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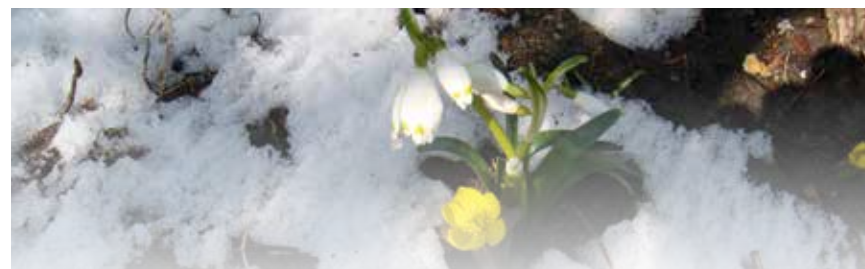
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EDITOR'S LETTER

YOU CAN SEE IT BY THE SPRING...



“You can see a good year by the spring.” Once I had heard this saying, I liked it. We can continue: as spring has begun, so will summer. The new spring on the pages of the *Russian Mind* magazine is rich in interesting subjects. These are a sequel of *The History of Empires* by Teo Gurieli, an essay about the academician Alexander Chuchalin, a world-famous pulmonologist, and, of course, the *Orthodox Messenger* – on 20 April Orthodox Christians worldwide will celebrate the Radiant Resurrection of Christ, or Easter.

For me personally spring is above all the “cosmic” season. On 12 April 1961 Yuri Gagarin was launched into space; and on 18 March 1965, exactly sixty years ago, Alexei Leonov walked in outer space. Throughout my career as a journalist, I was privileged to meet with many of the earliest cosmonauts and do interviews with them. Alexei Arkhipovich Leonov was very special.

The commander of Soyuz-19 – the Soviet half of the Apollo-Soyuz joint space mission between the USSR and the USA, a peace ambassador, a gifted artist and a businessman, he is even the author of a book entitled, *The Time of the First. I am My Own Destiny*. A fascinating book. “I looked up: our huge spaceship was slowly rotating above me, as if it were bigger than a planet. I took one hand off the handrail, then the other, and floated off... I heard in my headphones the voices of those watching me with the help of telecameras from the Earth: ‘Look, he’s alive!’” Leonov wrote. The *Russian Mind* will tell readers about his life’s feat.

“In human ignorance it’s very comforting to regard everything you don’t know as nonsense,” one of Denis Fonvizin’s characters said. This year marks the 280th anniversary since the birth of this author of aphorisms and one of the most brilliant playwrights of the past.

The issue contains materials dedicated to the great sculptor Michelangelo and the amazing Russian author Pyotr Yershov, along with, as always, poems and short stories, some of which are being published for the first time.

“A spring day feeds the whole year,” Russian peasants used to say. Dear readers, may you have both a happy day and a happy year!

By Kirill Privalov

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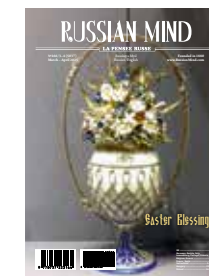
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Basket of Flowers (Fabergé egg). 1901



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THE SPRING MOOD

“With a clear smile nature through the dream greets the morning of the year”

By KIRILL PRIVALOV



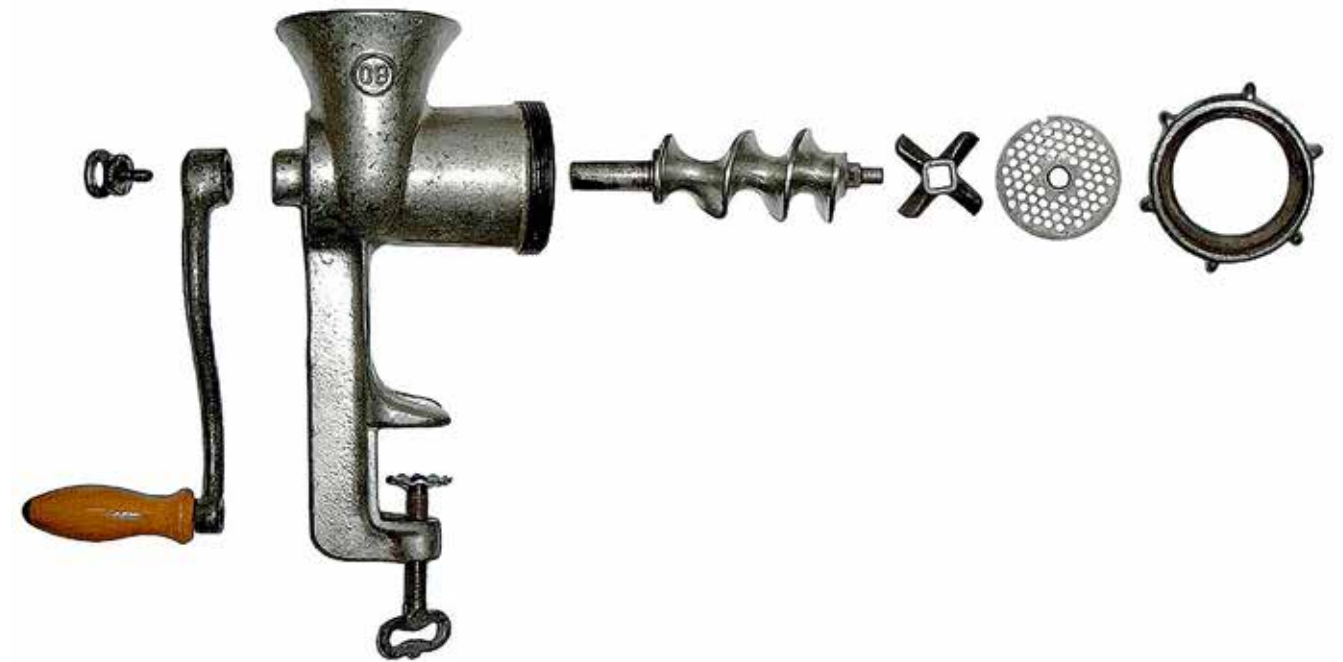
Anna Rakhmanova / Unsplash

“**S**kiping-Rope” was the title of Agniya Barto’s merry poem about a children’s game with a skipping-rope, which puts you in a great mood. Perhaps it is because these lines are about spring.

*It’s spring, spring outside,
Spring days!
Like birds, tram bells
Trill out their song...*

I memorized this poem in the second form and remembered it for the rest of my life. Spring is my favourite season. Why? It would seem obvious: spring is the awakening of nature; it is sunny, fine days that lengthen with each morning awakening...

In my case everything is much more thisworldly and trivial. The fact is that my birthday is in March! Now, as years have passed, I perceive every such personal holiday as a reminder that merciless time that rules us is flying by too fast. But then, in my childhood, when hours and days seemed to be endless, my birthday was associated not only with presents, but also with sweet dishes,



the unconditional queen of which was... kartoshka [the Russian for “potato” and “potatoes”]! No, not usual potatoes that we buy at a vegetable shop, black from the earth sticking to it, which we boil or fry, cook in the form of puree or chips... No! It was sweet kartoshka – a pastry that I adored and that only exists as a distant memory. We didn’t buy cakes and other confectionery delicacies for family holidays – they were too expensive and not always delicious. We preferred to make our own desserts either for educational purposes, or because my mother, a journalist and editor, did not have free time. So she involved me in making sweet dishes. As teachers say, she probably brought me up by her own example. I admit, at first I was reluctant, and then I even began to enjoy culinary exercises in our small kitchen. All the more so since I was charged with such a responsible task as tasting. And now I still remember the unchanging holy order of cooking kartoshka dessert.

First we took vanilla-flavoured dried bread (it was easy to get it in

Soviet bakeries) and, together with vanillin, it was put through a mincer with a handle that resembled an instrument of murder. For some reason my mother kept this huge, heavy mincer (as it seemed to me), cast from the best cast iron, for a whole year in an old pillowcase in a mothballed cabinet in order for it to be solemnly born just in time for my birthday. (A curious detail: one day I went to Oscar Yakovlevich Rabin’s workshop in Paris, near the Pompidou Centre, and noticed a very familiar Soviet mincer screwed to the table; it turned out that the artist used this primitive kitchen tool as a model when doing a painting about the Gulag – people were sent by the regime to the “mincer” of repression).

So, let’s return to home-cooked kartoshka by my grandmother’s recipe. Half a pack of butter, a glass of warm milk, and two or three eggs (depending on their size) were added to the dried bread that had been put through the mincer... Apparently, there was also sugar, and something else appetizing that I can’t recollect

now. All this was mixed thoroughly, turned into a homogeneous mass, and – here, please note, the main thing! – a large, full tablespoon of cognac was added (some people, as I was told, sometimes added vodka instead of it, but, I must admit, it is a banal blasphemy). After that the brown mass began to smell divine! All that remained was to wet our palms so that nothing would stick to them and start sculpting kartoshka desserts. As a result we got oblong “stones” (for some reason mine came out in different sizes), which we rolled in cocoa powder at the end of the process. And the homemade delicacy was ready! Next we would put it into the fridge!...

No one at home claimed the right of tasting the delicacy first, except for me, a young boy. And I wasn’t particularly eager to taste it first either: kartoshka was much tastier when cold – frozen and hard. These were not puff pastries for Napoleon cake (the French call this iconic cake mille feuille). Our puff pastries were eaten stealthily as the mother



The St. Sergius Orthodox Theological Institute in Paris, France

conjured up buttercream for the cake. This wonder of home-made treats was made on her own birthday, which was a week later than mine.

Oh goodness, how sweet the month of March is! Two days before my personal holiday it was my grandfather's birthday.

Witness to the Truth

I do not remember the day when I first met Konstantin Yaseyevich Andronikov, a diplomat and a scholar, but I do know that it was in the spring. And I firmly remember that it was at St Sergius Orthodox Theological Institute in Rue de Crimée in Paris.

Prince Andronikov used to be the rector of this Institute, and when I came to interview him, he just gave lectures to students from different countries. As he told me himself: "I'm an expert on the Easter rite." It is prestigious to teach at an amazing educational institution, among whose professors were Fr Sergei Bulgakov and Ivan Ilyin, Vasily Zenkovsky and Vladimir Lossky; where the rector was Anton Kartashev, whose Essays on the History of the Russian Church in two volumes were my reference books; where Mikhail Osorgin conducted the student choir, for which Alexander Glazunov himself composed liturgical works...

My God, what great names! Konstantin Yaseyevich showed me the lecture halls of the Institute, which had been the only Russian theological school in the whole world until 1944, when the Orthodox Theological Institute resumed its work in the Soviet Union and two years later was transformed into the Moscow Theological Academy. He also took me to the hall of residence, which immediately reminded me that at the Moscow State University.

And he said, as if by accident, "As I understand it, you are baptised." I had to lower my eyes and confess: "No, Konstantin Yaseyevich... a sincere believer, but not baptised." He stretched his head up from his very long neck, looked at me and said in a conciliatory way, "I see... The Soviet legacy..." and I had no idea what to say. That my parents were baptised in childhood by my grandparents' efforts, but they didn't go to church? That I, who had studied history with delight since childhood, had always been secretly interested in religion, and during my first trip to France I went to a Russian shop in Paris opposite the church in Rue Daru and bought a pocket Bible on tissue paper? That my grandmother, who raised me (a village woman), once confessed: "There is no God – I know it for sure! My Orenburg headscarf was once stolen in church during Matins..."?

Sensing my confusion, Andronikov said, "Come to Rue de Crimée the day after tomorrow. Easter service will be celebrated at the church... You will be interested." That's what I did, and I never regretted it.

It was a warm, summer April day. A wonderful, truly festive service! And then the procession of the cross began. The church (a former German Protestant chapel), rebuilt in the mid-1920s at the request of Metropolitan Evlogy (Georgievsky) with the copper money of Russian people, was buried in green. The procession walked round the church to the singing and ringing of bells, and juicy, extremely fragrant, heavy lilac brushes dropped dew onto our faces. There was happiness, unity, and an amazing sense of true Christian fellowship...

My wife and I, in a tight line of like-minded people, carried candles carefully, shielding them with our palms from the breeze. We exchanged glances and realised that

we wanted to say to each other, "Let's get baptised together!"

A few days later I met Konstantin Yaseyevich again. This time at his home, near the Parc Montsouris public park in the 14th arrondissement of Paris. We talked for a long time. Andronikov recalled that he used to be an interpreter for Presidents Charles de Gaulle and Georges Pompidou, and how President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing sacked him after Konstantin Yaseyevich had refused to lay wreaths at Lenin's mausoleum as a member of the French delegation...

As a result of that conversation my newspaper article about this remarkable man, Prince Andronikov, was born. At that time I titled the interview in the spirit of the essays on early Christians: "Witness to the Truth."

We parted as friends. At parting, Andronikov, to whom I had revealed our mutual desire to get baptised, said: "Don't rush! You'd better prepare for such an important event... I'll introduce you to my student and colleague at the Institute, Father Nikolaj Cernokrak, a Serb from Krajina who speaks excellent Russian, and his wife is Russian." And so it happened: for over a year we communicated with Fr Nikolaj and spoke with him about the Bible and Christ's works. We were preparing for our Baptisms.

We decided to get baptised at the Church of St Seraphim of Sarov in Rue Lecourbe. As I was walking with my little son through the 15th arrondissement of Paris, where "white Russians" had long settled (where, as I remember, in small shops you could find "le cottage cheese", a rare kind of food in France), I spotted the entrance to an arch, next to which there was a sign on the house wall with the service times of an Orthodox church. I went in and saw a small miracle: a wooden church (it was built and consecrated

in 1933) with sky-coloured rounded domes and two monumental trees piercing the roof.

Over time we got to know the parishioners. And we made friends with Tatiana Dmitrievna Zhigmanovskaya, a native of Odessa and the churchwarden of the church, who had once been abducted by Romanian invaders. This strong woman, who was rapidly losing her eyesight, but still attended St Seraphim's Church in Paris, kindly agreed to become our godmother. Naturally, I wanted to invite Andronikov to become our godfather. I kept calling Konstantin Yaseyevich, but no one picked up the phone. I told Fr Nikolaj about it, and he was surprised: "It's been a month since Konstantin Yaseyevich departed to God..." With my business trips and traveling I had missed that sad event and had not attended his funeral. Such a great pity!

We postponed our Baptisms till April: that's when they took place. Thanks to this event we understood Victor Hugo's words in a new way: "If people didn't love each other, I wouldn't see any point in spring."

"Dusmanchik" and "snegogon"

Ah, these early spring holidays! They include International Women's Day on 8 March, Good Deeds Day on 15 March, World Health Day on 7 April, and Cosmonautics Day (in Russia) on 12 April, to name just a few.

Among this host of spring holidays World Poetry Day, which is marked on 21 March, is the closest to my heart. In the USSR it was the beginning of the spring school holidays, which were timed to coincide with Book Week in the Soviet media. It's a useful thing! It is not for nothing that Emmanuel Kant stated: "Of all the arts poetry is the highest."

I recall my interview with the Spaniard Federico Mayor. Director General of UNESCO, he was not the most proud of his high international position, but of the fact that he was a poet: "Poetry is the embodiment of beauty, and if we believe Dostoevsky, beauty will save the world."

The history of the adoption of Poetry Day is interesting. The initiative came from the American poet Tessa Sweazy Webb. In 1938, at her suggestion and after a long campaign in the American state of Ohio, where she lived and worked, 15 October, the birthday of the remarkable ancient Roman poet Virgil, was declared Poetry Day. At first, it was only in Ohio, but later other American states and other countries followed its example. This went on for many years, until in 1999 UNESCO decided to replace Virgil Day with World Poetry Day. And a beautiful spring day was chosen for this – 21 March. Our contemporaries preferred poetry to the majestic Latin of Virgil with its beautiful Bucolic, Georgics and Aeneid as a means of maintaining linguistic diversity and uniting representatives of different cultures. The 30th UNESCO General Conference in Paris adopted it. And that's great!

On World Poetry Day literary museums and libraries hold poetry evenings, writers speak on radio and TV, and poetry collections are released specifically for this date... And in general, on this day we reflect on the need to preserve the correct, literate and literary language.

"Our native language is the greatest and most precious national treasure after life," the academician Alain Decaux, who at one time headed an institution in the Fifth Republic specialising in the dissemination of the speaking of French and in protecting the language of Voltaire and Hugo from Anglo-Americanisms, told me. He was

right: this charming sage, writer, popularizer of history, and journalist. When one country was invaded by another, the first thing the invaders did was to destroy the native language of the defeated. "The language is the spirit of the people, and it has its own rules of existence," Monsieur Decaux argued. "They are unique not only in every country, but even in every big city." Indeed, there are "batons" [the Russian for "bread stick"] and "bordyurs" [the Russian for "street curb"] in Moscow, and "bulkas" and "porebriks" meaning the same in St Petersburg. Further – more! Many districts of Paris have their own distinct language. For instance, a glass of beer in Montmartre is "un baron", and in Montparnasse it is "un formidable".

True, these remarks are for humour, but language belongs not only to us, but also to the time and place we exist in. Alexandre Dumas Pere believed that belonging to the same neighbourhood with its language was equal to a noble rank and an exquisite education.

I recall my meeting with Nina Nikolaevna Berberova in Rue de Vigne ("Vineyard Street") of the 16th arrondissement of Paris, in the flat of Alexandra Petrovna Pletneva–Butan. Among other things, we discussed the Russian language with this marvellous author (my material, in which Berberova's book of memoirs, *The Italics Are Mine*, was played out, was entitled, *Not Only Italics*). She gave me an example from her *Biancourt Holidays* and other stories replete with the slang of numerous former soldiers and officers of the Volunteer Army working at the Renault factories in Boulogne-Billancourt, especially in the foundry: "Just think about it and try to make it out! Imagine an ad right on the window: 'There is a libernaya [the French for "vacant" is "libre"] room.' When I tried to convince the author

of this announcement that it was easier to write: 'There is a vacant ["svobodnaya" in Russian] room,' the person got offended and called on me to 'talk with dusmanchik.' That is, he asked me to speak gently and tenderly... People adjust a foreign language to themselves, digest it, and choose only what suits them. Imagine: 'Buabulonsky Forest'! In French it is bois de Boulogne, but our compatriot in Paris had successfully combined the French language with the Nizhny Novgorod dialect!"

On World Poetry Day I would like to reflect on the need to protect and safeguard the Russian language once again. "Once the writer Dovid Knut asked Vladislav Felicianovich for advice," Berberova recalled her life in France with the wonderful Russian writer Khodasevich. "Khodasevich took the manuscript that the young man had handed him, and a week later he returned it with disgust. He said, 'Please, no offence, but I've corrected a lot of things... Understand, my friend: this is not the way we speak in Russian.' And Dovid Knut replied: 'But in Chisinau we speak this way!' He was a very nice man, but he didn't understand that you can't adjust the language to your tastes."

Indeed, if our ancestors had tried to do it with their language, March and April would have been called quite differently. The names of both months [in Russian as well as in English] take us back to the days of Ancient Rome. The name of April derives from the Latin "aperire" – "to open" (shrubs and flowers blossomed at that time in Ancient Rome), and March derived its name after the Roman god Mars... Meanwhile, our ancestors had names for the first months of spring with deep meaning that were more understandable to posterity. Thus, March was called "zimobor" [he who takes away winter], "sukhoy" [dry] or "protalnik" [a derivative from a word meaning a "thawed patch"]. Indeed,



Nina Berberova. The 1930s

earth, warmed by the sun, welcoming the generous warmth of the god Yarilo, evaporated the snow moisture, and thawed patches appeared. April, when the snow melts in large amounts, was called "snegogon" [he who drives away snow] or "tsveten" [from the verb "to blossom"]: trees stand with a halo of melted snowdrifts at their roots, with the first flowers breaking

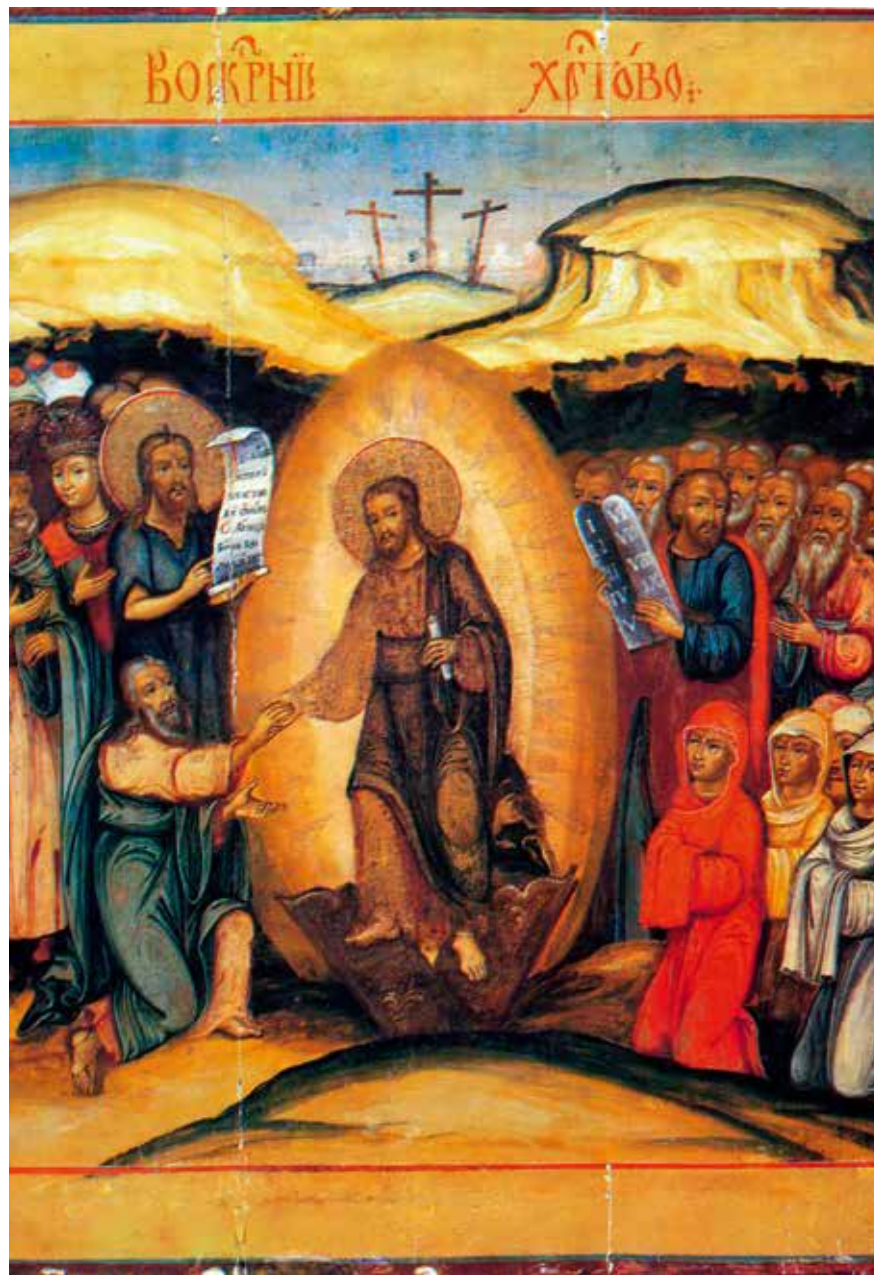
through their sticky leaves. And in the south-west of Russia, closer to Belarus and the Ukraine, April was called "berezen" [a derivative from the word "birch"]: the sap moves in birches, and people begin to prepare for sowing... April will banish anyone from lying on the stove, as the saying goes.

Let's get ready for the fruits of spring weather!

ANNIVERSARY OF EASTER DATE

In this year 2025, the Jubilee year of the Council of Nicaea, Christians all over the world celebrate Easter on the same day

By AUGUSTINE SOKOLOVSKI, DOCTOR OF THEOLOGY, PRIEST



Resurrection of Christ. Icon of the 17th century

On Sunday, April 20, 2025, the Orthodox Church celebrates Easter. In the liturgical calendar, this day is called “Bright Resurrection of Christ.”

This is the most important, most original, and most solemn Orthodox church holiday. There is no equal to it among other celebrations, remembrances, and feasts.

The celebration of Easter lasts exactly forty days. But even after that, the Easter celebration does not end. It passes into the Ascension of Christ. Then, exactly ten days later, Easter finds its fulfilment on the Day of Pentecost.

Pentecost is the Descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles. The Descent of the Holy Spirit made the Risen Christ visible and present throughout the Universe. In history, this was accomplished first through the Apostles and then through the Church. Therefore, Pentecost is the culmination of Easter.

In the Russian Orthodox Church, the feast of Pentecost is most often called the day of the Holy Trinity. Church science calls such a new understanding of the essence of a holiday from history to dogma its transformation into an ideological or theological celebration. In Orthodoxy, this is a rather rare phenomenon. On the contrary, in Western Christianity there are many such ideological feasts.

The celebration of Easter is preceded by Great Lent. This is the only completely obligatory, most

ancient and most important fast in Orthodoxy. In one form or another, it is observed by all Christians: Orthodox, Catholics and Protestants.

In Orthodoxy, the main attention during Lent is paid to abstinence from food, and time is devoted to ascetic feats, and in Catholicism and Protestantism, to helping the poor and giving up bad habits and hobbies.

Orthodox holiness is first and foremost ascetic righteousness, while Western Christianity has always had a strong ethical and missionary focus. In the Orthodox tradition, Great Lent lasts several days longer than in Western Christian denominations. Therefore, from the last Sunday before Lent, called Forgiveness Sunday, to the day of Holy Easter, exactly 50 days pass.

50 days in the Bible is a special, sacred, symbolic number. Fifty days is a sign of completeness. In the Old Testament, it is a remembrance of the giving of the divine law, and a designation of a sacred jubilee.

The year is 2025. A day is a part of a year, and a year is a collection of days. In our church tradition, the passage of half of the Easter period is called “Mid-Pentecost”. So, Mid-Pentecost, that is, half of the way from Easter to the Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles, is also a special holiday. There are even churches dedicated to Mid-Pentecost.

25 years have passed since the beginning of the 21st century. Another 25 years will pass, another quarter of a century, another “Mid-Pentecost” years, and many of us will no longer be on earth.

Great Lent, which began on March 3 this year, was a time of repentance. Repentance is greatly helped by the memory of death. Great Lent consists of two parts. The first part is a sorrowful memory of oneself, this is asceticism. The second part, Holy Week, is the memory of the death of the Lord on the Cross.

Great Lent is also called Easter Lent, since the time of repentance and remembrance ends with the great joy of the Resurrection of Christ. Worthy preparation for Easter is the goal of Lent.

This year is special. After all, exactly one thousand seven hundred years ago the First Ecumenical Council took place in Nicaea. Then the Church once and for all, unequivocally and for all proclaimed that the Only Begotten Son of God was crucified on the Cross. The Son of God died for us on the Cross. Therefore, God Himself forgave us in Jesus Christ.

Like us in the 21st century, the Fathers of the Council of Nicaea in 325 were aware that a quarter of a century had already passed. It was obvious to them that time passes in an instant. After all, just a quarter of a century earlier, the Church had been through a time of severe persecution.

During the reign of the Roman Emperor Diocletian (284–305), the Great Persecution (303–313) of Christians began. But the Church stood firm.

Saints George, Catherine of Alexandria, and Pantaleon became martyrs of the Great Persecution. Saints Nicholas of Myra and Spyridon of Cyprus were its confessors. This is how the Church called the saints who suffered for their faith but remained alive.

In 313, Emperor Constantine the Great (272–337) signed a document that went down in history as the Edict of Milan. It recognized Christianity as a permitted religion. Thus, persecution of Christians was officially stopped. Just twelve years later, and this is also a sacred, biblical number, the Ecumenical Council was convened by Constantine’s will.

After the Council of Nicaea, the Church entered a period of prosperity and, at the same time, dogmatic definitions. Pagan rulers

seemed to have gone forever into the past. It seemed that the era of martyrdom was over. But it seemed that the path to holiness was closed. Therefore, contemporaries and disciples of the Council of Nicaea laid the foundation for monasticism. The first genuine monasticism was a craving for voluntary martyrdom in the asceticism of self-restraint. Then, in the Christian West, monasticism became learned and missionary.

Orthodox holiness is, first, ascetic holiness. After all, it was from them, the first monks, these sons of the Council of Nicaea, that we inherited the practice of Great Lent in the form we know it in Orthodoxy.

Tradition says that in ancient times, before the beginning of Lent, monks went to the desert, where they lived for 40 days without food and water. The day before, they reconciled with others and asked for forgiveness for all sins. After all, each of them understood that not everyone would be able to survive the subsequent hunger, thirst and other dangers.

This mutual forgiveness reminded them of the last days and therefore had an eschatological character. Eschatology is the science of the last times in theology. From this farewell forgiveness of monks before the beginning of Great Lent, the rite of mutual forgiveness on Forgiveness Sunday, with which the Church began Lent, originated. In Orthodoxy, this ritual is still solemnly performed during the solemn vespers.

But let’s return to the Council of Nicaea. An Ecumenical Council is a meeting of the episcopate of the Roman Empire, and sometimes also of some bishops outside it. The name itself speaks of this. After all, the “Universe”, in Greek “oikumene”, was the name given to all the inhabited lands in general, and to the inhabited lands par excellence, that is, the Roman Empire.

This is why the Bishop of Constantinople, the main city



Christ's Appearance to Mary Magdalene after the Resurrection by Alexander Ivanov. 1835

of Byzantium, eventually began to bear the title of “Ecumenical Patriarch”. Since before the accession to the throne of Emperor Constantine and the signing of the Edict of Milan, Christianity in the Empire was considered an unauthorized religion and was persecuted, holding Ecumenical Councils in the early days of the Christian Church was impossible.

The city of Nicaea is in Asia Minor, in the historical region of Bithynia. The Greek name of this city literally

translates as “victorious” or “victory”. Today, this city is in Turkey and is called “Iznik”. It is the same word as Nicaea, just pronounced in the Turkish manner, just like the French “Nice” on the Cote d’Azur. Everything everyday has theological or sacred contexts. Many everyday things have theological or sacred contexts.

The reason for the convocation of the Church Council was the teaching of Arius (250–336). He was a priest from Alexandria, or,

in the language of ancient church terms, a presbyter of the Alexandrian Church. We know very little about the circumstances of his life. We have no data on his biography. It is assumed that he was born in the middle of the 3rd century in Libya or Alexandria.

Obviously, Arius had considerable authority among believers. With the end of persecution of Christians, the teachings he spread went far beyond the Egyptian capital. It should be noted that Egypt was

not only the granary of the Roman Empire, but also the territory where the Jewish biblical faith, and later Christianity, found its greatest growth.

According to Orthodox teaching, the Son of God became man in Christ Jesus. Being a Christian and a priest of the Orthodox Church in Alexandria, Arius of course accepted this teaching. But he gave it his own interpretation and claimed that it was the only correct one. This is what made him a heretic. For heresy is neither a mistake nor an incorrect opinion, but the persistence in presenting as truth what has been recognized as false.

Arius taught that the Son of God was created. This meant that God the Word, the Logos, spoken of in the opening words of John’s Gospel (John 1:1), was once created by God the Father. If this were true, the Revelation that Christ proclaimed would not be complete. It would then come from man, and like all human knowledge, would be merely an interpretation. Furthermore, if the Son of God were a creation of God, He simply could not have saved men through His death on the Cross and His Resurrection. Thus, the connection between dogma and the Easter celebration was revealed. Thus, the connection between dogma and the Easter celebration is clearly visible.

There are different versions of the origin of Arius’s teaching. The first version says that he was initially influenced by Alexandrian philosophy, so he allegedly borrowed his doctrine from philosophers.

Another version suggests that Arius was a student of Antiochian theology. In this case, he became an opponent of philosophy. Thus, being a consistent Antiochian, he based his teaching exclusively on the literal understanding of the text of the Holy Scripture.

The beginning of the fourth century was the time of the most severe persecutions in the ancient history of Christianity. As we have already mentioned, it was the so-called Great Persecution or the persecution of Emperor Diocletian. This event was so significant that some ancient Eastern Churches began a new era, that is, a new chronology, from this historical moment. Diocletian considered Christians enemies of the state. At the same time, he reformed the Empire.

Thanks to Diocletian’s reforms, the Roman Empire in its eastern part, Byzantium, lasted another 1150 years. After all, Constantinople was captured by the Ottomans in 1453. At the same time, the Ottomans themselves did not consider themselves destroyers of the history of New Rome on the Bosphorus, but its continuers.

Perhaps the most important of all the reforms was the division of the Empire into two parts: the East and the West. At the head of these huge parts were placed two emperors. These two emperors were subordinate to two other rulers with the title of Augustus - in the East and in the West respectively.

Surprisingly, the division of the Churches into Orthodox and Catholic subsequently occurred along the same boundaries that Diocletian had once established. Was it a kind of time bomb, a sly grin of a persecutor? But thanks to this reform, the Empire managed to survive and exist for an incredibly long time. Christianity managed to spread both in the East and in the West, while becoming uniquely united in diversity. Perhaps, at least in part, Diocletian thus atoned for his sin?

But let us return to Arius. I believe that consciously and perhaps without realizing it, Arius was creating a kind of theological imitation of Diocletian’s political reform. In

his scheme, the Son became a kind of co-ruler with the Heavenly Father. Whether Christ was transformed into an emperor-co-ruler, or, together with the Holy Spirit, into a ruler with the title of Augustus, is not important to us. Moreover, it is not entirely clear how exactly Arius taught about the Spirit.

Diocletian did indeed see Christianity as an implacable enemy of the state. Arius “reformed” the Holy Trinity to show that Christians were not enemies at all. Moreover, within the framework of such logic, the theology of Christians would not only not contradict, but would legitimize the emperor’s reforms. Whether this is true or not, we will never know.

It is noteworthy that Emperor Constantine himself, who initially rejected Arianism at the First Ecumenical Council, sided with the Arians at the end of his life. Old age was approaching him, and he was increasingly turning into a dictator.

Researchers tell us that Arianism, in which God the Father was the creator of the Son, eventually came to seem to him a more suitable model to follow than the “democratic” Holy Trinity of the Orthodox Church, in which the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are completely equal.

It is very important that if the Church Fathers likened the Holy Trinity to earthly realities, they did not resort to the analogy of government, but to the human soul. It was precisely by the likeness of the unity of reason, word, and memory that Saint Augustine taught about the unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the Trinity. Moreover, in his epochal work “On the City of God” Augustine asserted that the Kingdom of God is a Republic, at the head of which is Christ Himself.

The Ecumenical Council of Nicaea formulated the Creed. The main element of this document was



First Council of Nicaea

the assertion that Jesus Christ is the incarnate Son of God, Consubstantial with God the Father. The Nicene Creed also speaks of faith in the Holy Spirit. It should

be noted that in that era, each local Church, and often each diocese, had its own Symbol of Faith. But from the moment of the Ecumenical Council, they all had to correspond to

the content of what was proclaimed in Nicaea.

Here is the text of the Nicene Creed. Nowadays, it is not used in worship. However, Orthodox Christians should not only remember its content thoroughly but even learn it by heart.

“We believe in One God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible.

We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, the only begotten, that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father, by Whom all things were made both in heaven and on earth. Who for us man, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man; He suffered, and the third day he rose again, ascended into heaven; From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit.

But those who say: ‘There was a time when He was not;’ and ‘He was not before He was made,’ and ‘He was made out of nothing,’ or ‘He is of another substance’ or ‘essence,’ or ‘The Son of God is created,’ or ‘changeable,’ or ‘alterable’ – they are condemned by the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.”

The last part of the Nicene Creed is the so-called anathema, that is, the excommunication of heretics from the Church. And this is precisely the Catholic and Apostolic Church from which they are excommunicated. In the following Creeds, particularly in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed that we use, this anathema will be omitted, but the words about the Church will remain. Thus, the Catholic and Apostolic Church will become a new part of the Creed. To the two original properties of the Church, its characteristics, in the Creed, two more will be added. The confession of faith in the Church sounds like

this: *“We believe in One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.”*

Arius was condemned and excommunicated from church fellowship. After this decision of the Council of Nicaea, he could no longer receive communion or serve the liturgy in the Church. Little is known about the circumstances of his subsequent biography. Arius died in Constantinople. According to eyewitnesses, death overtook him when he was hastily heading to the church to receive reconciliation in faith and to be returned to Eucharistic communion.

The First Ecumenical Council marked the beginning of a new era. Christianity became a powerful theological and philosophical force. It became obvious that it was to be not just a moral teaching or a system of rules and regulations, but a dogma, that is, a way of speaking about God, who was destined to constantly transform this world.

The history of the Council of Nicaea is well documented. We know the names of the participants, the circumstances of the event and the decisions made. At the same time, it is obvious that the past is the sister of oblivion, and therefore not everything was preserved. What remained unknown was often supplemented by popular piety.

Thus, according to church tradition, Saint Nicholas (270–343) was among the participants of the Council. Moreover, according to the same tradition, Nicholas was not only present at Nicaea, but actively opposed Arius. When Arius continued to defend his beliefs, Nicholas allegedly struck him with his hand. Subsequent tradition, lives, sermons, and even liturgical texts repeated this story. Moreover, in the Middle Ages this story was taken as an argument that Christians should persecute heretics following the example of Saint Nicholas. At the same time, we know that Christ

did not approve of violence in the Gospel. “Put away your sword, for he who takes the sword will perish by the sword,” Jesus said to Apostle Peter in the last minutes of His earthly life (Matthew 26:52).

What did Saint Nicholas actually do at the Council of Nicaea? It is known that in the ancient rhetorical tradition, a teacher who listened to his student’s speech and remained dissatisfied with the quality of his argumentation had to pat him on the cheek in a friendly and fatherly way. This is exactly what St. Nicholas did. But since Arius was not a cleric, that is, an active priest of the diocese of Nicholas, the city of Myra in Lycia, Arius’ supporters obviously protested. For a formal violation of canonical order, Nicholas was punished. But soon, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, this erroneous decision was reversed.

All this once again confirms the image of St. Nicholas as a merciful shepherd. The oratorical gesture of the saint speaks of his high education. Nicholas was not only a shepherd of his people but also belonged to the cultural elite of society. Undoubtedly, he not only preached beautifully, but also wrote magnificently. One can only mourn the fact that none of his writings have reached us. History is not just memory and recollection, but also the sister of oblivion. According to St. Augustine, the Lord, being outside of time, became incarnate and Himself became temporary to free us from time.

Finally, it was in Nicaea that the rule for celebrating Easter was determined for all Churches. In the first centuries of the Church’s existence, there were at least three main traditions for celebrating Easter.

1. Referring to the Apostle John the Evangelist, who, according to tradition, was the founder of the Church of Ephesus, the Christians of Asia Minor

celebrated Easter on the 14th day of the spring month of Nisan, approximately as the biblical people celebrated it in the Old Testament.

2. The main Churches, Rome and Alexandria, and many others after them, celebrated Easter on the first day of the week, that is, on the Sunday after the first spring full moon after the equinox.

3. The third way of celebrating Easter, every Sunday, was widespread in all churches. The Council of Nicaea decided to unite the last two traditions.

The principle for determining the date of Easter was now: once a year on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal equinox.

And therefore, following the Fathers of the Council, the Church celebrates Easter on the first Sunday of spring once a year, and the small Easter, every Sunday, is celebrated by us every Sunday every week.

The difference in the celebration of Easter between Orthodox Christians on the one hand, and Roman Catholics and Protestants on the other, is explained by the fact that in determining the date of Easter, Orthodoxy adheres to the Julian calendar. This calendar is currently 13 days behind the modern Gregorian calendar.

Therefore, the spring equinox in Orthodoxy falls on April 3 instead of March 21. Usually, the dates of Easter in the East and West differ, and Orthodox Easter is almost always later.

It is a wonderful coincidence from God that in this year 2025, the Jubilee year of the Council of Nicaea, Christians all over the world celebrate Easter on the same day. This is truly a biblical sign. For the Church, as a Community of Interpreters, this is a great inspiring call to reflection and gratitude.

CHRIST IS RISEN!

HISTORY

FREEMASONRY AND THE IDEAS OF ENLIGHTENMENT IN RUSSIA

The ideas of Enlightenment began to actively spread in Russia with the rise to power of Catherine the Great

By ROXOLANA ZIGON

In the Western Europe freemasonry originated at the turn of the XVII–XVIII centuries and it can be undoubtedly called as one of the important components of the Age of Enlightenment. In England after the ‘Glorious Revolution’ of 1688 freemasonry has extended in the continent along with a wave of Jacobites. In the XVIII century freemasonry began to spread in Europe, where several Masonic systems were created. The members of lodges were the brightest figures of the Age of Enlightenment – Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, Mozart, Washington, Franklin, Frederick II the Great. The last name entered into the rituals of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite and at the same time became a distinguished example of the policy of enlightened absolutism.

At the end of the 18th century there were works published in Europe, attributing to the enlighteners the organization of the Masonic conspiracy and the Great French Revolution. A striking example of such kind of literature were the books of the French historian and Jesuit priest Abbé Augustin Barruel, ‘Volterians, or History of the Jacobins, revealing all the anti-Christian malicious intentions and mysteries of the Masonic lodges that have influenced all the European powers’ in 12 volumes and their abridged version – ‘Notes on

the Jacobins, revealing all the anti-Christian malicious intentions and mysteries of the Masonic lodges that have influenced all the European powers’ in 6 volumes. They were published in France in 1797-1799 and in 1805-1809 were translated into Russian and published. A similar work – ‘Proofs of a Conspiracy against all the Religions and Governments of Europe, carried out in secret meetings of freemasons, Illuminati and Enlightenment Societies’ – was written in 1797 by the Englishman John Robinson.

Barruel wrote that in Europe since the middle of the XVIII century there was a secret society that aimed to destroy monarchies and Christian churches. The first two volumes of the work were devoted to the protection of the Christian Church against the wiles of the Freemasons. The author believed that the founders of the society were Voltaire, Diderot, d’Alembert and King Frederick II of Prussia. The quotations from Voltaire’s correspondence were cited as an illustration of his statements. The chapters of the volumes corresponded to the main (supposed) tasks of the freemasons: the extermination of the Jesuits, the extermination of all the monasteries, the distribution of malfeasant books, and evil deeds under the guise of tolerance of faiths.

The first step towards destruction of religion was considered by

the author as the activities of the enlighteners and the publication of the encyclopedia. One of the methods of the monarchies decay was the creation of ‘Academies’, where the Masonic doctrine would be taught under the guise of science.

The fallacy of Barruel’s assertions is obvious. Masonic lodges – heirs of the medieval craftsmen – at a certain point borrowed components of the ideology of the enlighteners, but then one part of the Masonic system returned to the original ‘simplicity’ of the craftsmen’s rituals, while the other one not only rejected the ideology of the enlighteners but also began fighting against of it. Thus, in the XVIII century freemasonry has risen from promoting the ideas of the enlighteners and rationalists to an extreme conservatism.

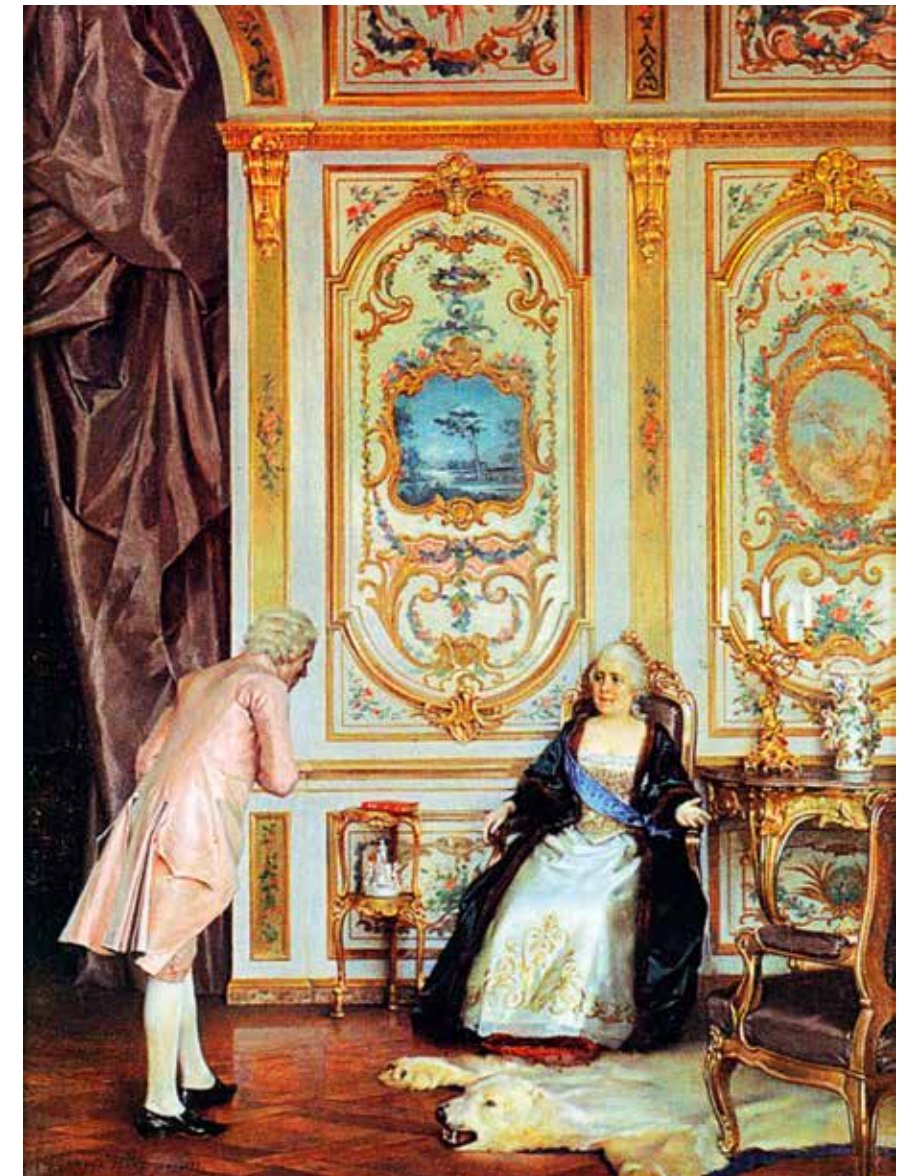
The original ideology of Masonic organizations (lodges) was a synthesis of the guild traditions of the organized bodies of operative stonemasons with the ideas of European, primarily English, intellectuals of that era. These thinkers, including J. Locke, I. Newton, F. Bacon and others, considered it necessary to get rid of the scientific thought of the clerical dogma, reducing the influence of the church on secular life, emphasized the importance of personal freedom, human dignity, upbringing and education. Each Masonic lodge had its own rite and a clearly

structured hierarchy. The ultimate goal of freemasonry was to create a society based on freedom, equality and fraternity without any national, racial and religious division. This goal could be achieved through the moral, intellectual and physical perfection of man.

Freemasonry penetrated into Russian society in the first half of the 18th century, becoming the main conductor of Enlightenment ideas. The representatives of the Russian nobility, as well as wide circles of intellectuals, political and public figures, were members of the Masonic Lodges. There can be noted such kind of renowned names as I.P. Yelagin, N.I. Novikov, D.I. Fonvizin and others.

The heyday of the Russian Freemasons’ activity falls on the second half of the XVIII century. The ideas of Enlightenment started its glorious dissemination in Russia with the rise of Catherine II. During her reign the internal and external life of society has changed dramatically. Freemasonry played a leading role in that process with its desire for a self-improvement, which, in turn, led to a strong criticism of the monarchy and the official churches.

At the same time, yet in the second half of the XVIII century among European Freemasons there have appeared a certain branch of thought that required their followers to be ideal Christians and monarch’s subjects. Such ideas were practiced in the Order of the Golden and Rosy Cross, as well as in the system of the Revised Scottish Rite. Simultaneously, the Order of the Illuminati was established in Bavaria, whose members called for the development of the ideas of the Enlighteners and its introduction to the society. Immediately between those lodges a desperate struggle has occurred that led to the liquidation of the Order of Illuminati. Already at the Wilhelmsbad Masonic



Denis Diderot at a Reception with Catherine the Great
by Gunnar Fredrik Berndtson. 1893

Convention of 1782, the leaders of the European Freemasons realized the danger of the attempts to revive the Order of Templars and abandoned that idea.

In concurrence with this, the neo-Templars were active in Russia until the prohibition of Masonic lodges in 1822. Russian Masons worked in line with the European Masonic movement, and in some cases became ‘trend-setters’ themselves. In St. Petersburg there was born an idea of the ‘clerical’

coined by I.A. Starck (the main idea of this Masonic system insisted on the argument that the keepers of the secrets of the Templars could be only priests) and the system of P.I. Melissino. Both systems became widespread in Europe.

Catherine the Great was an admirer of the ideas of the Enlighteners. Her reign was the first major stage in the history of the Russian Freemasonry, although at the end of it some Freemasons were



Portrait of D.I. Fonvizin by Armand-Charles Saraff

persecuted. The head of the first Russian Provincial Lodge was I.P. Yelagin, a confidant of the Empress. A member of one of his lodges was N.I. Novikov, whose biography reflected the quest of Freemasons of the Age of Enlightenment.

Ideas of educating an enlightened personality in Russian Freemasonry

Nikolai Ivanovich Novikov, a journalist, publisher, historian and Freemason, the brightest

public figure of the XVIII century, according to the leading Russian Imperial historian Vasily Osipovich Klyuchevsky, a true enthusiast of the 'Gutenberg printing press', who taught Russia to read. Klyuchevsky characterizes the 'adherent of the Russian Enlightenment' with the following words: *'He had two cherished subjects that made his mind focused on and devoted, in which he saw his duty, his vocation: it was a service to the homeland and the book as the means of serving the it... In the person of Novikov, a non-serving Russian nobleman, almost for the first*

time went out to serve his Fatherland with a pen and a book, as his ancestors used to step out with a horse and a sword'.

Nikolai Ivanovich Novikov was born on the 27 April 1744 in the village of Tikhvinskoye-Avdotyeno, Kolomensky (now Bronnitsky) district, Moscow province, into the family of a poor nobleman landlord. Novikov received his first educational experience from a village priest; later on, he continued his education at the Moscow University gymnasium, but in 1760 he was expelled 'for laziness and failure to attend classes'. He did not know languages, for he had not been taught them. Novikov acquired all the knowledge that enabled him to later lead the Russian reading society much later, when he entered military service. As a reward for participation among other guardsmen in the palace coup d'état of 1762 Novikov received the rank of non-commissioned officer and, having been granted with more free time, began to read a lot and engaged himself in intensive process of self-education.

That was a period of time when Novikov has actively exposed himself on a public stage. In 1767 he was sent among other Guardsmen to work 'on the written duty' in the Commission of Deputies to draft a new statute.

In addition to keeping the written records of the meetings of the department 'on the average kind of people', Novikov kept a written record of the general meetings of the deputies and read them while representing reports to the Empress. It was at this time when Catherine II got acquainted with Novikov personally.

A year later Novikov was promoted to the ensign of the Izmailovsky Life Guard Regiment, but he did not wish to continue his service and retired with the military rank of lieutenant. The researchers of the history

of Freemasonry in Russia note that Novikov was actively interested in publishing, established relations with the printing house of the Imperial Academy of Sciences and in 1769 became the publisher of the satirical journal *Truten*. At the same time Novikov decided to strengthen his activities as a journalist, having been convinced that it was the best way to 'influence the mores' of such an uncultured society yet.

Probably, the journal 'Anything and Everything' published by the Empress became an example for Novikov, who wanted to serve his Fatherland.

In 1772 Novikov became the publisher of the satirical journal *Zhivopisets*, and in 1774 – *Koshelyek*. The pages of Novikov's journals covered such kind of social vices as a lack of culture, Francomania, embezzlement, lies, and injustice.

It should be noted that the XVIII century was a time of a deep transformation of the social, religious and philosophical foundation of the Russian society. The 'Voltaireanism' that came from the West and introduced the Russian society to the works of Voltaire, Rousseau and other encyclopedists turned the philosophy of an overall liberation into libertinism. Deism was understood as the absence of God.

Religiously speaking, the Russian society experienced an uneasy time at that period of its history. The worldview 'according to the customs of the ancestors' was being rethought, and all the hopes were pinned on the transformation of the state.

At the beginning of the reign of Catherine the Great, the public interests dominated over all other interests, for the eminent thinkers of the era, such as Voltaire, carried a powerful but contradictory idea of Enlightenment: *'God is needed only for the common good'*.

Novikov, surrounded by Voltairians, was highly sensitive to



Portrait of N.I. Novikov by G. Levitsky. Circa 1797

the ideas of internal transformation of both man and society. He was not afraid of entering into polemic with the Empress herself: being a true liberal, he was extremely dissatisfied with serfdom. The title of the journal 'Truten' proclaimed that protest loudly. Thus, Novikov has placed on the cover page of the journal an epigraph from Sumarokov's fable: *'They work, and you reap the harvest of their labour'*.

Novikov drew up a memorable picture of a nobleman torturing and robbing his serfs in 'Prescription for Mr. Harebrained'. The diagnosis was

the following: "Mr. Harebrained is sick with the opinion that peasants are not human beings, but just peasants". And the prescription for this disease was very unusual: "Mr. Harebrained must examine the bones of the lords and peasants twice every day until he will find a distinction between lord and peasant".

In addition to articles against the arbitrariness of landlords, Novikov also condemned the policy of 'imaginary' enlightenment, when many young men, resembling Mitrofanushka from Fonvizin's 'Nedorosl', were forced to go abroad



Portrait of A.P. Sumarokov. Workshop of Fyodor Rokotov. 1762

to study, from where they returned even more stupid and morally passive and ignorant. For example, here is one of the notes in the journal 'Truten': *'The young Russian pig, who travelled abroad to enlighten his mind, the one whose travelling was aimed at achieving a grand benefit, returned already as a complete pig; those who want to watch can see him without money on many streets of this city'*.

Undoubtedly, between Truten and Vsyakaya Vsyachina has arisen a literary battle, which later turned into a political struggle. Novikov's journal was a kind of opposition, shamelessly attacking the propaganda machine of the government. But Catherine II

was not reluctant to attack her enemy. Truten, unlike Vsyakaya Vsyachina, used satire, which was addressed to the different public figures, and angrily criticized the serfdom regime as well as the concrete representatives of the epoch, including Catherine II herself.

The Empress, of course, was horrified by such kind of free-thinking, and in reply has published in one of the following up reviews of the Vsyakaya Vsyachina: '1) Never call weakness as a vice. 2) Preserve humanity in all cases. 3) Do not think that perfect people can be found, and for that 4) Ask God to give us the spirit of meekness and leniency ...

... P.S. tomorrow I want to propose a fifth rule that henceforth no one should reflect about something that he does not understand; and the sixth one, that no one should think that he alone can fix the whole world'.

The last rules can be called as a threat from the side of the government to Novikov himself and a hint that if Truten continues to write materials in its usual manner, the consequences would be highly unfavourable. That is, according to Catherine II, serfdom, arbitrariness of landlords, famine of peasants, – all these indications are just 'weaknesses', not 'vices', and, in no case, they can be condemned – it is better 'to preserve humanity'. Novikov spoke out about this in Truten vehemently: *'Mrs. Vsyakaya Vsyachina is angry with us and curses our moral reasoning with different words <...> "Vsekaya Vsechina" is so spoilt with praising that now she considers it as a crime if someone does not praise her'*.

Her Imperial Highness could not tolerate such a reaction. Truten more than once was on the verge of closure, but was saved for another year, largely due to a partial giving away of some inches in the battlefield by Novikov. However, in the very same year 1770 Novikov's journal was closed, as well as the publication of Vsyakaya Vsyachina. The edition size of the latter had fallen drastically by that time.

For Novikov and his co-thinkers the time of 'searching' new ways to serve the Motherland has come. The answer to the demands of his heart and mind was within Freemasonry.

Thus, in the late 1770s Novikov, having been disappointed in the possibilities of satirical journalism, moved to Moscow. Since that time, all his activities were guided by the Masonic ideology. O.G. Florovsky explains: *'An internal discipline or asceticism ... was the most important element in the general*

economy of Masonic action, – hewing a "raw stone" of the human heart, as it used to be said in those times. And within such an 'ascesis' a new type of man was about to be nurtured.'

While being immersed in the earthly concerns, the modern man is just a 'raw stone' that should be morally processed, and this is the work of the man himself. The Masonic 'quest for the true light' was understood as the path of moral perfection. 'Knowledge of oneself' became the goal of life. In Moscow Novikov found a circle of like-minded people, called 'Moscow Rosencreutzers'. The fruits of the labours of this circle were so significant that it actually overshadowed all other Masonic systems and lodges. It is not surprising that any discussion of the Russian Freemasonry, as a rule, refers to Novikov and the 'Moscow Rosencreutzers'.

In Novikov's journals of this period (*The Morning Light*, *The Evening Dawn*) many articles are devoted to the pedagogical problems and the education of an enlightened incivility. Novikov was interested not only in 'the reasons of expanding Arts and sciences', but also in what kind of 'effect the sciences may create on the heart and morals of the man'.

A surprisingly accurate remarks are expressed on the pages of *The Morning Light*: *'The sciences, transferred to another place, are like a rapidly drying out flowers in the fields. They do not flourish in any other way than by the delicate care of the gardener, they do not get used to the new climate and do not adjust to the properties of that land. They are languishing comfortably, and a strong wind does not disturb them. The people are the first collectors of the fruits brought by science; however, they used to come very late to the noble ones. We should not think that they may suddenly blossom in any nation or that attracting scientists from the other states can be sufficient. They can decorate the royal house; but it is very rare that they can*

make the whole state as an enlightened one. Arts and sciences march so slowly that the state in which they begin to grow or which accepts them, is required to stay for a long time without any change in guidance. The longevity of the state gives the sciences a chance to come to perfection; with freedom they flourish'. ('On the Main Reasons Relating to the Increase of Arts and Sciences', 'Moscow Monthly Edition', April 1781).

'By the orderly and diligent study of free sciences one acquires a certain good taste, i.e. a delicate, quick comprehending and faithful feeling of everything that is attributed in the spiritual works is right, beautiful, noble; and, on the other hand, of everything that is vicious, obnoxious, immature, unreasonable and unstructured. This delicate feeling, accompanied in the first case by a secret pleasure, and in the latter, by a secret indignation; such a good taste becomes so natural to us from its use that we follow it not only in our writings but also in our conversations and actions. Its effect extends not only on our way of thinking but also on the whole realm of our soul. It does not make us virtuous, but it gives our virtues a value and respect which they would be deprived of without it. Dedication to the sciences softens our morals and teaches us humanity. As the song of Ovide goes: spread the sciences, and you will see the truth of these words. ('On the Effect of Sciences on the Heart and Manners of Man', 'Moscow Monthly Edition', August 1781).

Thus, Nikolai Ivanovich Novikov, following the postulates of Publius Ovidius, spread the high spirit of Enlightenment, tirelessly asserting that good morals are the natural fruit of the sciences and Arts and that good morals should be nurtured from an early age.

It would be a great omission not to mention that Novikov was the publisher of the first Russian journal for young readers, *Children's*

Reading for Heart and Mind. He entrusted the young N. M. Karamzin to edit the journal. This journal remained the object of love and admiration of teenagers almost the entire first half of the XIX century.

The quintessence of the pedagogical ideas of the freemasons was the conviction that education should be based on the 'Christian worldview'. In other words, the acquisition of knowledge cannot be an ultimate journey in itself but must contribute to the 'organization of the soul'. By becoming more educated, a person must gain more moral power; this process represents an inseparable unity. These are the views that Novikov and his circle of co-thinkers tirelessly introduced to the Russian society of their epoch.

One of the most significant Novikov's pedagogical work was a large article *'On the Education and Instruction of the Children'*, printed in the *Additions to the Moscow Gazette* of 1783. In this article he elaborates a detailed vision of his enlightenment credo. For Novikov, the main object of education *'...is nothing else than to educate children to be prosperous people and useful citizens'*. He endeavours to explain his own thoughts as precisely as possible: *'The duty of the parents to educate their children as best as possible is based on their duties to their children, to the state and to themselves. It leads to the crucial goal of upbringing process that must include the fulfilment of the noble service. And as a result, all the positions of parents towards their children contain the idea of promoting the well-being of their children as much as possible, as well as to provide the state with the useful citizens, – it follows that the well-being of children and their benefit to the state are essential parts of the subject of upbringing'*.

It should be noted that this passage gives a twofold impression. On the one hand, Novikov shows himself as a faithful follower of the Russian czar Peter the Great precepts,



Imperial Tsarskoye Selo Lyceum in a lithograph from the 1820s

which required from every Russian to be a useful citizen to the state. On the other hand, he persistently uses the word 'service' in a different, sometimes even in a specifically Masonic meaning, namely as a clear delineation of duties in a certain community (even family). For earlier it would have been simply ridiculous to speak of the 'servicing position of parents' in relation to the children. The so-called 'Positions' existed only within a state hierarchical pyramid. Novikov clearly distinguishes the aspects of his pedagogical system: *'Education has three main pillars: a physical education that is concerned about healthy and sound body; a moral education, which is aimed at the education of the heart, that is, the education and guidance of the natural feeling and will of the children; and a reasonable education, which deals with the enlightenment or education of the mind'*.

Without diminishing the first aspect (physical education), Novikov gives primacy to the second and third ones: *'...most of all, education consists of upbringing the mind and heart of the*

child and, thus, to lead him to the best possible way towards virtues, religion and Christianity'. Without deviating one step from his enlightenment credo, he puts 'education of the heart' above 'education of the mind'.

The 'education of the heart' means a wide openness to all the human manifestations. Novikov puts a special emphasis on this. He demands from educators: *'Do your best in instilling in them (pupils – N.I. Novikov) a sincere love and favor to all people, without distinction of social status, religion, nation or outer state of happiness'*. A special attention is paid here to the attitude to the lower-class people of their own country: *'Do not let them talk about the commoners, the lower-class people, in a contemptuous manner'*. In the footnotes Novikov explains: *'For the profanum vulgus are not people of the lowest social level or condition, but those who are of the ignorant nature, whether they are nobles or beggars'*. *Under the conditions of serfdom in Russia, such kind of words sounded as highly relevant and progressive.*

Novikov overviewed Christianity not as a blind adherence to the spiritual heritage of the past but as a roadmap of life for the modern man. That is why he wrote: *'He who loves the Lord, who keeps His commandments; according to Jesus Christ, only faith is appropriate, through effective love <...> love without deeds is dead'*. Consequently, the goal of educators' efforts should be not only the free and noble-minded people but also active citizens.

Novikov himself was a living embodiment of his words; above all, he was a man of action. He saw his goal in the active creation of good.

Adhering to the Masonic phraseology, we can outline the main moral criteria of freemasons of the Enlightenment era in Russia.

'The polishing of the raw stone' means a continuous search for truth. That search should not stop for a single moment. A rising along the hierarchy of the Masonic degrees is the acquisition of the new facets of truth. A human life is an eternal spiritual wandering. Of course, only a few will find the truth – the most Enlightened ones- the most active. But a whole mankind must follow this path. Applied to the Russian soil, we can say that the freemasons transferred the official table of ranks to the realm of spirit. Their pedagogical theories were based on the above-mentioned initial moral and spiritual principles and criteria.

One of the most eminent Russian freemason and brilliant writer was M.M. Kheraskov. His contemporaries honoured him as the first poet of his time; the moral decoration of his character was no less attractive. According to the public opinion, he did not utter a single poisonous word to his neighbour during his entire life. During a long period of time Kheraskov was a curator of the Moscow University. He was the one who invited Novikov to Moscow and leased the university's printing

house to him. For many years Kheraskov was Novikov's most active collaborator, working hand in hand with him on the implementation of numerous enterprises of the unwearied 'adherents of the Russian enlightenment'.

The views of Novikov and Kheraskov were put into practice by the pedagogical experience of the Moscow University. The success was so impressive that Klyuchevsky called the 'Novikov's decade' as one of the best epochs in the history. Novikov himself constantly repeated his favourite proverb: 'A student without a book is like a soldier without a gun'. He considered his own publishing activity as 'the creation of a Man'.

The pedagogical ideas of the Russian Freemasons gained a wide recognition among upper aristocratic and political circles quite rapidly. The matter was not limited only by the Moscow University. Despite a suspicious attitude towards freemasons, Catherine II did not hesitate to invite a prominent Freemason M.I. Muravyov-Apostol (father of Decembrist N.M. Muravyov-Apostol), who was a trustee of the Moscow University and taught moral philosophy, Russian literature, and Russian history to the royal offspring. M.I. Muravyov-Apostol was regarded by the contemporaries as the best Russian writer after Karamzin.

The Masonic milestone of Enlightenment and education of a free personality, laid by Novikov in the second half of the XVIII century, formed the basis of one of the most significant pedagogical experiments of the first half of the XIX century – the opening of the Tsarskoye Selo Lyceum. It was conceived by Count M.M. Speransky as a privileged educational institution, a kind of cradle of the Russian intellectual elite.

Speransky, a freemason himself, was convinced (quite in the spirit

of Novikov) that good laws 'without good morals' would ultimately be powerless. The reformer of the new time sought to develop the pedagogical experience accumulated by the 'Moscow Rosenkreutzers'. The endeavour turned out to be highly successful. After all, the first graduating class of lyceum students was proud not only of A.S. Pushkin and A.M. Gorchakov, but also of the less colorful but significant names of I.I. Pushchin, V.K. Küchelbecker, A.A. Delvig, M.A. Korff.

It is not without reason that the attacks on the Tsarskoye Selo Lyceum, especially after the Decembrist revolt, contained the name of Novikov, who formed a 'sect of Martinists', which turned out to be, as F.V. Bulgarin wrote, the beginning of 'liberalism and all free ideas', constantly came up. According to his saying, the whole system of education in the lyceum was based 'on Martinism'. The friendly unity of the lyceum students, the 'lyceum union', praised by Alexander Pushkin, and which became a phenomenon of the Russian culture, he, without any hesitation, compared with the Masonic lodge.

Undoubtedly, L.N. Tolstoy could not miss such a rich ideological heritage of Freemasonry in the construction of his school in Krasnaya Polyana as well. The experience of the state educational institutions embraced the writer's mind with the gloomy thoughts. Sometimes those institutions used to give a way to the highly educated people, but still spiritually defective.

All this led Tolstoy to the conviction that a profound upbringing and education are not the same thing. The main thesis of Tolstoy as an educator sounded as the following: *'Religion is the only legitimate and reasonable basis of the spiritual upbringing'*. Obviously, he did not mean an official Orthodoxy (additionally

to the previous stance he writes about the ugliness of seminaries and monastery schools), but a kind of natural religion, the only basis that may give a fruitful soil for the inner reorganization of the soul. A direct reference to the quests of the inexhaustible 'adherents of the Enlightenment' of the previous century, a direct spiritual heritage of Novikov, could be clearly traced here.

In the early 1820s Russian Freemasonry has exhausted its spiritual potential. The historical role had been played by its torch-bearer. The closure of the Masonic lodges in 1822 just confirmed the existing state of the things. But the works of Novikov and his inner circle were not lost in vain.

While relying on the assessments of the historians, we may notice that almost all of them expressed a consonant statement that the Masons drew up a direct line of succession to the so-called progressive intelligentsia of the XIX century and the early XX century.

The historian of Russian philosophy V.V. Zenkovsky noted: *'There were formed all the main features of the future "progressive" intelligentsia in the Russian Freemasonry – there was the primacy of morality and consciousness of duty to serve society at the first place here, in general, that was a practical idealism'*.

A fiery example of this service was given by Nikolai Ivanovich Novikov. He truly found himself only in Freemasonry, as well as the whole era that followed him. Freemasonry was banned, the leading men of the epoch were ostracized and subjected to all kinds of humiliation and deprivation, but the ideas of the Enlightenment continued to revive and ignite the minds of the new generations that discovered and continued to discover the moral grounds of Freemasonry and public service at the dawn of the XXI century.

WHAT IS ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE?

Arthur C. Clarke: “Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic”

By GALINA CHERNIKOVA

Technology has advanced so much that our lives now resemble a fairy tale – not a Disney one, but a practical Russian folk tale.

Modern navigation systems are like Ivan Tsarevich's magical ball of yarn. They quickly calculate routes, warn about traffic jams, and even help avoid obstacles on the road. Of course, in the fairy tale, the ball of yarn was enchanted, but our GPS systems are no less impressive they work anywhere, from dense forests to urban jungles.

In fairy tales, the magical tablecloth would instantly present a feast, but modern technology turns this process into pure enjoyment – after all, what could be more magical than having your favourite meal delivered right to your doorstep?

Technology surrounds us everywhere, and while it may not be entirely magical, its capabilities remind us that fairy tales might be closer than they seem.

The rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has radically transformed the way we live and interact with the world. The concept of AI emerged in the 1950s alongside the first computers. The term was introduced by scientist John McCarthy at a Dartmouth College conference to describe research aimed at developing machines capable of solving tasks that require intelligence. The core idea was that intelligence is a set of computational processes that can be replicated using computers.

Many people find the word “intelligence” intimidating because

it creates the impression that computers engage in a thought process similar to the human mind. But that's not quite the case.

Let's break down what the concept of AI includes. There are various methods, which can be roughly divided into two types: traditional approaches and machine learning. We are more interested in the latter, so let's quickly go over the first.

Traditional artificial intelligence methods involve solving problems using predefined rules and logical principles. If a computer is assisting in diagnosing diseases, it might rely on a set of rules to determine a possible illness based on symptoms – just like a doctor uses their knowledge and experience.

Other methods help computers find solutions in complex situations. For instance, when determining the fastest route for a journey, a computer can evaluate different options to find the optimal path. Or, in a game like chess, an AI program can analyse potential moves to choose the best one.

There are also methods that allow computers to “think” using strict logical rules. These approaches are often used in language processing or action planning. Sometimes, problems are solved quickly using simple rules that provide a good approximation rather than a perfect solution.

Since these methods rely on clear instructions and logic, they are useful for solving problems in many different fields.

Machine learning, on the other hand, is a method where computers learn to solve problems by analysing data rather than following predefined rules. Instead of explicitly programming instructions, we provide the computer with many examples, and it identifies patterns or relationships in the data to make predictions or draw conclusions.

Imagine we want to teach a computer to recognize paintings created in different artistic styles. To do this, we would show it many examples of paintings by various artists, and the computer would analyse the differences – such as the colours each artist uses or the way they draw shapes. After training, when presented with a new painting, the computer would be able to classify its style because it has learned to recognize these distinctive features.

However, it is important to understand that the computer does not actually “see” paintings the way humans do. Instead, it processes a set of numbers that, to a person, carry no meaningful information. Every image is a grid of pixels, each represented by red (R), green (G), and blue (B) values. A pure white pixel is (255, 255, 255); black is (0, 0, 0).

When we train a computer to recognize paintings, we provide it with images as numerical data and label them with the corresponding artist. For example, one image is labelled as Savrasov, another as Rembrandt. The machine analyses



A. K. Savrasov, *The Rooks Have Arrived* and *Its Digital Interpretation in RGB Format*

this data, identifies patterns, and learns to distinguish artistic styles. This process is based on complex mathematical analysis and linear algebra techniques.

That all makes sense, you might say, but how does AI create new paintings? Has it really learned to invent something new on its own? Will humans soon become unnecessary? Generative artificial intelligence, such as models for generating images and text, works by studying vast amounts of data and identifying patterns within them. When it creates images, it doesn't copy existing ones but generates new ones by combining colours, shapes, and textures based on the examples it has been trained on. When it writes text, it doesn't think – it simply predicts the most likely word or phrase in a given context, drawing from millions of texts it has processed.

I work as a Data Scientist in a healthcare company, where my job revolves around machine learning and data analysis. Our team tackles challenges that span the entire business. We analyse advertising effectiveness, develop models that help answer consumer questions – ranging from choosing new product flavours to addressing sensitive issues about medication dosages. We also predict flu outbreaks to ensure pharmacies are stocked with the necessary medicines in advance. In manufacturing, we work with data streams from factories, helping to automate quality control and optimize production. My job isn't just about crunching numbers – it's about finding solutions that make healthcare more accessible and efficient. Technology is transforming healthcare, and being part of this change is truly exciting.

There's no need to fear AI taking jobs. Yes, it is changing our lives, and it's difficult to predict where technological progress will lead us. But it's important to remember that technology expands our capabilities rather than taking them away. Once upon a time, the loom replaced hand weaving, but that didn't eliminate the profession of textile production – it actually fuelled the rise of fashion as an art form. Freed from tedious manual labour, people were able to focus on creativity and the search for new materials and meanings.

The same is true for AI: it takes over repetitive, monotonous tasks, leaving humans to do what requires imagination, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence. Instead of fearing change, we should learn to use new tools to our advantage. After all, technology is simply an extension of our magic – meaning there are still many incredible discoveries ahead.

THE MAGIC OF THE LITTLE HUMPBACKED HORSE FAIRY TALE

For the 210th birth anniversary of the Russian poet, prose writer and playwright Pyotr Pavlovich Yershov

By EKATERINA GRIG



Portrait of Pyotr Pavlovich Yershov by the artist Nikolai Madzhi. The late 1850s

Pyotr Yershov went down in the history of literature primarily as the author of the wonderful fairy tale in verse, *The Little Humpbacked*

Horse, which he wrote at the age of nineteen.

The future writer was born on 22 February (6 March) 1815 in the Siberian village of Bezrukovo into the family of an official. Pyotr spent his childhood in the city of Tobolsk where he obtained his primary education. Later he studied at the Department of Philosophy and Law at St Petersburg University.

Yershov became interested in folk art at an early age. His admiration for Russian folk tales, excellent knowledge of folklore and passion for literature inspired him to try his hand at writing his own work. Thus, was born the tale about a wonderful tiny horse, which was “only twelve hands high, with two humps upon his back and ears a foot long...”

The fairy tale is full of vivid characters: these are the protagonist Ivan the fool, the most popular hero of Russian fairy tales; the wicked tsar; the beautiful princess; the sea tsar; and, of course, the clever and faithful Little Humpbacked Horse which helped Ivan overcome many challenges: to get the firebird’s feather, rescue the princess and even get down to the bottom of the sea.

Yershov presented his fairy tale at the university, and it immediately attracted the attention of the teachers. During one of his lectures Peter Pletnev, Professor of Russian Literature, read an excerpt from *The Little Humpbacked Horse*



A. F. Afanasyev. Illustration to Pyotr Yershov's fairy tale, *The Little Humpbacked Horse*. 1898

and, to the students’ amazement, announced that the author of the tale was their fellow student Pyotr Yershov.

It was Pletnev who showed the tale to Alexander Pushkin. “Now I can stop writing in this genre,” Pushkin said, highly appreciating the talent of the novice poet.

The Little Humpbacked Horse is notable for its light and lively popular language, apt jokes and vivid imagination. Yershov masterfully used elements of Russian folk tales – miraculous transformations, magical helpers, and tests for the protagonist; there is also a lot of social satire in the tale.

Yershov’s work was a huge success. It also attracted the attention

of the royal censorship office, and as a result in 1834 the *Biblioteka Dlya Chteniya* (Library for Reading) magazine published only the first part and several verses from the second part of the tale, and the first edition was published in St Petersburg with considerable cuts made by the censorship office.

We cannot help but recall Vladimir Nabokov’s words about Nicholas I: “Regardless of what brilliant qualities he displayed as a Tsar, it must be admitted that in dealing with the Russian Muse he behaved like an assassin...”

It was not until 1856 and 1861 that Yershov managed to prepare new uncensored editions of the tale.

Today *The Little Humpbacked Horse* remains one of the most



N. A. Bogatova. Illustration to the fairy tale, *The Little Humpbacked Horse*. 1914

beloved Russian fairy tales. It has been translated into English, French, Japanese and other languages.

In 1856 the Italian composer Cesare Pugni and the French choreographer Arthur Saint-Leon created the ballet *The Little Humpbacked Horse*, or *The Tsar Maiden*, based on Yershov’s work. In 1947 and 1975 cartoons were made based on the story of *The Little Humpbacked Horse*, and feature films were produced in 1941 and 2021 respectively.

Yershov also wrote other works, such as poems, plays, and short stories, but he went down in the history of literature as the author of just one yet truly immortal fairy tale, *The Little Humpbacked Horse*, a true gem of Russian literature.

WORLD THEATRE DAY

March 27 marks World Theatre Day.
It was initiated in 1961 by the International Theatre Institute, founded in 1948 by UNESCO.



Theatre has been a vital part of human culture for thousands of years, evolving from ancient rituals to the diverse art form we know today. Its origins trace back to ancient civilizations, where performances were deeply connected to religious and social traditions.

The earliest recorded theatre comes from ancient Egypt, where religious dramas were performed as early as 2000 BCE. However, the foundations of Western theatre were laid in ancient Greece around the 5th century BCE. Greek theatre emerged

from religious festivals dedicated to Dionysus, the god of wine and fertility. Playwrights like Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides wrote tragedies that explored human nature, fate, and the gods, while Aristophanes pioneered comedic plays.

The Romans adopted Greek theatrical traditions but introduced grander spectacles, including gladiator battles and pantomimes. After the fall of the Roman Empire, theatre declined in Europe but resurged during the Middle Ages through religious and morality plays.

The Renaissance (14th–17th century) saw a revival of classical theatre, with Shakespeare, Molière, and other playwrights redefining drama. Theatres like London's Globe became cultural centres.

The 19th and 20th centuries introduced realism, avant-garde movements, and modernist experimentation, leading to new forms such as musical theatre and experimental drama.

Today, theatre remains a dynamic art form, blending traditional and digital elements.



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