

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SOVIET AND EAST EUROPEAN RESEARCH

TITLE: Abstracts of Soviet and East European  
Emigre Periodical Literature

AUTHOR: Dr. Leonid Khotin

CONTRACTOR: The Regents of the University of California

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Professor Robert P. Hughes

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## Final Report

ASEEPL has been published since the Fall 1981. The purpose of the journal has been to familiarize specialists studying the contemporary politics, economics, art, literature, and history of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe with materials published in the pages of the émigré periodical press.

The changes occurring presently in the Soviet Union and East European countries, and especially those changes which may yet occur, are transforming émigré periodicals into a bridge between the West and the East. In recent years the process of transformation of "samizdat" into "tamizdat" has accelerated, as materials make their way to the West more quickly and are promptly printed in the émigré press. The change in the attitude of the Soviet Union toward the emigration, including the émigré press, is noticeable in numerous publications of the Soviet press, which is showing unprecedented interest in this topic.

In 1981, the Soviet press treated all Soviet émigrés, including famous writers, artists, and scholars, as traitors. Now, as you may be aware, there is an émigré-mania in the Soviet Union. Many positive reviews have appeared lately on Soviet émigré publications and an article about Russian émigré periodicals and books, written by the American scholar David Arans has been published in the journal Sovetskaia bibliografiia (2, 1990). In this article the author mentioned our journal as the principal source of information on current émigré periodicals. At this point, several Soviet libraries, including the Lenin State Library, subscribe to our publication.

In turn, the émigré press is concentrating more and more on analyzing materials from the "liberated" Soviet press. One may concur with the author who wrote in the émigré journal Vremia i my, "Russian periodicals on both sides of (Moscow's) Sheremet'ev Airport are rapidly converging." (90, 1986, p.171) ASEEPL can and must play a role in this process, above all as a bibliographical reference tool for specialists.

During its ten years of existence ASEEPL has played an enormous role in the preservation of the cultural achievements of the Russian diaspora. Today this role grows more and more evident. ASEEPL editor Leonid Khotin presented a report on the journal's activity to the Organizational Committee of the Congress of Compatriots, which is planning to invite representatives of all waves of the emigration. The Congress is scheduled to meet in Moscow in the Fall 1991. It is to be conducted under the slogan "Cultural, spiritual, and economic resurgence of Russia". At the urging of the Organizational Committee's chairman, deputy of the Russian Federation Supreme Council Mikhail Tolstoy (grandson of the well known Russian writer Aleksei Tolstoy who returned to the USSR from emigration), currently volume I, issues 1-4, 1981, of ASEEPL is being published in Russian in Moscow. Also, on the basis of this Organizational Committee, a special committee for ties with the Russian émigré community is currently being formed. This was recently reported by Boris Yeltsin in a special address to compatriots (Dec. 24, 1990).

Over the course of these 10 years ASEEPL has prepared the ground for the return to the Soviet Union, and above all to Russia, of the entire enormous cultural and spiritual legacy accumulated by several generations and waves of the emigration. Thus, even as it has continued to fulfill its function of a reference tool for Western scholars of the Soviet Union, ASEEPL has also begun to play an active role in the spiritual and cultural resurgence of Russia.

We believe that the role of the émigré press on the whole as an independent information source will continue to increase in the near future. The fantastic rise in emigration to Israel is already providing and will continue to provide a great deal of valuable information through the channels of Russian-language periodicals in Israel. This information is hard to trace because of the short-lived nature of many such periodicals. There is a growing flow of materials from the Soviet Union which, despite glasnost, cannot be published in the USSR. A couple of examples should suffice here. In her article on Nagorny-Karabakh "Blood continues to spill" (Aug. 31, 1990, Russkaia mys') Yelena Bonner writes, "Just as two and half years ago it was impossible to understand anything from the reports in the Soviet press, so today it is still..." Another example follows. Nine Kemerovo college social science professors openly spoke out

against the party leadership of the Kemerovo province in defense of miners. In November 1989 they sent a letter to the local newspaper Kuzbass, which did not publish it. It did not see print until July 1990, in the same émigré newspaper Russkaia mysl'. The number of examples cited here could easily be increased to several hundred. At the same time there has been a drastic increase in the number of full-time correspondents of émigré publications in the USSR, Panorama, Strana i mir, Novoe russkoe slovo, Nasha strana (Argentina), and many others.

Recent developments in the Soviet Union testify to the fact that most likely glasnost is facing a serious menace. It is possible that there will be no direct repressions, but it is still very easy for reactionaries to hamper certain publications by creating difficulties with paper, deliveries, etc. As we have seen, the very first repressive measures were undertaken specifically against the media: the takeover of a publishing house in Riga, bans of the broadcasts of the TV program "Vzgliad" (Glance), etc. However, in our estimation it is much less probable that the KGB will sharply limit access to émigré literature in the Soviet Union. First of all, virtually everyone, democrats, conservatives, and even many, if not all, reactionaries agree that ties with the West should be cultivated, not curtailed. Second, it is much more effective to limit various popular democratic publications, TV broadcasts, etc. because their audience is numbered in millions, whereas the readership of émigré publications is still quite limited, even though it is steadily growing.

The grant we received from the National Council for Soviet and East European Research has significantly helped promote the work of the journal. As a result of this grant we have been able to keep highly qualified abstractors and translators and, on the whole, raise the requirements for these jobs. Four journalists well known in the Russian emigration have joined our permanent staff as abstractors: Ye. Gessen (Boston), B. Vail' (Copenhagen), D. Shturman (Jerusalem), and M. Lemkhin (San Francisco). One of our English editors, J. Weeks, became a Professor of Russian Literature at Amherst College, and has left our staff. Another English editor, R. Miller, got a permanent job at Yale University Press and is continuing to do some work for us.

As before, the problem of subscriptions remains a sore spot for us. On the one hand, it is a favorable sign that we have not lost a single subscriber and that we have enjoyed a very modest increase in the number of subscriptions, not only from American libraries, but from European and Asian ones, as well. On the other hand, we must admit that we are still quite far from reaching the stage where subscriptions completely cover the necessary expenses of publishing the journal.

In order to increase subscription we have paid for advertising for the past two years in the AAASS, signed a contract for reciprocal advertising with the Ardis publishing house and the magazine Libraries and Culture, and also signed a contract with the publisher Charles Schlack who is advertising ASEEPL in his magazines. However, even though the subscription is not falling, its increase has been painfully slow and as yet utterly insufficient. As the grant from the National Council for Soviet and East European Research had expired, we sent copies of ASEEPL to a number of federal organizations from a list supplied by the National Council for Soviet and East European Research. We have received a number of positive responses to our questionnaire (they are included in this report), yet we must sadly report that despite their interest they failed to subscribe to ASEEPL, with the sole exception of the Naval War College Library.

### Our Plans

Until recently we were convinced that we will be forced to shut down the journal in May 1991. At this point it would be relevant to note that the production cost of the journal with minimum labor compensation is \$27,500. And, keep in mind that the cost of a page of translation from Russian to English varies from \$15 to \$40, while we have been paying \$6/page. These \$27,500 do not include the compensation of the editor or the managing editor, not to mention the publication of an annual book review supplement which has already been issued three times. Subscription fees add up to \$6,200. Thus, financial circumstances had forced the publishers to shut down a publication which, as we have demonstrated above, plays an important role both in the West and in the Soviet Union.

Several publishing houses in Moscow have offered to publish ASEEPL in Russian. We contacted a number of our subscribers in the West and concluded that most likely our subscription will not decrease because of a shift to Russian. However, moving the journal to Moscow is not a simple task:

- 1) Delivery of émigré journals and newspapers to Moscow is still irregular;
- 2) Abstracting of émigré periodicals necessarily involves profound knowledge of the cultural and political life of the emigration, as well as at least an elementary comprehension of life in the West;
- 3) Our experience in working on the Abstracts of Soviet Social Science has convinced us that it is impossible to maintain an even, informative, and objective approach to the writing of abstracts in Moscow and that this task requires an editor with experience in work of this sort in the West. In other words, during the transition period (which we estimate will last around a year) it will still be necessary to use the services of our abstractors and editors. Nevertheless, the expenses of the journal will considerably decrease because there will be no need to pay for translators or for printing costs. As you can see then, the situation is rather unclear at this time.

In conclusion, we would like once again to express our gratitude to the National Council for Soviet and East European Research, whose support allowed ASEEPL to survive until a time when it has actually become possible to consider publishing a journal on émigré literature right in the capital of the Soviet Empire.

Thanks to the support of the funds provided by the National Council for Soviet and East European Research, we were able to publish eight issues of the journal containing 5,569 items of information on the Soviet Union and East European countries, selected and summarized from the contents of 76 of the most informative émigré periodicals in nine countries of a wide geographical spectrum. It also made it possible for us to maintain bibliographical control over more than 100 émigré periodicals throughout the world.