



In Memoriam

Elizabeth B. Neatrour, Professor emerita of Russian and French chair emerita of the Department of Foreign Language and Literatures

Elizabeth (Betty Jo) Baylor Neatrour, Ph.D., professor of Russian at James Madison University and internationally recognized figure in foreign language studies died Monday, Jan. 7, 2002.

A daughter of Robert Peyton Baylor of Churchville, she was born June 21, 1934, in Buffalo, N.Y. The family moved often because of Peyton's work as a construction engineer. However, they made Churchville their permanent home. Neatrour was graduated from Churchville High School in 1950 and subsequently earned her B.A. in French from Mary Washington College in 1954. The following year she received a Fulbright/French Government award to study and teach in France. She received a Certificate in French Studies from the University of Paris, France. During that same year, she taught part-time at the Lycee de Filles in Fontainebleau.

Beginning in 1955, she taught in secondary schools: North River (Va.) High School in 1955-1956 (English and French); kindergarten in 1956-57 at the Darmstadt, Germany, Dependent School; and Robert E. Lee High School in Staunton, 1958-61 (English and French).

She and Charles Neatrour were married in 1956. Their son, Peyton, was born in 1958. She earned an M.A. in education from Madison College in 1960, followed by an M.A. (1966) and Ph.D. (1973) in Russian language and literature from Indiana University. Her doctoral dissertation was on the life and works of Russian pre-revolutionary author and playwright Nadezhda Teffi, a subject about whom she subsequently wrote books and articles that established her over many years as the pre-eminent authority, even in Russia.

She joined the JMU faculty in 1961, and in 1974 was named chair of the Department of Foreign Language and Literatures and professor of Russian and French. She served as department head until 1980, thereafter continuing her duties of professor of Russian until recent illness.

Neatrour acknowledged that her fascination with foreign languages had its genesis in her home life. Her father, Robert Baylor of Churchville, met and married Amalia Dworetzkaya while working as an engineering consultant in Russia in the early 1930s. He and his Russian bride settled in Churchville and became parents of Elizabeth and her brother, George, who now works as a manager for Dupont in

Waynesboro. Despite her home base familiarity with Russian, her first foray into foreign language studies was with French. Eventually, however, she decided to concentrate on Russian and build her academic career around that language specialty.

The decision led to almost four decades of distinguished academic achievement, not only in teaching of that Slavic tongue, but in developing and encouraging appreciation of Russian culture. Neatrou was in constant demand to write and speak about aspects of Russian life, politics, culture, language, and much more. She authored scores of papers, monographs and newspaper articles that were perceived here and abroad as scholarly contributions toward greater understanding between the United States and the Soviet Union/Russia.

Neatrou was honored on more than one occasion by the American Council of Teachers of Russian (ACTR), an organization she served twice as president and which encourages international teacher-student exchanges and higher standards of excellence in teaching. She founded JMU's internationally recognized summer Governor's Russian Studies Academy for gifted American and Russian high school students, and she was co-creator of the Local-International Network Committee, which sponsored trips to Peterhof, Russia, to deliver contributions of money and medical supplies. Neatrou helped establish Harrisonburg's sister city relationship with Peterhof.

Her tireless work in promoting higher standards of teaching, scholarship and leadership here and in Russia was recognized April 1998, with the award of the prestigious Pushkin Medal by ACTR. The honor cited her efforts to cultivate "goodwill in American-Russian relations through academic study and collaboration. " The Russian government hosted a congratulatory ceremony for Neatrou at the then newly opened embassy in Washington, D.C.

Neatrou's accomplishments occasioned numerous honors and recognitions. In 1999, Mary Washington College presented her with its Distinguished Alumnus award. In 1996 JMU's Alumni Association made her the first recipient of its Distinguished Service Award. Mary Washington College elected her as an alumni member of Phi Beta Kappa in 1993, and in 1991 she received the coveted Outstanding Faculty award from the State Council of Higher Education - one of only four such citations given to JMU faculty members since 1998. She was named "Valley Woman of the Year" in 1991 and was a recipient of the Foreign Language Association of Virginia's Distinguished Foreign Language Teacher award in 1989.

Neatrou's organizational leadership was evidenced by the many presidencies to which she was elected, including the JMU Women's Club, American Councils of Teachers of Russian, the Delta Kappa Gamma Society of Virginia, the JMU Faculty Women's Caucus, and the Foreign Language Association of Virginia.

She was engaged in the work of many collateral organizations, including Phi Kappa Phi, which she served as president from 1985 to 1997. The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International, an honor society for women in education that she served, sent her to Israel, Mongolia, the People's Republic of China, the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, the Netherlands and Germany. She was a member of Asbury United Methodist Church, serving as a Sunday school teacher and chair of its administrative board.

Despite the demands of her professional life, Neatrou was a dedicated wife, mother, grandmother and sister. She is survived by her husband, Charles, JMU professor emeritus in mathematics education; their son, Peyton, an ophthalmologist in Virginia Beach; his wife, Leslie; and their three children, Kristin, Kaitlin and Gregory.

Neatrou is also survived by her mother, Amalia, a resident in Neatrou's home for the past several years. She is also survived by a brother and sister-in-law, George and Judy Baylor of Waynesboro; and their son, Robert, a student at Davis-Elkins College; sister-in-law Mary DiSalvo of Boulder, Colo.; Dorothy Neatrou of Torrance, Calif.; Lisa Neatrou; and Genevieve Arneson and her husband Allan of West Palm Beach, Fla.

Funeral Services were held at Asbury United Methodist Church in Harrisonburg with the Rev. Doug Hill officiating. Memorial donations may be made to the Elizabeth Neatrou Chair of Language Studies at JMU, Harrisonburg, Va., 22807, or to Asbury United Methodist Church, 205 South Main Street, Harrisonburg, Va., 22801.

Elizabeth Neatour, an American scholar and winner of Russia's Pushkin Medal

Montpelier, Winter 1999

Last spring [1999], when Elizabeth Neatour received Russia's Pushkin Medal for her teaching of Russian studies and cultivating goodwill between Americans and Russians, this professor of Russian and French turned philosophical. She quoted - aptly and innocently - Fedor Dostoevsky, a Russian author whose works are as sweeping as her own career.

Later, weeks after the medal ceremony at the Russian Embassy in Washington D.C., she reflected on yet another Russian writer of epic works. "It's funny in one's life how things happen," she says. "Boris Pasternak talks about coincidences. I think there have been many strange coincidences in my life."

Coincidental experiences for the Doctor Zhivago author transcend the ordinary because each one sets in motion a series of intersecting events that can have personally fateful and historic repercussions. The beating of a butterfly's wings in the Urals, for example, may create atmospheric disturbances that lead to rain in the Sahara. Thought of this way, coincidence has a particularly Russian spin, keeping in view both the singular event and the panoramic sweep of history.

But Pasternak and Russia's often-tortured history notwithstanding, to all those who know her, Neatour contradicts the American stereotype of a Russian scholar - broad shouldered and given to brooding over dark conundrums of the soul.

Whatever the topic, even today's economic and political crises that continue to cause personal despair for so many Russians, Neatour's voice remains ebullient, as if pegged to an optimism and enthusiasm that is, well, so like an American. Imagine jazz played on a balalaika.

Neatour's own ingrained optimism stems from her prolonged contact with the Russian people and from her abiding love for their culture. "A people that can produce such a great culture ... certainly has great promise," she says. "So even though the history is marked by periods of terrible tragedy, I think there is a wonderful theme running throughout all of Russian history, and that is the courage, the generosity and the creativity of its people."

Neatour's sense of commitment to Russian culture is at least as deep as a Russian's own - and is borne at least in part from her own heritage as the daughter of an American father and a Russian mother. Their meeting in 1931 in the Soviet Union has created a Russian-American hybrid that blends a Russian passion for language and literature and a magnanimous Slavic spirit with an all-American vitality and drive.

Neatour's energy, her own admission that she is a perfectionist - especially when it comes to education and scholarship - and those Pasternakian touches of serendipity set off by her parents explain her devotion to introducing Americans to "the Russian intellectual heritage and cultivating goodwill in American-Russian relations through academic study and collaboration." Those were the words of the Russian Embassy's deputy chief-of-mission, Vladimir Chkhikvishili, who bestowed the Pushkin Medal on Neatour during last April's ceremony. But even he could not have been fully aware of the magnitude of professors work.

Tightly packed into Neatour's diminutive frame and gracious exterior is the powerhouse of JMU's nationally-recognized Russian program; 26-years' worth of exchanges with and foreign study in the former Soviet Union and Russia; the Harrisonburg/Rockingham-Peterhof Sister City program; and the Governor's Russian Academy for Virginia high school students. She is also the recipient of many prestigious teaching awards; a scholar of Russian literature and language as well as French; mentor to almost 40 years' of JMU graduates; and possibly the world's foremost expert on the Russian writer Teffi, which is the pseudonym of Nadezhda Aleksandrovna Bucminskaya (1872-1952).

For a woman who was hired at JMU in 1961 originally to teach French, her life has been a satisfying turn of events. Then-director of humanities Louis Locke asked Neatour to turn her few Mary Washington College undergraduate Russian credits into qualifications to teach Russian. She did, enrolling in a doctoral program at Indiana and balancing her course work against her JMU teaching duties and raising a family.

By another fortuitous turn, while at Indiana University on sabbatical to finish her doctorate, an off-hand suggestion that she sample the writing of the obscure Russian writer Teffi set her on a lifelong course of scholarly specialty. Once Neatrou read Teffi, she immediately "fell in love with Teffi's bittersweet style" and made the writer the subject of her dissertation. "Little did I know then, as I began to do bibliographical work [on Teffi] it was just a tremendous task," says Neatrou.

Through yet another chance meeting - this time with a literary scholar from Russia - Neatrou's work has culminated today in the publication of several Teffi collections and the author's resurgence in the mainstream of post-Soviet, Russian popular culture.

The core of Neatrou's goodwill mission over the years has been JMU's Russian Program, which started with six Russian majors. Neatrou and a team of professors in the departments of foreign languages and literatures, history, geography, political science, and economics have worked assiduously since then to continue building the program, which now enrolls 181 students. Moreover, the program now boasts numerous alumni who are teaching Russian in public and private schools, working as Russian specialists and scholars in government, business, media, law, accounting, finance and the Peace Corps. Whereas in the past, during the Soviet era, the main career opportunities for Russian majors were found in national defense, media, academia and travel, today, Neatrou says, "Today, there are countless new opportunities."

Neatrou credits three students, Joe Schultz ('73), Valerie DeFillipo ('73) and John Meeks ('73), known on campus as "the Troika" for lobbying hard to get JMU to approve the Russian program.

Today Schultz attributes the program's success to Neatrou. "All of us who are [alumni of the program] credit it to her bounding energy. She created it single-handedly," often teaching 15 to 18 credit hours each week in the early years to help students meet their degree requirements, says Schultz. Neatrou, he adds, "absolutely loves what she is doing and that is very apparent."

Her "passion for Russian culture and language is what feeds her enthusiasm for the program and teaching," according to Schultz. Coming back to campus year after year, Schultz sees "the same scenario of [Neatrou] pulling people in. ... She makes sure that learning is active. You don't forget her classes."

One distinct reason for the program's success, says Schultz, is Neatrou's emphasis on the practicalities of speaking, hearing, and writing Russian. "I have met people from other major universities as an undergraduate and professional who just don't match the level of JMU's graduates in basic language skills," explains Schultz, who worked in Russia for NBC television during the early 1980s.

Neatrou's ability to establish and maintain a regular network of connections among her American and Russian colleagues and acquaintances and former students has also contributed to the program's superiority, Schultz says. That view is seconded by Karen Marshall ('88), another Russian program alumna.

"[Dr. Neatrou] is the most loyal professor in terms of her former students," Marshall says. "I am not the only person who has benefited from her loyalty, from her connections, from her promoting her students, from her supporting them and caring about them and their careers," says Marshall, who is the associate director of JMU's Russian Academy, another one of Neatrou's projects. Each summer the academy sponsors a program for select high school students from around Virginia, most of whom have no prior experience with Russian. But in just 19 days Neatrou and a cadre of associates, including many of her former and current students, get these high school juniors and seniors reading and speaking Russian, studying Russian history and art, learning Russian folk dances, and even singing Russian songs.

Neatrou, a recipient of many teaching awards including, in 1991, Virginia's most prestigious faculty honor, the State Council of Higher Education's Outstanding Faculty Award, always puts her students first, Marshall says. She gets her students writing the formal letters and processing the official paperwork that allows Russian dignitaries and scholars to visit JMU, includes them in the university's official dinners for these Russian visitors and even lets the students toast their Russian guests at these functions. "She was always putting us in the driver's seat." Literally. Marshall recalls that she and a couple of other Russian majors drove to Washington, D.C., in then-President Ronald Reagan's car to pick up a Soviet delegation. "She gave us the responsibility and expected us to handle it."

Now a high school teacher of Russian in Henrico County, Marshall says her commitment to teaching Russian and supporting Russian studies in Virginia's public schools is the direct result of her "totally accidental" decision to take a Russian language course from Neatrou. After one class, Marshall recalls thinking, "'Wow! This is something I want to do.' It's all about serendipity - one thing happening and putting

you on an entirely different main road in your life."

Neatrou might have said the same. For her, it's all about "connectedness," which may be a natural impulse considering her own origins.

In addition to the Russian Program and each summer's Russian Academy at JMU, Neatrou has fostered Russian-American connections as president of the American Council of Teachers of Russian, with whom she has worked closely to implement Russian- American student and teacher exchanges. Beyond the academic community, she has also encouraged greater cultural appreciation by co-founding the Harrisonburg/ Rockingham Local/International Network Committee (LINC), which supports assistance to hospitals and clinics in Peterhof, Harrisonburg's Russian sister city.

During Neatrou's acceptance of the Pushkin Medal last spring, she summed up her sense of things by quoting Father Zosima in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*: "All things flow and connect with each other, a touch in one place sets up movement at the other end of the earth." Her life seems to bear this out. For in a real sense the touch that began when her father met her mother in Russia has extended through Neatrou's life as she has reached out and touched the lives of students passing through JMU on their way to other places, both near and far. And many of her JMU students are in turn creating their own share of motions in the field of Russian language, literature, and culture.

Story by Randy Jones

Neatrou's research revives Russians' love affair with Teffi

While many scholars conduct their re-search in closeted obscurity, Elizabeth Neatrou's life work instead intersected with the historic events that broke down the Soviet Union and revived Russia's love affair with one of pre-Soviet Russia's favorite authors.

Before the Communist Revolution, Teffi (1872-1952) was so cherished that candy and perfume were named after her. "Even the Tsar said he could not get along without reading Teffi," Neatrou says. But in 1920, Teffi fled Russia to escape persecution by the Bolsheviks. Much of her pre-Soviet work was collected in books, though it was banned in the Soviet Union after 1930.

A second career followed after Teffi settled in Paris as a writer-in-exile immensely popular among Russian emigrants. There her writing was syndicated in the Russian-language newspapers of the large }migr} communities in Europe's major cities and New York City. Teffi was one of the leaders - and the only woman - of that community. She inspired it, her writings giving voice to its longings and worries and providing a link to Russian culture. Reading Teffi gave emigrants hope, Neatrou says.

But as those communities withered, so too did Teffi's popularity. By the time of her death, three-decades' worth of her uncollected weekly writings had disappeared into archives of microfilm and disintegrating newspapers.

Since 1967 Neatrou has searched 30-years' worth of two daily, Paris-based Russian newspapers. "I found myself spending hours and hours going over microfilms just to establish a bibliography of what she had written. Then, ultimately, the more work I did, the more I saw that she had done," says Neatrou. In the end, she adds, Teffi's works - essays, fiction, plays, memoirs, and poems - fill about 13 volumes.

In 1988, Teffi began emerging from obscure research into relevant, timely current events. When Neatrou was in the Soviet Union directing the first exchange of American undergraduate and graduate students at the Herzen Institute in Leningrad, she chanced to meet the Russian professor Boris Averin, who told her that Soviet officials had authorized the No. 1 publisher in the country to issue a collection of Teffi's work. But there was a problem, he added. After 60 years of censorship, there were no Soviet scholars familiar enough with the full range of Teffi's writing and life to discuss either in depth.

The result of that meeting was the publication in 1989 of the first significant Soviet edition of some of Teffi's collected works, introduced by Neatrou and edited by Neatrou and Averin. The book was an overnight hit, selling half a million copies.

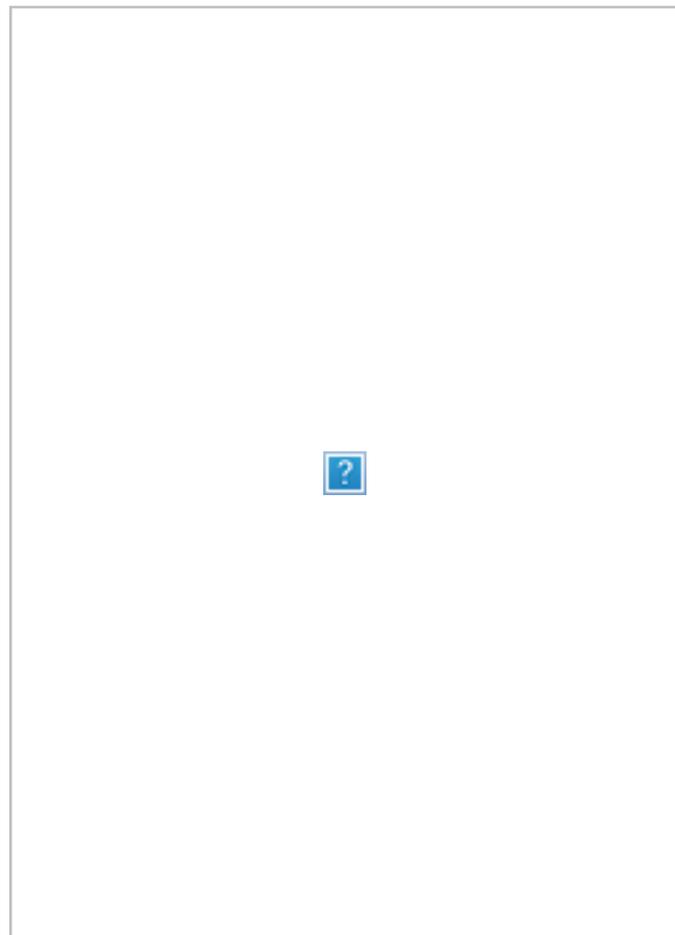
Since that first volume, Neatrou has continued writing, editing, and translating Teffi for publication both in Russian and English - collections of short stories, memoirs, letters, Teffi's only novel, and a forthcoming biography. For the latter, Neatrou draws on interviews she conducted in the 1960s with Teffi's former colleagues and friends. "The people I interviewed were very, very old at that time," Neatrou says. "I am thankful that I was able to meet people who actually knew Teffi."

Today in Russia there is a thriving "Teffi cottage industry" that includes annual academic conferences and symposia, university courses, journal articles and an avid Teffi readership. "To have a part in restoring Teffi to Russia is just a great joy," says Neatrou. "You see, I've spent years with this woman and I think I know her very, very well."

Teffi's renewed popularity can be explained in several ways, Neatrou says. "She speaks to [Russians'] nostalgia for the old Russia, before the dark Soviet night, and their sense of injustice, because here is a writer who was greatly loved but who had to suffer because she was exiled from her country, where she was forbidden," she says.

Teffi is emblematic, adds Neatrou, of those Russians, especially the intelligentsia, who were "callously driven from their homeland." She also offers contemporary Russians a window that was shuttered under the Soviets - into }migr} life after the Revolution. Russians today are appreciating Teffi's role in helping to sustain those }migr} communities through her writings.

"So really the Russians are rediscovering their heritage," says Neatrou, who senses that the rediscovery is part of a larger cultural reinvigoration. Despite the litany of hardships facing the country, Neatrou says, "Russians themselves have great confidence in their future, especially the young. Although the elderly are currently suffering the most, especially economically," Neatrou says, "even some of the older people say, 'You know, we in Russia have always had faith, now we have hope.'"



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Neatrou acknowledged that her fascination with foreign languages had its genesis in her home life. Her father, Robert Baylor of Churchville, met and married Amalia Dworetzkaya while working as an engineering consultant in Russia in the early 1930s. He and his Russian bride settled in Churchville and became parents of Elizabeth and her brother, George, who now works as a manager for Dupont in Waynesboro. Despite her home base familiarity with Russian, her first foray into foreign language studies was with French. Eventually, however, she decided to concentrate on Russian and build her academic career around that language specialty.

The decision led to almost four decades of distinguished academic achievement, not only in teaching of that Slavic tongue, but in developing and encouraging appreciation of Russian culture. Neatrou was in constant demand to write and speak about aspects of Russian life, politics, culture, language, and much more. She authored scores of papers, monographs and newspaper articles that were perceived here and abroad as scholarly contributions toward greater understanding between the United States and the Soviet Union/Russia.

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One distinct reason for the program's success, says Schultz, is Neatrou's emphasis on the practicalities of speaking, hearing, and writing Russian. "I have met people from other major universities as an undergraduate and professional who just don't match the level of JMU's graduates in basic language skills," explains Schultz, who worked in Russia for NBC television during the early 1980s.

Neatrou's ability to establish and maintain a regular network of connections among her American and Russian colleagues and acquaintances and former students has also contributed to the program's superiority, Schultz says. That view is seconded by Karen Marshall ('88), another Russian program alumna.

"[Dr. Neatrou] is the most loyal professor in terms of her former students," Marshall says. "I am not the only person who has benefited from her loyalty, from her connections, from her promoting her students, from her supporting them and caring about them and their careers," says Marshall, who is the associate director of JMU's Russian Academy, another one of Neatrou's projects. Each summer the academy sponsors a program for select high school students from around Virginia, most of whom have no prior experience with Russian. But in just 19 days Neatrou and a cadre of associates, including many of her former and current students, get these high school juniors and seniors reading and speaking Russian, studying Russian history and art, learning Russian folk dances, and even singing Russian songs.

Neatrou, a recipient of many teaching awards including, in 1991, Virginia's most prestigious faculty honor, the State Council of Higher Education's Outstanding Faculty Award, always puts her students first, Marshall says. She gets her students writing the formal letters and processing the official paperwork that allows Russian dignitaries and scholars to visit JMU, includes them in the university's official dinners for these Russian visitors and even lets the students toast their Russian guests at these functions. "She was always putting us in the driver's seat." Literally. Marshall recalls that she and a couple of other Russian majors drove to Washington, D.C., in then-President Ronald Carrier's car to pick up a Soviet delegation. "She gave us the responsibility and expected us to handle it."

Now a high school teacher of Russian in Henrico County, Marshall says her commitment to teaching Russian and supporting Russian studies in Virginia's public schools is the direct result of her "totally accidental" decision to take a Russian language course from Neatrou. After one class, Marshall recalls thinking, "'Wow! This is something I want to do.' It's all about serendipity - one thing happening and putting you on an entirely different main road in your life."

Neatrou might have said the same. For her, it's all about "connectedness," which may be a natural impulse considering her own origins.

In addition to the Russian Program and each summer's Russian Academy at JMU, Neatrou has fostered Russian-American connections as president of the American Council of Teachers of Russian, with whom she has worked closely to implement Russian- American student and teacher exchanges. Beyond the academic community, she has also encouraged greater cultural appreciation by co-founding the Harrisonburg/ Rockingham Local/International Network Committee (LINC), which supports assistance to hospitals and clinics in Peterhof, Harrisonburg's Russian sister city.

During Neatrou's acceptance of the Pushkin Medal last spring, she summed up her sense of things by quoting Father Zosima in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*: "All things flow and connect with each other, a touch in one place sets up movement at the other end of the earth." Her life seems to bear this out. For in a real sense the touch that began when her father met her mother in Russia has extended through Neatrou's life as she has reached out and touched the lives of students passing through JMU on their way to other places, both near and far. And many of her JMU students are in turn creating their own share of motions in the field of Russian language, literature, and culture.

Story by Randy Jones

Neatrou's research revives Russians' love affair with Teffi

While many scholars conduct their re-search in closeted obscurity, Elizabeth Neatrou's life work instead intersected with the historic events that broke down the Soviet Union and revived Russia's love affair with one of pre-Soviet Russia's favorite authors.

Before the Communist Revolution, Teffi (1872-1952) was so cherished that candy and perfume were

named after her. "Even the Tsar said he could not get along without reading Teffi," Neatrou says. But in 1920, Teffi fled Russia to escape persecution by the Bolsheviks. Much of her pre-Soviet work was collected in books, though it was banned in the Soviet Union after 1930.

A second career followed after Teffi settled in Paris as a writer-in-exile immensely popular among Russian emigrants. There her writing was syndicated in the Russian-language newspapers of the large }migr} communities in Europe's major cities and New York City. Teffi was one of the leaders - and the only woman - of that community. She inspired it, her writings giving voice to its longings and worries and providing a link to Russian culture. Reading Teffi gave emigrants hope, Neatrou says.

But as those communities withered, so too did Teffi's popularity. By the time of her death, three-decades' worth of her uncollected weekly writings had disappeared into archives of microfilm and disintegrating newspapers.

Since 1967 Neatrou has searched 30-years' worth of two daily, Paris-based Russian newspapers. "I found myself spending hours and hours going over microfilms just to establish a bibliography of what she had written. Then, ultimately, the more work I did, the more I saw that she had done," says Neatrou. In the end, she adds, Teffi's works - essays, fiction, plays, memoirs, and poems - fill about 13 volumes.

In 1988, Teffi began emerging from obscure research into relevant, timely current events. When Neatrou was in the Soviet Union directing the first exchange of American undergraduate and graduate students at the Herzen Institute in Leningrad, she chanced to meet the Russian professor Boris Averin, who told her that Soviet officials had authorized the No. 1 publisher in the country to issue a collection of Teffi's work. But there was a problem, he added. After 60 years of censorship, there were no Soviet scholars familiar enough with the full range of Teffi's writing and life to discuss either in depth.

The result of that meeting was the publication in 1989 of the first significant Soviet edition of some of Teffi's collected works, introduced by Neatrou and edited by Neatrou and Averin. The book was an overnight hit, selling half a million copies.

Since that first volume, Neatrou has continued writing, editing, and translating Teffi for publication both in Russian and English - collections of short stories, memoirs, letters, Teffi's only novel, and a forthcoming biography. For the latter, Neatrou draws on interviews she conducted in the 1960s with Teffi's former colleagues and friends. "The people I interviewed were very, very old at that time," Neatrou says. "I am thankful that I was able to meet people who actually knew Teffi."

Today in Russia there is a thriving "Teffi cottage industry" that includes annual academic conferences and symposia, university courses, journal articles and an avid Teffi readership. "To have a part in restoring Teffi to Russia is just a great joy," says Neatrou. "You see, I've spent years with this woman and I think I know her very, very well."

Teffi's renewed popularity can be explained in several ways, Neatrou says. "She speaks to [Russians'] nostalgia for the old Russia, before the dark Soviet night, and their sense of injustice, because here is a writer who was greatly loved but who had to suffer because she was exiled from her country, where she was forbidden," she says.

Teffi is emblematic, adds Neatrou, of those Russians, especially the intelligentsia, who were "callously driven from their homeland." She also offers contemporary Russians a window that was shuttered under the Soviets - into }migr} life after the Revolution. Russians today are appreciating Teffi's role in helping to sustain those }migr} communities through her writings.

"So really the Russians are rediscovering their heritage," says Neatrou, who senses that the rediscovery is part of a larger cultural reinvigoration. Despite the litany of hardships facing the country, Neatrou says, "Russians themselves have great confidence in their future, especially the young. Although the elderly are currently suffering the most, especially economically," Neatrou says, "even some of the older people say, 'You know, we in Russia have always had faith, now we have hope.'"