Obituary

Leonid Mikhailovich Goryushkin (1927–1999)

An appreciation by Dr Alan Wood, University of Lancaster, UK

After a long and serious illness, the celebrated Russian historian of Siberia, Leonid Mikhailovich Goryushkin, died on 26 September 1999 at the age of 71 in Novosibirsk. At the time of his death, he was the first Director of the newly-formed Institute of History at the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences (SO RAN), previously part of the Institute of History, Philology and Philosophy of the Soviet Academy of Sciences (SO AN SSSR) where he had worked for thirty-six years.

Leonid Goryushkin was born on 21 November 1927 in the village of Medvedsk, Cherepansk *raion*, Novosibirsk *oblast'*, one of seven children. His peasant parents, Mikhail Nikitich and Darya Fominichna, had emigrated from Orlovsk province to Siberia in 1925. Mikhail Nikitich, who worked as a store-keeper in the village *artel*, was 'illegally repressed' during Stalin's terror, and posthumously rehabilitated in 1954. His mother, a *kolkhoznitsa*, had already died, in 1951. The family lived in very poor circumstances, and even while a schoolboy the young Lyona began to work on the collective farm. From 1941 to 1945, during the Great Patriotic War, he was ganger of a wagon-train making state grain deliveries. After finishing secondary school in 1945 he was drafted into the army and sent to the Kemerovo Military School, but was demobilised in 1946 after a short illness. He then enrolled in the Faculty of History and Philology at the University of Tomsk from where he graduated in 1951. Between 1951 and 1958 Goryushkin taught in various institutions of higher education in Tomsk, and also became first secretary of the *gorkom* of the town's *komsomol*. During these years he already displayed the same personal and academic qualities that were to distinguish his later career: an enormous capacity for work, scholarly acumen, great organizing ability, full participation in social activities, scrupulous attention to detail, and strict self-discipline, which he also expected of others working with, or under, him.

After completing postgraduate studies at Tomsk University, he worked for a while in the Institute of Economics and Organization of Industrial Production, before finally joining the Institute of History, Philology and Philosophy, SO AN SSSR, at Akademgorodok, Novosibirsk, where he spent the rest of his life. He received his Candidate's degree in 1964, and his Doctorate – with distinction – in 1975. As well as his work at the Academy, he also taught at Novosibirsk State University, rising from teaching assistant to full Professor and Head of Department.

Evidence of Goryushkin's expansive energy and erudition is provided in a bibliography of his collected works which appeared in 1997 to mark his seventieth birthday.¹ In it are listed 439 published scholarly works, including sixteen personally authored monographs, seventeen co-authored books, and eight collectively authored works. In addition are scores of scholarly articles, chapters in anthologies, brochures, pamphlets, and edited collections to which he also contributed. Taken together, they indicate the phenomenal breadth of his scholarship, and cover (by Cyrillic initial lettering of subject matter) almost the entire *azbuka* of Siberian historical studies, from *Agrarnaia istoriia* to *Yakutskaiia politicheskaiia ssylka*. Probably his major contribution, maybe stemming from his own peasant roots, was his work on the agrarian history of Siberia, from the mid-nineteenth century to the most recent times. One of the distinguishing features of his scholarly approach was that, despite having been educated within the limits of orthodox Soviet methodology, he looked as far as was possible beyond those ideological borders and brought a freshness and openness of mind to his studies, and encouraged others to do the same. In 1970, for instance, eschewing established formulae, he initiated a Union-wide discussion on various forms of agrarian-capitalist relationships and encouraged debate on the many-sidedness and mosaic nature of the rural economy, for which he received a Party reprimand. Official disapproval notwithstanding, he continued to develop a number of new approaches to the complex nature of the economy, the peculiarities of the Russian borderlands and colonies, the role of foreign capital, peasant psychology, and many other areas. But apart from the agrarian history of Siberia, Goryushkin's interests also included historiography, source materials on peasant movements, the scientific and intellectual history of Siberia, urban history, demography, the revolutionary movement, and the history of Siberian exile – on all of which he wrote copiously. His scholarship was recognised not only in Russia, where he was elected Corresponding Member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences in 1990, but also abroad, where his works were widely reviewed, and where he appeared at a number of international conferences, for example in China, Japan, Canada and the UK.

Apart from his actual academic publications, Goryushkin was also a great teacher and organiser. He sat on many influential committees, editorial boards, local and national associations, and was the driving force behind a whole range of conferences, collective publications, symposia and workshops. He was also responsible for initiating important fund-raising activities, particularly in his last position as Director of the Novosibirsk Institute of History, 40 per cent of whose funding at the time of his death came from outside commercial sources or foundations. At Novosibirsk University he was regarded as a talented teacher, always responsive to the needs of his students, a great inspiration, but always an exacting supervisor. He was personally responsible for the academic supervision of around one hundred diploma students, more than thirty Candidates of Science, and four Doctors of Historical Science. He also received a large number of distinguished awards, medals, certificates and other accolades for his acclaimed pedagogical work. Goryushkin was also active in his local community,

and never stinted himself in encouraging the work of various cultural associations in Novosibirsk and elsewhere in Western Siberia.

I myself first met Leonid Mikhailovich during my first visit to Novosibirsk in 1983. At a meeting with him and Academician A. P. Okladnikov, I was immediately impressed with the seriousness, warmth and enthusiasm with which he encouraged my early researches on the Siberian criminal exile system, and struck up with him – despite our age difference – both a personal friendship and an academic relationship which continued until his passing. I was more than once a personal guest in his own home, where I was overwhelmed by the more than generous hospitality provided by him and his wife, Irina Alekseevna. I was regaled with endless tales of Siberian popular life, the work of the Institute, historical titbits, guided tours of his voluminous personal library, anecdotes, a flute recital by his niece, traditional Siberian fare and liberal libations of vodka, of which he himself drank very little. He was, though, insistent that the most important thing was *work*: ‘*Rabotat*’, *Alan, nado vseгда rabotat*’?, he would twinklingly admonish, if I appeared on occasions to be rather less than assiduous. On one of my later visits to Akademgorodok, he sent apologies for his absence for a few days – he was on a visit to Harbin – but provided me with a research assistant, and had us both packed off to Barnaul where he had made sure in advance that the historical archive of the Altai region should be put at my disposal – much to the consternation of the archivist who had never before had a westerner penetrate her domain. I was warmly welcomed and entertained by local academics and librarians, but all the time I was there I kept on hearing those words – ‘*Rabotat*’, *Alan, nado rabotat*’?

I was glad to have been able to reciprocate his hospitality by inviting him to a conference of the British Universities Siberian Studies Seminar, held in Glasgow in 1989. There, too, he flung himself with his usual gusto into both the academic work and social activity of the conference, particularly enjoying a visit to Rabbie Burns’s cottage and the Johnny Walker whisky blending plant in Kilmarnock. It was also his suggestion that an academic exchange programme be set up between the University of Novosibirsk and my own University at Lancaster. This led to a further trip to Novosibirsk, followed by a reciprocal visit by Leonid Mikhailovich and two of his distinguished colleagues to the UK in 1993. Before we travelled north, I met them in London, where, among other diversions, we were entertained to lunch in the Houses of Parliament by my local MP. Leonid Mikhailovich was absolutely fascinated by the feudal splendour of the rituals he witnessed, and kept sighing to himself, ‘*Traditsiia, traditsiia, aakh, traditsiia!*’ Most memorably, however, while watching the antics of our politicians from the Sergeant-at-Arms box during Prime Minister’s question time, he almost collapsed in paroxysms of barely suppressed laughter. The immediate cause of his mirth was apparently my explanation of the tradition that all MPs, when speaking, solemnly address each other as ‘Honourable Member’, which I duly translated as ‘*Pochëtnyi chlen*’. (I think it must have been the *double entendre* that did it.)

I never saw Leonid Mikhailovich again after his visit to Lancaster, but we kept

regularly in touch until the end. Indeed, his last letter to me was written from his hospital bed, a letter in which, apart from the business and the felicitations, there was the usual imperative infinitive – ‘to work!’ At the time of his death his own published output probably numbered over 450 items, to which the editors of *Sibirica* are proud here to add what was one of his last articles, as a tribute to his life, his memory, and, of course, his work.

Note

- 1 Nozdrin, G. A. and Goryushkina, I. A. (eds) *Goryushkin Leonid Mikhailovich: Bibliografiia nauchnykh trudov* (Izdatel'stvo SO RAN, Novosibirsk, 1997).