

# CyrTUG '94

— and some more —

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### *Russian T<sub>E</sub>X tour*

## Introduction

CyrTUG<sup>1</sup> invited me again to participate in their annual meeting. There was more to that. Kazan (Renat and Sergej) and St Petersburg (Yuri and Olga) urged me to visit their towns too and to lecture about T<sub>E</sub>X. It promised to become a real Russian T<sub>E</sub>X tour.

A lot of details had to be fixed and dangers to be circumvented. The visa came off in time and I definitely felt at ease when Irina and Sergej offered to host me again at Moscow.

The trip was a bit more complicated than last year. Now I drove to Warsaw by car, and from there by train (The Polonez) to Moscow. My Polish friends (met at BachoT<sub>E</sub>X '94) turned out to be indispensable. The idea was that on my way back I could pass by the EuroT<sub>E</sub>X '94 meeting at Gdansk.

On Saturday 3 September my hosts Irina & Sergej Gorbunovi welcomed me into Moscow, this time at the Belarus station. The weather was fine again. The city holiday weekend invited us into the Sokolniki park to enjoy various exhibitions, especially the one devoted to virtual reality. Most of the park was in dinosauris mode imported straight from the USA.

Later Sergej showed me around in the house of the press, where he has one of his two jobs as designer.<sup>2</sup> In his office Macintoshes are used with big screens, such that two facing pages can be seen on the screen simultaneously. The many colour printing machines were impressive. The newspaper industry is upcoming, especially those newspapers which contain a lot of advertisements. In the old days people informed each other when something special was on sale. Because of the cash-and-carry shopping Russian people developed all kinds of tricks to ascertain quality. CDs seen through the light of a lamp must yield a nice regular wire! 4AllT<sub>E</sub>X passed of course the test. We also went to the Zoo. The news in there was the Tset-tset bird, after which

tap-dancing in Russia is named. Much activity in Moscow. Many things are under reconstruction. The smell of the town is typical Moscovite.

## 1 Conference at Dubna

The conference was attended by some 60 members and essentially about the experience of using T<sub>E</sub>X. We had mostly a one-stream reports schedule about the usual things: fonts, hyphenation, and ligatures. Michel Goossens was there to report about his work on L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X2<sub>ε</sub> and the use of colours. He also told about TUG '94 at Santa Barbara. Attention was paid to (L<sup>A</sup>)T<sub>E</sub>X and PostScript, next to moving to UNIX platforms. User reports came from Dubna, Moscow State University, and the people at the Academy of Sciences. Irina detailed with the submission process of camera ready copy to MIR. I presented 'BLUe's Format,' and had my tutorial about Manmac BLUes. Like last year CyrTUG '94 attendees were the first to hear about my latest work. The papers were well-received, although the main interest was towards L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X2<sub>ε</sub> developments, which is not much of a surprise.

Suited to the occasion was the visit to the Publishing Department of the Dubna institute.

At the Dubna JINR<sup>3</sup> the scientists use (L<sup>A</sup>)T<sub>E</sub>X for submissions to journals, while the Publishing Department uses Ventura. The cooperation of the Dubna Publishing Department with CyrTUG is emerging and promising.

Courses were run in parallel: a L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X course for beginners, a L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X2<sub>ε</sub> course, a Manmac BLUes workshop, and a computer room for those who just liked to demo, and to discuss (L<sup>A</sup>)T<sub>E</sub>X matters, or to exchange software.

The attendees were less eager for new software compared to last year. There was also a Birds-of-a-Feather session.

The equipment consisted of some 386-based PCs with emT<sub>E</sub>X and A<sub>M</sub>S-T<sub>E</sub>X on it as basis. Overhead projectors supported the lectures. However, nearly all of the

<sup>1</sup>The Russian T<sub>E</sub>X Users Group.

<sup>2</sup>Because of his 'job rotation' he learns on the fly, and comes into contact with many advanced software, for example CorelDraw and QuarkXpress. Very common in Russia is the Norton commander.

<sup>3</sup>Joint Institute of Nuclear Research.

lectures were in Russian. Most of what I know about the meeting reports was prompted to me by Renat Zagretdinov.

The reading table contained many nice contributions: the GUTenberg colour issue, some L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X introductions in Russian, the L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X<sub>2</sub><sub>ε</sub> companion, of course the T<sub>E</sub>Xbook in Russian, and like last year an introduction to PostScript, also in Russian, next to NTG's 4AllT<sub>E</sub>X CD-ROM.

The conference banquet (better known as 'towaritzeski oozin') had as usual a cosy Russian atmosphere. Many a toast was given, for example one to the health of Don Knuth and traditionally to the Ladies present. I toasted on the friendship of CyrTUG and NTG and the maturity of CyrTUG. This time I drank friendship with at least three Olgas. After dinner we had our Russian round dance and Irina 'Balerina' and I let ourselves go into a Wolga ballet.

The Wolga and Dubna here are beautiful. More of the Wolga was still to come at Kazan.

## 2 The Tatarstan

Next was Kazan. The train leaves at 6 PM, meaning that an 'oozin' had to be enjoyed on the train as well as a night's sleep. The Tatarstan as was said by Renat is the best train to be found in all Russia, and indeed that is true. The curtains, the blankets and everything was well-maintained. Sergej, Renat, Marina and me enjoyed it very much. A little talking and a bite now and then. The 'guest' in our compartment, Yakowlef a musician, joined the party by offering a bottle of champagne to finish the meal. 'Otsin priatne,' very pleasant indeed.

The Wolga was overwhelming here. No time of yet for a boat trip.

First Sergej and Tania showed me around. The most pleasant was just the walking together and chatting. Of course I liked the museum with some Tartan art. Kazan means Wolga and Tartar culture to me now.

Renat showed me around in the University Museum and that was impressive. The best University museum I have ever paid a visit. The big surprise was that Lobachevski worked here for the better part of his life. His lecture rooms are still there and I could feel the crossing of parallel lines. In the evening we enjoyed a Tartar festival in the national theatre. So subtle the Tartar music.

The next days I had to go to work: 'What is T<sub>E</sub>X and METAFONT all about?' and BLUE's Format. Students spotted immediately Big BLUE.

Renat took me for lunch one day to the place where the Russian people go. It was within the walls of the Kremlin, and indeed we had to queue and it was very warm in there. For the afternoon tea we were invited by Marina. Her boss Andre runs a small 'science park'-like company offering computer science technology, not in the least the network-

ing infrastructure. He donated a UNIX machine with two 486 in there to the University, and therefore he could locate his office within the Computer Science building.

The last day was devoted to what I had hoped for. By hydrofoil Renat, Marina, Tania and me went to Swiyask, an island in the Wolga with a rich history. So pleasant to walk about and around and having a lunch a la Russe. Unforgettable.

## 3 St Petersburg

For the last part of the trip John Roseman from Urbansoft company was my escort. After the tea at MIR publishers on the occasion of the L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X introduction book, John invited me to come along for some business. Surprise, surprise, it was Luda we went to. Of course I do remember Luda from last year to say the least. We had some contact after the meeting via e-mail and she even sent me Evgeny Onegin in Russian. She was at the heart of this Russian T<sub>E</sub>X tour, although the way she envisioned it did not work out. Needless to say it was a cosy visit and we really had to hurry to catch the St Petersburg train. Getting more and more confident it all went smooth.<sup>4</sup>

The Newa was beautiful, especially with those palaces along it. Olga Grineva was my hostess and all went smooth, and given the experience so far, I was not surprised at all. Joseph Romanovski took me out for a walk and detailed about art nouveau, the special Peter the Great statue and more such things. After this morning walk we were invited for tea at Urbansoft. Yuri was a shy but pleasant host. His office reflected T<sub>E</sub>X in a very surprising way. The walls of the office garden consisted of boxes of Russian T<sub>E</sub>Xbooks. A handy storage and well-suited to inflation.

In the evening Olga took me to a Jazz club on my request, and that was an experience. Russia is not for Jazz, they have their own culture. I should have known better. But with charming Olga around I would have enjoyed everything.

The next day Joseph Romanovski had invited us for 'oozin.' Knuth seated on their divan some months before, as I could witness from the photographs, and now it was me!?! On his video he had Knuth lecturing about (Stanford) tree(s).<sup>5</sup> Joseph also told about how Knuth processed the illustrations in the Bible Illuminated by computer. He used 4 colours as basis and calculated the nuances all by himself. Knuth did it again and just nobody knows about it.

On his home computer he showed me his work in PostScript, and he gave me some homework for casting this into METAFONT. He was especially interested in the size of the files.

The next day Olga showed me around in the University. I was surprised to find out that Alexander Block was a stu-

<sup>4</sup>The problem is that foreigners have to pay a different price and my hosts had bought tickets as if I was a Russian, so all I had to do was to keep my mouth shut and look intelligent.

<sup>5</sup>Video tapes are abundant now in the booths on the street.

dent of this University.<sup>6</sup> BLUe's Format was rehearsed for the third time, a piece of cake by now. Joseph was again interested in the size of the memory used and suggested to load only what a user needed.<sup>7</sup> His attitude is different from ours. We are used to larger and larger hard disks. He also mentioned that 'BLUe's Format' reflects the Russian attitude: *not only using tools but also understanding them*. I'm happy that BLUe's Format was sown into the right soil. Tania from the Univeristy Press would try it out too, next to a colleague of her. In Moscow Nikolai Tretjakof was also very pleased, and he communicated that especially persons who used  $\mathcal{A}\mathcal{M}\mathcal{S}$ - $\text{T}\mathcal{E}\mathcal{X}$  so far would welcome the alternative, not in the least the underlying realistic model of how to cope with scripts during their life-phases.

### MIR Publishers

A visit to MIR publishers was less formal than last year. It looks like that MIR is experiencing difficulties. Less titles have been produced and the selling slows down, due to inflation.

### Corridors

The plans are to organize next year's meeting in Yaroslav, and to offer TUG to host the TUG '96 meeting, and to unite TUG '96 with Euro $\text{T}\mathcal{E}\mathcal{X}$  '96. Russia is a country of extremes, and definitely things are going to happen here in near future. Watch out!

### Social life

The shopping has been improved. It is still difficult to find the good shops. As a foreigner one has to rely on the centre of Moscow. Irina however helped me with finding the shop for Russian music and other souvenirs on the former Lenin prospect.

Inflation goes still up by the hour. During my stay the fare for the underground was nearly doubled.

The mafia was there but grace to my disguise I was not noticed, despite my continuous escorte. I believe I'm the first  $\text{T}\mathcal{E}\mathcal{X}$  VIP.

### The Dacha

Olga and her parents took me to their Dacha. This was a true experience. First we stopped for collecting mushrooms. Next the driving in Russia resembles much Russian roulette. But I survived.

Many people enjoy their freedom at the Dacha. They can build their own house roughly as they wish on their allotment. No rules, and hardly no papers to be filled in. All like to have their 'bania' too. Olga's Dacha was still under construction. The bania of her friends was not yet ready either. Their hospitality was again great: friends of friends are friends.

<sup>6</sup>Not true as Olga communicated later to me. Alexander was born in the Rector's house because his grandfather D.I Mendeleev was in that time rektor of the University.

<sup>7</sup>Because of the modular approach he can easily delete what he does not need. His suggestion to load only the macros needed has the wrong 'granularity' IMHO, with all respect, especially in view of the increasing number of megabytes per dollar, of which the end is not yet in sight.

### Jobs

Curious for me was that many people have more than one job!?! Usually an University tenure — with a low salary — and a job somewhere else. The agreement is that the University does not fire employees but just divides the workload such that each has work only for a day or two. Every person is encouraged to look elsewhere for another paid job in order to survive. Banks are the 'rich' employers. Men also help to build Dachas for some extra money.

## 4 Euro $\text{T}\mathcal{E}\mathcal{X}$ '94 at Gdansk

This was not yet the end. Gdansk was still on the program. Irina and Olga were also on the Polonez to Warsaw. From there I took them with me in my old car to Gdansk, meeting old and new friends. An impressive program and a tidy issue of the proceedings with many a paper worthwhile to study at home. Jackovski and Ryćko again earned the public approval for their presentation and work.

To be honest this meeting had all to do with looking for amber, collecting mushrooms, and enjoying guitars at night. ( $\text{I}\mathcal{A}$ ) $\text{T}\mathcal{E}\mathcal{X}$  was just a excuse.

During my Manmac BLUe's Tutorial I found that I did not really understand Knuth's subtleness completely of yet. While lecturing I realized that Knuth's `\beginchapter` tag is as close to natural markup as I can think of. An eye-opener! Phil Taylor's lucid `\ignorewhitespace` as generalization of `\ignorespaces` has been immediately incorporated in BLUe's Format. Thanks folks!

### Some Euro $\text{T}\mathcal{E}\mathcal{X}$ afterthoughts

Although I know that not many people like me thinking aloud, I feel I should do it nevertheless, with all respect to those involved. It is just that from my point of view innocent users should be warned. Given the main stream and my warnings it is up to them what to decide.

Personally, I think to let  $\text{I}\mathcal{A}\text{T}\mathcal{E}\mathcal{X}2_{\epsilon}$  pass by. I don't need it and its inherent quasi-static nature is too cumbersome for my personal collection of works. To boost a standard is one thing while how to cope with change and customization is another, and more realistic to my taste. That the coding is based on a one-part macro is regrettable and an inheritance from  $\text{I}\mathcal{A}\text{T}\mathcal{E}\mathcal{X}$ . If I only think of that exercise 15.12 about automatic numbering of footnotes was completely neglected, and that counters with value zero can't be printed, see the  $\text{I}\mathcal{A}\text{T}\mathcal{E}\mathcal{X}$  book figure C6, then too much has to be corrected still at the elementary level which does not give me confidence in advanced issues.  $\text{B}\mathcal{I}\mathcal{B}\text{T}\mathcal{E}\mathcal{X}$  needs a multi-pass job, and is complicated, and so on.

As I see it the innovative approach of Knuth via processing on the fly via two-part macros has not been appreciated as it should have been.

### Many thanks. . .

I like to thank again CyrTUG for having invited me, and not in the least I owe my gratitude to my hosts at Moscow (Irina and Sergej) at Kazan (Sergej and Tania) and at St Petersburg (Olga and Yuri) for having taken care of me, and never leaving me on my own. Of course, I also thank those whom I met and chatted with so friendly. There was always a friend watching over me. Thank you! Unbelievable, it was the trip of my life, very much so indeed. Unforgettable. . . and many a sweet dream pops up now and then in my mind. I hope I will find the discipline and energy to continue my learning of Russian.

### PS I: CyrTUG

CyrTUG is thriving. Roughly 300 members with Knuth as number 314. Cyrillic  $\TeX$  is available, with some diversity with respect to cyrillic fonts. MIR publishers especially Irina's Makhovaya's department, is the heart of the organization. The new board consist of Evgeny Pankratiev (Moscow) president, and members Sergej Strelkov (Moscow), Wladislav Andrushenko (Moscow), Renat Zagretidinov (Kazan) and perhaps some more. Strong centres are Moscow of course (Irina and her staff at MIR, Pankratiev and co-workers of Moscow State University, Tretjakov and Academy of Sciences colleagues) next to St Petersburg (Joseph Romanovski of St Peterburg University and Academy of Sciences, Yuri Nesterenko and John Roseman of Urbansoft, Olga Grineva, Alex Berdnikof), Kazan (Renat Zagretidinov, Sergej Perfilof, Andre

Wladislawowitz of TISSA), and Siberia. Of the latter I did not meet nor talk to specific persons this time, but Olga Lapko assured me that it is a strong branch of CyrTUG.

The new generation is also present. I spotted various young people for example Tania Gavrilova (Kazan, involved in (IA) $\TeX$  education), Tania Semjova (St Peterburg, head of University Press).

### PS II: GUST

GUST (the Polish Local  $\TeX$  Users Group) is modest but stable and was already on the scene before NTG existed. Polish  $\TeX$  has been around already for some years, and the interaction of METAFONT and PostScript is common and used in (business) practice. Like CyrTUG they have a non-nonsense approach. Organizing an Euro $\TeX$  within a couple of months, did not seem to be a heavy exercise. They enjoy a hundred or so members, but are deprived from institutional members, as Jackovski told to me. Definitely some top class  $\TeX$ ies are within their ranks. Ryćko and Jacko earn rewards regularly when they participate in Euro $\TeX$ s. Their annual meetings — The Bacho $\TeX$ s — are renowned, not in the least for the courses and the courseware. The only disadvantage for me is that the booklets are in Polish, alas. The GUST bulletin is tidy and well-suited for the purpose, IMHO as observer, with all respect. The fileserver is on the air since a year or two. E-mail with GUST members works reliable. Warsaw, Gdansk, and possibly Torun are strong centres.



Figure 1: Mr. BLUe lecturing in St. Petersburg