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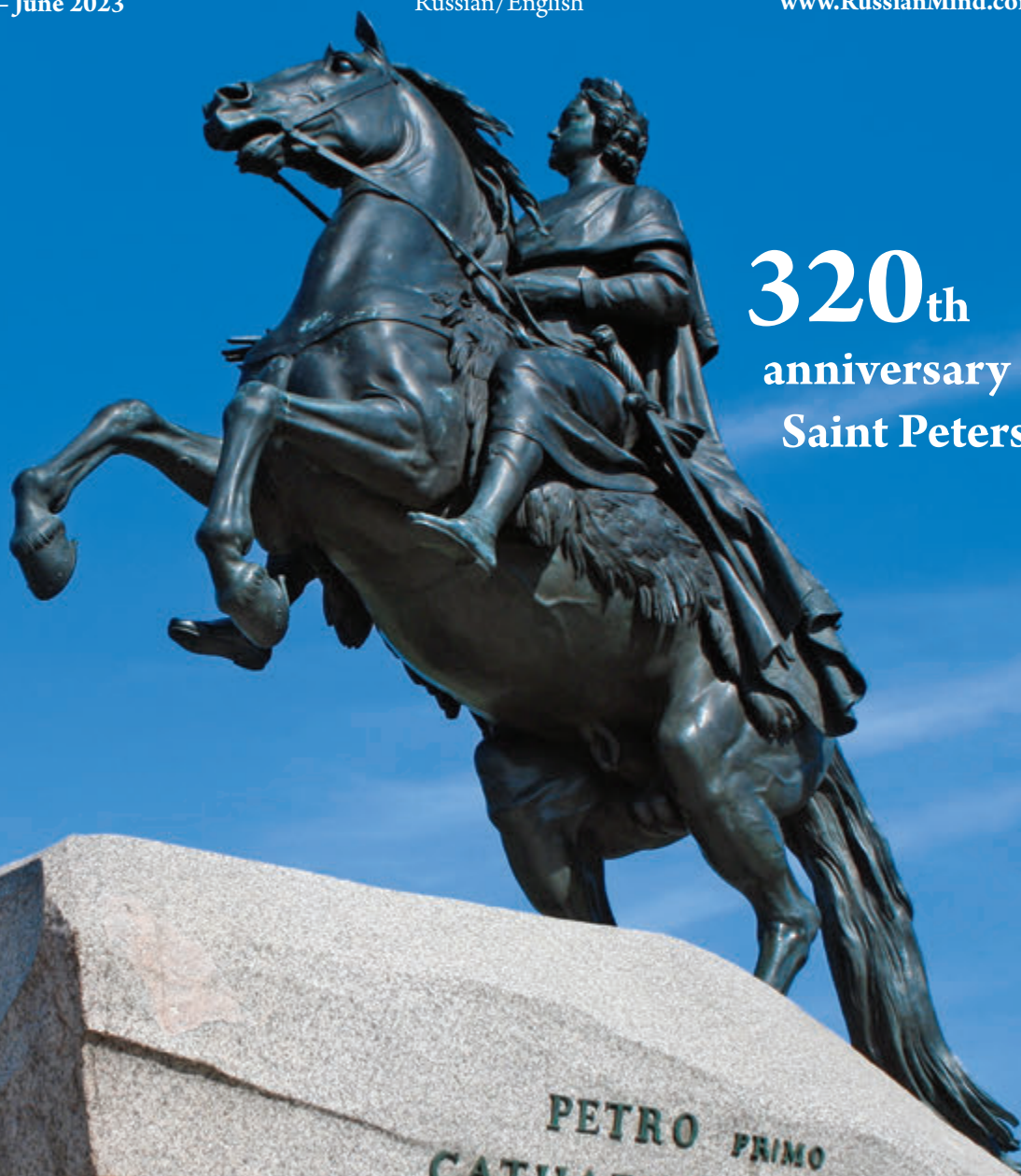
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PETROPOLIS AS AN IDEA

Marking the 320th anniversary of St. Petersburg

By KIRILL PRIVALOV



We love cities when they love us. But St. Petersburg does not need that. This city knows that under any circumstances it will remain the object of, if not universal admiration, then at least enthusiastic contemplation. Noble mansions and palaces of dignitaries built in the Baroque and Empire, accurate tenement houses in the Art Nouveau Modern style, majestic temples of all denominations... And bridges with their cast-iron support structures, carefully detailed canals, grooves wrapped in granite and leading to the full-flowing Neva... “Let’s go along the Moika, along the Moika...” calls one poet. “And over the Neva – the embassies of half the world, the Admiralty, the sun, silence!” another one echoes.

Of course, the cities built on high water have a special position. Especially, the capitals. And St. Petersburg is the great capital of Russia. Moreover, it is the capital among all capitals, although the youngest in Europe. It is not only due to its harmonious beauty as a single ensemble, but also because no other European capital would ever endure such trials. It is impossible to imagine, say, Paris, Rome or London choking and freezing in the blockade which lasted for almost nine hundred days. Or tell me, what other major city of the continent was renamed three times?.. But Petropolis – no matter how you call it! – is becoming only more meaning, moreover – meaningful. And no one and nothing are able to shake this meaningfulness of St. Petersburg – Petrograd – Leningrad for Russia, Europe, the whole civilised world. Neither the moisture falling from the sky and stubbornly refusing to choose between snow and rain, nor the endless wind impudently blowing like over a rotten swamp, nor the heavy sky, which looks like it threatens to fall on the ground with wet, ankle-deep slurry, nor hordes of barbarians surrounding the city walls... That’s what it is, the city of Peter the Great!



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The Bronze Horseman.
The statue of Peter the Great in Saint Petersburg.
Sculptor: Étienne Maurice Falconet



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CIRCULATION: 11 000 COPIES

This issue of *Russian Mind* remarks the 320th anniversary of St. Petersburg, the city about which it seems that everything has been said – especially over the past two centuries – by writers, politicians, thinkers... What is worth the mere revelation of the Frenchman Frédéric Beigbeder, “Night does not come in St. Petersburg, and only at six in the morning the sky becomes a little purple. You are standing on the banks of the Neva with strangers. Suddenly someone starts to sing and you sing too, without understanding the words. There is a feeling of something eternal, which you experience only in Russia. And only in Russia and nowhere else can one feel this grace; I know that as I have travelled all over the world. It is some kind of magical secret. We, foreigners, are going to your disorganised, noisy and completely insane country, because we expect to live a moment of bliss and eternity, a magical spark that will certainly flare up. But we will have to pay a very high price for that feeling. I think Russia is a drug. The most dangerous of all!”

It seems to me, the brilliant literary provocateur from Paris is right, but not completely. The magic of Petropolis is rather cold than intoxicating or burning. It attunes to an exalted state, coming from the bowels of the earth. From the wet, tightening depths that were staked, paved, covered by hundreds and thousands of bodies of Russians – from the time of Peter the Great and up to the trials of the blockade. These people were given as a message to us. I remember the words of Nikolai Nekrasov, “And on the sides, all the bones are Russian...” The city of Peter is a concentration of victims and self-sacrifice. These are the souls of heroes and martyrs, frozen in stone. This is the Russian Logos: both the Word of God and at the same time the eternal necessity of the difficult Russian existence. For the nation, formed in heavy searches from the Baltic to Sakhalin and from the Crimea to the Altai, is spiritually nourished in St. Petersburg to this day.

Having laid it on the site of the Chukhon swamps, Peter the Great determined the future of the country, or rather, the direction of its development. The Russian eagle, which reached us from afar, from the ancient Assyrians through the Byzantines, is two-headed. The first Russian emperor practically balanced the two crowned heads, decisively cutting through the *window to Europe*. And for three centuries, the city of Peter remains primarily a European *polis*, open to the western and northern winds.

And this is not only a location, but also a symbol. “On May 16 (old style), 1703, on Hare Island, Peter the Great founded the city of St. Petersburg in honour of St. Peter,” the chronicle says. It is unlikely that the tsar was fully aware of the burden he then threw upon himself. More precisely, not even upon himself and his supporters, but upon the whole of Russia, which was entering a new century and a new era. According to historians, about 227,000 people actually worked on the construction of St. Petersburg in the first ten years. It’s no laughing matter: in 1714 Peter issued a decree on a nationwide ban on stone construction to let all Russian stone go to the construction of St. Petersburg. The decree remained in force for fourteen years!

Over those years, the first outlines of the city were determined to form a unique construction site, an exquisite laboratory of creative genius. For creative people, the city of Peter means a secret interlocutor for dialogue, it is a declaration of love for a mythical creature, moreover, a living one: from Derzhavin and Pushkin to Akhmatova and Mandelstam. “I don’t want to



Saint Petersburg. Palace Square

choose either a country or a graveyard – I’ll come to Vasilyevsky Island to die,” Joseph Brodsky confessed to Petropolis, however – alas! – he was not given a chance to follow his reckless promise.

“The most abstract and deliberate city on the entire globe,” as Fyodor Dostoevsky described St. Petersburg in *Notes from Underground*. It is a fact. Sometimes, when visiting St. Petersburg, I catch myself thinking that this city is almost virtual. It is so ghostly and filled with a certain detachment, fatal inaccessibility... Its mysterious unsteadiness is multiplied by urban

perfection. That emphatically classical sense of proportion forms the mind of everyone who reaches the banks of the Neva, Moika, Fontanka... The chaos of the world around us acquires healthy, conscious boundaries under the influence of St. Petersburg’s noble, Nordic snobbery and fills the soul with peace and breath. Yes, the very one that has come to us through the centuries. The

magnificently, proudly...” Indeed, it was impossible not to add up a host of myths about St. Petersburg. Everything in it is conducive to this – the cult of the white nights, the chronicles of the monstrous floods in old times, and the abundance of real heroes of the past: tsars and architects, writers and pirates...

Once I was walking along Gorokhovaya Street, and at the corner of Bolshaya Morskaya Street I saw a memorial plaque with an inscription in Russian and English, “John Paul Jones, admiral of the Russian Navy, national hero and father of the United States Navy lived here from 1788 to 1789.” What a miracle! I put some effort, dug into the archives and discovered

city is only more than three centuries old – which is not comparable to Athens or Constantinople, – but it is easy to get lost in the abyss of time. One can see such dreams in it, where reality is effortlessly confused with phantoms, with such ghosts as Gogol’s *The Nose* and Pushkin’s *Queen of Spades* and *Bronze Horseman*.

Alexander Sergeyevich subtly felt the fabulousness of St. Petersburg, its unreality. Do you remember? “A hundred years have passed, and the young city, // The beauty and wonder of midnight countries, // From the darkness of forests, from the depth of swamps, // It ascended

that the Scot John Paul Jones, who had previously fought with the British under the flag of the young United States, entered into the service of the Empress Catherine the Great and became Rear Admiral *Pavel de Zhones* in Russia. He led the squadron of the Russian Navy in the Dnieper estuary and selflessly beat the Ottomans along with Potemkin and Kutuzov. However, being too hothead and simple-hearted, he did not fit into the Petersburg’s crown realities. Disappointed, he asked the Empress for a two-year vacation and left in May 1790... Guess, where to? Of course, to France! France continued to fight

with England, which was exactly what the admiral was looking for himself. But it did not happen... On June 18, 1792, John Paul Jones died in Paris at the age of forty-five. Doctors considered the cause of death to be kidney disease, but the friends of the naval commander were sure that he was poisoned by the vengeful British. The Scot managed to make a will. It was specific: Jones asked to place his body in a hermetic coffin and fill it with alcohol.

After the death of John Paul Jones, he remained in oblivion for a long time. The man called the *founding father of the US Navy* in American encyclopedias, was not reburied until 1905. The naval commander found his last refuge in the coffin installed in the Naval Academy Chapel in Annapolis. Today, future US Navy officers take the oath at his grave... It is unlikely that they are told that when the sarcophagus was opened, John Paul Jones laid in it as if alive. He was in the full dress uniform of an admiral of the Russian fleet, with the Order of St. Anne on his chest and a Peter’s faceted glass (it was also called *naval drinking glass*) in his hand. What can a man do, Russian vodka was his favourite drink.

You can’t throw words out of a song: St. Petersburg was created, next to the Russians, shoulder to shoulder, by the French and Germans, Italians and the British... It is a European city with Russian blizzards, cataclysms and passions, with a Russian combination of non-Russian straight streets and squares. This emphasised dualism – the sophisticated symbiosis of the West and the East – is the principal meaning of the Northern capital founded by Peter the Great. Petropolis is a breakthrough into the future promising good and honest relations between people from different states, it is a brilliant idea of unification timelessly embodied by Russians. And not only for ourselves – wherever we live and wherever we work, – but for the whole of Europe. For the whole world.

HISTORY

BIRTH OF THE GREAT CITY

Saint Petersburg was the first city in Russia, which developed according to a prescribed plan

By OLEG OZEROV

Saint Petersburg was founded by Peter I named the Great. They tried to challenge this truth in the 18th and 19th centuries, and they are still trying to challenge it today, based on the assumption that the Swedes once built a fortress on the site of the city established by Peter and a dozen houses in which Swedish merchants lived.

But, firstly, it was a colonial settlement. The Neva River banks had never belonged to the Swedes. Ivan the Terrible vigilantly looked after this land, and when the Swedes or Danes tried to settle at the mouth of the Neva River, Russian archers knocked them out from there.

When Ivan the Terrible fell ill in 1583 and the Swedes heard about it, they tried to recapture small plots of land there, but the archers drove them out.

Boris Godunov, having become the Russian sovereign, lost almost everything that was important for the defense of Rus' along the western border.

Admirers of this insidious despot believe that his most important achievement included the successful negotiations with the Swedes, as a result of which the fortresses of Yam, Koporye and Ivangorod were returned to Russia. At the same time, for some reason, they rarely remember that in return for that, Godunov gave up Narva to the Swedes.

The result was disastrous for Russia! Before that the Swedes had to locate three small garrisons in three fortresses, none of which was as powerful as Narva, which was considered impregnable. Now the Swedes consolidated their forces, which were

previously distributed among three garrisons, and, accordingly, were able to maintain one large garrison in Narva with an unprecedented number of guns. When Peter I besieged the Narva Castle in 1704, the Swedes had up to 3.5 thousand infantry, 1 thousand cavalry and 570 guns there! And navigation on the Narva River, which flowed into the Narva Bay, was completely blocked by the fortress.

So, who ultimately won the Godunov's negotiations?

Having established themselves in Narva, the Swedes launched a rapid expansion throughout the north-western part of Rus'.

At the beginning of the 17th century, taking advantage of weak Russia that suffered from the fratricidal Time of Troubles spread by Godunov, the Swedes captured most of the Neva River banks, and in 1611, at the mouth of the Okhta River, the Swedes founded the Nyenschantz fortress on the site of a small Russian settlement. On the opposite bank of the Okhta River, the Swedes began to build the city of Nyen.

In 1617, the Swedes even announced that they included this colony in the kingdom called Ingria and immediately started to oust the Russian population from the occupied territories.

According to the Treaty of Stolbovo signed between Russia and Sweden in 1617, almost all of the Neva River banks and most of the lands once conquered by the Swedes in that area, went to Sweden. Tsar Michael (Romanov) had to go for it under the conditions when Russia was ruined and weakened by the Time of Troubles and the Polish intervention.

According to the Treaty of Stolbovo of 1617, Russian nobles who did not want to become subjects of the Swedish king, were given only two weeks to leave Ingria. The Swedish kings willingly distributed their lands to Swedish nobles. By the time Russian troops appeared at the mouth of the Neva River in 1703, the lands on which Petersburg soon began to be built, were already divided among large Swedish landowners. The largest possessions belonged to the governors who ruled here.

In 1656, the Russian commander, the royal cup-bearer P. I. Potemkin took Nyenschantz by storm, however, then Russia still failed to return the Neva lands, and the Swedish authorities actively continued to oust the Russian population.

During the Northern War (1700–1721), Russian troops under the command of Boris Sheremetev invaded Swedish Ingermanland (Ingria). First, on December 30, 1701, a victory was won in the Battle of Erastfer, and then in July 1702, in the Battle of Hummelshof. On September 27, 1702, Russian troops under the command of Sheremetev laid siege to the Swedish fortress of Nöteborg located at the source of the Neva River from Lake Ladoga, and on October 11, 1702, they stormed and took the fortress. Finally, in the spring of 1703, after a week-long siege, the Nyenschantz fortress located at the confluence of the Okhta River with the Neva River, was taken by Russian troops. Thus, by the beginning of 1703, the Russian army regained the coast along the entire course of the Neva River. The settlement of Nöteborg built by the Swedes on the

site of the Oreshek fortress, which was founded back in 1323 by Prince Yuri Danilovich, was renamed Shlisselburg ("key-city") by Peter I, and on May 16 (27), 1703, he founded the new city of Saint Petersburg at the mouth of the Neva River.

However, they soon had to defend themselves from the Swedes: in the summer of 1703 and in the summer of 1705, the Russian army and fleet twice repulsed the attack of the Swedish fleet on Kotlin and Saint Petersburg.

The tsar faced the question of how best to defend the future city: after all, the Northern War was still going on! Having studied the map of the delta of Neva, Peter I chose Zayachy Island as the site for the construction of the fortress, where some of the fortifications of the Nyenschantz fortress were preserved. The preserved part of the central fortification and both crownworks of the fortress were saved, and the Smolyany Yard was located in the left-bank crownwork. Part of all these fortifications is believed to have survived until 1717, when the fortress was almost entirely rebuilt. Both crownworks and other remaining fortifications were completely torn down only by 1745, but already from 1725, those who were transferred to live in the new capital were settled in the remaining part of the old settlement.

Peter the Great decided to call his brainchild Saint Petersburg. Of course, his own name mattered when he chose the city's name. But, in addition, the Apostle Peter, according to Christian tradition, was the keeper of the keys to paradise, which also seemed symbolic to the Russian Tsar, since the city, bearing the name of his heavenly patron, was to become "the key to the Baltic Sea." A few years later, the fortress was named the Peter and Paul Fortress after the name of its main cathedral. The name of the city – *Sankt-Piter-Burch* – was close to the Dutch



Portrait of Peter I by Godfrey Kneller. 1698



Monument to Peter I. On the left side, the opening of the monument on August 7 (18), 1782

pronunciation of *Sint-Petersburg*; it is well known that Peter I among foreign languages has the best command of Dutch. In 1720, the name *Sankt-Piter-Burch* was changed to the more euphonious Saint Petersburg.

Among the first buildings of the new city are the original “Peter’s Palace” (a house on Berezovy Island), as well as the Church of the Holy Trinity.

Menshikov’s house appeared next to Peter’s house, then the first Gostiny Dvor and the first sugar factory. Judging by the names of the first streets in the capital – Posadskaya, Dvoryanskaya, Ruzheinaya, Monetnaya, Pushkarskaya, Zeleynaya (Settlement, Noble, Rifle, Coin, Gun, Potion streets) – the new city developed not only as a military fortress, but also as a secular settlement.

In November 1703, in memory of the fact that the fortress was founded on the day of the Holy Trinity, the first temple, the Trinity Church, was opened in the city. It was here that in 1721 Peter accepted the title of emperor.

Peter I attached exceptional importance to the new city for providing a waterway from Russia to Western Europe. In the autumn of 1704, at the mouth of the Neva River, the construction of the Admiralty Shipyards with fortifications began. At the end

of 1706, in order to protect the Peter and Paul Fortress from shelling from the opposite bank, Peter I issued an order to build the Kronverk. The victory in the Battle of Poltava (1709) and the capture of Vyborg further strengthened the position of Saint Petersburg.

Saint Petersburg, which had been the capital of Russia for two centuries starting in 1710, was built mainly by serfs who were forcibly driven to build the city. They say that Petersburg stands on the bones. Indeed, during the construction, several thousand peasant workers died from malnutrition and exhausting labour. But in 1710, Peter ordered to relocate about 15 thousand different artisans from all regions of Russia to Saint Petersburg. Lands in the city were distributed for free. Thus, that part of the city which today forms the historical centre, was built up very quickly.

At that time the construction was focused on European canons, all buildings were erected by foreign masters in the image and likeness of the architecture of European countries. Saint Petersburg was built according to the well-managed plan. Peter I wanted to liken the new city to Venice or Amsterdam. By order of the emperor, the architects J. B. Leblon and Domenico Trezzini developed the site plans for the new capital.

Saint Petersburg was the first city in Russia (and the only one for almost 200 years!), which developed according to a prescribed plan. This determined the high level of urban planning and contributed to the formation of urban ensembles characteristic of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. In 1703, by royal decree, the Chancery for the Buildings was established, which supervised all the work, but in fact it was directed by Peter himself. In order for the city to grow and develop rapidly, the tsar temporarily forbade stone construction everywhere except Saint Petersburg. And on May 19, 1712, at the behest of the tsar, the capital was relocated from the old merchant Moscow to young, only nine-year-old Saint Petersburg.

During the first ten years of the city’s existence, its main area included the Gorodskoy Island (now Petrogradsky Island) with facilities, artisanal settlements and military units. The Island was connected to the Peter and Paul Fortress with a drawbridge. Later, the left bank of the Neva River began to be built up, where the Winter Palace, Summer Palace of Peter I, and Summer Garden were located. In 1712, Peter I issued a decree on the creation of the Master Plan of Saint Petersburg, according to which Vasilyevsky Island



Map of Saint Petersburg. 1720

was chosen as the centre of the city. It was here that port facilities, lighthouses, as well as the building of the Twelve Colleges and the Kunstkamera were built. In 1713, the Senate moved here. In 1725, the Academy of Sciences was founded in Saint Petersburg, where in 1728 the first Russian newspaper, *Sankt-Petersburgskie Vedomosti*, was published.

Until the middle of the 18th century, little attention was paid to the decoration of the city, pursuing a single goal to erect as many buildings as possible at a rapid pace. At first, there

were not so many large stone structures. But with the reign of Empress Elizaveta Petrovna, the construction policy changed: during her reign, they began to put efforts to enrich the city with majestic buildings worthy of the national capital. It was then that the construction of the Winter Palace began, where the Hermitage Museum is now located. Anichkov Palace, Smolny and Vladimir Cathedrals also were added.

Even more structures appeared during the reign of Catherine the Great. This period is considered

the heyday of Russian architecture. When the queen came to the throne, there were about 60 thousand inhabitants in the city, and thirty years later 230 thousand people already lived there. It was during the time of Catherine II that the mass construction of the city with spectacular stone buildings began, which today form the main attractions of the city on the Neva River: Palace Square, Kamennostrovsky and Yelagin Palaces. At the same time, the famous monument to Peter I, The Bronze Horseman, was created.



Nevsky Prospekt and the first building of the Admiralty of Russia

During the same period, the territory of the Alexander Nevsky Lavra was developed. The empress paid special attention to the decoration of public spaces suitable for walking; during her reign, all the embankments of Neva were lined with granite stone.

During the reign of Paul I, the construction of beautiful buildings in the city continued. The 19th century generally became a golden age in the architecture of the Northern Capital. Saint Isaac's and Kazan Cathedrals, the Mariinsky Palace, the Mikhailovsky Castle, the Church of the Saviour on Blood and many other buildings were then built in Saint Petersburg. The buildings of the supreme institutions of Russia – the Senate and the Synod, the General Staff Building and ministries on Palace Square also appeared. The city gradually began to acquire the features that have been preserved in its

appearance till now: straight streets, austerity of style and building density. At that time, architects and builders adhered to certain rules that were formulated by the emperors. Developers were required to strictly observe the established lines of streets: only canopies over entrances – and balconies and bay windows at the second floor or above – could protrude beyond the line of facades.

However, at that time, in addition to luxurious private mansions, the number of tenement houses in Saint Petersburg, the owners of which rented out their premises, grew rapidly. In an effort to extract the maximum income, each homeowner built up his site as densely as possible. Such high building density, the abundance of dark and damp courtyard-wells have become a typical feature of many quarters of Saint Petersburg.

At the beginning of the 20th century, industrial progress broke into

the city. At the time, preference was given not to the construction of new buildings, but to improving the lives of citizens. Dozens of bridges were built across numerous rivers and canals of Saint Petersburg, railway lines appeared to connect the city with all corners of Russia. For the convenience of residents' movement along the streets, trams were introduced in 1907. Life in the city has become more attractive and convenient. That is why at the beginning of the 20th century tens of thousands of people from all over the country came here to live. The growth of the population of the capital during this period outpaced the growth of the population of Paris, London and even New York.

In August 1914, in the wake of anti-German sentiment associated with the First World War, the city was renamed Petrograd.

After the October Revolution, state architectural and planning

institutions were established here, which involved major Petrograd architects: A. I. Gegello, V. G. Gel-freikh, A. S. Nikolsky, L. V. Rudnev, I. A. Fomin. Behind the Narva, Moscow and Vyborg outposts, the construction of residential buildings and public buildings was launched. New types of structures began to appear: community centres, clubs, communal kitchens, communal houses. The architecture of that period was called constructivism.

In 1924, after the death of Lenin, Petrograd was renamed Leningrad by decision of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks. The master plan for the development of the city adopted in 1935, provided for complex development of the former outskirts. However, these works, so necessary for the city, were interrupted by the outbreak of the Great Patriotic War.

The most tragic page in the history of Leningrad is the almost 900-day siege of the city by German troops. By the end of the war, the population of Leningrad had decreased by almost half: about 600 thousand people died of starvation, tens of thousands were evacuated. Hitler's plans included wiping Leningrad off the face of the earth, arranging a ball before that in its best hotel, the Astoria. However, the heroism of Leningraders and Russian soldiers did not allow Hitler's plans to come true.

The feat of the Leningrad restorers, who restored the monuments of Leningrad and its suburbs after the war, has no analogues in the history of architecture.

In 1951, a new revised master plan for the development of the city was adopted, in which much attention was paid to the reconstruction and municipal improvement of the city centre. In 1955, an act was signed in the city on the commissioning of the first phase of the Leningrad Metro. Today this subway is one of the most beautiful in the world. In 1990, the



Drawing of the Kunstkamera project

historic city centre was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

The original name was returned to the city in 1991, after the collapse of the USSR.

Modern Saint Petersburg is a city of new technologies. Construction is now divided in two directions: the reconstruction of old buildings and the construction of new ones using postmodernist trends combined with the old architectural styles.

The city has always been one of the most important tourist centres in the world. For example, in 2022, 8 million tourists visited Saint Petersburg.

The museums of Saint Petersburg are comparable in their collections to the most valuable art collections in the world; the city competes in this area with the Prado of Madrid, the Louvre of Paris and the Vatican Museums. It is the largest museum in Russia, the State Hermitage. Its expositions occupy six buildings, where about 3 million showpieces are stored. The real pride of the museum is the building of the Winter Palace, where the residence of the royal family was located. This magnificent complex was built in the Elizabethan Baroque style by Bartolomeo



Arch of Palace Square



Mikhailovsky Castle

Rastrelli, a Russian architect of Italian origin. In front of it is Palace Square, an architectural ensemble built in the 18th and 19th centuries. The middle of the square is crowned by the monumental Alexander Column, which is dedicated to the victory of the Russian Empire over Napoleon's army. The column was erected by decree of Nicholas I.

Saint Petersburg is a museum town. We should start listing its attractions, perhaps, with the oldest architectural monument of Saint Petersburg, the Peter and Paul Fortress. The date of laying the fortress on May 16 (27), 1703 is also considered the date when Saint Petersburg was founded. According to the classification of the fortresses of the Russian Empire, it was considered a class I fortress, but was not used in any battle. The modern fortress includes numerous architectural monuments and museums: the Peter and Paul Cathedral (the tomb of the Russian imperial house of the Romanovs), Grand Ducal Burial Vault, Boathouse, Commandant's House, Engineering House, Mint, Museum of the History of Saint Petersburg, Military Historical Museum of Artillery, Engineers and Signal Corps, Museum of Cosmonautics

and Rocket Technology. The fortress belongs to the historical part of Saint Petersburg and, together with the complex of monuments located here, is included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. The Peter and Paul Cathedral on the territory of the fortress remained the main temple of the capital for a long time. It was built in the classical Russian Baroque style.

One of the oldest buildings in the city is the Kunstkamera, a museum created on the personal instructions of Peter I. For more than 300 years, samples of mutations, deformities, gene disorders, pathologies and man-made "ugliness" of nature and the human body have been collected there. In the early years of the museum's existence, real dwarfs, giants and other people with various abnormalities lived there. People always showed high interest in this unusual collection, part of which was compiled by the tsar himself during his travels abroad. To date, more than a million specimens of rare phenomena have been collected in the Kunstkamera.

One of the most beautiful examples of the palace architecture of Saint Petersburg is the Mikhailovsky Castle, the most expressive symbol of the Pavlovian era. The artistic tastes

and originality of its main creator, Emperor Paul I, were embodied in its appearance. The castle was built on the island bounded from the north and east by the waters of the Moika and Fontanka rivers. From the western and southern sides, the island was washed by two specially dug channels, Voskresensky and Tserkovny. The system of castle fortifications that surrounded the palace, and the Connetable Square located in front of it, included canals, semi-bastions, drawbridges and cannons. A monument to Peter I was erected in the middle of the square, cast in 1745-1747 according to the Rastrelli model made during the life of the famous great-grandfather Paul I. Emperor Paul wished to find a safe home, fearing palace coups. Ironically, it was in his new castle that he was killed.

The palace premises, including the gala halls of the castle, reopened to the public after many years of restoration. The principal retrospective exhibition of the State Russian Museum is showcased here in the castle. The remaining exhibits of the Russian Museum are located in the Benois Wing.

The Russian Museum is the largest museum of Russian fine art in



Peter and Paul Fortress at the end of the 19th century



Smolny Convent at the beginning of the 20th century

the world. It was opened at the end of the 19th century. The museum collection was made up of exhibits from the Hermitage, the Alexander Palace, the Academy of Arts, as well as from private collections of some Russian aristocrats. In the museum you can see the paintings of Bryullov, Repin, Aivazovsky and other masters. As of January 1, 2023, the museum collection includes 444,705 items.

On the banks of the Neva River, on the site where the first Baltic shipyard once stood, a building made in the Russian Empire style and topped with a high spire, is raised. This is the Admiralty, which since 2012 has hosted the Russian Naval High Command. Under Peter I, there was a fortress here that protected the shipyard during the Great Northern War. The ship silhouette crowning the spire of the Admiralty is one of the symbols of the Northern Capital.

Another creation of Rastrelli is an architectural complex built by order of Empress Elizaveta Petrovna, the Smolny Convent (another name for the monastery is the Voskresensky Novodevichy Monastery). The Smolny Convent had been built for 87 years, the work was often interrupted by wars and lack of funding.

The main cathedral was never open for worship. A concert hall has been operating here since 1990.

There are more than 100 theatres and theatre groups in Saint Petersburg. But the most famous theatres of the city include two of them, the Alexandrinsky and Mariinsky. The Alexandrinsky Theatre is the first Russian drama theatre in history available for the public, founded in the middle of the 18th century by decree of Empress Elizaveta Petrovna. The Mariinsky Theatre is the main opera stage of the city, known all over the world. It appeared in the middle of the 19th century by decree of Alexander II, who wished to name it in honour of his wife Maria Alexandrovna. The theatre performances are very popular among residents and guests of Saint Petersburg.

It is impossible not to mention the beautiful, majestic cathedrals of Saint Petersburg: the Kazan Cathedral created by Voronikhin; Saint Isaac's Cathedral by Montferrand; Church of the Savior on Blood, and other religious buildings. And of course, the Bronze Horseman, a monument on Senate Square dedicated to the founder of the city, Peter the Great,

holds a unique position in the list of the tourist attractions in the city.

The equestrian monument to Peter appeared at the request of Empress Catherine II. She decided to perpetuate the image of Peter in a majestic figure with a scepter, dressed in the clothes of a Roman emperor. But the sculptor Falconet proposed a different solution. According to his plan, the first Russian emperor was to be perceived primarily as a builder, creator, thinker and benefactor of Russia.

In the equestrian monument created by Falconet, Peter the Great is moving upward, striving for the greatness of his empire, over the expanses of which he stretches his right hand...

Everyone who comes to Saint Petersburg begins their acquaintance with it from Nevsky Prospekt, the most famous and picturesque street of the Northern Capital. The avenue was designed as the main entrance to the city from Moscow. It stretched for 4.5 km. There are many architectural monuments here. They say that the spirit of Saint Petersburg itself lives on Nevsky Prospekt.

Anyone who has ever visited the Northern Capital will keep the memory of this great city for life.



The Winter Palace at the beginning of the 20th century

HOLY CHURCHES OF SAINT PETERSBURG

St Petersburg is rightfully proud of its magnificent Orthodox cathedrals

By EKATERINA GRIGORIEVA

Every historic building has its own unique fate. Every cathedral in St Petersburg has it too – often complex, sometimes tragic. Many masterpieces of great architects went through the trials of fire, war and militant atheism... But they survived and today they delight the hearts of people.

Saints Peter and Paul Cathedral



The first wooden church of Saints Peter and Paul was built in 1703–1704 on the territory of the newly founded Peter and Paul Fortress. Eight years later it was decided to build a stone cathedral here, but in such a way that the wooden church would remain inside the new building. The building of

a new church designed by the architect Domenico Trezzini was finished in 1732. The Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul, 122.5 metres (401 feet) high, dominated St Petersburg till 2012, when residential skyscrapers were built in the city.

In 1924, the building of the cathedral received the status of a museum, but since 2000 services have been held there again. The cathedral houses the burial vault of the Romanov Dynasty.

Cathedral of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross

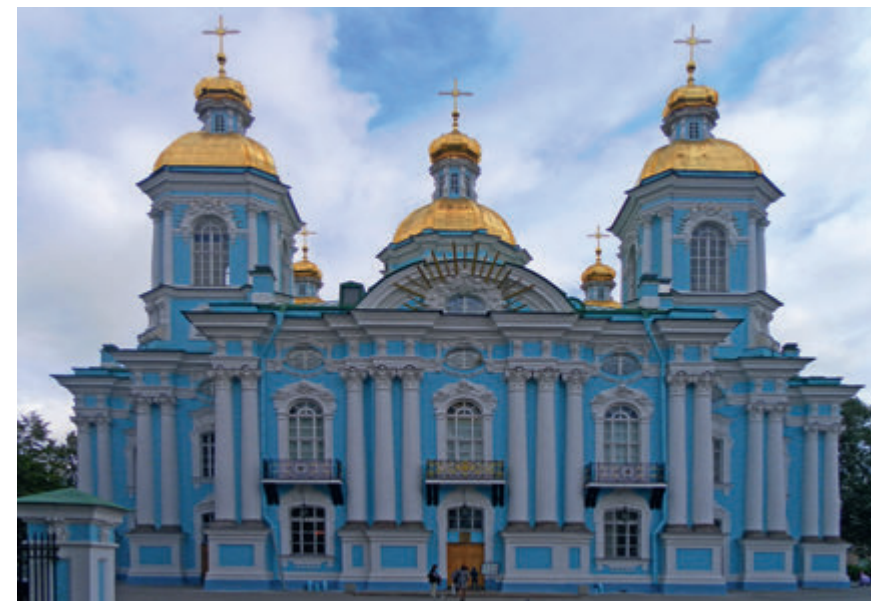
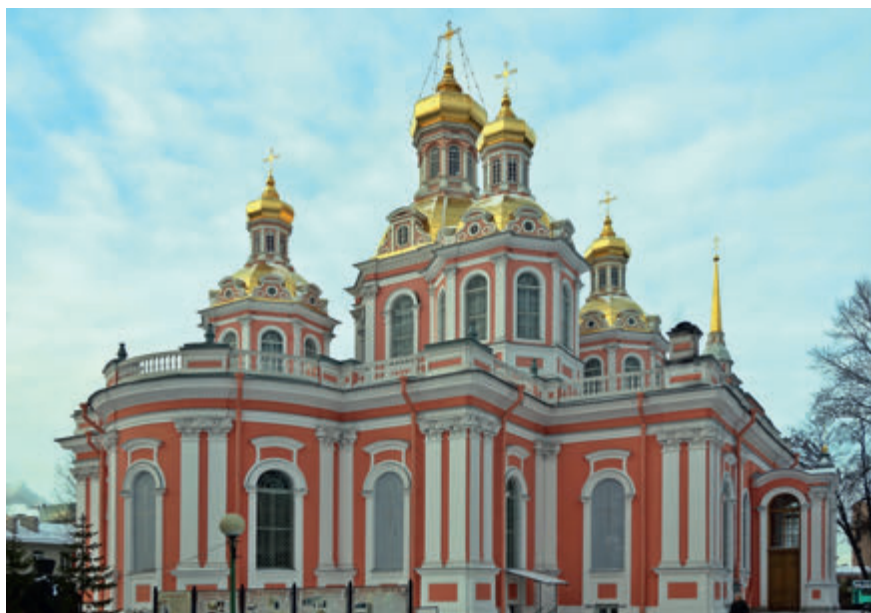
The first church, the predecessor of the Cathedral of the Exaltation of the Cross in St Petersburg, appeared shortly after the foundation

of the city and was wooden. The three-aisled stone church was erected in 1740. Its main altar was dedicated to the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, the north altar – to St Nicholas and the west one – to St John the Baptist. A bell tower was built over the western porch, and the Church of the Tikhvin Icon was built behind the sanctuary.

In the mid-nineteenth century the Church of the Exaltation of the Cross was rebuilt by the architect Yegor Dimetr. In 1872 a small Church of the holy Equal-to-the-Apostles Cyril and Methodius was built on the bell tower's second storey.

In the Soviet era the church was closed and converted into restoration workshops. The church was badly damaged during the Second World War.

The church was revived in 1991.



Saint Nicholas Naval Cathedral

St Nicholas Naval Cathedral on the banks of the Kryukov Canal is a unique architectural monument. Built in the Baroque style, it consists of two churches: the upper Theophany Church and the lower one in honour of St Nicholas the Wonderworker of Myra, a patron-saint of sailors.

The initiator of the building of the church was General-Admiral Mikhail Golitsyn, who applied with a petition to Empress Elizabeth Petrovna and she granted him permission. Building work to the design of the architect Savva Chevakinsky, begun on 15th July, 1753, was completed nine years later under Catherine II as a cathedral of extraordinary beauty. The Empress presented the cathedral with ten icons depicting the saints, on whose feast-days the Russian Navy had won victories over the Ottomans. From the very beginning St Nicholas Naval Cathedral became a monument of Russia's maritime glory.

Saint Andrew's Cathedral

Saint Andrew's Cathedral on Vasilevsky Island was founded in 1764

insignia of the Order of St Andrew the First-Called was put up above the entrance.

The cathedral was closed in the summer of 1938, but was protected by the State as an architectural monument. The seventeenth-century carved iconostasis has survived to this day. In 1992 the cathedral was returned to the St Petersburg's Metropolis.

Cathedral of the Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God

The building of the Cathedral of the Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God on the site of the wooden church of the same name in Torgovaya Square (now called Vladimirskaia Square) began in August 1761. The design is attributed to Pietro Trezzini, though there is an opinion that it might have been Christian Knobel. The free-standing bell tower was designed by Giacomo Quarenghi.

The church was consecrated on 9th April, 1783 in honour of one of the most venerated icons in Rus' – the Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God. According





Prince St Vladimir's Cathedral

The Prince St Vladimir's Cathedral was founded in St Petersburg in 1740 by decree of Empress Anna Ioannovna next to the clay-walled Dormition Church.

However, after the accession to the throne in 1741 of Elizabeth Petrovna, the youngest daughter of Peter the Great, work stopped and was not resumed until 1766, when the architect Antonio Rinaldi made a new design for the church.

In 1773, the construction of the building was interrupted again by a fire and was not resumed until ten years later under the supervision of the architect Ivan Starov.

On 1st October, 1789, the new cathedral was consecrated in honour of the holy Prince Vladimir.

to church tradition, the icon was painted by Luke the Evangelist on the board of the table at which the Holy Family used to eat. The icon was brought to Russia from the Byzantine Empire by Prince Yuri Dolgoruky, who received it as a gift from Patriarch Luke Chrysoberges of Constantinople.

The icon was kept in the Convent of the Mother of God near Kiev, and then at the Dormition Cathedral in the city of Vladimir, where it was moved by Yuri Dolgoruky's son Andrei Bogolyubsky. This is how the icon got its name.

In 1395, the icon was brought to Moscow to protect it from the invasion of Timur. Since 1999 the miracle-working icon has been kept at St Nicholas Church in Tolmachi at the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow.

In 1930 the Cathedral of the Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God was closed. For a long time, it was occupied by a knitting mill, but since 1990 services have been celebrated at the church again.



Cathedral of the Kazan Icon

The Cathedral of the Kazan Icon was built in Nevsky Avenue by order of Emperor Paul I on the site of the dilapidated Church of the Nativity of the Mother of God, where the wonderworking Kazan Icon of the Mother of God was kept – one of the most beloved Orthodox relics. According to the plan of Paul I, the cathedral was supposed to be as magnificent and harmonious as St Peter's Cathedral in Rome.

In 1811 the church, built in the style of Russian classicism by the architect Andrei Voronikhin, was dedicated to the Kazan Icon of the Mother of God.

The cathedral was built just before the French invasion of Russia in 1812. It was here that the great military commander Mikhail Golenishchev-Kutuzov prayed in front of the wonderworking icon before setting off to the troops near Smolensk and was buried in 1813.

After the victory over Napoleon the Cathedral of the Kazan Icon was regarded as a monument of Russian military glory. Monuments to the field marshals of the 1812 War – Mikhail Kutuzov and Michael Barclay de Tolly – were set up in the square in front of the church.

Transfiguration Cathedral

The Cathedral of the Transfiguration of the Saviour was built in 1829 to the design of Vasily Stasov in the Empire style on the site of an earlier church that had been destroyed in a fire that had broke out on 8th August, 1825. The restored church was re-consecrated on 5th August, 1829 by Metropolitan Seraphim (Glagolevsky).



After the Russian Revolution the church remained active, and during the Siege of Leningrad a bomb shelter was opened in its vault.

Holy Trinity-Izmailovsky Cathedral

The history of the Holy Trinity-Izmailovsky Cathedral is directly connected with the formation of the Life Guards of the Izmailovsky Regiment in 1730, during which a camp church-tent was set up, which, by order of Empress Anna Ioannovna, was consecrated on 12th July, 1733 in honour of the Holy Trinity.

Ten years later, the regimental church was moved to a permanent place in St Petersburg – initially on Admiralteysky Island, and then in



Izmailovsky Avenue. In 1754 the foundation of a new wooden five-domed church was laid. However, it was badly damaged due to the flood of 1824, as a result of which it was decided to build a new stone church. The architect Vasily Stasov was supposed to take the former wooden church as a model.

The foundation stone of the new church was laid on 25th May, 1828 by Metropolitan Seraphim (Glagolevsky). The ceremony was attended by Empress consort Maria Feodorovna and Tsarevich Alexander Nikolaevich. The church was completed in 1835; it was consecrated by Metropolitan Philaret (Drozdov) of Moscow.

On 22nd April, 1938, the cathedral was closed – they were going to demolish it or rebuild it as

a crematorium, but with the outbreak of the Second World War the building was occupied by a warehouse.

The church was returned to the Russian Orthodox Church in 1990. On 25th August, 2006, during the restoration work, the scaffolding caught fire. As a result of a strong fire, the external structures of the large dome collapsed, and two small domes, already restored by that time, were damaged as well. The unique church was completely renovated in 2017.

Saint Isaac's Cathedral

The magnificent St Isaac's Cathedral – one of the largest domed

structures in the world – was rebuilt more than once. This is the fourth edifice, dedicated to the Venerable Isaac of Dalmatia, a saint who was venerated by Peter the Great, who was born on the saint's feast – 30th May according to the Julian calendar.

The first wooden church was built on the banks of the Neva, near the Admiralty, and consecrated in 1710. In 1717 the building of a stone church commenced nearby, but work had to be stopped due to subsidence.

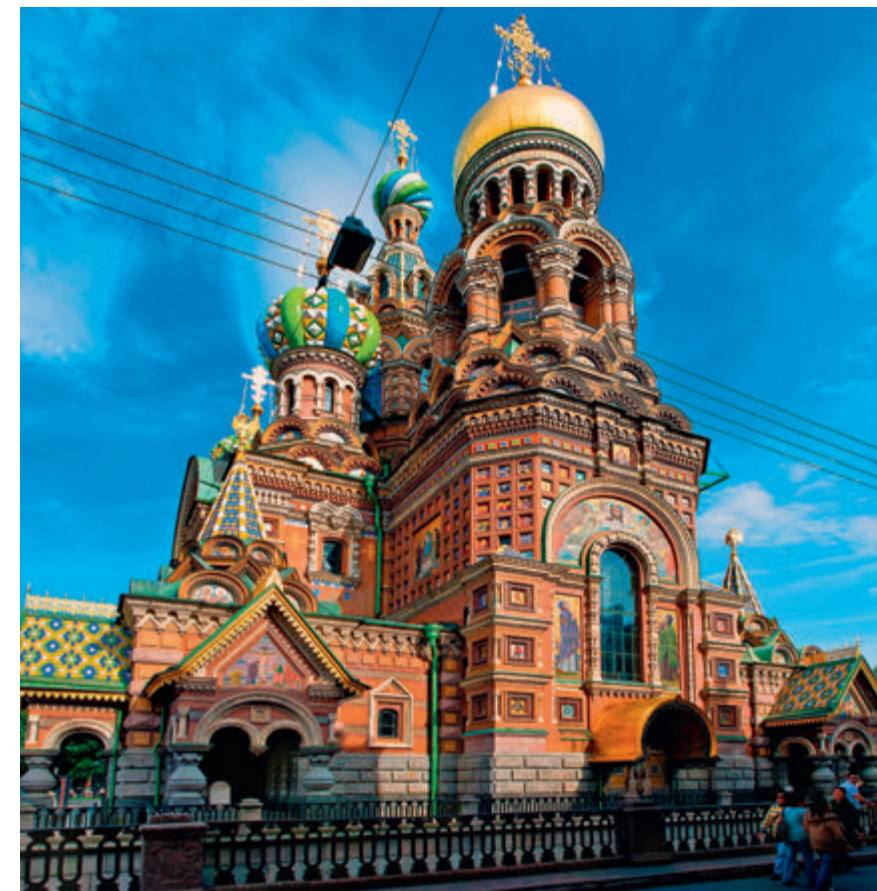
Under Catherine II the new St Isaac's Cathedral, designed by Antonio Rinaldi, was built at a distance from the bank of the Neva, but this building was far from perfect.



In 1809 Emperor Alexander I announced a competition for the building of a new church. St Isaac's Cathedral, which was built between 1818 and 1858, became a magnificent masterpiece of the French architect Auguste de Montferand and one of the main symbols of St Petersburg.

Church of the Resurrection of Christ on Spilled Blood

The Church of the Resurrection of Christ, popularly known as 'the Saviour's Church on the Blood', was built on the site where Emperor Alexander II was mortally wounded on 1st March, 1881. The cathedral was built to resemble outwardly the Moscow St Basil's (the Holy Protection) Cathedral by order of Alexander III in 1883–1907 to the design of the architect Alfred Parland and Archimandrite Ignatius (Malyshev).

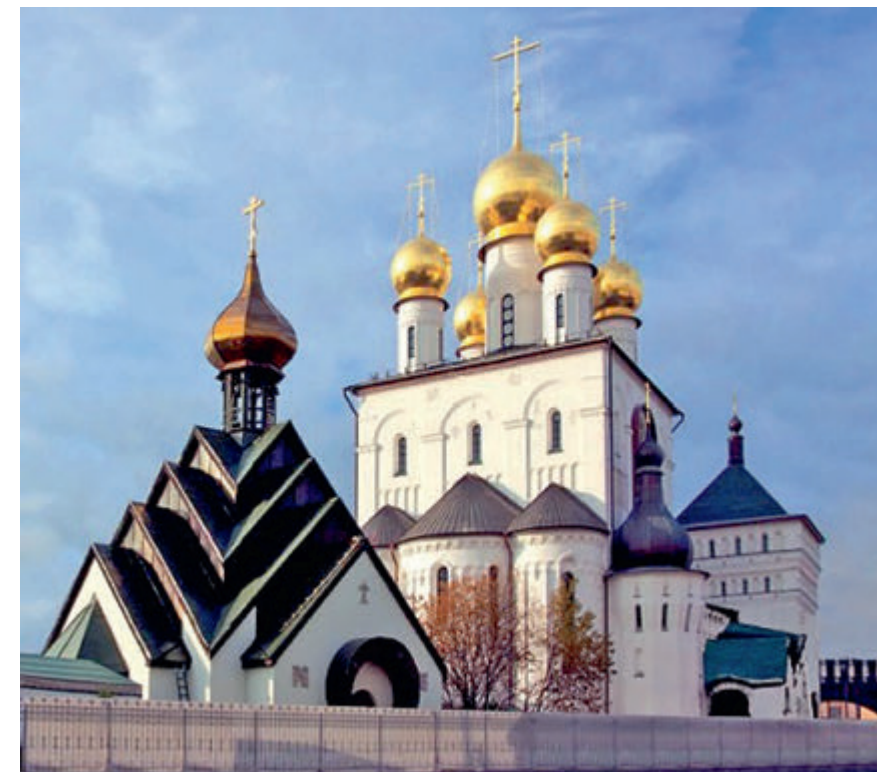


Feodorovskaya Icon Cathedral

The building of the Feodorovskaya Icon Cathedral, designed by the architect Stepan Krichinsky, began in 1907 in connection with the approaching 300th anniversary of the Romanov Dynasty. The foundation stone of the church was laid on 5th August, 1911 in the presence of Grand Duke Mikhail Alexandrovich.

After the Russian Revolution the church went through many trials – it was rebuilt, converted into a dairy factory, and its domes were demolished...

The church was returned to the metropolis in August 2005. Work on the rebuilding of the historic monument was completed in 2013 – on the occasion of the centenary of its building and the 400th anniversary of the Romanov Dynasty.



ASCENSION AND PENTECOST

If the earthly life of Jesus Christ ended with death on the Cross, it would be the greatest triumph of the forces of evil in history

By AUGUSTINE SOKOLOVSKI,
Doctor of Theology, Priest

On the fortieth day after Easter, the Church celebrates the Ascension of the Lord. Depending on the date of Easter, Ascension may be early or late. It is important to remember that it is always celebrated on Thursday of the sixth week after Easter. This year the Orthodox Church celebrates Ascension on May 25th.

Belief in the bodily ascension of the Lord Jesus is one of the most important dogmatic truths of Christianity. It is based on the direct evidence of the New Testament texts. The dogma of the Ascension is one of the indisputable foundations of the Christian faith.

The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, which is universally used in the Orthodox Church and recognized by all Christian denominations, says that the Lord Jesus “rose from the dead on the third day, according to the Scriptures, and ascended into Heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father.” The Creed of the Holy Apostles, which is more commonly used in Western Christianity, says the same thing.

Before the transubstantiation of bread and wine, into the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharistic prayer of John Chrysostom, the priest “remembers the saving commandment and everything that has happened for us, the cross, the tomb, the resurrection on the third day, the ascent to heaven, the sitting at the right hand, the second and glorious coming again.” The liturgy of Basil the Great “remembers His saving sufferings, the life-giving cross, the three-day burial, the resurrection

from the dead, the ascension to heaven, sitting at the right hand of God and the Father.”

Obviously, the Ascension Dogma is no less important than the truths about the Incarnation, Resurrection and Second Coming of the Lord Jesus. It is important to remember and confess it with heart and mouth. According to the words of the Apostle Paul, “with the heart they believe unto righteousness, but with the mouth they confess unto salvation” (Rom. 10:10).

The Ascension was a historic event. It is spoken of in Holy Scripture. Thus, the descriptive narrative of the Ascension is contained in the third Gospel and in the Book of the Apostolic Acts. The Tradition of the Church and biblical science consider the Evangelist Luke to be the author of both New Testament texts. Both testimonies complement each other, revealing the unique mysterious essence of the Ascension of Jesus.

According to the Gospel of Luke, the Resurrected Jesus appeared to two disciples on the road to Emmaus. At first, they did not recognize Him. Jesus “was recognized by them in the breaking of bread” (Luke 24:35). Returning to Jerusalem, these disciples “found together the eleven Apostles and those who were with them” (33). “While they were talking about this, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them” (36). The Lord assured the disciples of His Resurrection. Then He led them out of the city to Bethany, and lifting up His hands, blessed them. And when he blessed them, he began “to depart from them

and ... ascend into heaven” (Luke 24; 51–52).

The Holy Fathers, that is, the most prominent representatives of the theological and philosophical thought of the Church, who lived before the rise of Islam, represent a certain norm in the interpretation of Holy Scripture. They are the standard for the interpretation of the biblical word.

At the same time, in relation to the Church Fathers themselves, Scripture is a normative norm. In Latin, one of the classic languages of theology, this phrase sounds like “norma normans.”

At the center of Christian teaching is the belief that God in Christ Jesus became man. God went down in history when, more than two thousand years ago, Jesus was born in Palestine from the Virgin Mary. The Gospel of John calls Christ the Word, the divine Logos. At the same time, Scripture is also the word of God. In the Christian understanding, it represents a kind of incarnation before the Incarnation, the incarnation of God in the human word before the incarnation of the Word of God in human flesh and blood.

In turn, theology, being a science, constantly moves forward. Let us note that if theology were not a science and, as such, did not obey scientific laws, then all theological schools and faculties, apparently, would have to be locked. The study of Holy Scripture in modern times has moved far ahead. It is important to understand that the key difference between Christianity and other religions that also profess one biblical God is that,

scientifically and in an intellectual, rational and existential sense, it is precisely a dogma, and not a collection of legal regulations or law.

Scholars, experts in the study of sacred texts, differently understand the meaning of the narratives of the Holy Scriptures about the Ascension. So, among them there is a well-founded opinion that the Evangelist Luke himself, and the community of Christ’s disciples, which also stood at the origins of the Gospel, simply combined the events of the Resurrection and Ascension in the text. That is, the Apostolic Church consciously sought to ensure that the Resurrection and Ascension appeared to subsequent readers of this gospel text as one and the same, united, identical, a single event. Recall that this point of view refers to the Ascension in the form as it is described in the Gospel of Luke.

According to the Acts of the Apostles, “The Lord showed Himself alive after His suffering with many sure proofs, appearing to them for forty days and speaking of the Kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3). On the fortieth day, “He gathered them” (4), commanded them not to leave Jerusalem and wait for the “Baptism with the Holy Spirit” (5). “Having said this, He ascended before their eyes, and a cloud took Him out of their sight” (9).



Gustave Dore. *Ascension of Jesus*. 1879



Ascension of Jesus. 15th century icon

So, according to the Acts, the Ascension did not take place simultaneously, or immediately after the Resurrection, as it apparently follows from the Gospel, but after forty days. At the same time, in the language of Scripture, the number forty simultaneously denotes the necessary fullness of time. In other words, Christ, after His Resurrection from the dead, appeared to the disciples and talked with them about the

Kingdom of God for as long as it was necessary for them.

So, according to the Acts, the Ascension did not take place simultaneously, or immediately after the Resurrection, as it apparently follows from the Gospel, but after forty days. At the same time, in the language of Scripture, the number forty simultaneously denotes the necessary fullness of time.

In other words, Christ, after His Resurrection from the dead, appeared to the disciples and talked with them about the Kingdom of God for as long as it was necessary for them. At the same time, as Moses, at the command of God, led the people into the desert for forty years in order to prepare them for the Promised Land (Deut. 29:5), the Resurrected Jesus appeared to the disciples for forty days and prepared them for the Kingdom of Heaven. Those who saw the Risen One were themselves called to become Partakers of the Resurrection.

The key to the story of the Ascension in the book of the Apostolic Acts is not only the fact that the Lord ascended to Heaven on the fortieth day, but also the words about His upcoming Coming. “This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven” (Acts 11:12). It turns out that the Community, which stood at the origins of the Book of Acts, united the Ascension and the Coming – not the Return, but the Coming – into a single event. For Luke in the Book of Acts, it was important that the subsequent Church not only did not separate the Parousia, that is, the Second Coming of Christ, from His Ascension, but also understood the Second Coming of Jesus as one of the components of His Ascension.

“And when they were looking at the sky, at the time of His ascension,

two men in white clothes suddenly appeared to them. And they said: Jesus <...> will come in the same way” (Acts 1:10–11).

Perhaps, for the Apostolic Community, and later for the Church of Christ, there were no more important words than the promise and assurance given by “two men in white clothes”.

It is important to understand that, like the Resurrection, the Ascension of the Lord Jesus to Heaven, was an absolutely spontaneous, unexpected event for the apostolic circle, not amenable to any preliminary calculation. Perhaps it is because of this that the Gospel of Luke combined these two narratives into a single whole.

Scripture is inspired by God” for it contains historical truth and, at the same time, divine words (2 Tim. 3:16). It is written by the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. They, according to the words of St. Irenaeus of Lyons, are the “hands of God” (130–200). It turns out that the Ascension Event, in the form in which the Scripture itself conveys it, has a special diachrony, its chronology is broken by God Himself.

After all, the Ascension is not just a point, a period in time and space, but a life-giving Truth that determines the full value of the existence of the Church as the Body of the Lord and the sacramental authenticity of the existence of the human Universe as a divine-human communion.

The Ascension is the final and irrevocable proof that the Resurrection of Jesus is not a return to the lists of those living on earth who was previously dead, as was the case with Lazarus and other people resurrected by the Lord, but a genuine overcoming of non-existence and death. In turn, the Resurrection and Ascension together are “the final interpenetration of the nature of man and the nature of God”, where, in the words of one of our contemporary theologians, “the boundaries of the biological



This illumination from a 13th-century manuscript shows the apostles writing the Creed, receiving inspiration from the Holy Spirit

are broken, and a new space of existence is created.”

That is why the Church sees in the Ascension of the Lord Jesus the foundation of her own being “not

of this world” (John 18:36) and belonging already here and now to the Kingdom of Heaven. That is why the Church has always resisted attempts to bring the future age down to earth,



Andrey Rublev. *The Trinity*. 1425–1427

to create here and now a new chilias-
tic utopia. Symbols and nuances are
of great importance here.

According to Tradition, the earthly
life of the Lord Jesus lasted 33 years.
He continued preaching and min-
istry for three years. The Lord was
killed, He died on the cross. If the

life of Jesus ended with death on the
Cross, it would be the greatest tri-
umph of the forces of evil in history.
But “God raised up His Son,” says the
Book of Acts (Acts 13:26). At the
same time, it is extremely important
to remember and understand that
the Resurrection is not a return. The

understanding must calculate the
number of the beast for this is the
number of a man; his number is six
hundred sixty-six,” says the Apoca-
lypse (Rev. 13:18).

In this context the Antichrist is a
false utopia of repeated messianism,
an attempt to bring Christ back to

Resurrected Jesus
Himself spoke
about this to Mary
Magdalene with
the words: “Do
not touch Me!”
(John 20:17).
The resurrected
Jesus is alive, but
He is alive in a
completely new,
different transfig-
ured being and
qualities.

Therefore, the
Church has al-
ways resisted at-
tempts to “local-
ize” Christ again,
as, according to
the Gospel, false
Christs and false
prophets will try
to do. “Then if an-
yone says to you:
‘Behold, here is
Christ’, or ‘there’,
don’t believe it...”,
said the Lord Je-
sus Himself (cf.
Matt. 24:23).

In this context,
the words of the
Apocalypse that
the number of
the Antichrist will
be “666” receive
an important in-
terpretation. The
fact is that, taken
by itself, it repre-
sents the years of
the earthly life of
Christ (33) and
the one who has

earth by force, turning the Resur-
rection into a Return, denying the
Ascension of Jesus. Turning to Jesus,
St. Augustine says in his sermon on
the Ascension: “You, caught, bound,
beaten, and nailed to the Tree, You
are dead, and You are buried, Jesus,
ascend above Heaven!” (262).

In the 5th–6th centuries the Church
in the East was shaken by Christolog-
ical controversies. As a result, exactly
one thousand years before the di-
vision of Western Christianity into
Catholicism and Protestantism, the
Eastern Church was divided into two
equal and opposing parts with centers
in Alexandria and Constantinople.
The latter retained the name “Ortho-
dox” for itself, and Alexandria began
to be called “Coptic”. Communion
between them was never restored.
The debate was about the humanity of
Jesus Christ, in fact, it directly affected
the very essence of His Ascension.

At the same time, Bishop, and
theologian Julian of Halicarnassus
(+518) proposed a compromise solu-
tion. According to Julian, the Lord
Jesus was a true God and a true Man.
However, after the Ascension, Christ’s
humanity was abolished, being com-
pletely permeated with the deity.

In opposition to Julian, the warring
halves of Eastern Christendom, as if
for a moment, were able to unite in
this element of theology. They de-
fended the truth that the fullness of
Christ’s humanity is preserved after
the Ascension. This means that due
to the Ascension of the Lord Jesus,
God has ... a human heart beating.

On the fiftieth day after Easter,
the Church celebrates the Descent
of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles.
In accordance with the date of cele-
bration, this day is called Pentecost.
Depending on the date of Easter,
Pentecost can be early or late. It is im-
portant to remember that it is always
celebrated on the eighth Sunday af-
ter the Easter celebration. This year,
Pentecost in the Orthodox Church is
celebrated on June 4th.

In the context of our reasoning, Pen-
tecost is the culmination of Easter, and,
at the same time, the completion and
revelation of the Ascension Itself. If the
earthly life of Jesus Christ ended with
death on the Cross, it would be the
greatest triumph of the forces of evil in
history. If the Lord Jesus, after His Res-
urrection from the dead, would forever
remain with the disciples, he would not
be available to the entire Universe. But
God raised His Son. The Lord Jesus as-
cended into Heaven and sent down the
Holy Spirit on the Apostles.

So in the Resurrection, Ascension,
and Pentecost – the Church and
Christianity were born, the Universe
gradually began to change, the World
began to breathe differently.

“I shall descend and on the third
day rise, // And as the river rafts float
into sight, // Towards My Judge-
ment like a string of barges // The
centuries will float out of the night,”
as poetically wrote about this Boris
Pasternak in his poem.

A characteristic feature of Western
Christianity is the presence in the
liturgical calendar of the so-called
“ideological holidays”. Unlike more
ancient celebrations in honor of Je-
sus and Mary, tied to specific events
of Sacred History and the Economy
of Salvation, ideological holidays ex-
press this or that dogmatic truth, re-
fer to certain aspects of the Christian
faith and piety, and can also refer to
certain names, and the titles of the
Lord Jesus or the Mother of God. A
characteristic example of such an ide-
ological name, this time not for a hol-
iday, but for a temple, is the Church
of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople.

Among such holidays in the Catho-
lic Church: the Body of Christ, the
Heart of Jesus, the celebration in
honor of Christ the King, the Name
of the Lord, the Name of the Mother
of God, and others.

Ideological holidays not only
reflected one or another dogmat-
ic belief, but also represented a
well-defined reflection, or reaction

to specific religious events or phe-
nomena of a particular time.

Summarizing, we can say that the
Orthodox Tradition, celebrated holi-
days of the Easter and Christmas cy-
cles. With only one exception, which is
characteristic of the Russian tradition.
The fact is that Pentecost in our Church,
and in those Orthodox Churches that
in one way or another originate from
the Russian Church, is called the Day
of the Holy Trinity.

Recall that in the Western Christi-
anity there is also Trinity Day, but it
is celebrated a week after Pentecost.
Church guides and translators often
make mistakes in this place!

There is no clear explanation for
this paradoxical and surprising phe-
nomenon. Thus, representatives of
the Paris School of Russian Ortho-
dox Theology in the 20th century
believed that Pentecost “became” the
Trinity under the influence of the tra-
dition of the monastery of St. Sergius
of Radonezh (1314–1392).

The fact is that Sergius dedicated
his monastery to the Trinity, created
the famous church, and celebrated
the patronal Feast on the Day of Pen-
tecost. Subsequently, the great icon
“Holy Trinity” by Andrei Rublev
was born from this tradition. Prior to
this, a similar image existed in Ortho-
doxy, but was called the “Hospitality
of Abraham.” It was the Rublev icon,
in our church tradition, that became
the main holiday icon of the day. At
the same time, the traditional icon
of Pentecost is the image of the ap-
ostolic circle, on which, according to
the narration of the Book of Acts, the
Holy Spirit descended “in the form
of fiery tongues” (Acts 2,3).

The time of St. Sergius was extreme-
ly difficult. The great ancient Russian
saint bequeathed to his contemporar-
ies and descendants to overcome divi-
sion through brotherly love, contem-
plation, liturgy, prayer, and theology:
“So that the fear of the hated strife of
this world is overcome by looking at
the Most Holy Trinity.”

TWO PEARLS OF THE RUSSIAN MUSEUM

The “Last Day of Pompeii” by Karl Bryullov and “The Last Supper” by Nikolai Ge are among the most outstanding masterpieces of Russian art in the Russian Museum

By OKSANA KOPENKINA,
art analyst and founder of the Arts Diary website

Karl Bryullov.
Last Day of Pompeii.
1833

Four years of preparatory sketches, a year of nonstop work in the studio, a few fainting fits – and here is the result: the death of a city on 30 m² of canvas.

Probably there wasn't another painting that created such an uproar. It was constantly surrounded by a thick crowd; the critics proclaimed Bryullov a new Titian, and even Nikolai I honoured the artist with a personal visit.

Only Alexander Benois, a famous art historian of the 19th and 20th centuries, dared to criticize “Pompeii”. And he criticized very viciously: “Pomposity ... Painting for all tastes ... Theatrical loudness ...”

What was it that won every heart then and continues to amaze us now? And what exactly annoyed Benois so much?

We see a very tragic moment in the picture. In a few minutes, all these people will be dead. But that doesn't turn us off. Because we are fascinated by... beauty. Beauty of people, beauty of tragedy.

In 1828, the young Bryullov lived and worked in Rome. Shortly before that, archaeologists began excavations of three cities that died from the eruption of Vesuvius – Pompeii, Herculaneum and Stabiae. Bryullov could not pass by such an event and went to

the artist, exists in Pompeii. And the ruins of a temple with a staircase still stand there. And there are the ruins of a temple with a staircase.

Bryullov personally studied the remains of the victims. And he found some of characters in Pompeii. For



the excavation site. By that time, Pompeii was the best cleared. The artist was so amazed by what he saw that he started work almost immediately.

Despite all the “theatricality” which Benois mentioned, there is a lot of truth in Bryullov's painting. The scene was not invented by him. That street at the Herculaneum Gate, depicted by

example, a deceased woman hugging two daughters. On one of the streets, there were found wheels from a carriage and scattered decorations. So Bryullov got the idea to depict the death of a noble Pompeian woman. Among skeletons discovered, Bryullov saw a pagan priest who tried to take his wealth with him.

Buildings in the painting are crumbling “correctly”. Volcanologists claim that Bryullov depicted an earthquake of magnitude 8. And very believable. This is exactly how buildings collapse during tremors of such strength.

Lighting is very well thought out in Bryullov's work. The lava of Vesuvius illuminates the background so brightly, that it saturates the buildings with a red color, and it seems that buildings are on fire. The foreground is illuminated with white light from a flash of lightning. Such contrast makes the space especially deep and believable at the same time.

But in the depiction of people, plausibility is absent. Here Bryullov, of course, is far from realism. What would we have, if Bryullov were

in such a way so that we can see each of them. Even in the face of death, they are divinely beautiful.

Yes, this is an extreme aesthetic catastrophe. Benois was right about criticizing that. But it is only due to the painting's theatricality that we do not turn away in horror. This is more of a beautiful legend than a harsh reality.

You can also see that the main female characters of the canvas have the same face. At different ages, with different expressions, but this is the same woman – Countess Yulia Samoilova, the love of the life of Bryullov. The portrait of Samoilova can also be seen in the Russian Museum.

On the canvas, you can also see Bryullov himself in the role of an art-

Nikolai Ge.
Last Supper.
1863

The Last Day of Pompeii was accepted by the public very well. That was not the case with Ge's Last Supper, though. Many, like Dostoevsky, found that it was too earthly. Especially irritated was the Church, so much that they banned even reproductions of the work.

Why did this happen? Think of how other artists showed this scene before – Leonardo da Vinci, for example. Jesus and his apostles sit around the table together, Judas among them. Nikolai Ge ignores this cannon. He shows Christ lying down, which is historically accu-

rate: that was the way Jews ate 2000 years ago. Jesus has already announced his prophecy and asked Judas to leave and finish what he planned. Judas stands up to go.

We meet him in the doorway. He's putting on his cloak, about to step into the dark – both literally and figuratively. His face is obscured by his own sinister shadow.

This scene causes more complex emotions. Jesus feels Judas's betrayal deeply but accepts it. Peter is outraged and confused: he's leaped from his seat and follows Judas with

his eyes. John can't believe what he sees, just like a child meeting unfairness for the first time.

Ge also paints only nine apostles to make the scene less crowded and obviously not giving much significance to the number. For the Church, however, these details were vital.



more realistic? There would be chaos and pandemonium. We wouldn't have the opportunity to look at every character, on the contrary. They would have already been dirty with soot and dirt. And the faces would be distorted with horror.

And what do we see at Bryullov? The groups of characters are arranged

ist who covers his head with a box of brushes and paints.

The Last Day of Pompeii is a story about a catastrophe told very spectacularly and delightfully. The characters selflessly played their roles. Special effects are at the highest level. The light is delivered phenomenally. It is a theatre, but a very professional theatre.

EXHIBITION

SAINT PETERSBURG, THE CAPITAL OF THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE



The Peterhof Palace and Park Ensemble is recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site

The historical exhibition “St Petersburg, the capital of the Russian Empire: Marking the 320th anniversary of the city” has opened in the Exhibition Hall of the Federal Archives in St Petersburg.

The exhibition features authentic documents and drawings related

to the enterprise of architects Domenico Trezzini, Jean-Baptiste Leblon, Peter Eropkin, Mikhail Zemtsov, Bartolomeo Francesco Rastrelli, Giacomo Quarenghi, Auguste Montferrand, Vasily Stasov, Konstantin Ton, Andrey Shtakenshneider and many others.

One of the significant exhibits is the original 1747 plan of the facade of the Summer Palace in Peterhof with the resolution of Empress Elizaveta Petrovna and the autograph of the architect Bartolomeo Francesco Rastrelli.

The exhibition will be open until June 22, 2023.



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