

Russian volunteers at the crossroads: the past, present and future of Russian civil society

The Russia Foundation, with the *Guardian* newspaper and the Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations, co-sponsored a one-day conference on this subject on 29 June. Michael McCulloch, our Chairman, represented The BEARR Trust. This is his report.

'Contradictions' rather than 'crossroads' might have made a more appropriate, and in an historic sense more Russian, title. Many of the conference speakers were well known to BEARR members. They presented sharp contrasts between the real, if disparate, achievements of Russian civil society – still hardly fifteen years old – and the increasing and disturbing systematic assault on the independence and status of NGOs. Surely next year's G8 Summit in Russia offers a unique opportunity to challenge President Putin and his administration to take the 'managed' out of democracy.

Alena Ledeneva, Lecturer in Russian Politics and Society at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, identified several developments bearing on NGOs in her opening survey of the current social and economic context. Political and media freedom has regressed, to the point that the US think tank, Freedom House, has demoted Russia to a 'not

free' ranking. Prominent steps include biased TV electoral coverage, appointment instead of election of regional governors post-Beslan, crackdowns on the media in response to events in Ukraine, and restrictions on people's rights, especially affecting young people, after the benefit demonstrations. While the economy overall has flourished, unemployment has declined only marginally, and over 40% of people – some 61 million – see themselves as poor. Strikingly, most people appear still to have a short-term perspective on the future, and lack confidence in democracy and the political leadership.

Reliance on informal rules often substitutes for robust institutions. This dependence on unwritten rules presents a challenge to civil society in Russia. Rules are not transparent and can change suddenly. Organisations are easily framed and prosecuted, while extra-legal sanctions can threaten.

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The second session was billed as examining Russia's community tradition and what it had to offer a new civil society. In practice, people concentrated on the latter, though there were some observations on the legacy of Soviet practice as it affected NGOs. Elena Topoleva, Director of the Agency for Social Change, and well-known to BEARR, presented a more complex picture of contemporary Russian civil society. She agreed that 'managed democracy' meant that the Presidential administration sought to orchestrate the evolution of civil society. Russian NGOs were concerned about the most recent legislation and the role of the new body it set up. However, foreign financing was less of an issue – most Russian NGOs were genuinely self-help, also raising support from local authorities and, more recently, the business sector. NGOs' main weakness was that they were not firmly rooted in wider society as opposed to their own local communities.

Olga Alexeeva, Director of CAF International Philanthropy Trustees, took up some of these themes. Civil society has expanded rapidly: there are over 350,000 NGOs; the 23 largest companies give \$1.3 billion annually, with another \$100 million coming from new private foundations.

But in the last five years, NGO growth has stagnated:

- self-help resources are exhausted;
- the younger generation rejects 'old-style' activity;
- an alternative, parallel, civil society is emerging, led by 'idealists without ideals'.

Much of the apparent philanthropy goes not to civil society but to other organisations, while most NGOs are heavily dependent on support from local government. Private donors prefer to create their own NGOs rather than strengthen existing ones.

Most financing for advocacy organisations comes from foreign governments, but is inherently unreliable and tends to perpetuate gaps between NGOs and Russian society. International aid has helped to build an NGO infrastructure and client-oriented social services, but also reduced pressure for local funding. The risk is that foreign help focuses on a self-contained and isolated segment of civil society in Russia. Overall, Olga Alexeeva was not optimistic about the future – she saw 'an ice age' coming.

Andrey Kushinov, Chairman of Right Society, explored public attitudes to NGOs. Both Soviet experience and the 1990s emergence of spurious organisations have led to widespread suspicion.

'Most financing for advocacy organisations comes from foreign governments, but is inherently unreliable and tends to perpetuate gaps between NGOs and Russian society.'

Attitudes have swung from 'collectivism' to 'not my problem'. Many still believe the State is primarily responsible for delivering social standards, and favour only a restricted range of activities for NGOs, those serving children being preferred. Human rights organisations face particular challenges. Older people may see them as 'destroyers of the state', while amongst young people a new culture of routine bribery is emerging as a norm, replacing resort to democratic or legal channels. Against such a background, the tasks facing NGOs are to build trust among the public, to persuade the government that they are a vital element in society, to ensure transparency, especially in their dealings with business, and to revitalise the pursuit of human rights through NGOs.

In one of the break-out sessions, directors of three Russian NGOs addressed issues facing work with women and children, often exemplifying points made in the earlier plenary discussions. Johanna Rogers, Director of Everychild Russia, emphasised the need for awareness of wider options than institutional care for children. While the legislative framework was adequate, implementation was irregular and inconsistent, often leaving children as victims. Pilot models had been developed; diffusion and universality were now the challenge. She saw NGO/local authority relations in a more positive light.

Svetlana Pronina, Projects Director of Rights of the Child, described the advocacy work of her organisation, which has recently published a second *Alternative Report* on children's rights and seeks to raise political awareness and commitment. Maria Mokhova gave a fascinating, and moving, account of the efforts of the Centre for Victims of Sexual Violence. She saw the scope for social advocacy as limited, and the Centre had opted rather for research and education aimed at changing practice in key official and medical institutions. In 1997 the Centre had identified a new problem, that of organised criminal sexual violence, and launched the first Russian conference on trafficking. This led to its current involvement in advising on the first law obliging the State to help victims of crime. Echoing earlier speakers, she said the priority now was to move from a 'pot-luck' approach

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to more reliable and consistent practice. But she too feared that official assistance might be used as a means of controlling NGOs.

The keynote address by Maria Lipman, Scholar-in-Residence in the Carnegie Civil Society programme in Moscow, brought participants back to wider trends and developments. She was even more critical and pessimistic. Although some rhetoric did not turn into action, the clampdown on freedoms continues and President Putin has certainly not increased the stock of supportive legislation and practice. To the examples that others had mentioned, she added another: the damaging effects of recent trials, which had increased distrust of the government and encouraged wider abuses. If overt harassment in the media was no longer common, other instruments such as changes in ownership were having similar results. The general effects of such 'anti-modernisation' measures included bad governance, conflict with the growing expectations of Russian people, and the marginalisation of civil society. The deterioration in the public mindset promoted wider passivity and a lack of trust in the capacity of citizens.

In the final panel session, Michael McCulloch argued that there was a potentially fundamental contradiction between 'civil society' and 'managed democracy'. Such 'management' brings risks of intrusive interference, excessive sensitivity about political involvement, and restrictions on external links. BEARR's experience confirms the range and

diversity of initiatives launched by individuals and community groups. The challenge often lay in scaling up innovation through wider diffusion or in influencing institutional thinking and practice. BEARR was convinced that Russian NGOs should be a force for beneficial change in the social and health sectors, drawing on Russia's own history and culture, but also seeking to expand their common ground with NGOs elsewhere. British NGOs still had much to offer, especially in the urgent task of improving the policy, legislative, and regulatory framework within which Russian NGOs have to operate.

Ella Pamfilova, Head of the Human Rights Commission, and a long-time champion of civil society, went some way to redress the balance of earlier speakers, asserting that there were still opportunities to influence the administration in ways that would help the further development of civil society.

But while there were some impressive examples of what Russian NGOs can achieve by way of practical services and specific institutional change, it was hard to leave the conference without a fairly gloomy sense of the overall status of civil society in Putin's Russia. So Russia's assumption of the G8 Chair in 2006, as well as the summit itself, will offer an important opportunity both to encourage, and to test, a stronger and more liberal commitment to promote acceptance of a genuinely independent civil society. Putin should be challenged to allow – indeed to encourage – NGOs to play a prominent role in the G8 discussions and summit.

For more on the Russia Foundation, see page 15.

Annual Conference 2005**Towards a More Inclusive Society: the evolving role of NGOs in Russia and the region****Friday 11 November 2005****The Charity Centre, 24 Stephenson Way,
London NW1 2DP**

The BEARR Trust's Annual Conference 2005 will explore ways in which social welfare NGOs can promote social inclusiveness in Russia and its neighbouring republics.

There will be a special focus on dealing with the needs of disadvantaged children, but this will be in the context of general issues of interest to all NGOs, including:

- issues of social policy
- cooperation with local NGOs
- relations with local government
- replication and dissemination

Keynote speeches will be given by Andrew Jack of the *Financial Times*, author of *Putin's Russia*, and Anna Garchakova, Director of the Belarus

Children's Hospice. Other speakers will cover NGO developments and activities in Russia and Central Asia, but always with a view to their wider relevance.

In response to the views expressed by 2004 participants, the Conference will be in a slightly different format from last year, allowing more time for general discussion and networking.

Please put the date in your diary now. Full details and booking forms will be sent to all BEARR Friends and subscribers in good time before the conference. Contact the BEARR office if you need further copies.

DRUG & ALCOHOL NGOS IN RUSSIA

NGOs and the fight against drug abuse and alcoholism

Today's picture of Russia is one of a post-communist society with a rapidly growing market, undertaking the reform of government institutions and transforming its economic mechanisms but reducing funding for social and medical services.

Against this background, the role of the 'third sector' is expanding. A conglomeration of NGOs has found its niche in the provision of social services, both on a commercial and a philanthropic basis.

The third sector in Russia was born in 1989, and expanded hugely between 1992 and 1993. From about 1996, NGOs started to become more professional. From 2000 onwards there were signs that the creation of civil society was under way, and mechanisms were appearing to support its interaction with

state structures. Today these same structures are undergoing a crisis, the likely outcome of which is as yet unclear.

Despite the patchwork nature of the NGOs engaged in the drugs sector – each with its own structure, funding, interests and activities – they are all united by the fact that they were founded by professionals dissatisfied with the scope offered them within the inflexible frameworks of official drug prevention and treatment work, or within teaching or law enforcement, and also by people who have had direct experience of substance abuse. Liberated within the NGO, these people became social activists given the chance to put into practice their ideas for tackling the issues surrounding the abuse of alcohol, narcotics or other psychoactive substances.

NGOs working in this area now have practical experience of running their own organisations, training and developing personnel and working with other NGOs and state institutions. They have also developed their own strategies for tackling the alcohol problem in Russia.

My own organisation, No to Alcoholism and Drug Addiction (NAN), is a good example of an NGO which was started

*Oleg Zykov, President
No to Alcoholism and Drug
Addiction (NAN), Russia*

from scratch to address the substance abuse problem.

NAN's main strategic activities in tackling alcohol and narcotic misuse are as follows:

1. Primary prevention: propagating a healthy lifestyle and the conscious decision not to take narcotics; influencing youth subculture (including fashion); working with children's and young people's groups; and so on;
2. Secondary prevention: working with at-risk groups; going out onto the streets; working with juveniles; changing attitudes towards young offenders within the law enforcement structures; etc.;
3. Tertiary prevention: working with addicts; working to prevent relapse.

Experience of working with alcoholics, drug addicts and young people, and of defending their rights, has made us realise that social problems cannot be dealt with in isolation, and that the only way to help people is through radical changes in social policy.

Having come to this conclusion, we then find ourselves asking: 'What is it that is stopping us from making these radical changes?' The answer is to be found in the traditional formulae: 'It's up to



Young addicts during treatment at NAN's Moscow rehabilitation centre, *Quarter*

DRUG & ALCOHOL NGOS IN RUSSIA

the government to do something about it'; 'The state should take care of it'; 'The government should make the money available'; and in attitudes and thinking typical of a post-totalitarian state. By this I mean a repressed way of thinking – of solving problems by finding someone to blame for them – that is typical of a paternalistic state and a regime of total dependence on the part of both the citizens themselves and the state system. These are the factors that have contributed to the evolution of society's views during this new stage in our history.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the main buzz-word was political reform. An enlightened, honest and good leader was supposedly emerging, who would launch a flourishing new age. This delusion did not last long; in fact it disappeared as soon as people realised that flourishing new ages cost money. It rapidly gave way to another catch-phrase, 'economic reform', the idea being that we would first earn the money and then we would be able to flourish.

Only now is it starting to sink in that economic reforms by themselves do not solve the problems of the majority of society, and that our abundant material resources are in fact causing a worse splintering of society. We have the oligarchs at the top, who are fighting to retain and expand their acquired capital. Then come the state bureaucrats, to whom my fellow-countrymen so love to write petitions and letters, and who are becoming more and more corrupt as they attempt to lay their own hands on these abundant material resources. Who, in this scenario, gives a hoot for



Face painting – part of the 'fun' side of rehabilitation

photo: Larisa Goncharova

alcoholics, drug addicts, homeless children and other marginalised people?

At this point the more responsible sections of society suddenly realised that, without social reform directed at the formation and support of civil society, no flourishing at all was possible.

Hard on the heels of this breakthrough in thinking came the realisation that, in order to create a properly functioning civil society – as opposed to an empty promise by a politician who has no intention of doing anything – the public itself has to be involved

in solving society's problems. Only with an effective civil society can the most pressing social problems be tackled. Among these problems are alcoholism, drug addiction and the abuse of children's rights.

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DRUGS HARM REDUCTION

Minister applauds 'necessary work' in drugs harm reduction

A project in Sverdlovsk Oblast

*Richard Cunningham,
BEARR Coordinator at
Allavida*

Harm reduction work for drug users is not exactly the cuddliest of activities for any organisation, state or non-governmental, to undertake in Russia today. 'Harm reduction' is a rather elastic term with a wide range of definitions. It often reflects a side of life which many people would ideally prefer to ignore and hope will go away; in the view of some agencies, it borders on illegality or even crosses that border. But harm reduction work in Ekaterinburg and elsewhere in the Sverdlovsk Oblast is proving a potent weapon in the fight against the rampant spread of HIV/AIDS in Russia.

The work there is largely focused on intravenous drug users (IDUs) who, through the sharing and re-use of needles, are a major element in the transmission of the HIV/AIDS virus. Since the late 1990s, International Family Health (IFH) had been running a project funded by the Department for International Development (DfID) in several towns and cities of the oblast, namely Ekaterinburg, Pervouralsk, Rezh, Verkhnyaya Salda, Polevskoi and Beryozovsky. The project took a multi-dimensional approach to the problem of the drugs-HIV/AIDS connection, involving primary prevention, health

education, law enforcement and treatment – no single activity at the expense of all others. It also took a multi-agency approach, based on co-operation between all relevant authorities locally, including the police, even though this kind of activity had attracted firm opposition from the authorities at the federal level, including the Ministries of Health and the Interior. It was also opposed by the Church.

The BEARR Trust has now become a part of this story. Sadly, the project was closed by DfID in 2003, and IFH dissolved itself in autumn 2004. However, when IFH closed, it asked The BEARR Trust to take on managing some of the remaining funds to further the project's objectives. This left the project centres to decide whether to continue to fund the work previously supported by the project. This issue also arose in the context of the transfer of responsibility for activity in this field from municipal to oblast authorities from 2006. All but one project centre did continue, albeit at a reduced level. The BEARR Trust and IFH's Director, Susan Crane, agreed that most of the funds would be used to prolong the work in the continuing centres, especially the needle exchanges which enable IDUs to obtain clean needles, either at fixed or mobile needle exchange units.

The 'new' IFH funds have come at just the right time, drawing attention and support to the issue in the right places. At a recent conference in Ekaterinburg, supported from the IFH money, clear evidence was provided that the IFH project had had a very positive impact.

The conference was addressed by the Sverdlovsk Deputy Prime Minister, Semyon Isakovich Spektor, a former surgeon, and by its Deputy Health Minister, Olga Petrovna Kovtun. Dr Spektor pointed out that, in the second half of the 1990s, the rising incidence of HIV/AIDS in the city of Ekaterinburg and the Sverdlovsk Oblast far outstripped the national rate,



The store for needles and condoms at Rezh

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The BEARR Trust Lecture 2005

Russia and the West: converging or diverging?

Sir Roderic Lyne, British Ambassador in Moscow from 2000 to 2004, and a Patron of The BEARR Trust, gave the annual BEARR lecture on 27 June at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). The President of EBRD, Jean Lemierre, kindly welcomed the guests and introduced the speaker. Natasha Sturgeon, BEARR Information Officer, reports.



This lecture was well attended, which demonstrates the interest and sympathetic concern for Russia and the Russians which had brought people together for this event. Yet Sir Roderic began his talk by questioning our motives – why do we bother with Russia? After all, Russia hardly lacks in competence and self-determination. It is a strong, wealthy country and Russians are renowned for their intelligence, talent and high level of education. But there is still a strong desire to help Russia in the West. This may simply be due to its geographical proximity: Russia is too close and too vast for West Europeans to ignore.

Sir Roderic suggested another answer: Russians generally seem to have a European aspiration and, as Russia progresses, this offers the potential for a great partnership.

Sir Roderic explained that Russia is still in a period of transition, rather than post-transition, as has often been claimed. Russia is continuing its quest to establish its identity and find its place in the world. At present, there is a sense of disillusionment with Russia from the outside and depression from the inside. This may be a result of the high expectations the West had of Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union: Russia was to become a democratic country and part of the international community. However, the West failed to take into account that Russia is simultaneously trying to 'emerge' as a country and cope with the shock of the sudden demise of its empire, power and security, and the loss of a large part of its population to the Commonwealth of Independent States. We must not forget that while democracy

in Britain took centuries to develop, in Russia democracy is only a fourteen-year-old concept.

This all led to a feeling of mutual disappointment during the 1990s: the West felt there was a lack of change in the Russians; and the Russians felt there was a lack of support from the West.

Sir Roderic focused on the direction of Russia's transition and outlined three questions likely to influence its outcome:

1. Can Russia develop a modern and effective system of governance?
2. Can Russia build a competitive market economy which both liberates the country's potential and addresses its social problems?
3. How successfully can Russia adapt to and integrate with the changing global environment, and ensure its own security?

On the first, there seem to be divided opinions about Russia's governance. While Putin declared in his Annual Address, 'I consider the development of Russia as a free and democratic state to be our main political and ideological goal', there are others who firmly believe that Russia is not ready for democracy, and perhaps never will be. However, Russians are enjoying the benefits of a freer society and the majority feel that the path to Russia's modernisation is not through state control. But change takes time. The old state bureaucracy has effectively remained from the Soviet system, there is currently no real party system, and there is a lack of law, order and efficiency within the government.

BEARR TRUST LECTURE

Economically, Russia is booming – at least on the surface. The lucrative export of Russia's raw materials should give it a trillion-dollar economy by the end of the decade. Moscow is also developing at an extraordinary rate, to the extent that the leading consumer credit company is issuing 15,000 cards a day. However, this optimism does not extend below the surface. The economy accelerated during privatisation in the 1990s but the drive to restructure is now wearing off. Disproportionate wealth, largely from oil money, has resulted in complacency and has hindered social reform. Russia's economy is struggling to tackle one of its biggest social problems – its declining demography. Russia's high mortality rate and declining health means that its population is falling by approximately 750,000 a year. This in turn is having a severe impact on its economic development.

Sir Roderic noted that Russia can be viewed as being in a similar position to other Western countries in terms of its attitude and options with regard to global integration. Russia is a former empire located on the edge of Europe and is torn over whether it should include or exclude itself from Europe: not wholly unlike the UK. The Russian Federation – a new and ethnically diverse unit – feels insecure and is searching for its identity. This feeling is in some ways shared by the EU in its present state. Russia has had difficult relations with the EU, yet Putin states that Russia is 'a major European power'. Although many Russians may not feel European, they are travelling to the West, Russian business in London has flourished; and for the first time Russia will be chairing the G8 next year.

Russia has come far in a short time. Fifteen years ago, what we call civil society did not exist in Russia. Now, private sector companies, independent media and reportedly 350,000 non-governmental organisations have a place in society. This sector is newly emerging and therefore weak and often viewed with suspicion, but it does exist and is benefiting Russia. Sir Roderic questioned whether foreign involvement might be viewed as patronising and whether organisations like The BEARR Trust should continue raising funds for work in Russia. His answer was that they should, but not for ever. Corporate social responsibility is developing in Russia, but there is currently a role for Western NGOs, and the best things they can offer Russian NGOs are ideas and support.

In conclusion, Sir Roderic reiterated that Russia will develop its own models throughout its transition period but, while setbacks can be guaranteed, ultimate success may not be. Russians want to be independent but not isolated, and now is not the time to turn our backs on Russia. Working with Russia is not easy, but it is in our interests to engage in an equal and open partnership.

At the end of this stimulating lecture, many people had questions regarding Russia's internal policies and Western concerns. Picking up on his final point, Sir Roderic stressed that cross-fertilisation goes two ways. Asked, 'Do you think the West fails to realise how much it can learn from Russian society?' he emphasised that while we may have better regulations in the West, the social culture is often better in Russia. Life may be hard, but the strength of the family and capacity for personal friendship in Russia is often far greater than here.

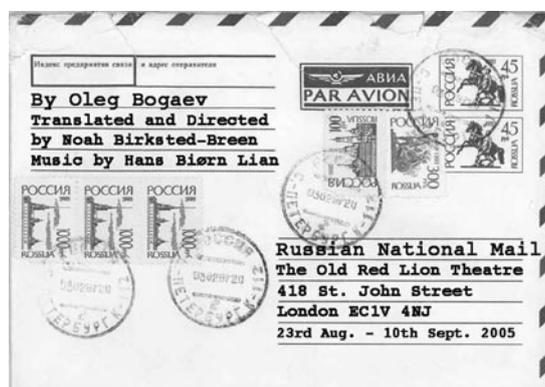
The BEARR Trust would like to thank the EBRD most warmly for sponsoring and hosting this lecture.

'Russian National Mail'

This is the title of a play by the young Russian writer from Ekaterinburg, Oleg Bogaev. Bogaev is well known in Russia, but he has only just had one of his plays performed for the first time in the UK. This was at The Old Red Lion Theatre in Islington in August-September 2005.

The play was translated and directed by Noah Birksted-Breen, formerly BEARR Project Officer. Noah kindly arranged for a special performance for BEARR supporters on 31 August. The audience not only enjoyed the play but had an introductory talk by Noah and the opportunity to meet the actors afterwards. They responded warmly by giving generously to a collection on behalf of BEARR.

The play was well received in the national press: 'bubbling with ideas ... nicely balancing wit and bitterness' and 'a profoundly Russian play ... a haunting image of desolation' were two of the critics' accolades. Noah's imaginative production, which included a prologue involving puppets, was also highly praised.



Annual Review 2004 (Summary)

The BEARR Trust (British Emergency Action in Russia and the Republics) was formed in November 1991. The Trust Deed was executed on 27 April 1992 and the Trust became a registered charity on 18 May 1992.

Objectives

The Trust's overall aim is to help Russia and other countries of the former Soviet Union (FSU) to become democratic societies. To this end, the Trust:

- Collaborates with British organisations working in the voluntary sector in these countries
- Provides information, advice and training to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in these countries
- Brings together UK and FSU NGOs to share know-how and experience
- Undertakes projects with partners to strengthen the voluntary sector in these countries.

Our work in Russia

Developing a Network for Child Protection in Russia

BEARR won a new grant from the Health and Social Care Partnerships scheme (HSCP) in April 2002 for an 18-month project to disseminate the Distance Learning Pack (DLP) on child abuse in Moscow, Togliatti (Samara Oblast) and Chelyabinsk (Chelyabinsk Oblast). The final dissemination event in this project took place in Moscow in January 2004 (slightly delayed). HSCP agreed that the remaining funds in the project should be used to develop a website for the OZON Child Protection Centre, and this was developed in 2004.

Work-based Community Mental Healthcare in Pervouralsk

With a grant from HSCP for a two-year project starting in April 2002, BEARR trained commercial managers, public sector managers, psychologists, teachers, students and social workers in Pervouralsk in issues of organisational development and mental health in the work place. The final event in this programme was a conference that took place in Pervouralsk in February 2004. The remaining small funds in this grant were approved by HSCP for use in running further seminars in the same series for local participants in Pervouralsk, and these took place in spring and summer 2004.

Developing an Adult Mental Healthcare Community Centre in Pervouralsk

BEARR received a grant from the Community Fund (NLCB) to set up a community centre over two years in Pervouralsk. The Centre was refurbished and opened to the public in July 2002. The final event in this programme was a conference held in Pervouralsk in February 2004. The Centre continues to function, although the Community Fund project ended in March 2004. Svetlana Ryaposova, Director of the Centre, presented a case study at the BEARR Annual Conference in November 2004. Her participation was paid for by the Community Fund as part of the dissemination stage of the project.

Opening School Doors to Deaf Children (Nizhny Novgorod)

The BEARR Trust won a grant from HSCP for a project that will help to integrate the education of deaf and disabled children with mainstream schools and institutes. This project was originally scheduled to run from May 2003 to May 2005. However, due to DfID's restructured funding policies, the project was obliged to close in December 2004. An initial needs analysis visit to Russia took place in October 2003, followed by a UK study tour in February 2004.

THE BEARR TRUST: SUMMARY ANNUAL REVIEW

Our work in the UK

The Annual Conference

The theme of the 2004 BEARR Trust Annual Conference was 'Successes and Failures in Promoting Change: Health, Social Care and Human Rights in Russia and the Region'. Keynote speeches were given by Mary McAuley, formerly Head of The Ford Foundation, Moscow; Oleg Zykov, Director, No to Alcoholism and Drug Addiction; and Robert van Voren, General Secretary, Geneva Initiative on Psychiatry. These were followed by two case studies and several break-out sessions, which enabled nearly a hundred delegates to pursue particular issues in more depth. The BEARR Trust received sponsorship for the Conference from Anthony Oppenheimer and from the Community Fund, for which it was most grateful.

The BEARR Newsletter

The BEARR Newsletter has continued to offer, to NGOs and others interested people, articles and news items covering NGO projects and the evolution of civil society in Russia and other countries in the region. One issue in 2004 was produced in association with Amnesty International and focused on human rights issues.

The Information Service

The Trust continued to provide a valuable service to professional enquirers and public alike. Enquiries range from simple factual information on Russia and the FSU to advice on potential partners for health and social sector projects in those countries. During 2004 responsibility for this service was taken over by a volunteer assistant, Natasha Sturgeon.

BEARR staffing

The organisational changes introduced by the Trustees from September 2004 were described in Newsletter 44. Rachel Watson, Information and Projects Officer, left BEARR in September 2004 to pursue full-time legal studies. Daryl Hardman acted as a part-time consultant director until September 2004, subsequently pursuing other career interests and commitments in relation to Russia. The Trustees record their warm thanks and recognition for her leadership role during a period of challenges for the Trust. They are delighted she accepted their invitation to become a Trustee in February 2005.

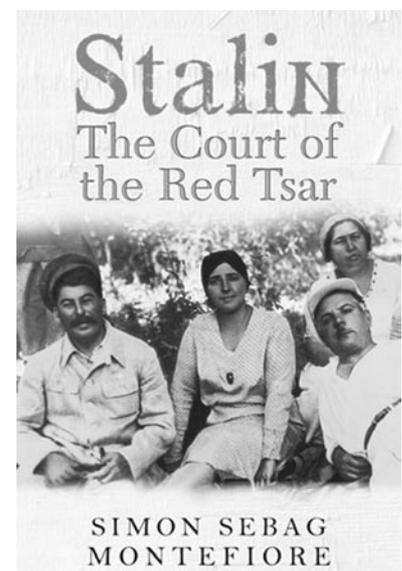
The BEARR Trust welcomes and values the services of volunteers, most of whom are graduates in Russian. In October 2004 Natasha Sturgeon agreed to maintain the operations of the BEARR Office on a volunteer basis one day a week. The Trustees, in addition to their formal duties, also act on a voluntary basis helping out with the organisation of events, editing of newsletters and running the Annual Conference.

Fundraising activities

Daryl Hardman presented the work of The BEARR Trust at a charity evening hosted by HM Ambassador to Moscow in his residence in Moscow on 25th May 2004.

On 21 June 2004, the historian Simon Sebag Montefiore gave a lecture and launched the paperback edition of his book 'Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar'. The event raised £2600 in donations to BEARR.

On 15 October 2004 the Konevets Vocal Quartet from Russia gave a concert in the Chapel of Pembroke College Oxford, arranged by the College Bursar and BEARR Trustee, John Church, with the kind support of the Master and Fellows of the College.



THE BEARR TRUST: SUMMARY ANNUAL REVIEW

Plans for 2005 The BEARR Trust will be involved in the following projects in 2005:

International Family Health (IFH) drugs project

On its dissolution in autumn 2004, IFH awarded some of its residual funds to the BEARR Trust. BEARR will use the funds to build on an earlier IFH project in the Sverdlovsk Oblast, including Ekaterinburg. In that project, various harm reduction strategies were developed to combat the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS in Russia, including the development of multi-agency approaches. This closed when funding was withdrawn prematurely, but this new injection of funds should help to stimulate continued local support for the project activities.



Konevets Vocal Quartet

Integrating deaf children into mainstream schools

A new project with the non-governmental school for deaf children 'Nordis' in Nizhny Novgorod, supported by the International Deaf Children's Society, will continue the partnership developed between The BEARR Trust and Nordis in 2003-04. In this project Nordis will focus on preparing and equipping deaf children to attend mainstream schools through the provision of new psychological and educational services for deaf children and their families.

The BEARR Trust will continue to participate in preparing and submitting proposals for projects in Russia and elsewhere in the region as opportunities allow.

The BEARR Trust will continue to provide its information service, run a Friends scheme, produce a newsletter, organise events and seek funding to meet core and project costs.

The full text of The BEARR Trust's Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2004 may be obtained from the BEARR office.

Opening doors – and ears – in Nizhny Novgorod

When BEARR was awarded the DfID-funded project 'Opening School Doors to Deaf Children', the title seemed to assume the task would be an easy one. In fact, in the context of closed institutionalised teaching for those with special needs, there were not many doors available for opening. Worse still, we soon discovered that in organisations such as BEARR's partner Nordis, where deaf children were being received, the financial burden of providing educational support to pupils meant that the doors were in severe danger of closing once again.

Rachel Watson
*Former Information and Projects Officer,
The BEARR Trust*

Restructuring brings benefits

A further shock was to be informed by DfID that the project would have to be completed six months earlier than scheduled. We soon realised that the task would require even greater stamina and determination than normal in Russia, but our splendid Russian project manager, Larissa

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Grishanova, proved she had both in abundance. Restructuring the project forced us to identify our priority objectives and combine activities so as to ensure maximum output from each project visit. Money saved on international travel was freed up to meet other needs and provide additional benefits. One of these was the development of a website dedicated to supporting the integration of deaf children into mainstream schools.

Building NGO-local authority partnerships

Highlighting a few specific activities will give a flavour of the project itself. In February 2004, Billie Tribe and Beverly McDowell, the main project consultants and both experts in service provision for the deaf, organised a detailed tour of inclusive schools in the UK for a group of Russian delegates. The participation of representatives from the local municipal and regional education authorities in Nizhny was a vital first step towards partnership-building, one of the project's key objectives. The contacts made led to discussions between the NGO community – spearheaded by Nordis – and those in charge of making the necessary policy decisions in the city.

Disseminating project materials

Links were also established with the UK's leading charity for deaf children, the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS). These links led to the production of a complete training manual based on NDCS material, the only publication of its kind available in Russia. The author of the material, Anne-Marie Hall, joined the trip to Russia when seminars were held. Sessions covered the main subjects (communication and methods, strategies in the classroom, trouble-shooting) and were delivered to a capacity audience of teachers from local and regional schools, for whom this was the first contact with information and training on inclusive education. So as to achieve as wide and effective dissemination as possible, all the materials developed by the project are to be distributed independently by both the local Department of Education and the NGO community.

Surprise response from local government

The most significant policy outcome resulted from a round table organised during the final trip to Russia in the prestigious Nizhny Novgorod Legislative Assembly. This was a unique opportunity for teachers, parents and project partners to speak directly with local government ministers and



Deaf children at the Nordis school in Nizhny Novgorod

education authorities and express their frustration with current legislation and its interpretation. At issue was a subsidy which the government had committed to schools providing educational support and services to special needs pupils. The families could not benefit from the subsidy because it had mainly been paid to the residential internats, from which they had already removed their children. To their surprise, however, they discovered that the government officials were also keen to review the existing legislation. A working group was set up there and then, and all participants were encouraged to help in its revision and implementation. Collaborative thinking and inter-agency working achieved results far beyond our expectations.

More doors opening

Support and follow-up will be vital. The links and partnerships that have been forged will need assistance, and additional resources and training will have to be provided. The needs are too many to list. But there have already been many positive outcomes. Deaf children are entering mainstream schools. Their parents are beginning to receive support from the government to fund extra tuition. NGOs are networking and lobbying collectively, challenging but also working alongside statutory bodies. Despite its initial setbacks, the project drew to a close at a time when doors were beginning to open in a whole series of new and exciting directions.

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Sir Norman Wooding

Sir Norman Wooding, Chairman of The BEARR Trust for ten years, died on 27 June. The Trust was represented at his funeral on 8 July by the present Chairman, several Trustees, and former BEARR staff and volunteers.

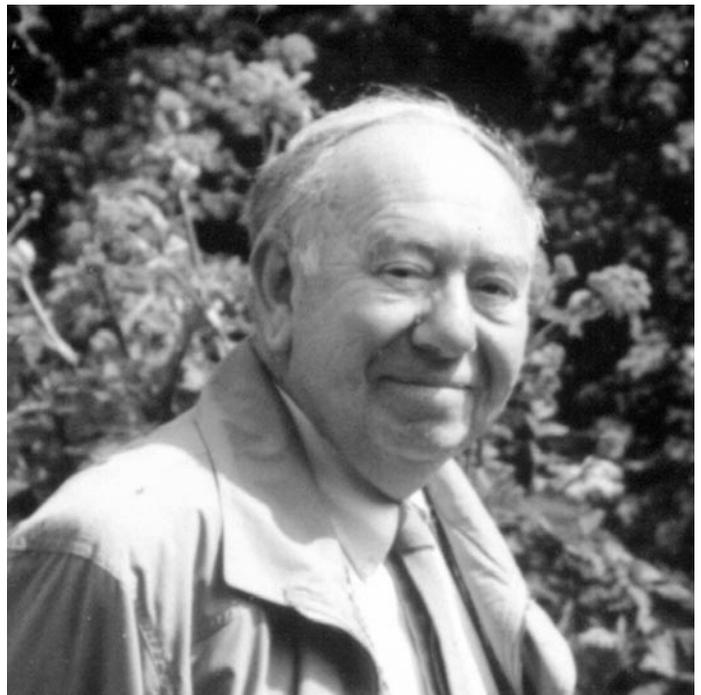
Norman Wooding's engagement with The BEARR Trust was only one part of his deep commitment to bringing Eastern Europe into the wider international community, a commitment described with affection and sensitivity in obituaries in both *The Times* and *The Daily Telegraph*.

As the first Chairman, he oversaw BEARR's development, guiding its evolution from an initial emphasis on relief to helping newly-emerging Russian NGOs to address a sometimes daunting agenda of health and social reform. To this task, as to so much of the Trust's activity, Norman brought a particular ability to place BEARR's role in the context of wider economic, political, and social developments in Russia – and to do so with a sympathetic but not uncritical eye. For someone who could move so easily among the good and the great, not forgetting the new Russian elite, Norman possessed a rare empathy with, and sensitivity for, the life of ordinary Russians, as they traversed extraordinary political and economic changes.

I have in my mind's eye a very clear image of Norman presiding over our Annual Conferences or fund-raising events, bringing a warm and gracious presence that was an essential element in their success. Indeed, he came to personify the Trust during his decade at the helm. Speakers and audiences alike were fortunate to enjoy his benign sense of balance between encouraging discussion and keeping to the timetable! In more informal moments, he seemed always to have time for a warm and courteous welcome to old friends and newcomers alike

Trustees especially valued – and enjoyed – Norman's contribution as their Chairman. His help and direction in matters of governance were authoritative but never overbearing. And meetings – enlivened by his perceptive, often amusing, anecdotes and reflections – were the very opposite of dull!

Behind the scenes, Norman gave generous support to Myra Green as Director, to the office team and to the many volunteers attracted to the Trust's work. Alongside advice, he was always ready to lend



a practical helping hand. Trustees and staff alike benefited from his perceptive judgment of people. Typically, he was himself quick to recognise and praise others for their contributions to the Trust's activities.

Of course, no tribute to Sir Norman would be complete without acknowledging his personal, and irreplaceable, part in fundraising for the Trust, where he drew regularly on his huge network of contacts to unlock corporate coffers. It was characteristic of him to suggest the Trust should tap his network one more time as he retired from the Chairmanship in 2003. Needless to say, he launched the campaign with a substantial donation of his own!

This was not quite his last contribution to the organisation he fondly called 'The BEARR'. As many readers will know, soon after Norman's death Lady Dorothy and the family suggested that BEARR might receive donations in his memory – a kind gesture that the Trust values greatly. Many of his friends and colleagues have responded generously, and I would like to express our gratitude to them.

FUNDING DATES

For me, it was a privilege and a delight to know Norman, and to benefit from his interest, advice and encouragement – all willingly, but never forcefully, offered. In the early days of the Know How Fund in Russia, he was a clear and much appreciated voice in support at its Advisory Board. He welcomed me to many a BEARR conference, then inducted me as a Trustee, and was unstinting in his kindness and guidance when I took over from him as Chairman.

He was a wonderful, generous, person, who will be much missed by the Trust and all associated with it.

To close, a characteristic extract from Sir Norman's memoirs, to be published this autumn by The Memoir Club:

'In writing these recollections I have described one person's journey through an enjoyable and rewarding life; the only lesson that I would draw is that nothing is impossible. My own ambitions were modest, but nonetheless satisfying, and I have been fortunate to know many who have achieved remarkable success against the odds. I suppose that I have encountered as many fools and rogues as the next man; but I scarcely remember any of them, or of their interference with my own life. What I remember is a growing number of people, as my life went on, who were interesting, helpful, fun to be with, and when I began to be given more responsible tasks, supportive. Again fortune shone on me.'

The fortune was not his, but ours.

Michael McCulloch

Drugs harm reduction project

continued from page 6

but that, since 2001, the gap had closed almost completely. Indeed, the number of new cases of HIV/AIDS in the oblast was falling. He wished the participants of the conference success 'in their necessary work'. Mrs Kovtun confirmed this picture, which she attributed to good government systems and cooperation. She also acknowledged the help of international projects. At a local level, even theoretical opponents such as the police have not intervened to close down these activities but have actually participated actively in a supportive way.

Some still need to be convinced. One new mayor, looking at the 'bottom line', remains doubtful of the value of the work, despite the efforts of local

health professionals, and further funding from him appears unlikely. But overall the strong support of the oblast government and the Oblast Aids Centre seems likely to confirm Sverdlovsk's position as a leader in the field of reducing the spread of HIV/AIDS in Russia.

Richard Cunningham is leaving Allavida in October. The Trust is grateful to him for all the work he has done on BEARR's behalf.

His future contact details are:

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FUNDING CLOSING DATES

DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (DfID): CIVIL SOCIETY CHALLENGE FUND (CSCF)

The closing date for projects beginning from April 2006 has passed and at present there is no confirmation of dates for projects to begin in the following financial year. The latest information may be obtained on www.dfid.gov.uk/funding/civilsocietycf, from where guidelines and forms may be downloaded; or from the Deputy Programme Manager, Steve Nally, on +44(0) 1355 843199; or by email to: enquiry@dfid.gov.uk

WESTMINSTER FOUNDATION FOR DEMOCRACY

Although the review mentioned in the last Newsletter appears not to be complete yet, there is one new deadline for the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, following that of 16 August. It is 22 November 2005, and the corresponding Board meeting will be held on 24 January 2006. Full details on www.wfd.org

The Russia Foundation

Interest in Russian affairs has been in decline since the late 1990s. Many media outlets have closed their Moscow offices and Russia as a policy specialism has been downgraded in both government and academia. Yet the implied judgement that Russia no longer matters looks increasingly out of step with reality. Russia is a nuclear power, an increasingly important energy exporter and a player in some of the world's most sensitive regions. It now has a border with the EU and there is growing concern about its political direction following an apparent retreat from democratic reform. It needs to be taken seriously by western policy makers.

The Russia Foundation was set up in Britain last year to promote greater understanding of the impact of political, societal and economic developments in contemporary Russia, and to this end encourages research, education and dialogue around the themes of democracy, good governance, political pluralism, freedom of expression, human rights, the rule of law, common security and economic cooperation.

The Foundation is non-partisan and its advisory council comprises people from the three main political parties, both houses of Parliament, the media and academia. They include: Doug Henderson MP, former Minister for Europe; Lord Howell, former Chairman of the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee; Lord Wallace, Liberal Democrat peer and professor of international relations at the London School of Economics; and Jonathan Steele of the *Guardian*.

Although it has no full-time staff, it draws on the help and experience of supporters with a background in politics and campaigns.

The Foundation works with a wide variety of think tanks, NGOs, academic bodies and other institutions. It places particular importance on providing up to date information and analysis to opinion leaders and policy makers, and organising high quality events. Activities this year include private lunches and dinners for visiting Russian politicians, a seminar on the Russian economy with the UK Trade Minister, an event on freedom of speech with English PEN and a major civil society conference with the Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations and the *Guardian* (see pages 1–3). As part of its work it is also sponsoring the Foreign Policy Centre's *Future of Russia* programme.

Priority areas for the Foundation's work include Parliament, government, academia and the media. But another important objective is to develop an active relationship with NGOs. A strong and independent civil society is the bedrock of any healthy democracy and the Russia Foundation is keen to facilitate contact with those in Russia who are struggling to build one. Russian NGOs today operate in a more hostile climate than at any time since the mid-1980s, with Kremlin officials openly denouncing them as agents of foreign influence. It is essential that Russian NGOs are supported in their work.

Further information can be found at www.russiafoundation.org

The Russia Foundation

Thank you John Kidd

The BEARR Trust is sorry to say goodbye to John Kidd, who has retired as Finance Officer. John's interest in Russia stemmed from his time as Deputy Director of the East European Trade Council. In April 1997 he was invited by Sir Norman Wooding to 'look after the books' for the Trust, and he has shared our somewhat peripatetic existence ever since, working in six different offices, always with unflappable commitment.

John has also retired as Director of The British & Foreign School Society, his third retirement since 1990, and has moved to Fishbourne, where he plans to sail his dinghy from Chichester harbour. His wife, Margery, has suggested he should find a job. Whatever he decides to do, the Trust wishes him all the best for the future, and will remember him with affection and gratitude.

Where are they now?

Noah Birksted-Breen translated and directed the well-received play 'Russian National Mail', by Oleg Bogaev, at the Old Red Lion Theatre in August-September 2005 (see page 8). He has also set up a new organisation called Sputnik Theatre, which aims to be the first theatre company in the UK dedicated to Russian drama, with a particular focus on new writing.

Kyryll Dissanayake is Chief Sub-editor, News and Multimedia, at the BBC Monitoring Service in Caversham.

Megan Bick set up the Moscow office of BEARR and was its Moscow Director until 1995. Since then she has worked on a range of health, social welfare and human rights programmes in the region. She worked for the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, helped design the EU's poverty alleviation programme for the Ferghana Valley and was part of the Evaluation Trust team which carried out the impact assessment of PNPS in Russia. Recently she has translated a book on human rights in Central Asia for Frontline Defenders and assisted in Article 19's Freedom of Information project in Ukraine.

Carole Chung was Russia Programme Manager 2003-2005, living in Moscow and travelling frequently to the regions to assist with Know How Fund and other projects. On her return to England, she moved to Scarborough and has since worked for a locally-based non-profit-making organisation which helps people on benefits to manage their tenancies. She plans to retire from full-time work shortly and become a full-time property renovator. However, she still has a keen interest in all things Russian and follows events there closely.

The BEARR Trust endeavours to include as wide a debate as possible in the Newsletter to capture the diversity of NGO work in the UK and Russia and a range of opinions. However, The BEARR Trust cannot be held responsible for the views expressed by authors in their articles.

About The BEARR Trust

Patrons: The Duchess of Abercorn, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Elena Bashkirova Barenboim, Lady Fall, Myra Green OBE, Professor Geoffrey Hosking, Lady Hurd, HE Sir Roderic Lyne KBE CMG, Dr Jonathan Miller CBE, Anthony Oppenheimer, Rair Simonyan, Sir Andrew Wood GCMG

The BEARR Trust is a British registered charity. It was formed in 1991 to act as a bridge between the welfare and health sectors of Britain and the former Soviet Union (FSU). It has four main aims:

- to collaborate with British organisations working with the voluntary, social welfare and health sectors in the FSU, particularly in order to provide information and advice;
- to be a clearing house for information about British activities in the FSU and, where appropriate, to make this information public;
- to bring British and FSU organisations together for the transfer of information, skills and material aid;
- to initiate projects that will strengthen the FSU's voluntary, social welfare and health sectors.

Trustees: Michael McCulloch (Chairman), John Church, Lesley Dean, Daryl Hardman, Professor Michael Holman, Marcia Levy, Ann Lewis CMG, Nicola Ramsden

Staff: Coordinator: Richard Cunningham; Information Officer: Natasha Sturgeon

Volunteers: Alena Ryzhykava, Lina Numan, Anna von Bennigsen, John Kidd

Editorial Board: Ann Lewis, Daryl Hardman, Michael Holman

Registered charity no: 1011086

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Contact details may be made available to other voluntary organisations working in the former Soviet Union, unless you tick this box to indicate that this information is confidential.

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