Soviet Space Culture
Soviet Space Culture
Cosmic Enthusiasm in Socialist Societies

Edited by
Eva Maurer
Julia Richers
Monica Rüthers
and
Carmen Scheide
# Contents

**List of Figures** viii

**Preface** x

**Notes on Contributors** xi

1 Introduction: What Does ‘Space Culture’ Mean in Soviet Society? Eva Maurer, Julia Richers, Monica Rüthers and Carmen Scheide 1

2 Space is the Place! Writing About Soviet Space Exploration Julia Richers 10

**Part I  Spirituality, Transcendence and Soviet Utopianism**

3 Introduction to Part I Julia Richers and Eva Maurer 23

4 The Conquest of Space and the Bliss of the Atoms: Konstantin Tsiolkovskii Michael Hagemeister 27

5 Into the Void: Philosophical Fantasy and Fantastic Philosophy in the Works of Stanislaw Lem and the Strugatskii Brothers Thomas Grob 42

6 The Contested Skies: The Battle of Science and Religion in the Soviet Planetarium Victoria Smolkin-Rothrock 57

**Part II  Remembering Space, Constructing Heroes**

7 Introduction to Part II Carmen Scheide and Monica Rüthers 81

8 Memories of Space and Spaces of Memory: Remembering Sergei Korolev Slava Gerovitch 85

9 The Heroic and the Ordinary: Photographic Representations of Soviet Cosmonauts in the Early 1960s Iina Kohonen 103
Contents

10 ‘Let’s Find Out Where the Cosmonaut School Is’: Soviet Girls and Cosmic Visions in the Aftermath of Tereshkova 121
Roshanna P. Sylvester

11 The Regional Dimension of Space Propaganda 139
Anna Eremeeva

12 Propaganda of the Historical and Cultural Heritage of Cosmonautics: The Experience of Russian Regional Non-Governmental Organizations 151
Vladimir Sadym

Part III Performing Space in World Politics: Communications and Mediality

13 Introduction to Part III 167
Monica Rüthers

14 Sputnik Goes to Brussels: The Exhibition of a Soviet Technological Wonder 170
Lewis H. Siegelbaum

15 Soviet Cosmonauts and American Astronauts in Yugoslavia: Who Did the Yugoslavs Love More? 188
Radina Vučetić

16 Children and the Cosmos as Projects of the Future and Ambassadors of Soviet Leadership 206
Monica Rüthers

Part IV Space in Popular Culture

17 Introduction to Part IV 229
Julia Richers and Monica Rüthers

18 A Dream Come True: Close Encounters with Outer Space in Soviet Popular Scientific Journals of the 1950s and 1960s 232
Matthias Schwartz

19 Space Exploration in Russian and Western Popular Culture: Wishful Thinking, Conspiracy Theories and Other Related Issues 251
Andrei Rogatchevski

20 Two Images of a Spaceman in Estonian Art: The Missing Myth of a Hero and the Fable of Failure 266
Anneli Porri
Epilogue: From Utopia to Nostalgia

21 From Cosmic Enthusiasm to Nostalgia for the Future: A Tale of Soviet Space Culture

Asif Siddiqi

Select Bibliography

Index
List of Figures

1.1 Matchbox label (1960s/1970s) 2
1.2 A series of ‘space firsts’ 3
Pl.1 ‘To the stars!’ 22
4.1 K. E. Tsiolkovskii 28
4.2 Tsiolkovskii in front of his library 35
6.1 ‘Mobile planetarium’ bus used for rural lectures 64
6.2 Demonstration of telescope in village, Ukraine 65
6.3 ‘Mobile planetarium’ lecture on a collective farm, Ukraine 66
PII.1 Cosmonaut Ilu. Gagarin 80
PII.2 Cosmonaut G. S. Titov 80
PII.3 Cosmonauts A. G. Nikolaev and P. R. Popovich 80
8.1 K. E. Tsiolkovskii 85
8.2 F. A. Tsander 86
8.3 Gagarin laying the foundation stone in Kaluga 91
9.1 Iuriii Gagarin walking towards Nikita Khrushchev on the red carpet 104
9.2 German Titov in the silent chamber, a sound-insulated room 112
9.3 Cosmonaut German Titov at home with his wife Tamara 113
9.4 Cosmonaut Valerii Bykovskii with his son Valerii 114
10.1 The cover of the weekly humour magazine Krokodil 122
10.2 Illustration in Krokodil 123
11.1 The Gorbathko family reading a letter from home 144
11.2 Cosmonaut Anatolii Berezovoi on a field of the Soviet Farm 148
12.1 The opening of the Iurii Kondratiuk museum at the Krylovskii elevator 155
12.2 An excursion in the G. Bakhchivandzhii museum 156
12.3 Pilot-cosmonaut and twice Hero of the Soviet Union, V. V. Gorbatko with Professor T. I. Agapova 158
12.4 Kuban schoolchildren at the Iurii Gagarin monument in Star City 160
12.5 Competition winners at the Korolev monument in Baikonur 161
PIII.1 Sputniki 166
PIII.2 Sputniki 166
14.1 The Soviet Pavilion in Brussels 1958 173
14.2 Vasilii Dmitrevich Zakharchenko 175
14.3 Moon walk 177
14.4 Sputnik and Lenin in the Soviet Pavilion 179
15.1 Tito and American astronauts 190
15.2 The three American astronauts 192
15.3 Olja Ivanijcki in front of her painting 194
15.4 Olja Ivanijcki, ‘Life-support box’ 195
16.1 Model plane builders during a lesson in the Cheliabinsk Dvorets Pionerov 209
16.2 A rocket contest in front of the Cheliabinsk Dvorets Pionerov 209
16.3 Skyrockets on a playground in Novye Cheremushki 211
16.4 Belka and Strelka at the Pioneers’ Palace 212
16.5 The ‘Children’s World’ megastore in Moscow 214
PIV.1 Laika 228
20.1 Renaldo Veeber, ‘Lenin’ 271
20.2 Leppo Mikko, ‘Man and Space’ 274
20.3 Peeter Allik, ‘Autumnal Contemplation’ 277
20.4 John Smith, ‘Marko and Kaido’ 278
Preface

Earlier versions of most of the contributions collected in this volume were first presented at the conference *Cosmic Enthusiasm: The Cultural Impact of Soviet Space Exploration since the 1950s* held in Basel, Switzerland in January 2009 (for details of the conference programme, see www.spacecultures.net). We would like to thank the institutions who made the conference possible: the Swiss National Science Foundation, the Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences, the Freie Akademische Gesellschaft Basel, the cogito foundation and the Hotel Krafft. We are also indebted to the Gerold und Niklaus Schnitter-Fonds für Technikgeschichte for their support of this publication. Many thanks to all of those who contributed to the making of the conference and this volume, especially to Anna K. Liesch, to Ruth Ireland and Keith Povey of Palgrave Macmillan, to our translators Elizabeth Schlüssel, Rosie Tweddle, Michael Dobbins and to all authors and conference participants.
Notes on Contributors

Anna Eremeeva (1964), Professor of History and Museum Studies Department at Krasnodar State University of Culture and Arts, Russia, received her Candidate and Doctorate degrees in History at the Institute of Russian History, Russian Academy of Sciences (Moscow). She is the author of four books, including ‘Under the Roar of Civil Storms...’ Artistic life in Southern Russia in 1917–1920 (1998) and Scientific Life and Scientific Community of Kuban region in the 20th Century: Pages of History (2006). Her research interests encompass the history of Soviet culture, alternative culture in late-Soviet society, the social history of science, and representations of history in literary texts. Anna Eremeeva is a member of the 'Kuban Federation of Cosmonautics'. She can be emailed at eranna2000@mail.ru

Slava Gerovitch (1963), Visiting Scholar at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA, is the author of From Newspeak to Cyberspeak: A History of Soviet Cybernetics (2002) and a contributor to the collections Critical Issues in the History of Spaceflight (2006) and Remembering the Space Age (2008). He is currently working on a volume titled, ‘Designing a Cosmonaut: The Technopolitics of Automation in the Soviet Human Space Program’, which explores the early history of the Soviet human space programme in the political and cultural context of the Khrushchev era. His research interests are the history of Soviet mathematics, cybernetics and computing; aerospace history; and history and memory. He can be emailed at slava@mit.edu

Thomas Grob (1961), Professor of Slavic and Comparative Literatures at Basel University, Switzerland. His PhD thesis is on Daniil Kharms and the late avant-garde in Russia, habilitation (forthcoming in two volumes) on Russian literature and culture of the 1830s. Among his research interests are the theory and history of the fantastic in literature. He can be emailed at Thomas.Grob@unibas.ch

Michael Hagemeister (1951), historian and Slavist, wrote his PhD thesis on the Russian philosopher Nikolai Fedorov. He has lectured at universities in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, and presently holds an appointment at the European University Viadrina in Frankfurt (Oder). His current research focuses on the origins of the ‘Protocols of the
Elders of Zion’, and the life and work of the Russian religious and apocalyptic writer Sergei Nilus. He can be emailed at Michael.Hagemeister@unibas.ch

Iina Kohonen (1973) is a researcher and doctoral student at the Aalto University, School of Art and Design, Helsinki, Finland. Her recent publications address the visual history of the Soviet Space programme; for example, ‘The Space Race and Soviet Utopian Thinking’, in Space Travel and Culture. From Apollo to Space Tourism, D. Bell and M. Parker, eds., Oxford: Blackwell (2009). Her research interests are Soviet visual history and Cold War culture; the Soviet space programme; photographic theory and the history of cosmic art. She can be emailed at iina.kohonen@aalto.fi

Eva Maurer (1972) studied History at the Universities of Zürich/Switzerland and Münster/Germany and has since worked at the Universities of Fribourg (Switzerland) and Münster, where she received her PhD in History in 2008. Her dissertation Wege zum Pik Stalin: Sowjetische Alpinisten, 1928–1953 was published in 2010. She has published several articles on the history of Soviet tourism and sports, and collaborated in research projects before becoming a Science and Politics Fellow at the Swiss Parliament. She can be emailed at evamaurer@gmx.de

Anneli Porri (1980) is an art critic, lecturer and curator based in Tallinn, Estonia. She graduated from the Institute of Art History in the Estonian Academy of Arts in 2003. She has participated in the work-groups of the Nordic Baltic Curatorial Platform, organized by FRAME – Finnish Fund for Art Exchange (Helsinki). Anneli has been curator at exhibitions of the Biennale of Young Artists (2007, with Rael Artel) and satellite projects for the 4th Tallinn Applied Art Triennial (2006), the 13th Tallinn Print Triennial (2004), and special projects for young Estonian artists in Estonia, Latvia and France. Since 2004, she has worked as a lecturer at the Old Town Educational College, Tallinn and is currently Visiting Associate Professor at the Photography department of the Estonian Academy of Arts. She can be emailed at anneli.porri@gmail.com

Julia Richers (1975) studied East European History and English at the Universities of Budapest and Basel. Since 2001, she has been working as a research and teaching fellow at the chair for East European History at the History Department of the University of Basel, Switzerland. She finished her PhD in 2005 (published under the title Jüdisches Budapest. Kulturelle Topographien einer Stadtgemeinde im 19. Jahrhundert). Her interest in spatial theories, mental maps and cultural geographies led to her new research project on the cultural aspects of the Soviet space age titled
‘Cosmic Enthusiasm in the Soviet Union between the Cult of Technology and Utopian Thinking’. She can be emailed at julia.richers@unibas.ch

**Andrei Rogatchevski** (1965), Senior Lecturer in Russian at the University of Glasgow, UK, has written a PhD on the Russian author and politician Eduard Limonov (published in 2003). Among his other publications are *Bribery and Blat in Russia* (co-edited with Alena Ledeneva and Stephen Lovell, 2000) and *Filming the Unfilmable: Casper Wrede’s ‘One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich’* (co-authored with Ben Hellman, 2010). His current research interests include Russian and East European Cinema, East European Jewry, and the National Bolshevik Party since 1993. He can be emailed at a.rogatchevski@slavonic.arts.gla.ac.uk

**Monica Rüthers** (1963), Professor of East European History at Hamburg University, Germany, published a PhD on East European Jewish women in the 19th century. Her second book addresses the spatial history of Moscow: *Moskau bauen. Öffentliche Räume zwischen Alltag, Terror und Utopie* (*Building Moscow. Urban spaces between everyday life, terror and utopia*, 2007). Her research interests are Russian and Soviet visual history, Jews and Gypsies as European liminar groups, the iconography of Soviet childhood, and Soviet-type consumer societies. She can be emailed at monica.ruethers@uni-hamburg.de

**Vladimir Sadym** (1978), PR-manager at the Interregional Distributive Grid Company of the South, member of the Krasnodar regional NGO ‘Kuban Federation of Cosmonautics’, received his Candidate Degree in Cultural Studies from the Krasnodar State University of Culture and Arts, Russia. He is the author of many publications on propagating space heritage, Russian (Soviet) and foreign planetariums, school museums of cosmonautics and aerospace education. His research interests are the cultural heritage of cosmonautics, Russian and foreign air and space museums, and non-governmental organizations in Russia and abroad. He can be emailed at sadymvlad@mail.ru

**Carmen Scheide** (1965), studied East European and general History in Munich, Freiburg and Moscow. She received her PhD in 1999 for a study on Soviet women in the 1920s, investigating Moscow workers. From 1995 to 2005, she was a research fellow at the chair of East European History at the Historical Institute of Basel University, from 2005 to 2008 funded by a research grant from the Swiss National Science Foundation. Her second book on Soviet culture and politics of remembering the Great Patriotic War will soon be published. Since December 2008, she has been a fellow at the Kulturwissenschaftliches Kolleg (Institute
for Advanced Studies) at Konstanz University. She can be emailed at Carmen.Scheide@unibas.ch

**Matthias Schwartz** (1970) is a research fellow and lecturer at the Institute for East-European Studies and the Peter Szondi-Institute of Comparative Literature at the Freie Universität Berlin. He wrote a PhD on the cultural history of Soviet adventure literature and science fiction from the 1920s to the 1950s. His further research interests include the interplay of science and literature in Russia from the 18th to the 20th centuries, Soviet and Post-Soviet popular culture studies, Eastern European contemporary literature. Related publications are *Die Erfindung des Kosmos. Zur sowjetischen Science Fiction und populärwissenschaftlichen Publizistik vom Sputnikflug bis zum Ende der Tauwetterzeit* (2003); ‘Die Spur des Sputnik. Kulturhistorische Expeditionen ins kosmische Zeitalter’ (co-edited with Igor J. Polianski, 2009). He can be emailed at schwartz@zedat.fu-berlin.de

**Asif A. Siddiqi** is an associate professor of history at Fordham University in New York. He specializes in modern Russian history and the social and cultural history of science and technology. He has published widely on the history of space exploration in such journals as *Technology and Culture, History and Technology, Europe-Asia Studies*, and *Osiris*. His most recent book is *The Red Rockets’ Glare: Spaceflight and the Soviet Imagination, 1857–1957* (Cambridge University Press, 2010). He is also serving as editor of the four-volume English translation of the memoirs of Russian space engineer Boris Chertok, published under the general title *Rockets and People*. His current research interests include a study on the phenomenon of ‘prison science’ under Stalin. He can be emailed at siddiqi@fordham.edu

**Lewis Siegelbaum** (1949), Professor of Modern Russian History at Michigan State University, received his PhD from Oxford University in 1976. He has authored and co-authored books on Russian industrialists during World War I, the Soviet state and society during the 1920s, the Stakhanovite movement of the 1930s, coalminers in eastern Ukraine at the end of the Soviet period, and most recently *Cars for Comrades: The Life of the Soviet Automobile* (2008). His research interests now include the built environment of Soviet cities and migration in Russian political space across the centuries. He can be emailed at siegelba@msu.edu

**Victoria Smolkin-Rothrock** (1980), Assistant Professor of Russian History at Wesleyan University, Connecticut, completed her PhD at the University of California-Berkeley in 2010. Her dissertation, ‘“A Sacred Space Is Never Empty”: Soviet Atheism’, 1954–1971, is a study of Soviet
atheist education and socialist rituals that follows two distinct, yet overlapping, life-cycles: that of Marxist-Leninist scientific atheism, as it attempted to transform religiosity and fill the space that had been occupied by religion with a distinctly Soviet spiritual content; and that of Soviet citizens, whose lives were ordered and made meaningful by Soviet beliefs and rituals. Research interests include: everyday life, ritual culture, religion and secularism, and the cultural history of Soviet social sciences. She can be emailed at vsmolkin@wesleyan.edu

Roshanna P. Sylvester is Associate Professor of History at DePaul University in Chicago, where she specializes in modern Russia. Her first book Tales of Old Odessa: Crime and Civility in a City of Thieves (2005) examined representations of class, gender and ethnicity in Odessa’s popular press in the last years of the Tsarist era. Her current project is a comparative study of Cold War culture, focusing on the attitudes of Soviet and American school girls towards science and technology in the 1960s and 1970s. Sylvester’s research interests include the history of childhood, popular culture, gender and sexuality, and society and culture in the late Soviet period. She can be emailed at rsylvest@depaul.edu

Radina Vučetić (1972) is Assistant Professor of General Modern History, Department of History, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade. Her PhD thesis was on the Americanization of Yugoslav popular culture in the 1960s. She has published a book, Evropa na Kalemegdanu: Cvijeta Zuzorić i kulturni život Beograda 1918–1941, as well as numerous articles relating to Yugoslav social history in the 20th century. Her areas of research interest include Western influences on Belgrade and Yugoslavia, Yugoslav–American relations, Americanization in Yugoslavia, Yugoslav modernization in the 20th century, gender history, and the popular culture and history of everyday life. Since 2003, she has been a member of the editorial board of the Annual for Social History. She can be emailed at radina@sbb.rs