Cultural life in Russia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries differed from cultural life in Western Europe in two important respects. Works of literature and scholarship were not written in the spoken vernacular (Russian), but in Church Slavonic, and the predominant medium for conveying thought was not the printed book, but the manuscript. Printing, which began late—the first explicitly dated Moscow imprint being that of Ivan Fedorov’s Apostol (Acts and Epistles) of 1564—was dominated by Church and State and was reserved in the main for the production of generally large-format liturgical works for use in Orthodox Church services. The first printed and dated East Slavonic primer did not appear until 1574. It was a primer for children learning to read not Ukrainian or Russian, but Church Slavonic, and it was printed not within the State of Muscovy, but in Lvov, then in Poland (but now in the Ukrainian SSR). It is the recent acquisition by the British Library of a copy of this significant and rare work (hitherto known only from a copy at Harvard) that has caused this article to be written (fig. 1).

During the period 1574 to 1652 in the territory within the frontiers of the present-day Soviet Union some twenty editions of Church Slavonic primers are known to have been printed. Only two came from the Moscow Printing House (printed in 1634 and 1637), the others were printed outside Russia, either in Belorussia or the Ukraine, both then part of Poland. Although edition sizes for primers were relatively large (of the Lvov primer as many as 2,000 copies were probably printed, and in the Moscow Printing House in the seventeenth century a primer might run to 14,400 copies, as opposed to the norm of 1,200 for larger-format liturgical works), the number of surviving copies is extremely small. The reasons for this are sufficiently obvious: their relative cheapness, small format, and their use by children lessened their chance of survival. Thus it is that of the twenty editions mentioned above only nine are represented in the collections of Soviet libraries. Copies of the other eleven are to be found only outside the country of their origin and owe their survival to foreign travellers or merchants who may have acquired them for the purpose of studying the language or, more likely, simply brought them home as curiosities.

Such is the case with the two Church Slavonic primers, bound together, which the British Library has recently acquired. The first item in the volume is the Lvov primer, printed by Ivan Fedorov in 1574. Of this, only one other copy is known—one which
Fig. 1. Ivan Fedorov's Primer of 1574, fol. [1]/1r
found its way to Italy in the seventeenth century, where it may have been acquired many years later by the great collector of art, manuscripts, and books, Count Grigory Sergeevich Stroganov (1829–1910). It was rediscovered in a bookseller's shop in Rome in 1927 by another bibliophile patron of the arts, the impresario Sergei Diaghilev, and finally passed to Harvard College Library in 1953. This copy was fully described by Roman Jakobson and W. A. Jackson in an article in the *Harvard Library Bulletin* in 1955 and only then did its existence become widely known. A microfilm was made available to Soviet scholars which has resulted in a number of studies, and three facsimiles were issued between 1964 and 1975. The primer is remarkable not only on account of its rarity and its place as a landmark in the printing of Slavonic educational texts but also for the fine quality of its printing and layout, which is superior to that of the later primers produced in Moscow in the first half of the seventeenth century. The primer which is bound with it is a Moscow edition of 1637, the second of two printed by Vasily Burtssov-Protopopov (the first was published in 1634). The 1637 Burtsov primer is known in a number of copies (at least four in the Soviet Union and at least five in the West, including another copy in the British Library) and as an example of typography it falls far short of Ivan Fedorov's primer. Together, the two primers serve to illustrate the differences and similarities between literary language and printing in the Ukraine during the second half of the sixteenth century and in Moscow during the first half of the seventeenth century. Furthermore, our newly-acquired copy of the Burtsov primer is of great interest for its provenance. It contains inscriptions by two seventeenth-century Englishmen, one of whom, Sir John Hebdon, played a prominent role in Anglo-Russian trade and diplomatic relations during the reigns of Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich and King Charles II of England.

The printer of the Lvov primer, Ivan Fedorov, began his printing career in Moscow. Until 1565 he was the deacon of one of the Kremlin churches, St Nicholas the Miracle Worker of Gostun’. At this time the need to introduce printing in Russia was beginning to be felt, partly as a result of the Church Council (Stoglav) of 1551 which had criticized the number of errors which had crept into liturgical manuscripts, and also because of the increasing need for multiple copies of liturgical works, due in part to Ivan the Terrible’s conquests of the ‘heathen’ peoples on Muscovy’s eastern frontier. Apart from seven undated ‘anonymous’ editions of liturgical books believed to have been printed in the 1550s and early 1560s, the folio *Apostol* (Acts and Epistles) of 1564, printed by Ivan Fedorov and his partner Petr Mstislavets, was the first book to appear in Moscow. They followed it with two editions of an octavo Book of Hours in 1565, but by 1568 they were already printing in Zabludov (a Belorussian town then part of Lithuania), driven from Moscow, as Ivan Fedorov himself explains, because of ‘great persecutions, not at the hands of the Tsar himself, but at the hands of many powerful officials and ecclesiastical authorities and teachers who, out of envy, tried to lay upon me many charges of heresy . . .’. Having escaped the intrigues of Moscow, but having lost the powerful patronage of the Tsar, Ivan Fedorov spent the rest of his life moving from place to place in search of patrons for his printing enterprises. In Zabludov, financed by the Hetman Chodkiewicz, Ivan Fedorov and Petr Mstislavets printed a folio edition of a Gospels
commentary. A Psalter and Book of Hours printed by Ivan Fedorov alone appeared in the following year (1570), and he then moved on to Lvov where in 1574 he printed a second edition of his Moscow *Apostol* and the primer. In Lvov his difficulties were mainly financial and only after assiduous petitioning, accompanied by ‘copious tears and lamentation’, did he eventually manage to borrow sufficient money from local wealthy craftsmen and tradesmen to set up his press. From 1578 to 1581 he printed at Ostrog in Volhynia (then in Poland), the seat of Prince Konstantin Konstantinovich Ostrozhsky, the founder of a Greco-Slavonic seminary there. Supported by this wealthy and influential patron, who, in spite of his Orthodox background, was on good terms with the Roman Catholic Church and Polish State authorities, Ivan Fedorov was able to print four new works—an octavo Greek–Slavonic chrestomathy in 1578, presumably for use at the seminary, an octavo Psalter and New Testament in 1580, and two impressions of his magnificent folio Bible in 1580 and 1581. A second edition of the Lvov primer was printed either in Ostrog around 1580 or, possibly, in Lvov after Fedorov’s death. A chronology compiled by Andrei Rymsha printed in 1581 has also been attributed to Ivan Fedorov, but may have been the work of his pupils. In 1583 he returned to Lvov where he died in December of that year. Throughout his travels he was able to take his types (or at least his punches or matrices) with him and for the majority of his books he used the original Moscow type of the 1564 *Apostol*. Only for his Greek–Slavonic chrestomathy and the Ostrog Bible did he introduce new, smaller types.

With the acquisition of the Lvov primer the British Library now possesses examples of Ivan Fedorov’s printing from three of the places where he was active. His Moscow period is represented by the 1564 *Apostol*, a copy acquired at the sale of the Diaghilev-Lifar Library in 1975. From his Ostrog press we have two copies of the 1580 impression of the Bible, one of which was brought to England by Sir Jerome Horsey in the sixteenth century and which, according to an inscription in Horsey’s hand, was once in the library of Ivan the Terrible.

The Lvov primer is a small octavo consisting of five unsigned eight-leaf gatherings making forty unnumbered leaves in all. It has no title-page, but year and place of publication are given in the colophon on fol. [5]/8* (i.e. the recto of the eighth leaf of the fifth unsigned gathering) below a pair of woodcuts depicting the coat of arms of the town of Lvov and Fedorov’s printer’s mark which contains the letters IΩAH (Ioan being an alternative form of Ivan) (fig. 2). The type, which is that used for the Moscow *Apostol*, has a ten-line measure of 84 mm, and there are fifteen lines to a page. Five of the six sections begin with headpieces (on fols. [3]/7* (fig. 3), [2]/4* (fig. 3), [3]/7*, and [4]/*/), the first of which had been used previously in the Slavonic–Greek chrestomathy and was used again in the second edition of the primer. All of these reappear in the Ostrog Bible. There are three tailpieces and these too are familiar from the Ostrog Bible. The leaves in the British Library copy measure only 140 × 95 mm (as against the Harvard copy’s 157 × 100 mm), consequently the headpieces on fols. [3]/7* and [4]/ are slightly cropped and very little remains of the watermarks. The watermarks in the Harvard copy are described as representing ‘a horseshoe with sharply turned ends, like an ancient stretched bow,
Fig. 2. Colophon of Ivan Fedorov’s Primer of 1574, showing the coat of arms of the town of Lvov and Ivan Fedorov’s printer’s mark
Fig. 3. Ivan Fedorov’s Primer of 1574, fol. [2]/4r
enclosing an outlined cross whose arms touch the sides but whose head does not quite touch the center or toe of the shoe.\textsuperscript{11} The scanty evidence in our copy—a double-lined segment of a curve with a small semi-circle joining the bottom and top lines on fol. [2]/6 and [5]/6 and what appears to be the bottom of the cross and of one leg of the horseshoe on fol. [4]/6—suggests that the paper is the same as that used for the Harvard copy. The fragmentary watermarks in our copy closely resemble Laucevičius no. 2664\textsuperscript{12} and Tromonin no. 372\textsuperscript{13} (both from copies of the 1574 Lvov Apostol) and Siniarska-Czaplicka nos. 296–8. According to Siniarska-Czaplicka, the marks reproduce the Jastrzębiec arms and the paper may have been made at a mill at Poczesna on the river Warta, to the north of Cracow.\textsuperscript{14} A fuller physical description of type, ornaments, etc. can be found in Jakobson’s article. A comparison of the British Library copy with the facsimile of the Harvard copy reveals no significant differences.

The contents are divided into six sections, beginning with a Cyrillic alphabet of forty-five letters, both in direct and reverse order, and moving on to vowel and consonant syllables. In this section paragraphs are numbered so that numbers, represented in Cyrillic by letters of the alphabet, can be learned in parallel with letters. There follow sections on the conjugation of verbs and on the spelling and declension of nouns and adjectives, written in traditional contracted form. The last section consists of texts for reading. The texts, which are preceded by an alphabetical acrostic, consist of well-known prayers and selected passages from Proverbs and the Epistles, all touching on the education of children and offering precepts to pupils, teachers, and parents. The primer ends with a short afterword addressed to Ivan Fedorov’s Orthodox Christian readers in which he expresses the hope that his work will be received favourably and indicates his willingness to produce further works. Roman Jakobson has made a detailed analysis of the contents and language of the primer and of the sources which may have been used in its compilation. V. I. Luk’yanenko of the Leningrad Public Library, in two studies,\textsuperscript{15} has continued the investigation of sources and has also discussed the influence of Fedorov’s work on later East Slavonic primers—both manuscript and printed. Luk’yanenko’s first article is based on a thorough textual analysis of the primer and of East Slavonic manuscripts and other religious and educational works, mainly of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. She points out that these manuscripts were probably copies of earlier texts, but that there are few surviving earlier copies (Ivan Fedorov’s printed primer being earlier than any comparable extant manuscript of an East Slavonic primer). Three striking points emerge from Luk’yanenko’s work: the continuity of the East Slavonic tradition which is reflected in Fedorov’s primer; the innovative nature of Fedorov’s primer; the lasting influence of his primer and the mutual influence of printed and manuscript primers which continued into the seventeenth century (it must not be forgotten that in the East Slavonic countries the printed book did not supersede the manuscript for over two centuries).

In discussing Ivan Fedorov’s use of earlier texts, Luk’yanenko puts forward a great number of possible sources of influence, most of them pedagogical or moral works. She stresses, however, that Ivan Fedorov’s primer, while following traditions, is far from being
a straightforward copy of any one or two earlier texts, but is rather a creative and judiciously selected compilation from a wide range of sources. She notes that Fedorov's scriptural excerpts for reading which, especially in the case of the Old Testament pieces, consist not of sections, but of individual verses, specially chosen and arranged so as to form a logical sequence of precepts on education, are compiled not from the then most up-to-date and authoritative versions of the Old Testament (Archbishop Gennady's Bible of the end of the fifteenth century) or the Epistles (Ivan Fedorov's own edition of the Apostol), but follow more archaic versions to be found in early educational texts. She argues that Ivan Fedorov, rather than destroy the delicate and logical 'mosaic' structure which had been carefully pieced together by previous compilers, was willing to tolerate the presence of certain archaisms. She notes, as does E. L. Nemirovsky, that Ivan Fedorov must also have been familiar with Western, notably Polish, primers of the sixteenth century, but although these may have influenced him, his primer contains elements, such as the sections which teach the morphology of the language, the acrostic, and the inclusion of biblical excerpts for reading, which belong to a purely East Slavonic tradition. She further suggests that some East Slavonic primers of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries may themselves in turn have been based on Ivan Fedorov's primer.

In her second article, which is a comparative study of eight printed editions of East Slavonic primers which she considers to be closely modelled on Fedorov's primer, Luk'yanenko takes issue with scholars such as Bykova and Jakobson who maintain that the format established by Fedorov provided the model for East Slavonic primers up to the late eighteenth century. She argues convincingly that the direct influence of Fedorov's primer effectively ends with Burtsov's primers of 1634 and 1637.

Vasily Fedorovich Burtsov (or Burtsov-Protopopov), unlike Ivan Fedorov, was probably not a man of letters, but a craftsman printer, punch-cutter and letter-founder. He headed one of the sections of the Moscow Pechatny dvor (Printing House) between 1633 and 1642 and, contrary to the traditions of that printing house, his name appears in the works that he printed. Printing in Moscow at the beginning of the seventeenth century was organized very much as it had been at the time when Ivan Fedorov was printing there. Unlike the Ukrainian and Belorussian lands which were dominated by the struggle of Orthodox believers against the increasing militancy of the Roman Catholic Church, where the cultural centres of Orthodoxy and printing were scattered, and where printing was financed by wealthy princes or magnates, Moscow was the centre of Orthodoxy and its one printing house had a single patron—the collective authority of Tsar and Church. Printing was therefore used mainly for the production of liturgical works. The output of the Pechatny dvor in the seventeenth century consisted of 440 large-format liturgical works, sixty-six other religious works (including primers) intended for reading outside the church, and only seven secular works.

As has been said, Church Slavonic was used not only in church services but also for all scholarly and literary writing. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it differed from the vernacular Russian not only in vocabulary but also in morphology and could be considered as a largely fossilized language. Thus the language of Ivan Fedorov's 1574
primer and of Burtsov’s 1637 primer is essentially the same, although in places attempts have been made in Burtsov’s primer to change some of the archaic features of Ivan Fedorov’s orthography and morphology. In the imprint of the 1574 primer, however, the influence of the local vernacular is evident: for the works ‘printed in Lvov in the year 1574’ Ivan Fedorov uses the Ukrainian vydrukovano and roku, whereas Burtsov in his colophon uses the Russian pechatati and leto. In form and content the Burtsov primer is also close to the Ivan Fedorov one. It is divided into the same sections but in addition has a preface (fols. 1/1^-1/6^) and a fairly lengthy afterword (fols. 13/3^r^-14/4^r). Burtsov also gives the names of the symbols of punctuation in addition to the names of the letters and in his section on orthography more examples are given. In the section of passages for reading Burtsov omits the prayers included in Ivan Fedorov’s primer but includes the ten commandments, additional passages from the Old and New Testaments, and the text ‘How Cyril the Philosopher compiled the alphabet . . .’.

The quality of printing of Burtsov’s primer is inferior to that of Fedorov’s in its types, clarity of print, layout, and justification, but there are some innovations (a few lines of printing in red, the use of signatures, and a woodcut illustration). The primer consists of 108 unnumbered leaves signed 1^8^-13^8, 14^4. The copy recently acquired by the British Library is imperfect, wanting fols. 1/4, 1/5. The size of the typeface is 87 mm over 10 lines and there are eleven lines to a page. There are three headpieces on fols. 2/4^r, 3/5^r, and 11/5^r, and on fol. 2/3^v, following the preface, there is a woodcut illustration representing a teacher and pupils in a school—the first Moscow book illustration with a secular motif. Beneath the illustration in the British Library copy (fol. 2/3^v) is the ownership inscription of one George Hooke (fig. 4), and on the previous blank page (fol. 2/3^r) there is a longer inscription in Russian. On the facing page (fol. 2/2^v) an attempt has been made in a different hand (possibly Hooke’s) to copy parts of the inscription and throughout the section on orthography this same writer has exercised himself in expanding in manuscript the words printed in contracted form. The inscription on fol. 2/3^v reads as follows:

Сея книга азъ быку алгел(н)ск(о)и земля Юрья романов(в) (д(а) с[ы]на Гука в лета о(т) со(в)да(н)и мира з(р)ми ф(е)в(в)аль д[е]нъ к (c) пок(р)ностю человъ бъ(т) Иван(ь)ка Иванов(ь) с[ы]на Ге(б)до(н).

This translates as:

This alphabet book belongs to the Englishman Yury son of Roman Guk. In the year from the creation of the world 7148 [i.e. 1640] February the 20th day. With humble greetings from [literally ‘humbly bows to the ground’] Ivashka son of Ivan Gebdon (fig. 5).

The writer of this inscription evidently knew Russian well, for it is proficiently penned in a flowing cursive hand and contains few irregularities of spelling or grammar. In fact we know from other sources of a John Hebdon who had a sound knowledge of spoken and written Russian. There were two John Hebdons, father and son, active in Russia in the seventeenth century, both indeed were Ivashka son of Ivan (or John son of John), but there is little doubt that it was the elder, Sir John, who inscribed the primer—his son
Fig. 4. Burtsov's Primer of 1637, fol. 2/3v
Fig. 5. Inscription by Sir John Hebdon on fol. 23r of Bartsov’s Primer of 1637
would have been little more than eight years old in 1640. Sir John Hebdon’s career as a merchant in Russia (he exported caviare and pitch to England), as an agent and later a diplomat for Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich is well documented by his Russian biographer Gurlyand.\(^{21}\) From Gurlyand’s account, based on documents from the *Prikaz Tainykh Del* (Office of Secret Affairs) we know that between the years 1652 and 1662 Hebdon was employed by the Tsar to travel to Western Europe to promote the export of Russian raw materials and to import into Russia manufactured goods, both luxury goods and weapons. At the same time he was instructed to recruit craftsmen and professional soldiers for Russian service. By the time of the Restoration he had been accorded semi-diplomatic status by the Tsar, denoted by his title of *rezident*.\(^{22}\) The Russians had not as yet any permanent diplomatic representatives abroad, but the need for such representatives was beginning to be felt, and Hebdon, as *rezident* in Holland and England, was one of the first of these foreign ‘experts’ to be recruited. The fact that he gained such influence at the Russian court must have been due in no small part to his knowledge of Russian and his understanding of Russian customs and protocol, coupled with his business acumen and ability to establish the right connections. To Gurlyand’s biography are appended various letters written by Hebdon to officials at the Russian court and to the Tsar himself which show that Hebdon was well able to combine the flowery and obsequious style necessary for dealings with the Russian court, with a shrewd ability to advance his own interests. Certainly, in the period following Charles I’s execution, when the English were *persona non grata* in Russia—a decree of 1649\(^{23}\) banned them from Moscow and abolished their former trading privileges—Hebdon seems never to have lost favour.

Gurlyand’s account illuminates the Russian side of Hebdon’s activities only. For references to his relations with the British government (during the Commonwealth and Restoration periods) we have to rely on a number of scattered English sources.\(^{24}\) From these we know that Hebdon was one of the governors of the Russia Company\(^ {25}\) which had been engaged in trade with Russia from the middle of the sixteenth century.\(^ {26}\) Hebdon seems to have been a staunch Royalist throughout the years of the Commonwealth—in 1650 he was instrumental in negotiating a loan from Tsar Aleksei for the Royalist camp\(^ {27}\) and he is alleged to have been extremely unhelpful towards Cromwell’s ambassador William Prideaux when he was assigned as interpreter to Prideaux’s mission to Russia in 1650.\(^ {28}\) Soon after the restoration of Charles II, by 1662 or at the latest 1663, he had returned to settle in England where his experience of Russian life made him invaluable as an adviser on Anglo-Russian relations and subsequently as an ambassador to Russia. There seems to have been a period when his position was somewhat ambiguous, in that he was considered to be in the employ of both the Russian and English governments. In June 1663 he is dubbed the ‘Russia Resident’ (i.e. the Russian Ambassador in England) by Pepys\(^ {29}\) only a week after he had been knighted by Charles II for his ‘good services performed between England and Russia’.\(^ {30}\) During these years Hebdon’s wife and married daughter remained in Russia, and he was still involved in commissions for the Tsar.\(^ {31}\) As late as 1664 when he travelled to Russia as part of the Earl of Carlisle’s embassy, he was still being described by the Russians as the ‘Russian Resident’.\(^ {32}\) In 1667 he made
his last journey to Russia, this time as Ambassador, with the task of restoring England’s
former trading privileges with Russia. His mission was a failure. Konovalov suggested that
Hebdon’s recent change of allegiance from the Russian to the English court may have
caused the Russians to distrust him and so may have been a partial cause of his lack of
success. He returned to England in 1668 where he died on 10 June 1670 and was buried
in Tooting Graveney.

Although the period of Hebdon’s life from 1652 onwards is relatively well documented,
very little is known about his early life and the date of his first arrival in Russia is uncertain
(unfortunately the records of the Russia Company for most of the seventeenth century
were destroyed in the Great Fire of London). The first mention of Hebdon which occurs
in the documents on which Gurlyand based his account refers to the year 1647 when he is
described as interpreter for the English inhabitants of Moscow. They further record that
in 1650 he was settled in Russia with his wife, his grown-up son Ivan-Rikhard (in fact
these were two sons John and Richard), and his married daughter (Elizabeth who
was the wife of Thomas Bryan, also of the Russia Company). Thus the inscription in
the primer (dated February 1640) predates Gurlyand’s reference by seven years and the
knowledge of Russian which it reveals suggests that Hebdon had already been in the
country for some time when he wrote it. Indeed, a note in Pedigrees of London states that he
was ‘33 years a merchant in Russia’. Since he had definitely returned to live in England
by 1663, if this source is correct, he would already have been in Russia in 1630, when he
would have been aged eighteen. However, his name does not appear in a list of merchants
resident in Russia in 1636 and it seems likely that ‘33 years a merchant in Russia’ results
from a not infrequent confusion between himself and his son John who last went to
Moscow in 1677-8. Our inscription stands as the earliest certain evidence of Hebdon’s
presence in Russia. That he was there six months later is proved by his signature on a
contemporary document, an oath taken by a merchant Henry Twentyman in Archangel in
August 1640. It seems most likely that Hebdon first went to Russia sometime between
1636 and 1640.

Thus the inscription in the primer adds a small but important fact to our knowledge of a
prominent seventeenth-century figure whose identity is well established. The identity of
Yury son of Roman Guk (i.e. George son of Robert Hooke), however, remains a mystery,
although a possible candidate would seem to be a certain George Hooke who was baptized
at St Vedast’s Church, Foster Lane, on 20 July 1617, the fifth of six children of Robert
Hooke, member of the Goldsmiths’ Company. Little further information has come to
light about George Hooke, but his father Robert is recorded as still living in the parish of
St Vedast in 1629 and in 1638 in ‘Cheapside, on the Southside thereof’. An entry in the
Memorials of the Goldsmiths’ Company for 2 September 1657 shows that Robert, then
aged seventy-nine, successfully petitioned the Company for an annuity of £4 a quarter.
His petition states that ‘Mr. Robert Hooke, sometime Upper Warden of this Company,
and now a poor member thereof . . . was formerly employed by the Company about the
new building of the Hall, wherein he spent his time daily for the space of about 4 years . . .’.
The Clerk further recounts that Hooke had ‘personally served in all the places of the
government of the Company’ and mentions his ‘diligent care and pains in the searches in the West Country as far as Launceston in Cornwall . . .’. If George Hooke followed in his father’s footsteps as a goldsmith or a prospector of mines then his profession would offer a plausible reason for his being in Russia in 1640. For the exploitation of precious metals which Russia possessed in abundance there was need of foreign expertise for both prospecting, mining, refining, and manufacturing. During the reign of Tsar Mikhail Fedorovich (1614–45) it is known that five British metallurgists served him in various capacities. One Walter Basbee, former assaymaster at the Goldsmiths’ Hall, was ordered by the Tsar to refine the gold of a rich copper mine in Siberia. In the 1620s and 1630s John Bulmer, John Martin, John Gilbert, and Francis Glover were all hired by the Tsar for their expert knowledge of jewels and precious metals. In 1633 Glover who was, like Hebdon, a Russia Company merchant, was granted ‘a ten-year monopoly for the manufacture of small gold, silver and copper objects. For this purpose Martin was commissioned to search abroad for craftsmen who specialised in making gold and silver thread. Three years later Martin’s brother Benedict brought some foreign craftsmen he had hired for John’s use.” We know too that one of the tasks entrusted to John Hebdon, during his journeys to Holland and Italy in the 1650s, was to recruit skilled goldsmiths, silversmiths, and diamond-cutters.” It could be that in earlier years too he was engaged on similar commissions for Tsar Mikhail and that he was responsible for persuading George Hooke to visit Russia. Or perhaps he simply helped Hooke to find his feet in a strange country. In August 1642 a goldsmith Thomas Attwood, who, having heard that there was employment for goldsmiths in Russia, had come to find work, was accompanied by Simon Digby, chief agent of the Russia Company, and John Hebdon ‘interpreter’ to a meeting with local Russian officials in Archangel, from whom he obtained a letter of recommendation to the Tsar and money for the journey to Moscow.” Hooke, too, evidently made his way to Moscow and remained in Russia for at least six years, for in April 1646 a letter was received by one of the Englishmen in Russia Thomas ‘Vergents’(? ) from ‘Yury Gok’, in which ‘Gok’ writes that he has arrived in Riga from Moscow (possibly on his way home to England). Another tenuous Hebdon connection is the fact that ‘Vergents’ also received a letter from John Hebdon’s brother Thomas, sent from Riga at about the same time.” However, absence of firm evidence makes it impossible to do more than speculate on the profession of George Hooke, his reasons for travelling to Russia, and his relations with John Hebdon.

The wording of the inscription suggests that Hebdon gave the primer to Hooke. The partial copy of the inscription on the facing page, which is not a stroke-by-stroke copy, but is in a different style of handwriting, suggests that the writer (perhaps Hooke) was able to read and understand what Hebdon had written and had therefore also mastered the language to some extent. The marginalia in the section on orthography which appear to be in the same hand suggest that he had some interest in using the primer for the purpose of learning the language. As has been noted, the primer is not a Russian but a Church Slavonic primer and its printed letters are of the semi-uncial style which was used in Church Slavonic books and manuscripts. The Russian language, which was written in a
different form of writing, in cursive hand, and which was used in the seventeenth century for private correspondence and in documents relating to business, law, administration, and diplomacy, was the language which Hebdon and Hooke would have needed to learn for practical purposes. However, in the absence of any specifically 'Russian' primer—the first Russian grammar, compiled by a German, H. W. Ludolf, was printed in 1696, in Oxford—Burtsov’s primer seems to have served as the best available stepping-stone to the mastery of the vernacular Russian language.

When and by whom, whether together or separately, the Ivan Fedorov and Burtsov primers were brought back to England, is not known. They were certainly in England before the end of the eighteenth century, for the spine of the eighteenth-century English binding remains intact. The volume remained in private ownership from that time until 1982 when the British Library was able to acquire it.

I would like to express my gratitude to Mr Norman Evans of the Public Record Office and Professor Geraldine Phipps for their help in my research on Hebdon and Hooke, and, most of all to Mr J. S. G. Simmons, without whose encouragement and assistance this article would not have been written.

1 Я. Запаско, Мистецтва спілкування Івана Федорова (Львів: Видавництво при Львівському державному університеті, 1974), р. 25.
3 В. И. Лукиянов, 'Переиздания первого-печатной заводки Ивана Федорова', Книго-печатание и книжные собрания в России до середины XIX века (Ленинград: БАН СССР, 1979), pp. 6-25 (p. 7). See also A. C. Зернова, 'Книги кирилловской печати, хранящиеся в заграничных библиотеках и неизвестные в русской библиографии', Труды Гос. библиотеки СССР им. В. И. Ленина (1958), т. 2, pp. 5-36.
4 No. 2 in Я. Запаско, Я. Ісаевич, Пам‘ятки книжкового мистецтва: каталог стародруків, виданих на Україні (Львів: Видавництво при Львівському державному університеті, 1981- ), 1 (1574-1700).
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