

The Pushkin Club in London

The Pushkin Club was established in 1953 by Maria Kullman and her brother and sister-in-law, Nicholas and Militsa Zernov, at 24 Kensington Park Gardens as a non-profit-making house for students and academics of all nationalities. In addition to providing lodgings, the house ran a program of recitals and lectures. In 1958 the Club moved to its present location at 46 Ladbroke Grove.

The list of speakers the Club attracted over the years includes many brilliant names. The Very Reverend Metropolitan Anthony Bloom, Sir Isaiah Berlin, and Dame Elizabeth Hill are among those who have always had a connection with the Club and have spoken on many occasions. In 1955 Tamara Karsavina spoke of her life in ballet; the following year Edward Crankshaw talked of the Soviet Union in the aftermath of the 20th Party Congress. Talks were given by Dame Marie Rambert, Dr. Aaron Steinberg, Dr. Georgi Adamovich, Professor Konovalov, Alexandra Wexler, and Dr. Nikolai Andreev.

Katerina Kornakova, once a favorite pupil of Stansilavsky, gave a breath-taking performance of "Netochka Nezvanova" only months before her death. Oda Slobodskaia used to give song recitals. Mstislav Dobujinsky, one of the last surviving members of *Mir Iskusstva*, held more than one exhibition in the Club. Among other exhibitions was one of paintings and lithographs by Leonid Pasternak.

In 1960 Konstantin Fedin and Alexander Tvardovsky spoke at the Pushkin Club; among the audience was Baron Alexander Meyendorff, aged over 90. Perhaps only at the Pushkin Club was it possible for three such different figures to engage in public discussion. Twenty-seven years later the entire ground floor of Pushkin House was again filled to capacity for an evening of poetry reading; amongst the readers was Irina Ratushinskaia, who had arrived in London only a few days previously.

Now the Pushkin Club maintains its program of lectures, recitals, and poetry readings, and, in various ways, responds to the new situation of the 1990s.

Reported by Dr. Jonathan Sutton, University of Leeds