

Ogonek Digital Archive

The most important publication on Soviet culture and everyday life

Ogonek (Огонёк, Spark) was one of the oldest weekly magazines in Russia, having been in continuous publication since 1923. *Ogonek* had rather inauspicious beginnings. Unlike *Pravda* or *Izvestiia*, born, as they were, in the cauldrons of the Russian Revolution, *Ogonek*, soon after its birth in 1923, came to serve one grand purpose only – to fulfill the task of cultural validation and legitimation of the Soviet system.

Ogonek would serve its mission with certain aplomb and sophistication. Lacking the crudeness and the bombast of the main organs of Communist Party propaganda, *Ogonek* was able to become one of the most influential shapers and reflectors of the public character of the Soviet culture. Every self-respecting Soviet intellectual was expected to read *Ogonek* if they were to stay informed about the cultural world in which they lived and moved.

The importance of *Ogonek* as a primary source for research into the Soviet Union and bolshevization of its cultural and social landscapes cannot be overestimated. Because of its mass circulation and popularity, it was able to unite Soviet Union's geographically and culturally diverse population through culturally important and imposing narratives. If in the West, and especially in the United States, cultural trends were the result of complex negotiations between market research, supply, and demand, in the Soviet Union cultural trends were more or less state approved top-down affairs. *Ogonek* was an important vehicle for the conveyance of the Soviet cultural idiom to the reading public.

Key Stats

- **Archive:** 1923-2020 (ceased)
- **Language:** Russian
- **City:** Moscow
- **Country:** Russia
- **Frequency:** Weekly
- **Format:** PDF, page-based
- **Producer:** East View Information Services
- **Platform:** East View Universal Database

Access over 90 years of Soviet and Russian culture

The *Ogonek* Digital Archive contains all obtainable published issues from 1923 on. The archive offers scholars the most comprehensive collection available for this title, and features full page-level digitization, complete original graphics, and searchable text, and is cross-searchable with numerous other East View digital resources.

The *Ogonek* Digital Archive is a part of the East View Global Press Archive®, which is the result of a landmark initiative of Stanford Libraries and the Hoover Institution Library & Archives to digitally preserve and make more accessible thousands of original print newspaper publications collected by the Hoover Institution and now housed by Stanford Libraries.



More about Ogonek

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Throughout its illustrious history *Ogonek* came to publish original works by such Soviet cultural luminaries as Vladimir Mayakovsky, Isaac Babel, Ilya Ilf and Evgeny Petrov, Yevgeny Yevtushenko, the photographer Yuri Rost, and others. *Ogonek* grew into an influential and widely read Soviet publication, experiencing the peak of its popularity at the hands of its editor Vitaly Korotich in 1986 at the height of perestroika. Korotich, inspired by the newfound political liberties turned the journal into a flagship of glasnost, a lively space for edgy political commentary, criticism, and satire, thus becoming a robust platform for intellectual debate.

After undergoing financial and creative crisis in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union, which saw a steep decline in readership, *Ogonek* has now rediscovered its creative zest under a new leadership and management, once again becoming an important forum for cultural and political intellectual exchanges.

Important Highlights

- *Ogonek* is one of the most important sources of photographic and visual representation of life in the Soviet Union, much akin to LIFE magazine in the United States. It attracted some of the best photographers in the USSR such as Yevgeny Khaldei, Max Alpert, Alexander Rodchenko, et al., publishing their works regularly. Thus, *Ogonek* represents a treasure trove of photo-documentation of life in the Soviet Union.
- From its inception it had several features that helped shape and elevate the cultural discourse in the USSR becoming in a sense an influential cultural tastemaker. Some of the features were the following: a refined literary language (although it contained elements of official praise); short stories and poems, much like one sees in *The New Yorker*; quality reproductions of European, Russian, and Soviet art, etc.
- Even during the difficult years of the WWII *Ogonek* did not cease publication, and thus it is an invaluable repository of primary source material for both visual and textual study of that crucial period of Soviet and Russian history.
- *Ogonek* was there at the inception of the Soviet Union, and there again during its demise. As such it is an especially important source of content analysis charting the evolving cultural, social, and political discourse of the USSR. By studying the content of *Ogonek*, scholars and researchers will be able to pinpoint with some precision the periods of the emergence of certain cultural, literary, political trends and the abandonment of others when they were no longer deemed important, fashionable or were even dangerous. In short it provides an important story arc from the rise of the Soviet Union to its demise to Russia's post-Soviet experiments with democratization and the rise of Vladimir Putin.

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