

“Только по-русски, пожалуйста”

“*Russian Only, Please*”



A History of the Russian School of Norwich University (1968-2000)

The phrase “*Tol’ko Po Russky, Pozhaluista*” echoed over the Norwich University campus each summer for more than thirty years. “*Russian Only, Please*” gently reminded students and faculty of the pledge they had all made to speak only Russian for the duration of the seven-week summer session. The Russian School of Norwich University placed great importance on this total immersion in the Russian language. The School’s philosophy held that students would best learn the language if every part of their experience was conducted in Russian.

More than simply a language program, the Russian School brought together world-renowned scholars in Russian literature and culture. Each summer a diverse group of faculty and students would convene a special community in Northfield, essentially creating a “Russian Village” in central Vermont. The Russian School gave American students a chance to be taught here in the United States by native Russian speakers at a time when exchange with the Soviet Union was not possible. During the Cold War, this was among the best places to learn Russian outside of the Soviet Union.



Outdoor class led by Prof. Igor Mihalchenko, 1974

Norwich University gained great recognition for its academically prominent summer Russian School. Because of the emphasis on Russian literature and culture, many esteemed scholars and artists were drawn to the School. The world-famous and reclusive Soviet dissident writer Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn visited the school in 1975, making a rare appearance in the initial years of his exile.

Despite the prestige the Russian School brought to Norwich, there were ongoing questions about the direction and future of the program. International changes brought about by the fall of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s eventually led to declining enrollment. Following the 2000 summer session, the Russian School of Norwich University closed permanently.

In this exhibition, we seek to present the unique character of the Russian School, and to examine the personalities and philosophies that made it thrive. We will also consider the momentous changes in Russian history that occurred during the years of its existence, and how these external factors led to changes within the Russian School.



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Founding of the Russian School of Norwich University

The roots of the Norwich University Russian School trace back to its Vermont neighbor, Middlebury College. Middlebury began offering language schools in the 1920s and, after World War II, added a summer Russian School. One of the faculty members of the Middlebury program was Dr. Marianna Poltoratzky. Born in Russia in 1906, Dr. Poltoratzky was part of the first-wave of Russian emigration to the United States following the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. As these early emigrants were decidedly anti-Communist, some eventually felt that Middlebury College, which hosted Soviet scholars and maintained ties to Soviet universities, was too closely related to the Soviet government.

In 1960, Marianna Poltoratzky left the Middlebury program and established the Institute of Critical Languages at Windham College in Putney, Vermont. The Institute of Critical Languages focused on learning languages, including Russian, which Dr. Poltoratzky deemed critical in the emerging modern world. One of the hallmarks of the Windham College program was its insistence on the total immersion method, in which the entire group pledged to speak only in the target language. “Since the value of the program to the individual, as well as the group, depends upon the exclusive use of Russian at all times and in all places, students must agree to speak the language not only in the classrooms, but also in the dormitories, in the dining hall and lounge, and in all extracurricular activities.” This Russian-only pledge would set the standard for the later Norwich University program.



Marianna Poltoratzky

After seven years at Windham College, Dr. Poltoratzky felt that her Institute of Critical Languages was facing interference from the Windham College administration. She believed that the administration was attempting to wrest control of the program from the Russian-born faculty. In 1967, she and a core group of faculty resigned and left Windham.



George Bruce

It didn't take long for the program to find a new home. Norwich University English Professor, George Bruce, had previously met Marianna Poltoratzky at the National Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California. He had also taken summer Russian courses at the Institute of Critical Languages at Windham College. Professor Bruce convinced Norwich President Barksdale Hamlett and Dean Loring E. Hart to invite Dr. Poltoratzky and the Institute of Critical Languages to Norwich University. In November of 1967, a statement of understanding was drawn up to clarify the relationship between Norwich University and the Russian program, newly renamed the Russian Language Summer Institute of Norwich University. In the summer of 1968, the program debuted on the Northfield campus.

Early Days of the Russian School of Norwich University

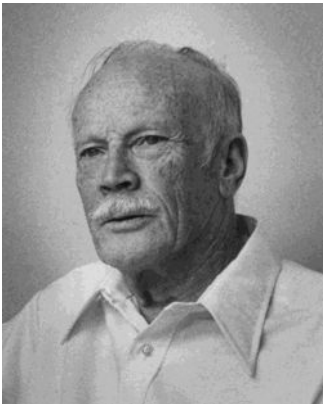
Soon after effecting the move from Windham College to Norwich University, Russian School founder Marianna Poltoratzky died. Her work was carried on by dedicated faculty and graduate students. One of these early faculty members of the Norwich University Russian School was Catherine Wolkonsky. Professor Wolkonsky was born in Russia in 1895, during the reign of Tsar Nicholas II. Her grandfather had fought for Peter the Great and her father had served as a three-star general in the Imperial Russian army. After leaving Russia with the retreating White Army following the Bolshevik Revolution in October 1917, she married a Russian officer, Count Wolkonsky. His illustrious family appears in the novel *War and Peace*.

Madame Wolkonsky eventually made her way to the United States. She served as the personal secretary for Countess Alexandra Tolstoy, the exiled daughter of famed Russian writer Leo Tolstoy. In addition to this work, Catherine Wolkonsky taught Russian at Cornell University, Vassar College, SUNY Albany and Middlebury College. She co-authored the influential textbook Handbook of Russian Roots with Marianna Poltoratzky in 1961. For all of this, Norwich University granted Catherine Wolkonsky an honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters in 1969.



Class led by Prof. Catherine Wolkonsky, 1981

Nicholas Pervushin



Nicholas Pervushin

Nicholas Pervushin was a fascinating figure instrumental in the establishment of the Russian School at Norwich University. Dr. Pervushin was born in Kazan, Russia in 1899. His family belonged to the middle-class intelligentsia during the reign of Tsar Nicholas II. While his family supported gradual political reforms in Russia, they remained opposed to Revolution. However, one of Dr. Pervushin's relatives became the central figure in the Communist Revolution that overthrew the Tsar's government in 1917. Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin was a cousin of Pervushin's mother.

After the Revolution, Nicholas Pervushin was arrested and several times threatened with execution on charges of being a counter-Revolutionary. Each time, his relation to Vladimir Lenin saved him. Pervushin wanted to leave the USSR, but he was forbidden to travel abroad for work and study. Eventually, his relation to Lenin enabled him to get a visa, and he left the Soviet Union to study economics and work in Germany and France. While in Western Europe, in addition to his economics work, he began writing reviews and criticism on Russian literature, which laid the foundation for his future career as a Professor.

In 1946, Nicholas Pervushin left France and came to New York to work as an interpreter for the United Nations. He was assigned to translate English, French and Spanish into Russian. Pervushin worked as an interpreter during the important early years of the UN, giving him a front row seat to the historic debates between the twentieth-century superpowers, the United States and the USSR. After retiring from the UN, he moved to Montreal where he taught Russian literature, history and language at McGill University.

In 1960, he helped found the Institute of Critical Languages. After the move to Norwich University, he served as the Director of the Russian School of Norwich University until 1980. Pervushin was granted an honorary degree by Norwich University in 1977, and the Slavic Collection in the library was dedicated to the memory of his wife, Xenia Pervushin. Nicholas Pervushin continued to serve as Director Emeritus and returned to Northfield every summer until his death in 1993.

“The Russian Village”

The Russian School of Norwich University convened for seven weeks each summer. Arriving in June, students and faculty took a pledge to speak only Russian during their time at the Russian School. As students and faculty moved into the dorms vacated by the cadets over the summer, all effort was made to provide separate living and dining accommodations so that only Russian would be heard around the School. Russian School students put up Russian signs in the Cyrillic alphabet renaming the various buildings on campus with the names of Russian cities.

Some faculty families lived in the dormitories with the students to encourage their use of the Russian language. In later years, the Russian School employed “Native Speakers”, people from Russia who would be available to converse with students about current events, culture and even Russian slang. Meals in the Harmon Dining Hall enhanced the learning experience. Students and faculty ate together family-style, giving students the opportunity to get to know the faculty on a personal level. Roberts Hall was used as a recreational center and its large ballroom was the scene of many receptions, parties, and dances. These gatherings, called *Vecherinkas*, greatly added to the close-knit atmosphere of the Russian School.



Vecherinka in Roberts Hall, 1968

The Faculty

The success of the Norwich Russian School owed much to the quality and dedication of its teachers. Russian School faculty were hand-picked and invited each summer by the Director, and later Dean, of the School. The faculty was comprised of leading scholars in Russian literature and language methodology drawn from some of the finest universities in the United States and abroad. Initially, there were no formal contracts through the University, rather letters of invitation were personally extended and many of the faculty returned year after year. Most of the original professors were born in Russia or Eastern Europe, but over time some American-born Russian specialists joined the faculty.

Academics

The Norwich University Russian School was an academically demanding program. Students were in class for five or six hours a day, with readings and homework in the evening. The instruction did not end with the formal academics. In the afternoons, students could drop-in at an “Oasis,” an outdoor spot to get informal help from an instructor.



Oasis Conversation with Prof. Veronica Stein, 1990

The Russian School offered instruction in Russian language and culture for first through fourth year undergraduates, as well as graduate courses in literature, culture, theory and pedagogy. During each summer session graduate students completed approximately one-third of their Master of Arts degree, while undergraduate students completed the equivalent of at least one year of college Russian.

Students

Most Russian School students came from other colleges and universities. They came from all fifty States and more than twenty foreign countries. In addition to traditional college-aged students, people ranging in age from their early teens up through their nineties attended the School. Russian School students also came from the media and business communities and from various government agencies, especially defense, intelligence and foreign service departments. The U.S. government provided funding for many of the students. Apollo Astronaut Rusty Schweickart came to learn Russian in his mission to set up an organization of former US Astronauts and Soviet Cosmonauts. During the peak years of enrollment in the late 1980s, around three hundred students attended each summer.

Changes in the Russian School

At the time of its founding, the Russian School was led by a faculty of native Russian speakers, many of whom had been born in Russia, some before the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and the Soviet-era. These faculty members represented the first-wave of Russian emigration. People of this first wave, referred to as “White Russians” (as opposed to the Communist “Reds”), were often from the well-educated professional classes that had been targeted during the Communists’ Revolutionary purges. These émigrés were strongly anti-communist, and saw it as their responsibility to keep pre-Revolutionary Russian history, religion and culture alive outside of the Soviet Union, in hopes that one day they could return with this traditional culture intact.

After World War II, there was a second-wave of emigration from the Soviet Union to the West. These émigrés were likewise anti-Communist, but had directly lived through years of hardship and oppression in the Soviet Union under Lenin and Stalin, and may have had a different worldview than that of the émigrés that had left just after the Bolshevik Revolution. A third major wave of emigration from the Soviet Union took place from the 1970s through the 1990s. Many of the people in this wave were of Soviet-Jewish background, and included many scholars and academics. Their political stance was often more liberal than that of the previous waves of emigrants.

All of these different groups were represented in the faculty of the Norwich Russian School. Over the thirty-two year history of the school, more recent émigrés began to replace the old guard. At the same time, American-born Russian speakers joined the Russian School faculty. Some of these people had mastered Russian in the Graduate program, and now took their place among the faculty. Cultural and political differences and changes in teaching methods created some divisions within the school. But these divisions can be seen as the natural outgrowth of an evolving relationship between Russian scholars and the Soviet Union, and the contrasting viewpoints could be beneficial for students. Russian School students had much to learn from these two types of teachers, both native Russians and American professors. The American-born professors understood the difficulties faced by American students learning the language, while the native Russian professors could best teach the peculiarities of the language itself, because they had grown up in the culture and understood its nuances.



*Examples of Russian School Course Catalogues and textbooks
(On loan from NU Archives and Special Collections)*

The Symposium

The Russian School of Norwich University conducted an annual lecture series. This two or three-day event, known as the Russian School Symposium, consisted of lectures and presentations by Russian School faculty and scholars invited from other institutions. The Symposium brought world-renowned experts on Russian culture to Northfield. Many remember these presentations as some of the most intellectually stimulating events Norwich University ever offered. Each year the Symposium had a specific theme, often based on the work of a particular Russian author, poet or playwright. Over the years there were Symposia dedicated to Dostoyevsky, Turgenev, and Pushkin. There were also Symposia on specific themes such as *Contemporary Russian Literature Outside the USSR* and *One Thousand Years of Christianity Among the Eastern Slavs*.



The Slavic Festival and Russian Theater

Each year, the Russian School presented a Russian play and also a performance of music and dance from Russia and the Slavic countries of Eastern Europe. These performances drew large audiences from Norwich and surrounding communities. The Slavic Festival was usually held over two days on the stage in Dole Auditorium. The shows typically began with solemn Russian Orthodox religious music presented by the Russian choir, made up of Russian School students and faculty. The audience was asked to hold its applause, in respect for the sacred traditions of this music. The Russian choir would also sing works by Russian classical composers.

The performance then shifted to high-spirited Russian and Slavic folk songs and dances, energetically performed by the students and faculty costumed in traditional Russian folk dress. For several years in the 1990s, members of the Dmitri Pokrovsky Ensemble served as artists in residence for the summer session. Pokrovsky, working as both a musician and ethnographer, had collected and revived a “living library” of Russian and Slavic folk songs, long suppressed under the Soviet Union. He shared these through performances and workshops with Russian School students.



Slavic Festival performance, 1977



Theater production of the "Inspector General", 1985

Rehearsals for the Slavic Festival and Russian Theater performances got underway as soon as students arrived on campus. Indeed, many Russian School Students came to the school specifically to work with the dance, music and theater instructors. Many remarked that the instruction given during rehearsals, always in Russian, helped with learning pronunciation. A choir director noted that when singing, Norwich Russian School students betrayed no American accents, and could be taken for native Russians.

Bulat Okudzhava: Singing Poet

Bulat Okudzhava was born in Moscow in 1924. His father, once a high-ranking Communist official, was executed by Stalin's government, and his mother was imprisoned in the Gulags for eighteen years. Following service in the Soviet Army in World War II, Okudzhava worked as a school teacher and an editor, and also began to write his own fiction and poetry.

In the 1950s, he taught himself guitar and set his poems to music. He performed the songs for small groups of friends and people began to pass around homemade recordings. These amateur tape recordings were known as *magnitizdat* and copies soon spread throughout the Soviet Union. His style of music became known as "Guitar-Poetry," and he is often referred to as the "Soviet Bob Dylan". The songs weren't overtly political but the poetic honesty of his emotional lyrics was still a challenge to the official Soviet culture. With his great underground popularity, he paved the way for many other artists.



Bulat Okudzhava speaking with students, 1992

Bulat Okudzhava came to the Norwich University Russian School during the 1990 and 1992 sessions as an artist-in-residence. He shared his songs and poetry with students in classes and through performances on campus. He was awarded an honorary degree by the University in 1990. Norwich President W. Russell Todd noted that "In your songs, poetry and prose you penetrated the cover that for a long time hid the reality of Soviet life. You helped ordinary people express the hopes and dreams existing despite state pressure and interference."

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and His Visit to Norwich

Some have suggested that in 1975, at the height of the Cold War, the writer Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn was one of the most famous and recognizable people in the world. In July of that year he spent four days at Norwich University.

Who was Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and why was his visit so important?

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn fought in World War II as an artillery officer in the Red Army. In 1945, after making a derogatory reference about Soviet leader Joseph Stalin, he was arrested and served years in various prisons and forced labor camps, known as *Gulags*. His experiences in these harsh camps provided the basis for his novel One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1970. Solzhenitsyn continued to write secretly, and to smuggle his work out of the USSR for publication in the West. His most important work was The Gulag Archipelago, a massive history of the Soviet prison camp system.



*The Gulag Archipelago, signed by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, 1975
(on loan from NU Archives and Special Collections)*

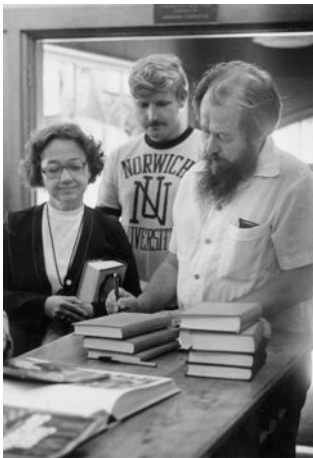
The Soviet authorities were furious at its publication, but since he had achieved world-wide fame, they felt they could not imprison him again. Instead, Solzhenitsyn was exiled from the Soviet Union in 1974. The whole world watched as he was deported to Western Europe, temporarily settling in Switzerland. Newspapers and magazines provided the latest updates on his situation and whereabouts. He became an international symbol of the oppression and censorship of the Soviet Union.

In 1975, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn planned a trip to the United States, yet wanted to avoid the constant media scrutiny of his life. He was seeking a quiet place to finish an article he was writing, and through contacts with Dr. Pervushin and other Russian School faculty, chose to come to Norwich. His visit was secretly arranged, and he spent four days on campus. In addition to writing, he observed Russian School classes, and spent time talking with students, discussing literature, politics, even rock music. The Russian School students re-staged the Slavic Festival performance for him, and Solzhenitsyn remarked "I am impressed with your efforts to preserve Russian culture without the Soviet imprint."



Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's tennis match at Norwich, 1975

When asked if there was anything else he would like to do while at Norwich, he replied he would like to learn to play tennis. Marion Hubiak, the Dean of Students of the Russian School, volleyed with Solzhenitsyn on the Norwich courts. Solzhenitsyn had given Norwich English professor George Turner permission to document his visit, as long as the press wasn't alerted until after he had left campus. After his departure, the photographs of Solzhenitsyn's tennis match were picked up by the Associated Press and accounts of the famous author's visit quickly spread to newspapers across the country. The University and Russian School offices were nearly overwhelmed with phone calls inquiring about Solzhenitsyn.



Librarian Ann Turner, Cadet Dennis Ryan, and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, 1975

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn must have been impressed with Vermont and his reception by the Norwich Russian School. In 1976, he purchased a home in Cavendish, Vermont. The remote property served as his family home for the next eighteen years. Solzhenitsyn closely guarded his privacy, and had almost no contact with the outside world. He wrote from 7 to 11 AM and from 12 to 5PM every day, and read all evening. However, his family continued to make trips to the Norwich Russian School. His three sons visited the school over the years and performed piano pieces and poetry in the Slavic Festivals. Solzhenitsyn's wife, Natalia, spoke to the Russian School on behalf of the Solzhenitsyn Foundation, through which proceeds from his books went to aid political prisoners in the Soviet Union. Other dissident writers, such as Aleksandr Ginzburg, came to stay with the Solzhenitsyn family in Vermont, and often visited the Russian School at Norwich.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's visit brought international attention to Norwich University, at a time when the writer was sought after worldwide as a symbol of resistance to the Soviet Union. It remains vitally important that he chose to come to Norwich, and not to other Russian programs such as Columbia University, Indiana University, or Middlebury College. It was the unique composition and approach of the faculty of the Norwich Russian School that drew him here and eventually encouraged him to settle in Vermont during his exile from the Soviet Union.

Norwich University and the History of Russia

Prior to the arrival of the Russian School, Norwich University had little direct connection to Russian culture but Norwich alumni have had periodic involvement with the history of both Russia and the Soviet Union. Consider the dramatic historical changes that swept Russia in the twentieth century through the framework of selected historical objects from the Sullivan Museum collection.

Tsarist Russia

Russian monarchs, the Tsars, had presided over Russia since the 1500s. The Russian Empire was officially founded in 1721 under Peter the Great. His military efforts expanded the territory of Russia and he implemented many political and technological innovations from Western Europe. By the early 1800s, Russia had become a major power in Europe. An early alumnus of Alden Partridge's *American Literary, Scientific and Military Academy*, (forerunner of Norwich University), Thomas Seymour (Class of 1828) served as United States minister to Russia during this period, from 1853-1858. Throughout the nineteenth century, the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian military supported the Tsar. The Imperial Russian Badge collection displayed in this exhibition commemorates many units of the Tsar's armed forces.

The Stearns-Goyette Collection of Imperial Russian Badges

Prior to the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, the reigning Tsars authorized the creation of numerous medals and decorations to honor service to the Russian Empire. Badges were given to commemorate regiments of the Tsar's military, as well as to acknowledge graduation from various schools and universities. Many badges celebrated the various service academies and cadet corps, while others acknowledged the close ties between the monarchy and the Russian Orthodox Church.

This collection of Imperial badges has a long and fascinating story. It was presented to Norwich University by Hazel Goyette in memory of her husband, Arthur Erland Goyette. The Goyettes were longtime friends of General I.D. White (NU Class of 1922). Goyette had received the collection of badges from Foster Waterman Stearns (1881-1956). Stearns had an extensive career as a scholar and statesman, and served as a member of Congress from New Hampshire. He had also been the State Librarian of Massachusetts, and worked for several important museums. His expertise led him to Rome, where he assisted in the restoration of the manuscript collections in the Vatican Library. He worked closely with Pope Pius XI (1857-1939), eventually becoming a member of the Pope's official staff. In recognition, Pope Pius XI presented Stearns with this collection of Russian badges. The Pope had personally collected the badges while he served as a Papal Legate in Poland shortly after World War I and the Russian Revolution.



*Imperial Russian Badges,
(Collection of SMHC)*



In 1980, the collection of Russian Medals was displayed in the Norwich University Library in Chaplin Hall. The Russian School faculty attended the reception, and some, such as Madame Wolkonsky, were able to retell stories of their close relatives who had served in the Tsar's forces.

*Reception in Chaplin Library, 1980
(left to right) Prof. Rodzianko, Prof. Kohler, Mrs. Ward, Prof. Wolkonsky)*

Communist Revolution and the Soviet Union

Class divisions between the nobility and landlords and the workers and peasants continued to simmer during the late 1800s and early 1900s. The deprivations of World War I added to the unrest. These divisions came to a head in 1917 and in the midst of general protests against the government Tsar Nicholas II abdicated the throne. Socialists had been gaining strength and the Bolsheviks, or radical Communists, favored complete economic and political revolution. In October 1917, the Bolsheviks, under Vladimir Lenin, sought to take power in Russia by force.



*TASS Poster No.891, 1944
(collection of SMHC)*

With the victory of the Bolsheviks, the Empire of Russia became the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Under Lenin, sweeping economic reforms were implemented. Vladimir Lenin was gradually forced from power by Joseph Stalin during the 1920s. Under Stalin, even more severe restructuring of Soviet society was enacted. Many millions of Russians died from starvation or relocation and imprisonment in labor camps. Despite this oppression, the United States viewed the Soviet Union as an ally against Nazi Germany during World War II and an uneasy alliance with the Soviets helped secure victory in Europe. The Soviet News Agency TASS produced thousands of propaganda posters during the War. The large poster in this exhibition titled "Novograd-Volynskyi is Ours!" celebrates Soviet victory over the Nazis on the frigid Eastern Front.

Several Norwich alumni were given citations by the Soviet Government. General Ernest Harmon worked closely with his counterparts in the Soviet Red Army during and after World War II. His American troops occupied a divided Czechoslovakia with the Soviets. Although nominally allies, they seemed to be wary of one another. General Harmon retained a souvenir of this time, a Soviet automatic pistol engraved with a dedication from Major General Baklanoff of the Red Army, "In Memory of Our Happy Meetings in Czechoslovakia, August 1945."



Soviet Pistol and Medals, c.1945 (collection of SMHC)

After World War II, the Soviet Union retained control of many of the countries of Eastern Europe, sealing them off behind the "Iron Curtain." This initiated the Cold War, the stand-off between the superpowers. Once the United States and the Soviet Union had developed nuclear weapons, the stakes were raised exponentially. It was in this climate that Dr. Poltoratzky founded the Institute of Critical Languages, the forerunner of the Norwich Russian School, in 1960.

Perestroika, Glasnost and the Collapse of the Soviet Union

The 1970s and 1980s saw a gradual loosening of the Soviet Union and diplomatic overtures were made to the West. A series of diplomatic summits led to nuclear disarmament treaties. Deborah Garretson, a student of Nicholas Pervushin and an instructor at the Norwich Russian School, was a translator for the START I and START II arms reduction treaties.

Mikhail Gorbachev's policies of *Perestroika* (Restructuring) and *Glasnost* (Openness) ushered in a period of increasing freedoms for the people of the USSR. These changes led to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The country reemerged as the Russian Federation. In the later 1990s, the militaries of the former adversaries developed renewed contacts, as evidenced by the joint peacekeeping force armband. General Gordon R. Sullivan (Class of 1959) made an official visit to Russia in 1993 during his time as Army Chief of Staff. His mementos include a set of Russian *matryoshka* stacking dolls.



Joint Peacekeeping Force Armband and Gen. Sullivan's Matryoshka Dolls
(collection of SMHC)

The Russian School's Place in Norwich University

When the Russian School arrived at Norwich from Windham College in 1968, the founding faculty members viewed the school as a somewhat independent entity. The faculty came from institutions other than Norwich, and the fact that the school convened only in the summer and conducted itself in a foreign language, all contributed to the feeling that the Russian School was somewhat distinct from the rest of the University. By the mid-1980s, reaccreditation committees cited the Russian School as operating outside of the administrative structure of the University, a possible liability for accreditation standards.

Despite these uncertainties, the University always benefitted from the prestigious academic reputation of the Russian School. The Russian School was internationally recognized as a leading place to learn Russian and its annual Symposia drew scholars from major institutions of higher education. The Russian School faculty tried to capitalize on this recognition but sometimes felt frustrated that the University did not devote more resources to growing and promoting this program.



Russian School tables in Harmon Dining Hall, 1982

From the beginning, the Russian School students and faculty and the Norwich cadets and administration did not quite know what to make of one another. Hearing about the Russian School, some cadets felt that a “Soviet invasion” was taking place on campus; however, the majority of the Russian School faculty was intensely anti-Communist and the cultural components of the Russian School aimed to promote traditional Russian culture, rather than Soviet sentiments. Nevertheless, some of the students from other universities were very politically leftist, and had their own preconceptions about Norwich and the Military College of Vermont. In the 1980s, a contingent of students from the University of California at Santa Cruz staged a protest against eating in the dining hall because they deemed the Norwich murals by William H. Earle to be too violent and militaristic. Similarly, some Russian School students flew Soviet flags from their dorm rooms overlooking the Upper Parade. For the most part, though, Russian School students and regular Norwich students on campus for summer school were intrigued by one another (and indeed, some romances developed).

From time to time, the Norwich administration made efforts to regularize the functioning of the Russian School to make it fit more clearly into the overall mission and framework of the University. During the years of the Cold War, some Norwich alumni wanted to shift the emphasis of the Russian School from cultural and language studies to a political science program, emphasizing the study of the Soviet Union. Despite these calls, the core program and faculty of the Russian School remained committed to language fluency and traditional Russian culture.

Under Mikhail Gorbachev's *Perestroika* and *Glasnost* programs, the Soviet Union began to open up and there seemed to be unlimited opportunities for American Russian speakers in industry, diplomacy and cultural exchange. In the late 1980s, Russian School enrollments soared. However, after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the market for Russian language programs like the one at Norwich changed rapidly.

During the Cold War, when American students could not easily travel to the Soviet Union, the best way to learn Russian language and culture was from Russian émigré faculty at a summer program like that at Norwich. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, students found it was less expensive to travel to Russia to study. There was also a decline in funding and government support for Russian Studies programs as intelligence and diplomatic resources were shifted elsewhere.

During the 1990s, enrollments at the Russian School continued to decline. There were debates within the Norwich administration over what to do with the Russian School program. Everyone acknowledged the prestige of the program and the fine public relations it had brought to the University over the years. However, the fact remained that the program was financially problematic and the University worried about subsidizing the Russian School at the expense of Norwich's other core academic programs. After forestalling the closure of the Russian School for several years, the decision was made to close the Russian School of Norwich University following the 2000 summer session, bringing its 32-year history at Norwich to an end.

Negotiations were made with Middlebury College to incorporate elements of the Norwich program into Middlebury's Russian School. Some Norwich Russian School teaching materials and the Slavic Festival costumes were transferred to Middlebury College where they remain in use to this day. Former faculty and students of the Norwich Russian School have gone on to teach in Russian and Slavic programs nationwide, and the records of the annual Norwich Symposia are still circulated and referenced by scholars today.



*Bound editions of Russian School Symposia
(Collection of SMHC and on loan from NU Archives and Special Collections)*

At Norwich, the legacy of the Russian School is perhaps most strongly felt in the continued interest in Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's visit in 1975. The impact of the Russian School, with its outward looking worldview, can also be felt in Norwich University's plan for the internationalization of the campus by its bicentennial in 2019. This initiative echoes many of the same sentiments voiced by the founders, faculty and students of the Norwich Russian School. It is important to speak the languages of other nations. By immersing oneself in the culture of another nation one can better understand the heart of the language. From 1968 to 2000, the Russian School of Norwich University worked toward this goal.

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Installation view of "Russian Only, Please", including video of 1994 Slavic Festival (collection of SMHC)

To view more Russian School photographs, please visit this
Norwich University Archives and Special Collections website:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/nuarchives/sets/72157629388835598/detail/>