Every summer, Middlebury College hosts over 1,500 students on their quaint liberal arts
campus in rural Vermont to offer a unique immersive language experience. Thanks to the
financial support of Middlebury and Bowdoin’s Summer Language Study Program award, I was
one of over a hundred students to attend Middlebury’s 8-Week Russian Language School.
 When I tell people I study Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies (REEES) I am
often asked a simple but incredibly perplexed, “Why?” I was accustomed to jokingly telling
people that I had been lured into the REEES department by the amazing faculty with promises of
future job security without realizing the cost of that would be cramming grammatical case
endings for a morning exam or quiz every Friday. However, my summer at Middlebury affirmed
what I already knew about myself but found difficult to express to people unfamiliar with
REEES. That is, I love the beauty of the Russian language, the people who speak it, and the
talented professionals who work tirelessly to show a side of the world that can often be nearly
inaccessible. Even when I found myself struggling over the summer, whether it was yet again
cramming declensions and new vocabulary for Friday exams or learning how to form all
varieties of participles, I still found a lot of enjoyment in learning and improving.
While improving my language skills in the classroom, I also found joy in the assignments
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