



the
slavic scene

volume 29, fall 2018

Photo by Ashley Bigham

lsa.umich.edu/slavic

table of contents

Letter From The Chair	3
Highlights	4-5
Faculty Focus	6-7
Graduate Focus	8-9
Undergraduate Focus	10-11
In the Classroom	12-13
Staying Connected	14-15



letter from the chair



Mikhail Krutikov

Dear friends,

We have started the new academic year with solid enrollments in our language and culture classes, and I would like to thank our staff for their dedication and creativity in promoting our classes around campus! Our superb team of lecturers is working hard on developing new, technologically enhanced methodologies of language instruction supported by the generous New Initiatives/New Infrastructure grant from LSA. I am happy to welcome our new Assistant Professor, Ania Aizman, who has joined our department as a Postdoctoral Scholar in Michigan's Society of Fellows. This semester she is teaching a first-year seminar on the exciting topic "Radical Russia: Writers, Artists, Revolutionaries." We are also delighted to co-host, jointly with the Residential College, the prominent Moscow theater director Irina Khutsieva who is now rehearsing two plays, in Russian and in English, with enthusiastic teams of students. At our November colloquium, Mrs. Khutsieva shared her experience of running a small theater in Moscow.

In May, four of our Ph. D. students participated in a graduate workshop at the Russian Academy of National Economy and Public Administration (RANEPA)

in Moscow. The workshop program was designed by our Russian colleagues specifically to help our students navigate Russia's cultural space. Students learned about current research projects in their areas of interest, met with the prominent literary critic Galina Yuzefovich, visited museums, met curators and archivists, and visited the headquarters of the innovative web-based education project Arzamas. We look forward to developing our cooperation with RANEPA. Graduate student Michael Martin shares his experience on page 8.

Our fall schedule is full of exciting events. In October, we had a rare opportunity for discussion with Dubravka Ugrešić, a prominent Croatian writer and a scholar of Russian and comparative literature, about her new novel *Fox*. In November, Professor Sabine Koller from the University of Regensburg gave a lecture on Marc Chagall, the Jewish Renaissance and the Art of Painting. In December, our department will co-sponsor, jointly with CREES, a talk by another prominent scholar from Regensburg, Professor Ulf Brunnbauer, titled "Class, Culture, and the 'Gastarbeiters': Contested Meanings of Labor Migration in Socialist Yugoslavia." Our academic ties with the University of Regensburg are

strengthened by Professor Jindrich Toman who is spending his fall research leave at this premier center of Slavic studies in Germany. Professor Toman is finishing his book project on Jewish culture in Bohemia in the nineteenth century. By developing our international contacts with leading universities in Europe, we offer our undergraduate and graduate students great opportunities to learn about East and Central European cultures firsthand.

As part of the college-wide initiative to expand the diversity of our student body, and building on the success of our event last year, we organized another preview weekend event for prospective Ph. D. students. We invited outstanding undergraduate students in Slavic studies from across the U.S. to spend a few days in Ann Arbor and get a taste of graduate school. This year we joined forces with the Departments of Comparative Literature and Germanic Languages and Literatures. On our part, this effort was led by our new Director of Graduate Studies, Professor Benjamin Paloff.

Wishing you wonderful fall and winter seasons!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mikhail Krutikov".

highlights

Leaving a Lasting Legacy

By Alina Makin, lecturer, Residential College and Slavic Languages and Literatures



Above
Irina Khutsieva
Artist in Residence at the
Residential College

The two productions will be performed as one-act plays at the East Quad's Keene Theater on Saturday, December 8 (3-5 pm) & Sunday, December 9 (6-8 pm).

This term, Russian theatre director and acting pedagogue Irina Khutsieva is Artist in Residence at the Residential College (RC). Khutsieva, whose visit has been co-sponsored by the RC, the Slavic Department, the Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies (CREEES), and the Center for World Performance Studies, is staging two plays with U-M students, giving talks and workshops, and consulting with U-M instructors on the use of dramatic techniques in the language classroom.

Khutsieva has thirty years of experience in the Russian theatre, and has also worked in Germany and the United States. Her successful Chamber Theatre (Moscow, founded 2003) has presented a series of very well-received productions and has propelled a significant number of young actors to professional prominence. The Chamber Theatre has performed to critical acclaim at festivals in Germany, Poland, Holland, Finland, Austria, and Switzerland.

Khutsieva has worked at one of Russia's most distinguished theatrical academies, the Schepkin Theatrical Institute, and has an even higher qualification as a director of GITIS, the Russian Academy of Theatrical Art.

This semester, she is working with U-M students on two productions relating to Russian folk themes: a production in Russian based on motifs from traditional folk tales and a production in English based on motifs from the contemporary literary tales of the Petrozavodsk author Vasilii Firsov.

Twenty-two students are participating in Khutsieva's productions, twelve of them from the RC program, many of them Russian majors or minors, with a wide range of disciplines represented, including international studies, economics, public policy, and theatre, as well as Russian. All students have chosen to participate in both productions – with the Russianists not only working on their language skills in the Russian-language production,

but also benefiting from the confidence-giving experience of acting in English, while the non-Russianists are learning some Russian from their roles in the Russophone production.

Khutsieva, in addition to working on her two productions, gave a lecture on the contemporary Russian theatre for CREEES in October and two workshops on drama techniques in the language classroom. She is also a regular participant in the RC program's daily Russian Tables and weekly Russian Teas, has given guest lectures in Slavic Department courses, and has made visits to Russian-language classes.

Khutsieva's visit is expected to leave a lasting legacy among students of Russian and all members of the University community interested in the theatre in Russia, while providing U-M faculty, and Graduate Student Instructors the opportunity to expand their teaching skills through contact with a professional theatre pedagogue.

Right Photo
Irina Khutsieva with actors
from the Chamber Theater



faculty focus

Getting to Know Ania Aizman

By Ania Aizman, assistant professor



I am honored to be part of the Slavic Department — and grateful. The Michigan Society of Fellows gave me an opportunity to advance my research while teaching a small number of courses in the Slavic Department over the next three years. I am using my first semester at U-M to write about the archival research and interviews I conducted over the summer and to teach a first-year seminar. I am catching up on some translation projects, sending out an academic article and, after an inspiring and productive retreat with the Society of Fellows, starting to chart my book.

Developing my work in this supportive environment makes it feel like it's writing itself. I also have a sense of urgency and timeliness. The project on anarchism in Russian culture, coincides with a rising mainstream interest in anarchists (both positive and negative!) and with increased government reaction to anarchist organizing in Russia as in the United States. As I imagine it, my book would move from the late nineteenth century to the contemporary moment, contextualizing and historicizing it. Some of the stops (chapters) along the way include: Tolstoy's affinity to anarchism; the radical politics of Soviet-era absurdists; the similarities of horizontal undertakings in culture — for example, in independent theater networks — to anti-statist and mutual aid organizing. The premise for the book is that radical ideas did not simply evaporate when governments censored, criminalized, and purged them; rather, they seeped into (underground, informal, dissident) culture. By bridging the gaps between radical art, writing, and

radical politics, I want to make the case that anarchism is continuous. In my research this summer, I saw many manifestations of anarchist ideas among contemporary artists. My interviewees were quick to connect their anarchist practices to literary predecessors, in particular. This alone complicates our picture of anarchism ("equals chaos" or, alternatively, "violence").

In my teaching this semester, I share the broader context of my project — the history of political art and thought in Russia. I teach this first-year seminar, called "Radical Russia," from primary source documents: we start with the Emancipation Manifesto that freed the serfs, and end with the trial of Pussy Riot. The course is structured around famous manifestos, whether written by tsars, revolutionaries, or artists. I was especially interested to see students' sympathy toward tsarist-era revolutionaries (we read a chapter from Katerina Breshkovskaia's memoir), the students' reenactment of Futurist manifestos, and

their debate on Lenin's April Theses. In November, the students will write and present their own manifestos.

As I start to learn more about the vast array of departments and programs at the U-M, the Fellows' Society serves as a compass. So far, presenters in our colloquium have talked about the physics of galaxy formation, the destruction of urban villages in China, the search for new solar cells, and the influence of management theory on fiction. It's been an invaluable introduction to fascinating research happening across the university.

"Developing my work in this supportive environment makes it feel like it's writing itself."

Above Photo
Ania Aizman

Right Photo
The book cover of Mikhail Krutikov's new book

Tsvishn shures, a new book by Mikhail Krutikov in Yiddish

Mikhail Krutikov, Slavic chair and professor, now has a collection of Yiddish essays titled "Between Lines: Notes on Jewish Culture" published in Israel with

the Contemporary Yiddish Literature series. It includes a selection of forty short essays, selected from more than one thousand pieces which appeared over the past

twenty years in his column in *Forward*, the world's oldest Yiddish newspaper. The essays are grouped thematically into four parts: (Post) Soviet, Towns Big and

Small, World and Worldliness, and American. They include book reviews, reflections on Yiddish literature and culture, and new discoveries in the history of Yiddish literature.



graduate focus

Strengthening Our Research Interests

By Michael Martin, current Ph.D. student



This summer, my colleagues and I took part in a week-long workshop organized by the University of Michigan and the Russian Academy of National Economy and Public Administration in Moscow. Through this program, we were given the opportunity to meet with literary professionals, anthropologists, and other cultural experts from both the academic world and the private sector. The experience allowed us to further our own academic interests, explore areas which were outside of our fields, and foster professional connections between our university and various academic institutions in Russia.

For me, the highlights of the workshop were the opportunities we had to meet with prominent cultural institutions outside of the traditional university

setting. On our first day of the workshop, we met with Galina Yuzefovich, a prominent literary critic who currently writes a weekly column at the Russian news organization Meduza. Galina's lecture on contemporary Russian literature focused on notable post-Soviet authors as well as the literary market in Russia today. While she acknowledged the problems of studying contemporary literature, she also provided several ideas for approaching the field, including specific recommendations of authors and, more generally, suggesting we pay more attention to the popular literary market. As someone who has long been interested in exploring contemporary Russian writing, it was refreshing to talk with someone who was actively engaging in this area and was extremely familiar with the Russian literary world —



both in terms of what was being written and what people were actually reading.

Another high point of the workshop was a meeting with the online university Arzamas. Since starting as a podcast in the early 2010s, they have recently undergone a period of rapid expansion which has included branching out into a paid subscription service, launching a YouTube channel, and hosting live events in Moscow. I have been listening to Arzamas' audio lectures since I was an undergraduate student, and it was an honor to meet with them in person. Arzamas' work is fascinating from a professional standpoint, as the organization has essentially made its living by finding a way to bring academic lectures and materials to the public at large. To me, Arzamas stands as an example of how we

as scholars can convert our specialized knowledge into forms that are more accessible to a popular audience.

Through these meetings and other lectures we attended, the workshop provided us with numerous opportunities to explore many areas of the Russian academic world and build connections that will hopefully aid us as we continue our academic careers. As a whole, it was a very beneficial experience, and it helped me think about my future research interests and how I might incorporate other fields into my own studies.

Left Photo
Aleks Marciniak, Michael Martin, Sara Ruiz, and Grace Mahoney, RANEPА attendees

Right Photo
Michael and his colleagues attend a workshop in Russia

Translation Brings Opportunities

By Christopher Fort, current Ph.D. student

Slavic Department Ph.D. student Chris Fort attended an international conference in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, organized by the Uzbekistan Writers' Union in August 2018. He received the invitation due to his work translating Uzbek literature into English—his translation of Uzbek writer Abdulhamid Sulaymon o'g'li Cho'lpon's 1934 novel *Night and Day* will be released in January 2019—and spoke at the conference about his research on twentieth-century Uzbek literature. Apart from Chris, the invitees to the conference included other international translators from Uzbek and representatives from Writers' Unions of other former Soviet Central Asian republics (Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, and Kyrgyzstan).

The conference was the result of efforts by new Uzbek president Shavkat Mirziyoyev to reintroduce Uzbekistan



to the international economic, political, and cultural community after years of isolation under his predecessor Islam Karimov. In the last two years, Mirziyoyev has graced the pages of the *New York Times* thanks to his economic reforms, but he has also poured considerable resources into modernizing cultural production in Uzbekistan. The conference served as a chance to showcase the attention he has lavished on writers. As part of the conference proceedings, Chris received a tour of the new Writers' Union offices and

apartments. The conference was held at the newly constructed Alisher Navoiy Language and Literature University.

Alongside conference participants, Chris listened to the reading of the official letter sent from Mirziyoyev, simultaneously broadcast in English and Russian translation. The conference included extravagant meals with performances from state dance troupes and opera singers, over whom participants shouted as they toasted. The second day

included a visit to the ancient city of Samarqand for sight-seeing.

Chris's presentation went well, though, naturally, there were disagreements. Chris controversially suggested that the novel he translated, *Night and Day*, was not an anti-Stalinist allegory as most have read it but rather both an attempt to write Socialist Realism and a modernist parody of the literature of twentieth-century Islamic reformers.



Natalie McCauley

successfully defended and revised her dissertation on *Controlling the Uncontrollable: Navigating Subjectivity in the Perestroika and post-Soviet Prose of L.S. Petrushevskaya and L.E. Ulitskaya* in August. McCauley accepted a visiting assistant professor of Russian Studies position at the University of Richmond.

Above Photo
Christopher, middle second row

undergraduate student focus

Ukraine Lessons

By Suzanna Duba, International Studies & Information Major, Russian Minor ('20)

"I was amazed at the typical Ukrainian's passion as well as their helpfulness"

This summer, I spent ten weeks interning for the US Embassy in Kyiv, Ukraine. While I went with hopes of practicing my Russian language skills, I did not go to Russia, and yet I learned so much more.

Ukraine's present conflict with Russia was critical to my experience, and my impressions of an emerging democracy and proud, historic society. Ukrainians my own age were born in an independent Ukraine, to parents who lived in the USSR and witnessed its collapse. Similarly, these Ukrainians witnessed the recent, deadly revolution, EuroMaidan, on their capital's main square and live with a struggling economy, rampant corruption, and tragic fighting.

In the capital, most young people speak some English, many better than I do Russian or Ukrainian. They look to the West and want to study in and visit the US, UK, Canada, and Germany. They listen to American music (I went to an Imagine Dragons concert in their main stadium with my Ukrainian friend), wear American clothes (I have

never seen so many Yeezys at home), and eat American food (Domino's Pizza was across from my house, a reminder of Ann Arbor).

The people I met were friendly, energetic, and interesting individuals. I was amazed at the typical Ukrainian's passion as well as their helpfulness, and especially by my Ukrainian Embassy colleagues' desire to support reforms in Ukraine. They quickly made me part of their team, and I feel honored and lucky to have made such wonderful friends within such a talented group. Similarly, the friends I made outside the embassy inspired me with their sense of adventure and their artistry. They generously toured me around their homeland to chic galleries, hidden bars, and local hangouts, never shy about giving me a recommendation for the next day.

The significant amount of time spent abroad in a single country allowed me to explore extensively; I saw so much of Kyiv and visited other parts of the country as well. As a broke college student, the strength of the US dollar there

provided me opportunities to do much more than I might have elsewhere. I visited venues, museums, restaurants, and traveled to other cities for extremely modest prices. That was very influential on my ability to experience more of their culture, society, and various regions.

Practicing the language I've been studying here at U-M, experiencing true immersion, and feeling purpose in using it was wonderful. It was exciting and rewarding to finally be in the place that I have heard about for so long, to finally form my own opinions about the culture, politics, and people there, and to truly put my skills to use.

I am inexplicably grateful to Dr. William Siegel and Ms. Margaret Swaine, the International Institute, Program in International and Comparative Studies, Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies, and everyone in the Slavic Department for supporting my trip. I'm already searching for a chance to return to Ukraine!



Left Photo
Suzanna filming the Embassy's Ukrainian Independence Day video



Right Photo
Suzanna on Kyiv's main square, Maidan

"Practicing the language I've been studying here at U-M, experiencing true immersion, and feeling purpose in using it was wonderful."



Above Photo
Suzanna with Ukraine's "motherland" statue



Above Photo
Press team interns working Ambassador's July 4 reception

in the classroom

Reimagining Public Engagement

By Benjamin Paloff, associate professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures and Comparative Literature

In September and October of 2018, graduate students from several humanities programs, including Asian studies, classics, comparative literature, English, and Slavic, gathered for a mini-course on the non-academic applications of scholarly knowledge. Although students did read and discuss a small selection of texts about the divide between the “ivory tower” and the “real world,” this was not a typical graduate seminar. Since each student approached the course with the ambition of producing a public-facing project, we operated more as a workshop than a seminar, with the participants helping each other refine their sense of audience and develop practical paths toward implementing their vision.

We also formed a support group. With the many competing demands of graduate education and the constant pressure of having to think about one’s professional future, students often feel that their interest in public-

facing documents, whether artworks, demonstrations, or publications oriented toward a general audience, are undervalued or discouraged outright. This mini-course, entitled “Reimagining Public Engagement” and supported by the Rackham Graduate School as part of the Mellon Public Humanities Initiative, was specifically designed to assist students in thinking about the ways various publics engage with the products of scholarly research. By developing a broader sense of how intelligent non-specialists absorb and use the work that originates in the research university, students were able to conceptualize their own projects with greater precision and to imagine how such projects serve them in their intellectual development, wherever their career paths ultimately take them.

Navigating these questions productively demands that we learn to recognize the many ways that professional

academics contribute to popular discourses, as well as how those discourses are then fed back into scholarly inquiry. Accordingly, we explicitly rejected the popular term “alt-ac,” used to signify alternatives to an academic career. While it was a natural byproduct of our enterprise to examine how our skills and expertise could be applied outside of an academic setting, we were programmatically opposed to the notion that we ought to consider such applications as consolation prizes for those who do not land a tenure-track job. On the contrary, we quickly found that the notion that scholarly and public-facing projects cannot coexist within the same career, let alone amplify each other, is a myth, especially given the recent turn toward public engagement within the university. At least one consequence of our activity was that it gave all of us permission to pursue research directions and media that we already knew we were interested in.

This is the second time we have offered “Reimagining Public Engagement,” which reflects our department’s ongoing commitment to nurturing graduate students’ own interests and skill sets across disciplines, media, and discourses. By incubating exciting and original public-facing documents—an online game about the history of foot-binding in China; short documentary films about Syrian refugees in the United States; a collaborative translation of a novel that touches on the lead translator’s own family history—we are expanding our vision of what good humanities research can look like while also helping each other appreciate both the role our work can play in our lives and the life our work can have beyond us.

“At least one consequence of our activity was that it gave all of us permission to pursue research directions and media that we already knew we were interested in.”

Left Photo
Students discuss during “Reimagining Public Engagement”

Right Photo
Marija Rosic with her BCS Students



Slavic Language Program Curriculum Revision Project: Inclusive Teaching in Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian

By Svitlana Rogovyk, lecturer and language director, Slavic Languages and Literatures



Developing a supportive, caring, and respectful learning environment for students across five Slavic languages has become a core teaching philosophy for the University of Michigan Slavic Language Program. In June 2018, the team of seven language lecturers was awarded with an LSA DEI New Initiatives/New Infrastructure (NI-NI) grant to support our Slavic Language Program Collaborative Curriculum Revision Project. The project is focused on fostering students' foreign language experience and success through inclusive teaching practices and innovative teaching methods. Slavic Lecturers Marija Rosic, Nina Shkolnik, Svitlana Rogovyk, Ewa Pasek, Eugene Bondarenko, Alina Makin, and Jodi Greig have been working on revision and modernization of their current course curricula in Bosnian/ Croatian/Serbian (BCS), Russian, Ukrainian, Polish, and Czech with focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion in teaching and

learning through the creative use of digital resources, experiential learning methods, and instructional technologies. The programs' diverse curricula will allow our students, not only to effectively work on developing their foreign language proficiency, but also to feel "at home" while learning a new language and culture in every one of our big and small language classrooms.

For example, in Bosnian/ Croatian/Serbian language curricula, Marija Rosic has been working on implementing oral history interviews conducted by her second-year language students. The main purpose of this project called Inclusive Teaching in Bosnian/ Croatian/ Serbian: "Life in Former Yugoslavia" (The Time before the War) is to collect narratives that focus on similarities between different ethnic and religious groups of former Yugoslavia. Because BCS classes are attended by

students of different heritage and with diverse cultural background the idea has been actively accepted by all students and connects the students with their heritage as they are developing listening and communication skills in a formal register through the discourse of the interview. Marija Rosic indicates that the use of oral history in her class is suggested as an innovative teaching technique which could be used in any language class with both heritage and traditional foreign language learners.

Beginning in September, students conducted a series of short interviews with people who were born in former Yugoslavia, and currently live in the Detroit metropolitan area. According to the suggested methodology, students identified BCS community members who are willing to share their experiences, design a set of questions and conduct at least five interviews, and make interview transcriptions.

Vocabulary, grammar, reading, and listening comprehension activities based on the interviews will be designed and implemented by the instructor. Canvas is used as a main platform for this project.

With support of Philomena Meechan (LRC), Kush Patel (Digital Pedagogy Librarian), and Edras Rodrigues-Torres (Resident Librarian for International Study), Marija Rosic was able to provide students with training in pre-interview research and preparatory work in oral history process and interviewing protocols. Formal assessment of the outcomes of this project will be done at the end of the semester and will be presented during the Slavic Language Pedagogy Round Table discussion in January 2019 along with other participants of the Slavic Language Program Collaborative Curriculum Revision Project.

staying connected

Sent to Siberia

By Isabelle Stamler-Goody, A.B. *Russian Language and Culture and Screen Arts and Culture, 2014*



Much like the great Dostoevsky, in September of 2016 I was sent to Omsk, Russia. I was sent by Fulbright to teach English at Omsk State Pedagogical University. I also had the opportunity to continue my Russian studies, travel around the country, work in schools, meet internationals, and talk about my culture. Yes Russia is cold, and sometimes gray, but in Omsk there are many splashes of color—which serve as inspiration for Omsk artistic group JVCR. Prospect Lenina, the main street, is a kind of mini Saint Petersburg with wonderful shops, cafes, restaurants, bars, and parks. In the city center you can easily see the impact of globalization; there is a Subway (sandwiches) and shops like New Balance and Timberland. If you walk 20 minutes from the center, you will see old wooden

houses called *izbi*. Walking throughout the city, you can see great diversity in architecture: Soviet, pre-Soviet, European, modern, contemporary, etc.. Many Omskovites don't love Omsk but they make the most of this city on the Om river.

As Fulbright is a program funded by the U.S. government, and I was sent to work in Russia, the term “soft power?” might come to mind. I was not a spy; I was an English teacher that could discuss important moments in American history and culture. As a native speaker, I was a huge asset to my students' English language studies. I could show Russians that I appreciate their culture, like many Americans do, and am critical of my own, much like Russians happen to be. In that case we are more similar than different.

Like a spy, however, I can report my observations about Russian people to my fellow Americans. Many have heard that Russians are corrupt, cold, and drink too much vodka. The news focuses on Russia's involvement in the current administration and the election, exacerbating negative images, leaving you with the impression that Russia is unsafe; however, I always felt completely safe in Russia. In Omsk I was surrounded by generous, polite, open-hearted, and curious people. Not always sharing the same views, I enjoyed searching for common ground and became a great listener.

I'm not saying you should take the news with as many grains of salt as our current president does, but, when it comes to Russia, try to imagine the people: sincere, hospitable,

and smiling citizens. Russians ask how you are and really want to know the answer. They ask you if you're cold, maybe a little too often. They are open and honest, like a best friend would be. Of course all Russians are very different from each other, however, it is clear that the culture in Omsk highly values love and honesty. I know the compassion, generosity, and curiosity of the Omskovites rubbed off on me, allowing me to return to America with a more Siberian heart.

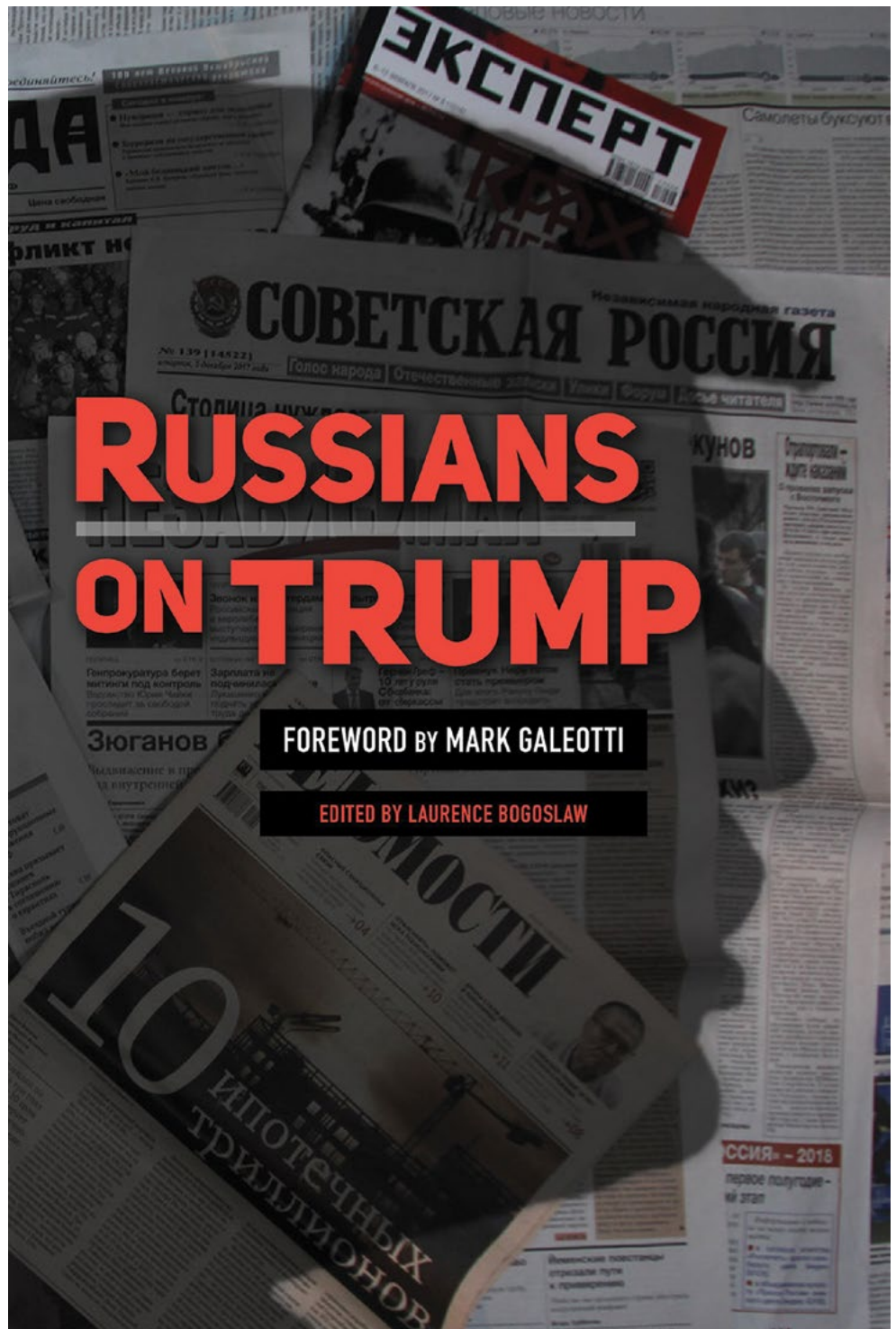
Top Photo
Isabelle Stamler-Goody, right,
and friends skiing in Russia

Russians on Trump: Press Coverage and Commentary

Courtesy of Amazon.com

What do the Russians really think of Donald Trump? This book tells you that and more. Packed with news, analysis and commentary about the 45th President from the Russian perspective, *Russians on Trump* is a must-have for anyone wanting the complete picture of Donald Trump and the Russians. Some of the stories you will find in this volume include: "How Russia Spooked the World With Hackers and Prostitutes"; "Spying on Uncle Sam"; "How the New Cold War Is Getting Out of Control"; and "One Hack Too Far."

The editor of this book, Laurence Bogoslaw, is a 1995 Ph.D. graduate from the Slavic Department at the University of Michigan. Larry is the Chief Editor and Publishing Director of East View Press. Congratulations on the publication of such an important and timely book! More details about Larry's work in publishing and a review of the book will be provided in the next edition of the Slavic Scene Newsletter.



Right Photo
Russians On Trump
Book Cover. Courtesy of
EastViewPress.com

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