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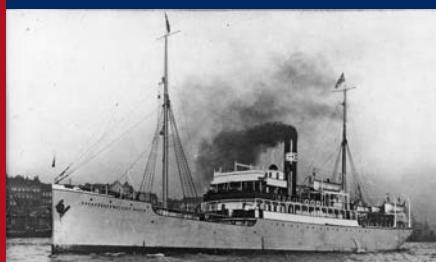
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EDITOR'S LETTER

PANEGYRIC TO HOPE



Time runs faster than us... This is an axiom. "The clock strikes. Everyone," as the wise Pole Stanislaw Jerzy Lec once remarked.

Every time in the last minutes of the outgoing year, I raise a glass of champagne with a slight sadness: another stage of my life has passed... And it is ineffectively to count the results of the past year. It is only in your youth that you don't consider that every new year moves on with your timeline but still keeps you behind. For the time left in the past is irreversible. In earthly life, we can regain anything: money, property, a wife, but not our age.

"Until the age of forty, I was an Armenian, but now I am just a man," one good friend once opened up to me. Good Lord, how right he is! "Just a man" does not live by disappointments in the human race steeped in xenophobia, greed, militancy, and so on, but by a natural hope for the best. Do you think it is primitive? No, not like that... As Andre Maurois, one of my most respected French fiction writers,

taught, even "the fear of death in old age can be overcome with faith and philosophy." And at all its twists, our life, on a larger scale, is subject to only one principal feeling that is fear. It is not necessarily the fear of death. You see, this is a philosophical approach. Unpretentious, of course. But still...

Strong pessimists argue that we are losing a better present while pursuing a hope for a better future. But hope is the ability to resist in a probably hopeless situation (sorry for the tautology!).

My innermost hopes are connected with the coming year. May it be rich in surprises for all of us – only pleasant ones. Let it be peaceful, cloudless, generous, joyful. Will it come true or not? Let's not guess without a daisy. The Frenchman Pierre Boiste, author of the famous Encyclopedia of the Mind, said: "Our hopes are day dreams." And we know for certain that dreams sometimes come true.

Happy New Year, dear readers!
Kirill Privalov

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HIGHLIGHTS

“BEAUTY WILL SAVE THE WORLD”

Past year results

By KIRILL PRIVALOV,
Editor-in-Chief, Russian Mind



Kirill Borisovich Privalov

A journalist, writer. He has been working as a journalist since 1973. He collaborated with many Soviet, French and Russian publications. Since 1986, he has been working in *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, and was its staff correspondent in Paris. Chevalier of the *Ordre des Arts et des Lettres* and the *Ordre national du Mérite* (France), he was awarded the *Renaissance Francaise* medal for merits in the field of Francophonie. TV and radio host. Author of twenty books in Russian and French. Screenwriter and producer of documentaries about the history of Russia and France.

Each period bears its own sign. This banality could be disregarded, if this did not actually happen. What is the sign of 2022? What marked the year which, according to most experts, opened a new era in the annals of mankind?

believe Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, who said: history teaches only, that, unfortunately, it never teaches anything.

Not only manuscripts burn

I remembered how the Notre Dame Cathedral burned three years ago... The ancient roof of the historical

temple sank and turned into ashes; slowly, like a wounded giant, the famous oak spire – which skilful architects, according to old drawings, restored on plumbic beams in the 19th century – collapsed, being absorbed by flames; fiery tongues, crowned with sparks, soared over the Seine in a column...

The majestic cathedral, the first stone of which was laid by Charlemagne, was almost destroyed in less than eight hours. And where? In the heart of Western civilisation! And when? In the 21st century: nuclear, space, digital era... No scientific or engineering achievements have helped people to ride the whirlwind in a short time. A sign... The symbolism of the fire in Notre-Dame de Paris is hard to miss: as if God himself wanted to warn us in such a cruel way that our civilisation is burning along with the temple.

It turns out that everything may burn, even manuscripts, contrary to the statement of Mikhail Bulgakov. The alchemists lie when they say that «all nature will be renewed by fire» (*Igne natura renovatur integra*). What kind of «renewal» are you talking about? I don't know about you, but my hopes for a future being more compassionate towards us, burned out along with the Notre Dame. The final verdict was somewhat restrained by the coronavirus, but the pandemic generated by that evil virus came to its end, and it became clear without choice: each next year will be more difficult than the previous one. As

one Russian sage said: «We have everything ahead – and this is what is alarming.»

The year began with a special military operation in Ukraine. Vladimir Putin defined its purpose as «the protection of people who have been subjected to bullying and genocide by the Kyiv regime for eight years.» I understand that. I have been to Donbass before and I appreciate its hardworking people... But I hate war. Any kind of it. I know that sometimes it is impossible to avoid it, but I still hate war. In various extermination battles of the 20th century, my family was ruined, crippled, and disunited. My uncle became a hero of the Soviet Union on Belarusian soil in the first week of the war against fascism, unfortunately posthumously. My grandfather, a badly wounded invalid of the First World War which he stubbornly called the «German war», passed away with the words: «If only there were no war...» And now it happened again. Dividing the countries into «friendly» and «non-friendly» ones.

Imagining war in the very beginning of the 21st century, not so long ago seemed to me as impossible as the destruction of the Notre Dame Cathedral. However, something ugly similar already happened earlier. I don't want to remember this – it hurts! – but it happened, it happened... On March 4, 1999, NATO bombarded Yugoslavia without the approval of the UN Security Council. Wild aggression continued for more than two months. Almost 2,000 people died only during the air raids, including 400 children. And with an incredible degree of cynicism, Western capitals called this military operation «Merciful Angel»! It turns out that the gunpowder history of the Millennium was by no means launched by Russia.

Such is human nature: someone has only to start – and off we go!..



The symbolism of the fire in Notre-Dame de Paris is hard to miss: as if God himself wanted to warn us in such a cruel way that our civilisation is burning along with the temple

Anti-Soviet ship

The centenary celebration is rightly called the «jubilee». The past year was truly a jubilee year for Soviet Russia, with the consequences that marked the entire 20th century. Representatives of Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and the Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic gathered in the Bolshoi Theatre building and on December 30, 1922, they decided to establish an unprecedented state: the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Somewhat earlier, on April 16, an agreement was concluded in Rapallo (Italy) between the Weimar Republic (Germany) and Russia (RSFSR) on the restoration of diplomatic relations and the settlement of all disputes. After many years of war and an economic blockade, the new Russia enters the global stage and becomes one of the main actors in the world «concert» (this

term originates from the Congress of Vienna in 1814–1815). But at what price?

On the same days, a steamer shipped out of Petrograd with the passengers including N. A. Berdyaev, S. L. Frank, I. A. Ilyin, S. E. Trubetskoy, A. A. Kizevetter... That was the «Philosophers' Ship» – six days before Lenin's apoplexy, the Bolsheviks decided to deport the elite of Russian scientific thought in several stages. Many of those refugees will inevitably settle in Paris. Where, on May 18, at the Majestic Hotel, visiting the English philanthropist and writer Sydney Schiff, the great authors of the century will meet for dinner: Marcel Proust, James Joyce, Sergei Diaghilev, Igor Stravinsky, Pablo Picasso, Eric Satie, and Clive Bell. They will not find a common language... Intellectuals of all countries, in general, have traditional difficulties with a «common language».



Memorial sign on the Lieutenant Schmidt Embankment in St. Petersburg

Sanctions are just sanctions, but culture is on a schedule

Time magazine has rated 2022 as «the worst year ever.» Pessimists

from the shores of Albion are unaware of the Russian spirit-uplifting principle: «There's more to come!» Moreover, no sanctions are able to mute the voice of Russian culture.

«Beauty will save the world,» the hero of Fyodor Dostoevsky believed. I believe in it too. More precisely, culture is the best medicine at the time of military trials. Here you

can, of course, recall the words of the Frenchman Charles Montalembert: «If you do not deal with politics, politics will deal with you.» However, over the recent year, there were incredibly many cultural events everywhere, from Moscow to the very outskirts of Russia.

Judge for yourself!

The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts (Moscow) held the main exhibition of the year: *Brother Ivan. Collections of Mikhail and Ivan Morozov*. There was no doubt that it would be a sensation after the Russian collection returned to Moscow from Paris, where it was visited by a record 2.5 million French women and men. For the first time in the century Moscow showcased the works by both Western (Sisley, Munch, Renoir, Picasso, Manet, etc.) and Russian (Vrubel, Serov, Vasnetsov, Larionov, etc.) artists in one artistic space. So it was in the Morozov collection: one culture, one civilisation.

The exhibition of contemporary Indian art *India! New Art* took part at New Tretyakov Gallery on Krymsky Val. More than 80 works – paintings, video installations, 3D art objects – arrived from the Kiran Nadar Museum, which is located in the capital of India, New Delhi...

And the major solo exhibition of Igor Grabar dedicated to his 150th anniversary of birth continues in the «classical» Tretyakov Gallery, in its main building, which happens for the first time in recent decades. A native of Carpathian Rus, Grabar was not only a remarkable Russian and Soviet artist, but also became famous as a master of museum and restoration affairs, as an art critic and teacher. He headed the Tretyakov Gallery, the Commission for the Discovery and Preservation of Monuments of Old Russian Painting, the Moscow State Art Institute...

On the other bank of the Moskva River, visitors to the Historical Museum saw the «Treasures of the

Museums of Genoa» – this is the name of the exposition from the collections of the Italian port city to include the paintings from the Cathedral of St. Lawrence and the funds of Strada Nuova, paintings by the Fleming Anthony van Dyck and the Genoese master Alessandro Magnasco. And, as the crown jewel of the exhibition, the canvas *Ecce Homo* of the incomparable Caravaggio.

After twenty years of living in Paris, I, like many inhabitants of white-stone Moscow, left the capital city a few years ago and settled outside the city, in the countryside in its truest sense of the word. So, next to me, in a «rural backwater», the New Jerusalem State Museum is located, which is the cultural and educational part of Russian Palestine surrounding the majestic Resurrection Monastery of New Jerusalem. Just before the New Year, the museum opened the exhibition *Under the sign of Rubens. Flemish paintings of the 17th century from Russian museums and private collections*.

Sanctions are just sanctions, but culture in Russia is on a schedule. Note that 67 iconic works of masters of the heyday of Flemish art were brought not from the Netherlands or Belgium, but from Russian regional museums and private collections of Russian collectors. The works came out of the workshops of the main artists of the golden period of the Flemish School: Anthony van Dyck, Jacob Jordaens, Frans Snyders, Jan Brueghel the Velvet, David Teniers the Younger and even Peter Paul Rubens. Including extremely rare works of the authors, whose artistic heritage exists today in single quantities. So, I managed to see the only signed work of the female artist Joanna Vergauwen – a rare case for that period. That is a unique exhibition in its scope!

The Monastery of New Jerusalem is a Russian wonder of the world



located fifty kilometres far from Moscow. And the museum, where I have previously enjoyed the masterpieces of Picasso and Faberge, Chagall and Falk...

One could, of course, focus on such outcomes of the year as the death of Queen Elizabeth II and the victory of Emmanuel Macron in the uncontested elections, the short forty-four-day rule of Liz Truss and the assassination of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe... But it seems to me that it is much more interesting to talk about a wonderful exhibition *Avant-garde: on a cart into the 21st century*, held at the Museum of Russian Impressionism in Moscow. More than three hundred paintings by Vasily Kandinsky, Nikolai Feshin, Ilya Mashkov, Alexander Rodchenko... Incredible story! In 1921, in the Vyatka province, after travelling exhibitions, masterpieces of avant-garde artists remained in provincial museums due to autumn impassability. And for the first time they were united and shown to the general public. That's good: it's much nicer to forget about the «curse» of the charred Notre Dame Cathedral and finally start talking about the results of the year in arts, literature, sports, especially after Argentina's victory in the World Cup. And about the culture of the country, which did not enter the avant-garde of the 21st century

on a cart at all.

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE BY PATRIARCH KIRILL OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA



Patriarchal Service in the Church of Equal-to-the-Apostles Prince Vladimir in Balashikha, Moscow Region

Beloved in the Lord archpastors, all-honourable presbyters and deacons, God-loving monks and nuns, dear brothers and sisters,

Today, as the Heavenly and earthly Church in conciliar unity glorifies

God Incarnate, I extend my heartfelt greetings to all of you on the great and radiant feast of the Nativity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Once again we look back at the events that occurred in Bethlehem

over two thousand years ago, beholding the meek Infant lying in the manger, surrounded by His Most Pure Mother, the righteous Joseph and the shepherds who were the first to hear the glad tidings of the

Saviour coming into the world. We join the heavenly hosts in praising the Most High Creator Who through His Begotten Son granted unto people peace and good will.

St. Gregory the Theologian reveals the very essence of this feast, saying: *It is this which we are celebrating today, the Coming of God to Man... that we might go back to God* (Oration 38). Truly, *the kingdom of heaven is at hand* (Mt 3:2); the long-expected *Shiloh* (Gen 49:10) has come to earth to fulfil the ancient prophecies; *unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given... and his name shall be called... The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace* (Is 9:6).

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you (Jn 14:27), Christ says to us. What kind of peace is it, which the Lord granted unto man and which the angels were singing of at the time of the Saviour's birth? Has there been less enmity or conflicts in the world since then? We hear all around, *Peace, peace; when there is no peace*, as Jeremiah the prophet writes (Jer 8:11). Yet, the true *peace of God* that came down to earth with the Nativity of Christ surpasses *all understanding* (Phil 4:7) and is unaffected by external circumstances or afflictions and hardships of this transient life. This invincible inner peace is in God Himself Who, having become a man like us in all things but sin, is not only active, but visibly present in the human history. *The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth* (Jn 1:14). The Lord is at hand, my beloved, let us never forget that and be of good cheer! In

Him is our strength, our firm hope and spiritual comfort in all vicissitudes of life.

Venerating the miracle of the Divine Incarnation in its humble greatness and magnifying the

Saviour Who came into the world, we at the same time cannot but be troubled by the ongoing hostilities overshadowing the holy Christmas festivities, for, as St. Paul notes, *whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it* (1 Cor 12:26). In the midst of all the hardships that have befallen the peoples of the historical Rus' it is of utmost importance for us to demonstrate in deeds our dedication to our Christian vocation and show love for one another. Sometimes it may seem that good is weak and helpless and that the little we do cannot make a difference. But it is not true.

There is an indisputable principle of spiritual life: love is multiplied when we devote ourselves to others, offering our time, financial help or just attention. Thus not only do we transform the world around us, but also find something precious within ourselves. In this simple but effective principle there lies a secret of genuine peace and real happiness that every person strives to achieve. This happiness is not to be found in far-distant lands, as some people think, chasing after illusions of material welfare and a life without sorrows. The true happiness is in sharing love and joy with those around and by good works glorifying God Who became incarnate that *we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly* (cf. Jn 10:10). When we let Christ in and allow Him to act in us, the blessed peace and rest come to reign in our soul (cf. Mt 11:29), and we become partakers of the kingdom of God which is within us (cf. Lk 17:21).

Do we want to embrace the Born Lord? If so, let us embrace the afflicted and comfort the suffering. Do we want to touch Christ and be like the wise men from the East bringing the gifts pleasing unto the Divine Infant? If so, let us give

our love and care to our fellow human beings, show mercy and help the needy and support those who have lost heart. *Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me* (Mt 25:40), the Saviour says.

St. Ephraim the Syrian calls Christmas *the night of reconciliation that stills all*. Daringly, he exclaims, *In this night that is the meek One's, high or haughty be in it none! In this day of pardoning let us not exact trespasses! In this day of gladness let us not spread sadness!* (Hymns on the Nativity, 1).

Let us take heed of these amazing words of the «Syrian desert prophet» and open our hearts towards the Lord Who became incarnate for our sake. Let us rejoice, for the King and Lord of the universe Himself came meekly down to earth in order to grant unto us salvation and eternal life. So, responding with gratitude to the great love of the Maker, let us sanctify our souls by patiently enduring ordeals, as well as by heartfelt prayer and good works to the glory of God.

Once again I extend my felicitations to all of you, my dears, on the radiant feast of the Nativity of Christ, wishing you strength in body and spirit and generous help from the Divine Infant Jesus, and wishing unceasing joy and welfare to your families. May the Creator, Lover of mankind, the True Lord of history, show His mercy on the peoples of the Holy Rus' and bless us all with peace so that *with one mouth and one heart* we give praise to the Incarnate Saviour, bearing an earnest witness that *God is with us!*

+KIRILL
PATRIARCH OF MOSCOW
AND ALL RUSSIA

Christmas
2022/2023
Moscow

PEOPLE OF THE NATIVITY

In the days of the celebration of the Nativity of Christ it is important to be imbued with the awareness of the combination of greatness and smallness, the Divine and the human, the festive and the everyday

By AUGUSTINE SOKOLOVSKI,
Doctor of Theology, priest



Andrei Rublev. *Nativity of the Lord*. 15th century

The event of the Nativity of Christ is closely interconnected with the Resurrection of the Lord. Easter is

the completion of the work of Christ: the victory over death and hell, a sign and guarantee of the resurrection

of all people. The Nativity is the beginning of this saving plan for us, as it is said in the Liturgy of John Chrysostom.

There is another salvific connection between the Nativity and Easter. The Lord rose from the dead on the third day. The event of the Resurrection took place in the mystery of the Holy Sepulchre. According to the Gospel, the Birth of the Lord took place in a cave as well. The Nativity and Easter were hidden from the world, for it was blind, like the Cyclops from the *Odyssey*.

'Anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see', the *Apocalypse* reads (Rev. 3:18). God has His own means of communication: it is Grace, transmitted through the World and the Church. These are two of His favourite works: one is the work of His Hands, the other is His Body. As St Irenaeus of Lyons wrote, the hands of God are the Son and the Divine Spirit.

God gave grace to feel the paradoxical reality of the Birth of the Messiah into the world to few people who lived in those ancient times – Mary, Joseph, the Wise Men and shepherds. A reality that was clothed in silence, obscurity, lack of glory and oblivion. Echoing the prophecy of Isaiah (Is. 9:6), the Nativity service refers to the Lord as to the 'Prince of Peace.' What is Silence if not Peace!

'And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not', the Gospel proclaims (Jn. 1:5). The Church Fathers wrote much about this 'mysticism of light and fire', which overcomes all darkness

and human inability to perceive, but at the same time remains Divine darkness.

These words are hard to understand. In the days of the celebration of the Nativity of Christ it is extremely important to be imbued with the awareness of the combination in this event of greatness and smallness, the Divine and the human, the festive and the everyday. It is no coincidence that, in addition to the Liturgy, the symbolism of human communication did not find a better reflection for the celebration of the Nativity of Christ than a table full of treats. The meal of the Covenant of people with God or, rather, of God with people.

Because, according to the Bible, God is always the first to reveal Himself to man. God is the Infinite Self-revelation and Gift. 'For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us' (2 Cor. 1:20). Now through the Birth of Christ God, Who had received no answer from people, Himself became this answer.

On these Christmas days we should keep in mind the main Orthodox hymn of the season: 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men' (Lk. 2:14). This ancient hymn is, in essence, one of the first Creeds because what is said in it is the confession, faith and conviction in what must certainly come.

This major Nativity hymn has two versions. The first is, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.' It is used in the Eastern Orthodox tradition. Its ending demonstrates that the calling and election by God embrace everyone. The second is approximately as follows, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace be to men of good will.' According to this interpretation, peace is given to those on whom God's favour rests. In modern terms, on people of good will.

This is not because the Church has some special attitude towards the relations between the sexes (of course, both the Bible and the Church bless

them when it is in accordance with God's plan), but it has to do exclusively with the essence of the Gospel message.

The Church teaches us that the Lord Jesus was a new creation. He was born apart from the normal process of procreation, but, like the first man, Adam, was re-created by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Mother of God. At the same time, and this is perhaps the most difficult thing, He is the Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, Who received the human name 'Jesus'.

This is how God entered history. And Mary and Joseph played an incredibly great role. Mary was the Mother of Jesus by flesh, and Joseph was His father by law. It should be remembered that the Bible constantly emphasises that the Law of God is above that of flesh.

At the Divine Liturgy on the feast of the Nativity of Christ an extract from the Gospel of Matthew is read. The first twelve verses of chapter 2 speak of the Adoration of the Magi. Following the star, they came to the ruler Herod and found out the birthplace of the future Messiah, as it was written in the Biblical prophecies. Then they, following the star, found the newly-born Infant and worshipped Him. They brought Him Gifts and, having received in a dream the news that Herod had decided to kill Christ, they left for their homeland in their own way.

The Gospel narratives are extremely important to understand the dramatic complexity of the time in which the Lord was born. Righteous Joseph is visibly present in them. He was destined to take the Baby and His Mother and flee to Egypt in order to save Him from inevitable death since Herod had decreed that all the newborn around Bethlehem be killed. Joseph was destined to return and take up residence in Nazareth, the area that



Guido Reni. *St Joseph with the Infant Jesus*. The 1620s

was not subject to the authorities that represented danger to Jesus. Thanks to this decision the Lord Jesus would forever be called 'Jesus of Nazareth.' Pontius Pilate would order for the inscription to be put on His Cross: 'Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews' (Jn. 19:19).

Joseph was among those who surrounded the Lord Jesus in infancy and was with Him as He grew up. Joseph was a carpenter. He brought up the Lord and, according to the Scriptures and Tradition, taught Him the skills of his trade. Thanks to this for all time in the Christian

faith work would be perceived as something very honourable. We meet Joseph the last time in the Gospel when the Lord at the age of twelve visited God's Temple in Jerusalem.

Joseph was the Lord's guardian angel, like a good father, helper and first teacher in God's Law. At the same time, in our Orthodox tradition Joseph seems to be forgotten. He is not specially venerated among the saints.

Moreover, by his youth Joseph shows us the image of God. For, according to Saint Augustine, 'God is eternally young and eternally old; He is the youngest of us.'

with the Lord's genealogy and law. This is a synaxis, not a particular feast in the calendar that most saints have. It is explained by the fact that thanks to Joseph and his genealogy Jesus was called the 'Son of David', and therefore the Messiah.

On a superficial examination, it may seem that God Himself through the Scriptures and Tradition hides Joseph's presence. However, it is not the case. Indeed, in the Scriptures Joseph is mentioned no less often than the Virgin Mary. But all these references are connected exclusively with the Lord. We do not know anything about Joseph's biography.

Joseph's age is also unknown. In the Eastern Orthodox tradition, which is reflected in iconography, Joseph is depicted as a very old man, but in the Western tradition, when it was still Orthodox, the image of Joseph as a young man appeared. In Catholic theology, originating from the early Western Fathers, such as Jerome and Augustine, Joseph became the prototype of... monastic life.

According to the Western tradition, the marriage with the Most Holy Virgin was his first marriage. God commanded him to protect and take care of the Virgin and live in chastity. Thus, Saint Augustine (354–430), who taught in Carthage, wrote that Joseph was the only person who simultaneously perfectly kept two vows – of monasticism and marriage, keeping the bonds of matrimony and virginity inviolable. An amazing wealth of blessing was bestowed on one person!

It appears that if for the Eastern tradition Joseph was a character of the Old Testament or, like John the Baptist, a bridge between the two Testaments, then for the Western tradition Joseph is one of us.

Moreover, by his youth Joseph shows us the image of God. For, according to Saint Augustine, 'God is eternally young and eternally old; He is the youngest of us.'

A New Testament's Man. A man of the Nativity. A man of the Resurrection. A man of Easter. Like Patriarch Joseph from the Old Testament, he kept his chastity. Like him, he had dreams. Through them God's will was revealed to him. Interestingly, Joseph the Betrothed became the last person of the Holy Scriptures with whom God spoke through dreams.

Joseph's biography is unknown to us. No specific dates from it have come down to us. Moreover, the circumstances of his death are unknown either.

The Portuguese writer José Saramago (1922–2010) who won the Nobel Prize in Literature, in one of his works suggested that Joseph was crucified on the Cross for speaking out against the Roman Empire: he allegedly suffered from the Empire, just as his Son Jesus was later crucified for the sins of the world, albeit at the hands of the Empire in the person of Pilate. Regardless of the writer's reflections, we know that according to the Scriptures, Joseph did everything God told him to do. In addition, according to the Gospel, the Lord did not have anti-Roman sentiments. As He told Pilate, 'My kingdom is not of this world' (Jn. 18:36).

While meditating on the image of Righteous Joseph during the Christmas season, we should wonder why the Lord often left only one fragment from the lives and biographies of His chosen ones in the memory of the Scriptures, and later in the memory of the Church. Only precious grains from the biographies of the Apostles have come down to us. In the Lives of the early saints (and most of them were martyrs) their sufferings and torments are often so similar that it seems that we are reading about the same person or martyrs who suffered together.

Most of what we would like to know about the saints (not only historically important, but also useful and salvific information) has not come down to us. To answer the question why it is so, we should take into account that every human being has by definition a biography and a Life. A Life is the part of human existence that belongs to God. Thus, we know little or almost nothing from the Scriptures about the Mother of God, but the great confession of faith of the Church is built on this little information. 'The faith of the Church is in short words,' Saint Augustine wrote.

From every human being, whether he is a saint or not, the Lord requires and takes for Himself only a tiny particle and puts it into the great building of His plan of salvation, to the foundation of the great city of Heavenly Jerusalem mentioned in the Revelation (chapter 21).

For this a person by his Life comes into contact with the History of God and in his Life he becomes everyone's heritage. But above all, this applies to the saints, each of whom is a grain of His plan for the salvation of the world, part of Divine dispensation – the Greek word 'economy' which means 'the rules or order of the household' is used here – where everything is taken into account. 'Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered' (Mt. 10:29).

It turns out that in our ignorance of the biography of Righteous Joseph a special Divine plan for everyone is also revealed.

A model of the ability to hear the voice of God, wait for His commands and fulfill exactly what truly matters – as an image of true religiousness in Christ. The art of separating the Divine from the human. So what is 'not interesting to God' (i.e., what does not take part in Divine dispensation) should remain in the shadow. Joseph, whose name means 'God will add.'

Joseph is righteousness from God. Joseph is an icon of appropriateness in Christ. Joseph is the guardian of the Lord of the New Testament. Joseph is a man called the Nativity.

a song by Bulat Okudzhava (1924–1997) says:

*I shall bury a grape stone in the warm fertile soil by my house,
and I'll kiss the vine twig and gather sweet grapes, my reward,
and I'll call all my friends to the feast,
and love in my heart I will rouse...
Otherwise, what's the purpose of living in this lasting world?*

(Translated by Alec Vagapov)

The image of ripe grapes and a solemn supper is very close to the spirit of the Gospel parables and the symbols of the Apocalypse!

So, through examples, instructions, meanings and signs the celebration of the Nativity not only becomes the recollection of the Gospel events, but also (and this is the great Biblical boldness of those who call themselves Christians) the renewal of the Covenant – that is, the people's pledge of faithfulness to God and God's pledge to the people – of The Church and the Universe – to bring the world to salvation in Jesus Christ by all means.

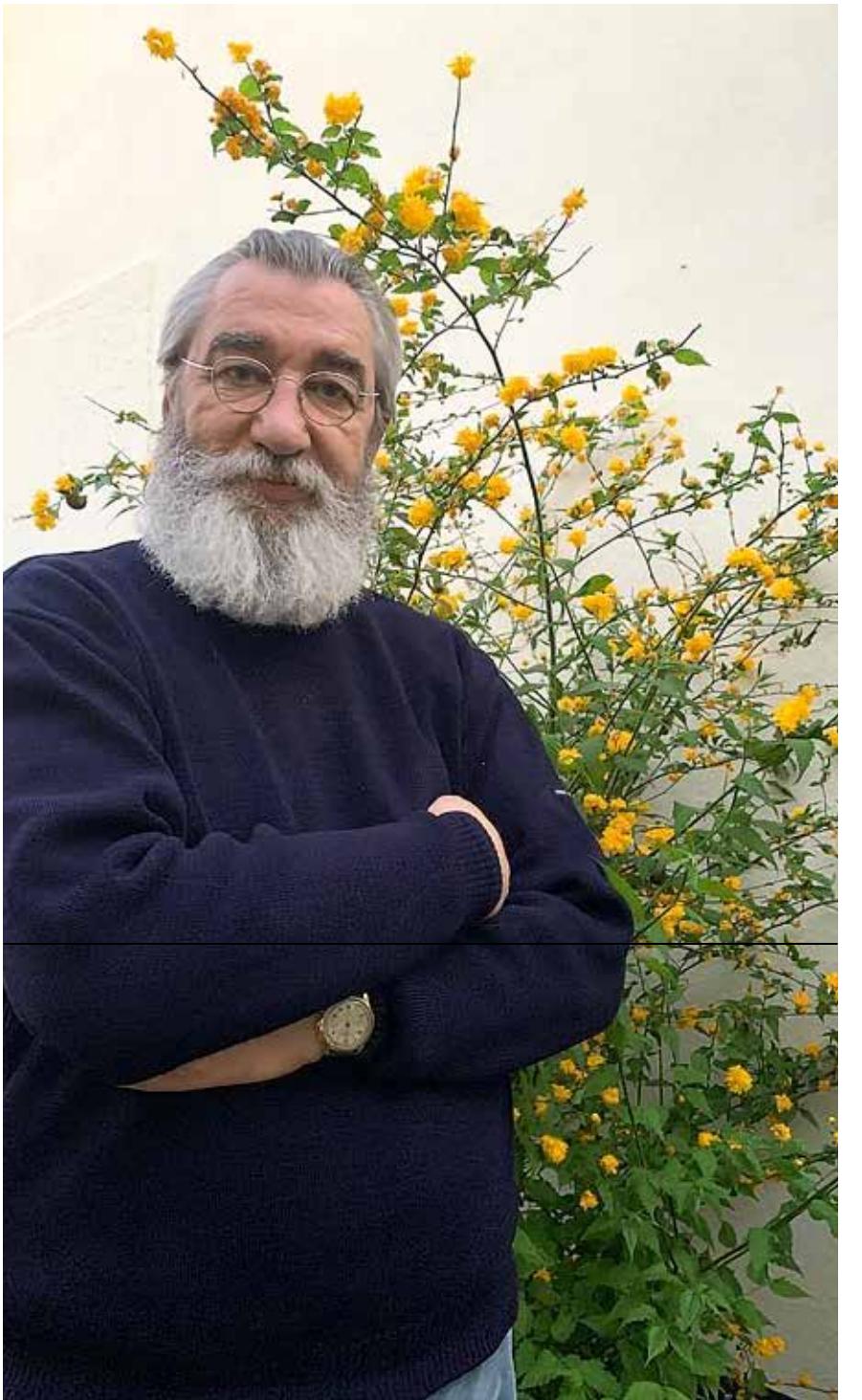
A life as a blessing from God, which every human being is called to live in love and joy. The image of the feast, fellowship and meal is closely connected with the celebration of the Nativity.

It turns out that in our ignorance of the biography of Righteous Joseph a special Divine plan for everyone is also revealed.

A biography concerns all of us in a personal biographical dimension. A biography is given by God to man in order to live by a blessing from above, to rejoice and embody the great gift of life in creative ability, which in man is the image of God. As

MEMORY

REMEMBERING VICTOR LOUPAN



It's been one year since we lost Victor Loupan, the head of the Editorial Board of *Russian Mind*. He was a brilliant professional, prominent journalist and publisher, documentary filmmaker, author of books and countless publications in mass media. He was a man of many talents, he was a man with a big heart. As a member of the Patriarchal Council for Culture since 2010, he managed to do a lot to preserve the spiritual heritage of the Russian émigré.

For sixteen years, Victor Nikolaevich was the front man and soul of *Russian Mind*. Always positive, full of energy, ideas and plans, he will live forever in the memory of people who were lucky enough to meet this extraordinary person on their life path.

Today we recall the wise thoughts of Victor Nikolaevich, which he generously shared with the readers of *Russian Mind*.

KNOW RIGHT FROM WRONG

(*Russian Mind*, January 2015)

It is probably wrong to say that the past year was good for Russia in terms of its historical, geographical and, finally, spiritual context. Not only because of the too far-reaching, almost metaphysical confrontation, but because of the civilisational nature of the conflict that has erupted to tear us – both me and you – into pieces. For in emigration, in exile, far away, in dispersion (name it whatever you like), it is in the souls of all of us that we keep close to those memories, to that culture, to that truth, after all, among which we were brought up, grew up.

Let's remember the year of 2013. It was so calm! And then, in 2014, the events developed suddenly in such a way, that sometimes one couldn't believe that it was real. When the sanctions were only discussed, I thought – it's a bluff! What sanctions? And moreover, against Russia? But it wasn't a bluff. Then suddenly they started voicing that sanctions would be even good for Russia, because Russia had always made breakthroughs when it was hard for it. No one is talking about it now. But everyone is watching with their mouths open, and saying to themselves – but how will all this end? After all, sanctions are bad – not only for Russia, but also for Europe. For that Europe in which we live. For that Europe that seemed to us an island of loyalty, prosperity, modesty. And which suddenly took extreme, aggressive measures against Russia, while Russia did nothing against Europe.

It is clear to everyone that Russia is neither Cuba, nor Iran, nor Venezuela; that it is simply dangerous to go into confrontation with it. That it is a strategic power on which a lot depends. <...>

Historians believe that the 20th century, in fact, began in 1914, and not in 1900. For until 1914, people lived according to the principles and standards of the 19th century. The fateful year of 1914 was not only the year of the beginning of the First World War which no one could have imagined, but also the year opening a new historical process, which by the end of the war would lead to the collapse of empires, to communism, to fascism, to qualitatively new realities, without which the 20th century is simply unthinkable. In 1914, no one could even imagine Europe without the Kaiser and the Tsar, without the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but with Stalin, Hitler, Mussolini, Franco, with Auschwitz and the Gulag. But no more than that. For the foreseeable collapse of the United States will still be another collapse of another empire.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN AND WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

(*Russian Mind*, January 2018)

In January of every new year many of us ask themselves this traditional question: 'What is in store

for us? What is going to happen this year?' Or, as the famous rock singer Yuri Shevchuk wrote in his song: 'What is going to happen to the motherhood and to us?'

The matter is not that we are particularly concerned for the future. The matter is that anxiety is a part of the human nature as life is an unpredictable thing. In the Gospel there is even a parable of the rich fool who is going to build larger barns in order to store all his grain and goods in them, whereas God is going to take his soul that same night. Being aware of and realising all this, we nevertheless try to plan and build our future. And that is why the questions 'What will happen?' and 'What is to be done?' are not only logical, but also vital. <...>

In mid-December the renowned French intellectual Pascal Bruckner published a sensational article, entitled *The Twenty-First Century will not Belong to America*. The publication shocked many Europeans by its pessimism, given the fact that the author is pro-American and famous for his liberal views. <...>

Since the beginning of the twentieth century Europe has regarded Washington as some sort of an 'alpha male' that always, especially at the most critical moments, forces all who dare oppose it to submit to its authority. However, all alpha males with time grow old and decrepit. This is a law of nature. Old and frail male lions are always driven away from their prides, so they die of hunger alone in the desert, where even hyenas are not afraid to bite them.

Likewise, 100 years ago, the once powerful British Empire, on whose vast expanse 'the Sun never set', lost ground. Like the USA, it also struggled with Russia for Central and South Asia over decades. The famous British writer Rudyard Kipling used the strange term 'the

'Great Game' to describe this geopolitical process.

Both the British and the Russian Empires eventually collapsed. The latter was replaced by the Soviet Union, while the former was replaced by the United States of America. The new 'Great Game' became known as 'the Cold War' and expanded into a global conflict. The Soviet Union eventually ceased to exist, and it was succeeded by the Russian Federation. Just a few years ago a new 'Great Game' between the Russian Federation and the USA began. It was an uneven fight, and according to all estimates Russia was destined to lose this battle. But this did not happen. Today, only the blind cannot see the withdrawal of America from world politics.

Thus, what will the world look like without the USA's 'responsive guidance'? Will it be better, more prosperous and peaceful? Should we rejoice at this outlook for the future? Answers to these questions may vary greatly. But even the most competent and perfectly informed experts are unable to make unbiased assessments as to where the current political process is leading us to.

A leading political scientist and expert in international relations Zbigniew Brzezinski in his sensational book, entitled *The Grand Chessboard*, compares world politics with a giant chess game. In my view, this metaphor is rather loose. In chess, at the end of a game only a few pieces are left on the board, whereas all other pieces have been taken. In my opinion, modern world politics bears more resemblance to the Chinese game of Go – a board game of deep strategy. Unlike chess, Go has very simple rules, yet it offers plenty of possibilities. The aim of this game is to surround more territory than your opponent. And it is the

finest example of modern-day geopolitics. <...>

Today nobody can oppose the global tendencies. Strange as it may sound, that is particularly true for the United States. They are the principal creators, promoters and ideologues of globalism. The above-mentioned Zbigniew Brzezinski long ago warned his compatriots that their own undertakings were dangerous. He wrote that the United States was at risk of being absorbed by the system of transnational network structures. He also said that the American society was stimulating the development of such global social tendencies that erode the traditional state interest. To put it simply, he was speaking of the suicidal tendencies of the American society. In other words, it means that the countries that tend to distance their political and social models from the American ones – Russia, China and several other states – have a better chance of survival.

War Against Russia

(*Russian Mind*, November 2020)

The exodus, the 100th anniversary of which we are commemorating today, seemed in 1920 to be a logical outcome of a lost battle against the ideological enemy. But this outcome turned out to be fateful. Hundreds of ships overloaded with people left the Crimea, not actually realising what was happening to them. But they paid not only for the lost battles, they also paid for the fact that they could not preserve and maintain what they seemed to love so much. For decades, millions of the White army emigrants believed that "Russia no longer exists". But they were packed and ready to go, hoping to return. Return to where? Because Russia "no longer exists"! Return to a cheap wood print?

Of course, Russia did not die or did not just "survive". The Bolsheviks, who hated the Russian Empire, would recreate it very soon after the collapse. Geographically, by 1940 the USSR was like the Russian Empire excluding Finland and Poland, and by 1945 the Kuril Islands were added as a revenge for the 1904 war lost to the Japanese.

For the Russian émigré, the 1920s and the 1930s were a period of growing confusion. The Allies had recognised Soviet Russia one after another. Moreover, the Soviet embassies opened in historical imperial buildings. And this fact clearly indicated that the West perceived the USSR as "a historical successor of historical Russia". <...>

So how can we determine the meaning of the Great Russian exodus a hundred years later? The Soviet Union no longer exists. But its aspects are manifested in today's Russia. The Soviet Union was a paradoxical successor to Russian imperial greatness. But the Russian Federation is a clear successor to both tsarist Russia and the USSR.

Russian revolution of 1917 began for a reason, it did not happen suddenly: it had been prepared for a long time, they dreamed about it without understanding what its essence was. Wrangel also did not understand what he was doing: he wanted to save the army and return to fight against the Reds. He had never returned... Lenin and Trotsky made a revolution, then the USSR was built by Stalin.

During the distant First Chechen War, your humble servant happened to present in the field tent of a young senior lieutenant. I liked him immediately. His special officer bearing gave him an appearance of a "white officer" reminiscent of *The Days of the Turbins*. Clippings cut from newspapers and magazines were pinned above the lieutenant's bed. Unfamiliar

formidable Soviet officers silently looked at me from the slightly moving tarp of the tent. And suddenly I recognised General Denikin. The fact that he was surrounded by the "Reds" who drove him across the steppes, surprised me. It did not embarrass the young lieutenant in the slightest, he just reacted: 'The civil war was a war against Russia, which was fought by the hands of the Russians'. I had never heard a more precise definition.

CHRISTMAS AND CONSUMPTION CULTURE

(*Russian Mind*, December 2021)

There are many signs of de-

Christianisation of Western society. But none of them is as obvious as the rejection of the very mention of the Nativity of Christ. Holidays and vacation periods still continue, for now, to be called "Christmas" or "Easter" holidays, as if due to tradition or habit. Although this is already a kind of paradox in the context of the current radicalisation of the struggle against cultural, religious, family, civilisational traditions and the values arising from them. Nowaday in the West, Christmas is not real Christmas, but the main riot of the year, in essence, a blasphemous cult of consumption. People frantically run around the shops crowded with customers and, – if they do not find what they are looking for, because everything is being bought up, – then they take any random things.

Even on credit. <...> People save on vacations, give up travel, fail to buy books or go to the theater or cinema, but still spend money on Christmas gifts.

The fundamental family and religious tradition associated with the celebration of a joyful event – the birth of the Infant Christ – continues to be a family one and a reason for meeting in an extended circle of

the family, but now joy level more and more relies on financial component – receiving or giving gifts.

The Catholic Church and various Protestant congregations are trying to struggle against the commercialisation of the great Christian holiday, but they are not doing well. Moreover, usually half-empty churches are suddenly replenished with parishioners on Christmas Eve. Or rather, that category of people who visit the church twice a year – at Christmas and Easter. These are already unbelievers or little believers who enter the church out of old memory, out of habit, due to the memory of how their parents took them there in childhood. <...>

Over time, the established and strengthened Christian civilisation abolished pagan customs, and now we know little about them. But manifestations and even bursts of pagan Bacchanalia periodically appear. The Great French Revolution was one of them. Not only because of the martyrdom of thousands of Catholic priests, but also because of the grotesque change in the calendar, the cancellation of the countdown from the birth of Christ, the change in the names of the months of the year and other nonsense, in particular, the renaming of Notre Dame Cathedral into the Temple of Reason.

Fascism, especially in Germany and especially among SS personnel, was permeated with pagan mysticism with its rituals, processions, temples and other devilry. The well-known Soviet period in the history of Russia and the eastern part of Europe also bore a pseudo-religious, pagan character. The cult of Lenin, the cult of Stalin, the cult of the Revolution, the infallibility of the Communist Party, national holidays with staged processions, figures of martyrs, such as Pavlik Morozov, Pavel

Korchagin, Alexander Matrosov, Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya, the closure and destruction of churches, the unprecedented physical extermination of priests and persecution of believers, the ban on all religious holidays and rituals – all this speaks of the pagan essence of the regime. Despite claims to be scientific and knowledgeable, the pseudo-religious essence of communist ideology is undeniable.

Today many Western analysts and generally thinkers are surprised to note the depression of society. The cult of profit has not justified itself for a long time, because the number of the poor has been constantly growing. Belief in democracy and equality is also going through hard times. Racial, ethnic, gender and other minorities consider themselves disadvantaged. When criticising the "androcentric society", the younger generation actually rejects the foundations and essence of Western civilisation. Islamisation, especially in European society, occurs as if Islam fills the spiritual emptiness of a society that has renounced the Christian faith and civilisation to remain essentially naked and defenceless.

Taking the example of what the holiday of the Nativity of Christ has become, one can notice the substitution of the Christian religion of love with the pagan religion of consumption. Love for one's neighbour has been replaced by love for an object acquired for money. <...>

And yet it is human nature to strive for something uplifting. People need positive dynamics that can bring them satisfaction. The satisfaction that they contribute to something important and good, proving that their existence is not meaningless, but is filled with the essence, which is commonly called the "meaning of life."

THE NUTCRACKER: A WINTER NIGHT'S DREAM

P. I. Tchaikovsky: 'Life has only charm when it consists of alternating joys and sorrows, of the struggle between good and evil, of light and shadow...'

By SERGEI MAKIN



The Nutcracker ballet. Bolshoi Theatre. Produced by Yuri Grigorovich

Photo: Damir Yusupov

Modest Tchaikovsky, Pyotr Ilyich's younger brother, wrote in the composer's biography: 'He was mainly captivated by the fantastic aspect of ballet and did not like ballets without transformations and flights. From frequent visits to ballet, however, he acquired an understanding of the technique of dance art and appreciated the "balloon", "elevation",

"hardness of the toe" and other intricacies.'

Ballet mania among the then Russian intelligentsia, which was prone to utilitarianism, was not a universal craze and was not commended. One of the prominent Russian journalists reproached the music critic Herman Laroche, a friend of Tchaikovsky:

'You shouldn't idealise ballet like

that. Ballet exists to arouse the extinct passions in the older.'

But Tchaikovsky was a ballet lover from his youth. So, he set about composing his third ballet.

Marius Petipa described the various parts of the future *The Nutcracker* for the composer:

'Part 12. Clara and Fritz are happy. They thank their godfather and

want to take away the toys. Cheerful graceful andantino – 16 bars. Their parents forbid it – such beautiful toys are not played with. Andantino gets more serious – 8 bars. Clara cries! Fritz plays up. This happens to the music of the last 8 bars. To console them, the old counsel (Drosselmeyer. – S. M.) takes out a third toy from his pocket. This is the Nutcracker. At least it can be played with. Andantino is more lively – 8 more bars.

'Part 13. Clara is delighted with the doll. Now starts the polka tempo. Clara wonders what the gift is designed for. The counsel takes a hazelnut and cracks the shell with the Nutcracker. The music goes "crack-crack", all to the polka tempo. Having heard the nut crack in the Nutcracker's jaws, Fritz becomes interested in it and, in turn, wants to crack a nut with its help. Clara does not want to give him the Nutcracker. Her parents note that the Nutcracker does not belong to her alone. Clara lets her brother take her favourite doll and watches in horror as he forces it to crack two hazelnuts. Then he puts such a big walnut into its mouth that – "crack"! Its teeth are broken... All this happens to the polka – 48 bars.

'Part 14. Fritz throws the toy aside while laughing. 8 bars of very lively music. Clara picks it up and tries to comfort her favourite toy with caresses. 8 bars of less lively and more affectionate music. She takes a doll off the bed and puts the Nutcracker in its place. All this is done during these 8 bars.'

In the new ballet, the parts of Fritz and Clara (later renamed Marie or Masha) were performed by children who studied choreography at the Imperial Theatre School. The great choreographer must have trained one of his youngest daughters, the talented Eugenia, for *The Nutcracker*. In the Soviet-French film about Petipa, *The Third Youth* (1965), the maestro's little daughter is going to perform



Drosselmeyer – Andrei Merkuriev. A shot from the film-performance of the Bolshoi Theatre. 2014. Set design by Simon Virsaladze, choreography by Yuri Grigorovich

at the premiere of *The Sleeping Beauty* as Little Red Riding Hood. But she falls through the trapdoor of the stage and becomes crippled. At the first performance of the ballet, a basket of flowers hanging on a cable 'dances' instead of her. This is the screenwriter's beautiful invention, whereas everything was different in reality, and it was not in *The Sleeping Beauty*. Vera Petipa, Eugenia's sister, recalled the tragedy on the eve of *The Nutcracker*'s production: 'A great tragedy befell our family. Even now I remember my parents' grief when their second daughter Eugenia, my father's hope, died: he believed her to be very capable. She died of sarcoma; her leg was amputated. The father was present at the operation. The suffering he had endured caused his nervous breakdown.'

Grief-stricken, Petipa gave the new ballet to Lev Ivanov. The day after the dress rehearsal of *The Nutcracker*, Tchaikovsky wrote to his brother Anatoly that the production was 'even too magnificent – the eyes get tired of this splendour.' But Vladimir Telyakovskiy,

the future director of the Imperial Theatres, was disappointed. Notably, he did not like the costumes of the performers: 'After a number of such successful productions as *The Queen of Spades* and *The Sleeping Beauty*, there appeared an unthinkable tasteless production of Tchaikovsky's ballet *The Nutcracker*, in the last scene of which some dancers were dressed like cakes from Filippov's bakery. The costumes were correct, but very bad. Cakes can take a variety of shapes, but a young lady who looks like a cake is unattractive on stage.'

Journey to fairy's kingdom

After Lev Ivanov Alexander Gorsky, Fyodor Lopukhov and Vasily Vainonen tackled *The Nutcracker* in Moscow and Leningrad, and George Balanchine in New York. Yuri Grigorovich at the Bolshoi Theatre surpassed everyone. The interpretation of his 1966 production is given by the stage director and ballet critic Boris Lvov-Anokhin in the book, *The Grand Ballet Masters*:



Scene from the ballet *Krakatuk* by Kasatkina and Vasilyov. Moscow State Academic Classical Ballet Theatre: Drosselmeyer – Nikolai Chevychelov, Marie – Ekaterina Berezina, Mr Stahlbaum – Sergei Belorybkin, Mrs Stahlbaum – Maria Gvozdeva

Photo: Andrei Stepanov

'The whole action of the ballet unfolds as a fairy-tale "journey up a Christmas tree", the desire to reach its top, where a mysterious star twinkles. <...> How to reach it, how to get it and touch it? So this simple image of sparkling, almost unattainable beauty in the ballet becomes the goal of the journey of Masha and the Nutcracker, a guiding star. <...>

The whole divertissement of specific dances forms a small suite of joy at victory. These dances are performed by puppets – Masha and the Nutcracker's companions. They accompany them throughout the journey – kind, naïve and helpless. Animated puppets – lovely, beautiful and funny, but not yet endowed, like the Nutcracker,

with the feelings of human courage and love.'

The central figure in Yuri Grigorovich's ballet is Drosselmeyer. 'In his image,' Lvov-Anokhin notes, 'some strange fairy-tale wisdom, which is kind and at the same time skeptical, is embodied. It seems that he could easily remove all obstacles in the characters' way (after all, he is a wizard), but as if deliberately he puts them through all the trials, testing the power of their courage and love. He tests their souls with everything beautiful and terrible that is in a fairy tale and in life. He is both kind and crafty, omnipresent and inconspicuous, fantastic and funny. He is a master of puppets, an inventor of tricky springs that make puppets arms

and legs move, their eyes open and their hearts beat. With this character Hoffmann comes into the play, albeit enlightened in accordance with Tchaikovsky's music... A cheerful joker and a formidable lord of events, he instantly transforms everything: the Nutcracker's funny dance turns into his death, an ugly doll turns into a handsome prince; but the prince disappears, and again a broken ugly doll remains in Masha's hands.'

In Grigorovich's production, the main characters come into Drosselmeyer's possession, and there is a reason for this. And what meaning did Petipa and Tchaikovsky put into the ballet? According to Petipa's script, the main characters find themselves in a realm without



Scene from the ballet *Krakatuk*: mouse Queen – Irina Dovidovskaya, mouse King – Vitaly Elagin

Photo: Andrei Stepanov

philistinism and torment, where a fairy reigns, dancing to music of magical beauty. The choreographer outlined this fragment for the composer:

'Act 2. Part 16. pas de deux. Fee Dragee with Prince Orgead. Adagio, which should make a huge impression – 48 bars. Variation for the Cavalier – 48 bars on 6/8. Variation for a dancer 32 bars staccato on 2/4. In this music drops of water escaping from fountains are heard. End with very fast 24 bars. code. More live music on 2/4 88 bars.'

And Tchaikovsky created an unsurpassed masterpiece: a pas de deux with a variation of Fee Dragee. Contrary to a popular opinion, the great composer worshipped the feminine. The composer adored his

mother who died prematurely. On 24th of October, 1879, in a letter to his friend and patroness Nadezhda Filaretovna von Meck, the composer confessed his love for his late parent: 'Yesterday I found at my sister's huge bundles of my letters to my parents, written once from St Petersburg when I was ten and eleven years old and found myself all alone in a big strange city. It is hard to describe what an exciting impression reading these letters made on me, carrying me almost thirty years back, vividly reminding me of my childhood suffering from longing for my mother, whom I loved with some painfully passionate love...'

Painfully passionate! Sigmund Freud would have definitely

diagnosed it as a classic example of Oedipus complex. Pyotr Ilyich poured out his love for his mother in music. The artistic world of Tchaikovsky is filled with femininity to the point of matriarchy. It was especially evident in ballets. In Swan Lake, Siegfried is first and foremost the son of his mother, the Sovereign Princess (the prince's father is not mentioned), and falls in love with the sublime manifestation of femininity – Odette. In *The Sleeping Beauty* the world is ruled by fairies: a good one and an evil one. In the first production of *The Nutcracker*, the characters entered the realm of a fairy. In Vasily Vainonen's and Yuri Grigorovich's productions Marie began to dance to the music of this variation.

Be like children

In his book *The Passion According to Tchaikovsky*, the Russian-American journalist Solomon Volkov discusses *The Nutcracker* with George Balanchine:

G. Balanchine: *The Nutcracker* is a ballet about Christmas. We had a brilliant Christmas in St Petersburg... True, Christmas is not Easter. On Easter the bells rang all night long! This is a special festival. But at Christmas St Petersburg was all dark and somehow strange. There was no such thing as now, when at Christmas everyone screams and runs out of breath, as if there were a fire. It was quiet here in St Petersburg, as if people were anticipating: who was born? Christ is Born! <...>

S. Volkov: When reviewing the premiere of Tchaikovsky's ballet, Herman Laroche wrote: 'Whatever you may say against children's fairy tales, you cannot deny that we came to love them from childhood and they have entered deep into our imagination. You cannot deny that fairy tales contain some of the deepest ideas that excite mankind. And it is a fact that in the eyes of our contemporaries supposedly "children's" fairy tales are becoming ever more those for adults, revealing their deep meaning.' <...>

G. Balanchine: Tchaikovsky remained a child all his life, and he felt like a child. The German idea that a person in his highest development approaches a child was close to him. Tchaikovsky loved children as such, not as candidates for future adults. There is the maximum potential in children. This potential is not reached later, but is lost.

The Nutcracker in our theatre (New York City Ballet. – S.M.) is for big and small children. That is, for children and for adults who remained children. Because if an adult is a good person, then he

remains a child in his soul. The main thing, the best thing in every person is what is left in him from childhood. <...> It is hard for children to understand classical dance. They are used to talking, they need to have a story. But in *The Nutcracker* everything is clear, and children like it.

Here *The Nutcracker* is more sophisticated than in St Petersburg – it is closer to Hoffmann. Our counsel Drosselmeyer is a more important figure. He comes, takes care of the children, and no one knows who he really is. And they love him because all children love mysterious adults. <...>

It seems to me that people like *The Nutcracker* so much because now everyone is interested in how children used to live and play. In my time, no one was interested. Nobody asked children how they lived or what they thought. Children just sought to become like adults as soon as possible – that's all.

Terrible and wonderful dreams

In *The Nutcracker* a doll becomes a prince. Its background remains unknown. But in Hoffmann's fairy tale the doll was a human being before becoming a toy. The mouse Queen bewitched the little princess Pirlipat. A way to save her was found. In Dumas père's narration (Petipa used his version, and not Hoffmann's original, for the libretto), the deliverance was supposed to be as follows:

'To be freed from the enchantment that made her ugly and to become beautiful again she has only to eat the kernel of the nut Krakatuk, the shell of which is so hard that a 48-pound cannon can pass over it without crushing it. In addition, in the presence of the princess this nut must be cracked by a young man who has

never shaved and has worn boots all his life. And finally, the young man must give the kernel of the nut Krakatuk to the princess with his eyes closed, and then, without opening them, take seven steps backward without stumbling.'

The magic nut is found by the mechanic Drosselmeyer, and his nephew performs the ceremony. The ugly princess turns into a young girl of angelic beauty. But, while walking backward, the young man stumbles and crushes the mouse Queen to death. With her last bit of strength she turns the young man into a toy for cracking nuts – the Nutcracker.

In 2020, the premiere of Krakatuk ballet was produced by Kasatkina and Vasilyov Moscow State Academic Classical Ballet Theatre on

the Historical Stage of the Bolshoi Theatre. Reality in the performance is interspersed with dreams. After falling asleep the main character reincarnates as Princess Pirlipat; the mouse King, the mouse Queen's son, proposes to her; and the wooden Nutcracker, presented to her by Drosselmeyer the day before, fights with him, turning into a handsome young man. The next day the girl sees Drosselmeyer's nephew, whom she imagined as a prince in her dream.

In *The Nutcracker* by Mikhail Shemyakin (staged by the Mariinsky Theatre in 2001) there is a feeling of childhood nightmares and fear of the dark and monsters. The storyteller Drosselmeyer turned into a sinister sorcerer. Mice climb up a giant cake to sink their teeth

into the sweets Marie and the Nutcracker standing on top. The result is something like doomsday: in a black-black ballet on a black-black stage black-black snowflakes are dancing, resembling black-black rats.

In Yuri Grigorovich's ballet, there is another dream: that of light. The ballet historian Marina Konstantinova writes about this in her book entitled Ekaterina Maksimova:

'In addition to the fact that Tchaikovsky's score finally found its first incarnation commensurate with music, this ballet brought to viewers the light lyricism vital for their souls. Thanks to Tchaikovsky you could allow yourself these childhood dreams without being ashamed of sentimentality. The realm of *The Nutcracker* had its

concerns and troubles, but it also had the peace of mind that gives you strength. *The Nutcracker* was not ashamed to be a performance in which viewers found their inner peace – not like in a vaudeville or an extravaganza, but what is possible only in a purifying wonderful dream that imperceptibly puts everything in its place. Thus we relax and gain strength at the sight of playing children and through memories of childhood and home Christmas holidays with a Christmas tree, when it becomes clear that

*The future does not suffice.
The old and the new are not enough.
Eternity must become
A Christmas tree in the middle
of the room.*

(Boris Pasternak.)



Shot from the film-performance, *The Nutcracker*, 2014

UNLOCKING A 400-YEAR-OLD MYSTERY

This year, a new book 'Shakespeare or Marlowe?' by Vyacheslav Katamidze will appear on the shelves of Russian bookstores

*Interview conducted by writer
MARINA BRAGINA*

Vyacheslav Katamidze, writer and a regular contributor of our magazine, has devoted decades to the research to reveal the secret that has interested humanity for over 400 years: was Shakespeare the author of the works attributed to him, and if not, then who could have been the creator of the plays and sonnets published under the name of Shakespeare? The author shares his thoughts on creating his unique book with Russian Mind.

First of all, let me congratulate you on the completion of this monumental work. How many years did it take you to do this?

I started to work on this topic 26 years ago. True, I did research related to this topic intermittently; at times I had to stop working on this book as it became necessary to get acquainted with new publications and archival materials, to visit different cities and villages in England, and during such periods I was busy working on other books or articles.



But I invariably returned to research related to the biography of the bard, to the works attributed to Shakespeare, and studied the books and articles by other authors related to this topic. There were more than a hundred books alone.

The books and articles of Mark Twain, Sigmund Freud, Charlie Chaplin had a huge influence on me: they all did not believe that

to a certain extent unique, while books in which the authors firmly adhered to the official, standard point of view were of little interest, as if written under a carbon copy. These authors were simply retelling what had been written hundreds of times before them.

In your article in 30 Great Britons, you argue that Shakespeare

received a very poor education, and this already makes it impossible for him to author an extensive literary heritage. Are there any facts that make this claim substantiated?

Undoubtedly. In my new book, I have devoted quite a lot of space to Shakespeare's childhood and youth. If we proceed from the contrary, then we learn that Shakespeare spent at best three years at school. But this is the case if he went to school at all! More importantly, the future genius of mankind did not study at any university in England: this is absolutely certain because the lists of all students who studied at the higher educational institutions of the country were carefully scrutinized, moreover by Shakespeare scholars. They, doing this, were sure that they would find his name there...

As you know, in recent decades in the UK and the USA, there have been many publications in which the works attributed to Shakespeare were allegedly written by other people: the Earl of Oxford, Francis Bacon, the writer Mary Sidney, and other writers of Tudor England. The film 'Anonymous' was even made, in which its creators put forward the hypothesis of the authorship of the Earl of Oxford. Do you consider hypotheses of this kind in your book?

Yes, sure. But for a variety of reasons, I cannot accept any such hypothesis. And I give arguments in the book that seem to me very weighty. At the same time, for more than two decades I have been adhering to the so-called *Marlovian Theory*, that is, the one according to which the true author of most, if not all of Shakespeare's works, was Christopher Marlowe, the literary genius of that era, the creator of such tragedies as *Timburlane* and *Doctor Faust*.

As far as I know, Christopher Marlowe was killed in a drunken fight in a tavern when he was only 29 years old. How can he be the author of so many plays and sonnets that were published at later times?

This is the detective element in my historical investigation. Based on indisputable historical facts, I prove in my book that Marlo was not killed; he was rescued, taken abroad, and for many years continued to write plays and sonnets which were published under the name of Shakespeare. That is, all these years Shakespeare was only a forefront and received a significant part of the royalties for this. I believe the story associated with the faked death of Christopher Marlowe is worthy of staging a feature film with a detective outline. And in my opinion, it would be much more interesting than the film *Anonymous* – just because this story is not fictional but confirmed by historical documents.

Writer Marina Nikolaeva, Ph.D. in Economics and an expert in English history and literature, asks a question that, in our opinion, deserves a lengthy answer. If there is a growing understanding among British historians and writers of the fact that Shakespeare could not have been the author of 39 plays, some poems and one and a half hundred sonnets, then why are fundamental studies not being conducted that would once and for all put an end to speculations and prove that Shakespeare was only a forefront?

Research of this kind, although not "fundamental", has been carried out since the 19th century. I know more than a dozen writers and journalists, and about the same number of literary historians, who carefully, meticulously studied the work of many writers of the Tudor era in order to solve this authorship problem.

But we must not forget that there exists a so-called "cultural establishment" that influences both the scientific community and the media. This establishment, for example, in every possible way encourages the promotion of modern art like sawn cows on display or those rubbish heaps in museums that pass off as high art. This establishment regulates both mass culture and scientific activity in relation to history, architecture, and literature. If, for some reason, it is not interested in revealing the truth, it is able to block any creative and scientific research, defame them, publicly call them falsification or low-grade adventure. Meanwhile, there is the Marlowe Society, a group of *Oxfordians* whose members are convinced that "Shakespeare was written by the Earl of Oxford", and more than two thousand cultural figures, journalists, writers and historians are among the people who do not accept the official theory that speaks in favor of Shakespeare's authorship. However, they are opposed by the force that they are not yet able to confront.

But positive changes, as we know, are inevitable in any area. Here is the first breakthrough! Not so long ago it was reported that a group of 23 research scientists who studied Shakespeare's plays *Henry VI, Part One*, *Henry VI, Part Two* and *Henry VI, Part Three*, concluded that Christopher Marlowe's participation was so serious in writing them that he deserves public recognition. This means that now, when these plays are published, Marlowe's name will appear next to Shakespeare's on the title page, Marlowe's name coming first. As they say, it's a great start. I am confident that the process of recognizing Marlowe as the true author of "Shakespearean" can no longer be stopped, and I hope that my book will become a contribution to this just cause.



80th ANNIVERSARY OF THE BREAKING OF THE LENINGRAD SIEGE LINE

January 18, 2023, is marking the 80th anniversary of the breaking of the encirclement of Leningrad.

Since the summer of 1941, the troops of the Leningrad Front had been fighting under a complete blockade of the city. But in the autumn of 1942, the army began to prepare for the operation to break the blockade, code-named "Iskra". On January 12, 1943, massed intense fire of Soviet artillery hit the defensive positions of the Nazi troops, which lasted almost two hours. The enemy was taken in a weak moment. Then Soviet aircraft started bombing the enemy positions.

On January 18, 1943, the 16-month blockade of long-suffering Leningrad was broken. During the winter and summer of 1943, the troops of the

Leningrad Front, together with the Volkhov Front, paralysed the opposing Army Group North, preventing the German command from closing the encirclement again. On January 14, 1944, after the most powerful artillery preparation, the Leningrad-Novgorod strategic offensive began to completely lift the blockade of Leningrad.

On January 27, 1944, Moscow ceded to Leningrad the right to fire a salute to commemorate the final lifting of the blockade.

80th ANNIVERSARY OF THE VICTORY IN THE BATTLE OF STALINGRAD

On February 2, Russia celebrates the 80th anniversary of the defeat of the Nazi troops in the Battle of Stalingrad.

On July 17, 1942, the vanguards of the 6th Army (under Colonel General Paulus) entered the battle with the 62nd and 64th army units of the Stalingrad Front. The enemy outnumbered the Red Army in

aircraft more than two times and in tanks and artillery 1.3 times. On August 23, the city on the Volga river was subjected to the most massive bombardment in the history of wars: two thousand Luftwaffe sorties destroyed the city. A fifth of the townspopple were killed. There were fierce battles throughout September. The Stalingrad Tractor Plant continued to produce tanks under shelling and send them directly to the battlefield. On October 14, five German divisions launched an offensive with the support of a thousand aircraft and reached the Volga river.

But already on November 9, the counteroffensive of the Red Army began. The fierce battle ended on February 2, 1943. The victory in the Battle of Stalingrad turned the tide of the war. Neither Turkey nor Japan, who were allies of Germany, dared to start hostilities against the USSR. The United States and Great Britain increased the supply of weapons to the USSR and gave their consent to open the Second Front. At a meeting of the leaders of the USSR, the USA and Great Britain in Tehran in December 1943, the British Prime Minister presented the Sword of Victory from King George VI to Stalin (it is kept in the Panorama Museum "Battle of Stalingrad").

"If we don't make a change for the better during Lent, then we worked in vain... Without feeling the result, we must understand that something wrong is happening in our lives," the Patriarch said.

DEFENDER OF THE FATHERLAND DAY

Defender of the Fatherland Day is the official holiday in Russia, which is celebrated on February 23 and has its own background. Since 1922, the Soviet Union annually celebrated the Red Army Day on February 23, which in 1946 was renamed the Day of the Soviet Army, and then the Day of the Soviet Army and Navy.

After the collapse of the USSR, Russia celebrated this holiday as Defender of the Fatherland Day and included it in the list of memorable dates established by the Federal Law "On the Days of Military Glory and Memorable Dates of Russia" of March 13, 1995. Since 2002, February 23 has been a public holiday in Russia.

GREAT LENT

On February 27, 2023, Orthodox Christians enter Great Lent. It will last until April 15 and end on Sunday, April 16, with Easter, which is the main holiday in the church calendar. According to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus', Great Lent helps people abstain from sins, and it is a time for repentance and challenges aimed at changing one's state of mind.



SAINT-GENEVIEËVE-DES-BOIS

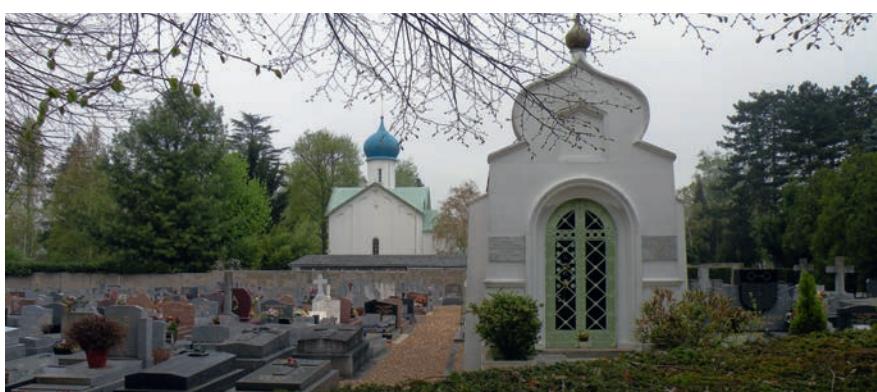
The mayor's office of the French city of Sainte-Geneviève-des-Bois refused to accept funds from Russia to extend concessions of grave spaces in the cemetery of the same name, where famous figures of Russian culture are buried, RIA Novosti reports citing the city's mayor's office.

At the same time, the mayor's office assured that it would ensure the safety and maintenance of Russian graves in the cemetery. "The city of Saint-Geneviève-des-Bois will continue to take measures to preserve this important international heritage site. We resolutely affirm that not a single Russian grave will be disturbed and that

the city will ensure, as it does today, the maintenance and restoration of places in the municipal cemetery. As for the payments for 2022, the exceptional international context has forced us to temporarily postpone them," the mayor's office said in its statement.

Since the beginning of the 20th century, representatives of the Russian émigré – military men, writers, and artists – were buried in the cemetery of Saint-Geneviève-des-Bois. Here lie such luminaries of Russian history and culture as Ivan Bunin, Boris Zaitsev, Nadezhda Teffi, Aleksey Remizov, Zinaida Gippius, Konstantin Korovin, Konstantin Somov, Zinaida Serebriakova, Matilda Kshesinskaya, Rudolf Nureyev, Sergei Lifar, Andrey Tarkovsky.

In 2016, the cemetery was included in the list of Russian historical and memorial monuments abroad.



2023 VENICE CARNIVAL

This year the famous masks and reincarnations fest will be held between February 4 and February 25

By EKATERINA GRIGORIEVA



Photo: Edoardo Maresca

The first mention of the Venice Carnival dates back to 1094, and documentary evidence dates back to 1296. At the end of the 18th century, the Venice Carnival was cancelled by Napoleon's decree, which became a real tragedy for the Venetians.

The festival resumed only in 1979, and since then, thousands of tourists from all over the world rush to Venice on carnival days, wishing to join the magnificent event.

The Mary Festival (*Festa delle Marie*) is one of the main events of the Carnival, which dates back to the middle of the 9th century. The Venetians chose the 12 most beautiful girls from poor families to be blessed in the Basilica di San Pietro di Castello. They were supposed to get married within a year, so wealthy citizens donated gold and precious jewelry to future brides as a dowry.

Today, this traditional holiday is celebrated more modestly. 12 Venetian girls between the ages of 18 and 28 are dressed in medieval or renaissance clothing and seated on an open palanquin. The procession runs from the Basilica di San Pietro di Castello to Piazza San Marco, where the «Mary of the Year» is chosen.

During the Carnival, a contest for the most beautiful carnival costume is also held in Piazza San Marco.

Masquerade costumes and masks were invented by the ancient Romans – this made it possible to remain unrecognised during the folk festivals, which especially suited noble citizens who sought to preserve their incognito.

The most popular was a Bauta mask, which completely covered the face. It was often complemented

with a cocked hat and a bright cape, so it was almost impossible to recognise the owner. In addition, due to the narrow shape of the nose of the mask, the owner's voice was modified.

The famous Columbine half-mask, decorated with feathers and rhinestones, according to legend, was created specifically for the actress from the *commedia dell'arte*, who did not want to hide her beauty.

The dates of the Venice Carnival are associated with Catholic Great Lent, so they change from year to year. The first day always falls on Saturday before Fat Thursday (the popular name for the last Thursday before Great Lent), and the last day falls on Fat Tuesday (analogue of the Maslenitsa), followed by Ash Wednesday marking the beginning of Lent.



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