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EDITOR'S LETTER

CULTURE WITHOUT BORDERS

Without any doubt, the main literary date of this spring is the 135th anniversary of the birth of Mikhail Bulgakov, one of the best-selling writers in Russia. Half a million copies of his works (not only the great novel *The Master and Margarita*, but other works) were published last year. In today's gadget age, this number is truly fantastic! In this issue of the *Russian Mind* magazine his biographer Alexei Varlamov discusses this most incontestable and at the same time controversial Russian author. I fully admit that readers may disagree somewhere with the author of the book about Mikhail Afanasyevich in the legendary *The Lives of Wonderful People* biographical series. After all, everyone has their own Bulgakov...

The onset of summer is directly associated with the memorable dates of Russian culture, to which this issue of our magazine is dedicated. There are two of them on 6 June at once – Pushkin Day in Russia and International Day of the Russian Language.

Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin – “our everything” – was born 227 years ago. The great poet's birthday is celebrated not only in Russia, but also in all countries of the globe where there is a Russian-speaking community. That is, virtually everywhere. Pushkin is the “father” of the modern Russian literary language, and his remembrance day was established by the United Nations in 2010. I strongly advise you not to miss a very interesting article, *A Sketch on the World of the Russian Language*, by our new



author Alexander Rudyakov, a PhD in Philology.

Our modern culture can and should be judged by the Red Square Book Festival, which is traditionally held in the very centre of the Russian capital in early June. It is an annual large-scale literary event with a grandiose programme: tens of thousands of readers meet with writers, poets, playwrights, publishers, librarians, scholars, actors, and film directors. Over 400 Russian publishing houses present their publications at fifteen sites.

It is gratifying to note that the oldest pan-European Russian-language *Russian Mind* magazine was presented at the festival venue as well. The line from then to now still holds...

To mark the 140th birth anniversary of the amazing poet and translator Vladislav Khodasevich we are publishing an essay by Vladimir Nabokov and the poem that Khodasevich published in the *Russian Mind* in 1912.

The cycle of Russian culture continues.

By Leonid Kolpakov

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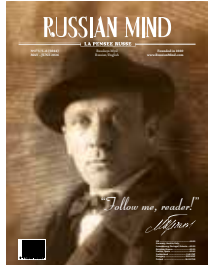
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COVER:
Mikhail Bulgakov in 1928



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DESTINY CANNOT BE CHANGED

The 135th Birth Anniversary of Mikhail Bulgakov

*The interview was conducted
by VALERIA GALKINA*



Mikhail Bulgakov in 1928

We have talked about the great writer's life and work with his biographer Alexei Varlamov, rector of the Maxim Gorky Institute of Literature and Creative Writing in Moscow.

In your book, you called Mikhail Bulgakov one of the most incontestable and at the same time controversial Russian writers. Why?

I believe that no one doubts Bulgakov's absolutely incontestable reputation as a novelist and playwright. Regardless of how long a time passes and how the world around us changes, he remains an excellent and unsurpassed master of clarity, accuracy and brilliant writing, with an amazing ability to create vivid images and characters, with a fascinating intonation, musicality and poetry. As for his controversial themes, I was mostly referring to the audience of Orthodox, church readers that I imagined when I was writing my book about Mikhail Bulgakov. True, there is something to argue about, disagree with and doubt here. And this applies not only to *The Master and Margarita*, but also to the play *Flight*, for instance. Or other controversial moments: the story of *Batum*, the interpretation of this play, the motives for writing it, as well as Bulgakov's biography in general: his attitude towards Stalin, the "Prechistensky Circle" group, conflicts with the literary and theatrical communities, his family

relations, the use of family ties as literary material...

When we talk about creative people, we often talk about the origins of personality, about childhood. Bulgakov was one of the few classics whose early life was very successful. How did it influence his worldview and creative work?

Indeed I wrote in my newly republished biography of Bulgakov about his happy childhood on "the most beautiful street in the world", contrasting the difficult childhood of most Russian writers. However, we cannot be completely sure of the ultimate well-being of this period in Bulgakov's life. Mikhail Afanasyevich was certainly very attached to his family, to his siblings, and to Kiev, which he loved dearly, but it is noteworthy that he himself wrote almost nothing about his childhood, adolescence and youth. Obviously, everything was not as cloudless as it might seem at first glance. We know very little about his relations with his father Afanasy Ivanovich Bulgakov, a professor at the Kiev Theological Academy; and young Bulgakov had many disagreements with his mother Varvara Mikhailovna, a very strong-willed and vibrant personality, which eventually led to open conflict. In fact, this conflict influenced the early departure of the future writer from the Church and the value system he was brought up in. And besides, Bulgakov could not forgive his mother her second marriage and it was no coincidence that he did not "include" her in his novel *The White Guard*.

*Today *The Master and Margarita* is perhaps the most widely read work of Russian classics. What is the secret of the popularity of this novel? And what does it mean to you personally?*

I can't say that this is my favourite Bulgakov's work. Rather, my choice



is between *The White Guard* and *A Theatrical Novel*, which I simply adore as a rare piece of confidence, written not for fame, but for reading in a narrow circle and therefore especially nice, intimate and sincere. Conceived as revenge on the Moscow Art Theatre that rejected the writer and turned into a declaration of love for it.

But, beyond all doubt, *The Master and Margarita* is a magnificent and epoch-making book that once amazed and continues to amaze all readers around the globe. And the reader is right, because the reader is always right! Bulgakov invented a cool story, linking modernity with antiquity, mixing satire with romance, lyrics with sarcasm, malice



The house on Bolshaya Sadovaya Street in Moscow where M. A. Bulgakov lived from late 1921 to 1924

with generosity, and sadness with fun, in such proportions that no one guessed what a hopeless and doleful story it really is – about the crushing defeat of man, about the weakness of good and the power of evil, and about Golgotha without the Resurrection. The author disguised this hopelessness, this narcotic vision of Ivan Nikolaevich Ponyrev, who only after a morphine injection sees what we read about with such delight, not realising in what anguish and fatigue Mikhail Afanasyevich was writing *The Master and Margarita*. Despite the visible laughter, there are lots of invisible tears in this book. But maybe this is why it is so attractive.

In your view, which works by Bulgakov were overshadowed by *The Master and Margarita*, without receiving due attention?

In general, Bulgakov would not complain now that modern readers do not know some important things about him. His works are being widely published, republished, translated, filmed, staged and studied. Of course, Bulgakov's work as a librettist at the Bolshoi Theatre is less known, not all of his plays are equally popular, and most of the satirical articles he wrote for the *Gudok* newspaper have been forgotten, but this is understandable. All in all, we can say this: as unhappy and unfair as Bulgakov's life was

(with rare exceptions), the fate of his works turned out to be just as happy after his death. Another matter is that he himself saw it, knew it, had a premonition, and was enraged by this blatant injustice. He wished he could exchange the continent of his posthumous fame for bits of acclaim in his lifetime, but it was not given to him.

The subject of the writer's contradictory relations with the authorities deserves special discussion. On the one hand, the ban on publication and harsh criticism in the Soviet press; and on the other hand, the patronage of Maxim Gorky and Joseph Stalin, despite the undisguised dissent...



A sign installed on the Patriarch's Ponds in Moscow

Can we say that he became a victim of envious people rather than a victim of the regime?

Bulgakov did not consider himself a victim of Stalin, the OGPU or censorship, but of Fate. He also blamed his own characters for his misfortunes, which was just in its own way. Not so many people envied him to consider him solely their victim. In the 1920s, when three of his plays were successfully performed in Moscow, there were surely enough enemies, and in the end, thanks to the Ukrainian writers who, at a meeting with Stalin in February 1929, demanded that *The Days of the Turbins* be banned, the “dark forces” achieved

their goal, but unlikely out of envy. Two months earlier, when a group of Soviet playwrights headed by Vladimir Bill-Belotserkovsky tried to do the same, calling Bulgakov a “counterrevolutionary” and a “White Guard author”, Stalin ignored their denunciation and replied sternly: “Learn to write like Bulgakov, and then pester me with your nonsense!”

Actually, Stalin's patronage was very short-lived and relative, and Gorky's was even less so. At least Gorky contributed to the resumption of *The Days of the Turbins* in 1932, when the Ukrainian issue temporarily lost its relevance, but refused to publish Moliere's biography, Bulgakov's

most feverish and autobiographical book, which meant a lot to him. Lastly, Gorky did not support Bulgakov in his desire to move abroad, just as Stalin did not help him here, and for Mikhail Afanasyevich the confinement in his “golden cage” in Moscow was a terrible blow and the disappointment of his whole life.

Mikhail Bulgakov's works are widely adapted as films: not only in Russia, but also abroad. Which films do you find successful and which ones you don't?

It seems that Vladimir Bortko's film *The Master and Margarita* was not as bad as it was described. The cast was good, as were the camerawork

and visual appeal. But this is such a fate: everyone considers himself a specialist in Bulgakov's work, not least in the interpretation of *The Master and Margarita*.

I recently watched Alov and Naumov's film *Flight*, which was once very popular, but apart from the scene where Ulyanov beats Evstigneev at cards and the amazing Dvorzhetzky as General Khludov, in my judgement, it does not look very convincing today. It is

yesterday. As is Bortko's *Heart of a Dog*, though when this film was first released, its fame was huge and well-deserved. But that's probably the difference between literature and cinematography, because even good film adaptations age faster than their originals.

To my mind, the series based on *The White Guard*, filmed a few years ago, were no good in the first place, though the script was written by very talented people, the director

is competent, and the cast is wonderful... but it's impossible to watch. Vladimir Basov's film was much better. Alexei Balabanov's *Morphine* is a very interesting film, albeit it heavily distorts the idea of *Notes of a Young Doctor*, a triumphant and inspiring book, but Balabanov's talent did its job. As for film adaptations that don't age, I would mention Andrzej Wajda's film *Pilate and Others*. Here's a true classic, albeit made for television.

ANOTHER DRAMA

The State Youth Theatre on the Fontanka (St Petersburg) is Successfully Hosting Bulgakov's Play 'The Kabbalah of Hypocrites'

The theatre's artistic director Semyon Spivak has abandoned the traditional interpretation of Mikhail Bulgakov's famous play as the artist's conflict with the government and dedicated his performance to the theatre's life-affirming power.

No, no, it is not about the relations between the artist and the government. They are quite predictable: under any economic and political regime the government strives with all its might, firstly, to give the artist less than he deserves, and secondly, to take back its favours at the first opportunity.

In Spivak's version, Louis XIV (played by Andrei Shimko) doesn't appear in the eighteenth-century royal robes, but in an elegant tracksuit and a swordsman's "chain mail" over it – like a businessman of the highest level. And his retinue... A lackey is a lackey, whether in lace and satin or in an office uniform!

The elegant irony with which Sophia Zograbyan has dressed the characters of the play is praiseworthy. The costumes she has invented are actor-proof in the highest sense of the word. A Dell'arte-style blaze of colours in the outfits of the actors of Mr de Moliere's troupe, the chthonic (infernal) dullness of the robes of the Kabbalists, and the blinding whiteness of the king's "Hugo Boss" robes. The visual aesthetics of the play is not an "illustration" of the director's vision, but a kind of "parallel" drama. Stepan Zograbyan's stage design is executed as the rivalry of descents and ascents, which no mortal can avoid.

Jean-Baptiste continues to create even when all his dreams and hopes are in tatters. Sergei Barkovsky masterfully copes with the task set before him to show the viewer the main talent of his character – joie de vivre. This love permeates everything he does, illuminating everyone around him.

It is diverse and takes many forms: it is no coincidence that the ancients categorized love into as many as seven distinct types.

Agape guides Moliere in his relations with Madeleine Bejart (Svetlana Strogova) – extinguished human love has transformed into an unquenchable business partnership. Eros rules his passion for Armande Bejart (Anastasia Tyunina), the young source of his mature inspiration. Storge guides his attitude towards the troupe – his only real family. Ludus makes the comedian fight a fatal duel with the king and accept a deadly challenge from the indomitable Marquis d'Orsigny (Alexei Oding). Philia allows him to forgive Muarron (Sergei Yatsenyuk) who betrayed him. Lastly, for Moliere theatre has long become his mania – a divine madness, which he sacrificially serves till his last breath. But the point is certainly not what each type of love is responsible for in Moliere's life, but that for him this life



Спектакль «Кабала святош» на сцене Молодежного театра на Фонтанке. Санкт-Петербург. 2026

in itself is love. Joie de vivre in all its manifestations.

Spivak does not try to blame the imperfect world and its even more imperfect inhabitants: human beings are human beings, and mercy sometimes knocks on their hearts... Actors become lawyers for their characters. Louis-Shimko cannot jeopardize the reputation of the royal power: as a human being he likes Moliere very much, but his marriage is unlawful, even if it's not his fault. Archbishop Sharron (Roman Nechayev) has to uphold the honour of his uniform (that is, his clerical robes), so it would be strange to expect him to be enthusiastic about the accusatory witticism of Moliere's "Tartuffe". And d'Orsigny-Oding

cannot help but take up his sword at the very thought that some buffoon made a joke about him, a descendant of a noble family, in his comedy: after all, in fact, he has nothing but family pride. But perhaps the most perfect fit for the role is the arrogant and handsome Muarron: Sergei Yatsenyuk seems to have spotted his character in a nightclub.

But let's be absolutely honest: Jean-Baptiste himself is not sinless either. In fact, the retribution that overtook Moliere is the price for two destroyed lives – those of Madeleine, who, like any woman, wanted family happiness (when she says that a faithful dog cannot be kicked out into the street, your heart sinks); and Armande who grew up without a father.

Yes, Moliere has to fight "with a whole sea of troubles". But what the director is primarily concerned with is not the outcome of the battle – it is a foregone conclusion – but the way Jean-Baptiste combats. Moliere may lose strength, his dignity may weaken for a while, but the belief that life is worth living never leaves him. In the play he does not die in front of the audience: we will never see what happens on the stage of the Theatre du Palais-Royal. But we will see how the "resurrected" master gathers his artists to bring them to the curtain call – the theatre exists as long as there are spectators in it. It is made for them.

By Victoria Peshkova

CELEBRATIONS AND THE MEANINGS OF SACRED TIME

Everything Jesus Christ said and did during His earthly life was an unadulterated, direct divine revelation

By AUGUSTINE SOKOLOVSKI,
Doctor of Theology, Priest

LEAVETAKING OF PASCHA

On the fortieth day after the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus from the dead, the Church concludes its celebration of Easter and bids farewell to the season. Like any period of time, it was not easy. It unfolded in an alternation of prayer and daily life, thereby creating the uniqueness of the believers' fellowship.

Parish life and the unique interweaving of the saints' commemorations with the moments of the Paschal calendar have, unwittingly, contributed to the Leavetaking of Easter as one of the observances of the liturgical calendar.

New Easter celebrations await every believer on this earth, but their number is limited, for all of them, like the times and years of each person – those “hairs on the head” from the Sermon on the Mount – are numbered by the Lord Christ. For some of us, Easter on earth will never be repeated.

Thus, human life is reflected in the structure of the Paschal season. We turn to time because, for people of faith, time is not merely a chronology – a hopeless march toward inevitable passing – but rather the very frame, the very context, within which the Lord Himself once appeared. Thus, time becomes one of the names of God. For He, being

outside of time, became temporal. According to St. Augustine (354–430), the “inventor of time” in human thought, He Himself became time, entering into history to free us from time.

The days of Easter serve as a reminder of this great liberation. They become a wondrous attempt to escape, through liturgy and prayer, into the eternity of God, where Jesus seats at the right hand of the Father.

In this sense, the celebration of Easter does not end, but continues in the Ascension of the Lord, reaching its culmination in Pentecost. For the Descent of the Holy Spirit is the proclamation of Easter to the entire universe; it is Christ's Easter, given to each and every one, to the whole Church as the Community of Believers, and to each of us. God will never abandon humanity, neither here nor, all the more so, there in the Kingdom of Heaven, where those who have accepted Him will reign on the thrones of the Apocalypse. Christ is Risen. We thank the Lord for His Passover, for His indescribably great Easter gift.

ASCENSION OF JESUS

Preachers often speak of the Ascension as a sorrowful event. As if the Apostles were left in a state of confusion and bewilderment, going through a period of repentance

during the ten days between the Ascension and the Descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. This is not the case at all.

The Ascension is a glorious event. It is the culmination of a great achievement that is both divine and human. Indeed, if we think in terms of metaphysics – that is, a kind of philosophy beyond philosophy – then everything becomes clear. God became man, was glorified, and ascended into Heaven.

But if we set aside metaphysics – which is, after all, a human construct – it becomes far from obvious that the Almighty, the Great, Boundless God, having become human, will lead this human life successfully: He will not destroy human nature, will not overstep human boundaries, will not be capricious or irritable, will not sink into indignation, nor, conversely, will He remain indifferent and submissive to any circumstances. Outside the realm of metaphysics, anything could have happened.

But it turned out that even this was, in fact, inconceivable. For man was originally created in the image of God, and God is the true archetype of every human being – and thus the future of humanity – so that this compatibility between God and man was revealed in a most excellent way. The union of God and man in Jesus Christ proved to be amazing and magnificent. God is the future

of humanity; The Ascension is the mystery of the great compatibility between God and man.

In Jesus, true humanity was revealed: there is no one more beautiful, more wonderful, more kind, more magnificent, more blessed, more joyful, or more religious and devout. The culmination of this reality was realized in the Ascension. For the Lord Jesus not only rose from the dead, but, having gathered around Himself His original Church – the Apostles and the Myrrh-bearing Women – He blessed them and ascended.

Jesus ascended in glory. Let us imagine: He ascended in glory. Our beloved Teacher, the Lord Jesus, ascended in glory. Lightly and freely, like a bird, like the eagle of biblical symbolism found on coats of arms and emblems, yet with human dignity, magnificently and solemnly, He ascended into Heaven. He did not simply rise and ascend, but, as the Scriptures and the Creed testify, He ascended into Heaven and sat down at the right hand of God's majesty in Heaven. This means that a human heart beats within God. This is the eternal truth and the dogma of the Christian faith.

For believers, this is a stark warning. For we are unable to truly be human beings; we are in no way able to truly embody our humanity. For example, we are dissatisfied with our age. We would like to live in a different era or time period. Those with overly liberal values would like to live in an era of great freedoms, while the more conservative among us would like to be incarnated in the Middle Ages. The other cannot become human, because he constantly behaves like an animal. Not because animals are bad in any way. On the contrary, they are properly incarnated because they humbly conform to what God intended for them.

The Church, as the Community of Believers, asks God to send us the Holy Spirit so that we may truly



The Resurrection of Jesus. Yaroslavl School of Icon Painting. 17th century

become flesh, that we may become authentic human beings. For only through true incarnation and humanization will a person be able, at the end of history, at the Second Coming, to ascend worthily and dwell with God in Heaven, where the Lord Jesus already dwells in glory and constantly intercedes for us, as our Friend and Brother, so that what was accomplished in Him may be accomplished in us. Christ has ascended into Heaven!

Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council

The seventh Sunday after Easter is unique. Unlike other Sundays in the church year, it is dedicated not to the Resurrection itself, but to the memory of the Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council.

The First Ecumenical Council was held in 325 during the reign of Emperor Constantine in the city of Nicaea. It was originally planned



The First Council of Nicaea. By Cesare Nebbia. Circa 1560

to be held in Ankara, or Ancyra – a name meaning “anchor” – the modern-day capital of Turkey, but was moved for logistical reasons. This change of venue turned out to be providential. For that time, an event of such magnitude – coming after centuries of persecution – was unprecedented, the first of its kind in history, and truly exceptional.

An Ecumenical Council is a gathering of the episcopate of the Churches within the Roman Empire, as well as certain bishops from beyond its borders, invited to participate by the emperor himself. This gave the Ecumenical Council a legislative character. The Roman Empire referred to itself as the “Ecumene” (Greek for “universe”).

The First Ecumenical Council adopted twenty canons – rules

of immense importance for the life of the entire Church. Yet, unfortunately, few people today, even among the most devout believers, remember or know their content. The main practical decree of Nicaea was a single rule regarding the celebration of Easter, which to this day, in one form or another, is followed by all of Christendom.

Most importantly, the Council of Nicaea adopted the Nicene Creed, which solemnly proclaimed that the Son of God, who became man in Christ Jesus, is consubstantial with God the Father. This meant that the Son of God has always existed. He was not created, and there was no time, or any period before time, when He, the Son of God, did not exist or was not. This is a binding dogma of the faith.

The paramount importance of this dogma lies in the fact that only in this way can we be certain that everything Jesus Christ said and did during His earthly life was an unadulterated, direct divine revelation. We are saved by God Himself, Who entered history, lived among us, and became our Friend and Brother. In Him, salvation is certain and is granted to us absolutely and for all eternity. Faith in the divinity of Jesus Christ is a distinctive feature of Christianity.

The commemoration of the Fathers of the Ecumenical Councils during the annual liturgy, as well as throughout the year, is a distinctive feature of Orthodoxy. Let us strive to remember this. The significance of the Ecumenical Councils lies in the fact that they emphasize the essence of apostolic

Christianity not merely as morality or doctrine – which is also important – but as Dogma. This also distinguishes Christianity from Judaism and Islam.

The Orthodox Church recognizes seven Ecumenical Councils. The First Ecumenical Council is exceptional and the most important.

Saints Cyril and Methodius, Apostles of the Slavs

This year, the feast day honouring the Fathers of the Council of Nicaea coincides with the commemoration of Saints Cyril and Methodius, the Apostles of the Slavs, on May 24.

For some time, brothers lived as monks in the same place, on Mount Olympus in Bithynia, in the same region as Nicaea, in Asia Minor.

Saint Cyril lived 42 years and died in 869 in Rome. He was a teacher, theologian, and philosopher. Methodius was twelve years older than his brother, lived to be seventy, and died in 885. The first Slavic archbishop in history, he was not subordinate to German hierarchs, as might have been the case at that time, but was ordained in Rome and became the head of an autonomous Orthodox Church in Moravia.

May 24 is also a church holiday commemorating the founding of Constantinople in 330 AD by Emperor Constantine the Great. Historically, it was this city that was destined to become the capital of Universal Orthodoxy from the moment of its founding until, perhaps, the upheavals of modern times: the Russian Revolution of 1917, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire following its defeat in World War I, and the expulsion of the Orthodox population from Asia Minor and Turkey in 1922, known in history as the Asia Minor Catastrophe.

The Feast of the Foundation of Constantinople is marked in



Monument to Saints Cyril and Methodius on Slavyanskaya Square in Moscow



Andrei Rublev. Icon of the Holy Trinity. Early 15th century

the church calendar and has its own troparion, which is sung in the fourth tone: “The City of the Mother of God dedicates its foundation as a gift to the Theotokos. For it was created to dwell in Her. Through Her it lives and is strengthened, crying out to Her: ‘Rejoice, hope of all the ends of the earth!’ It follows from this hymn that ancient Orthodox hymnographers regarded Constantinople as the “City of the Mother of God.”

The coincidence of the founding of Constantinople with the feast of Cyril and Methodius is no accident. The feast was introduced by the Bulgarian Orthodox community in Constantinople in the nineteenth century on this very day with the aim of “replacing” the “Greek celebration,” thereby emphasizing the distinctiveness and self-sufficiency of Slavic Orthodoxy in response to what was then perceived as the dominance of the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

As is often the case in history, the original reason for the establishment of a particular tradition has been forgotten, while the Church has gained a wonderful celebration. As “Day of Slavic Literature and Culture,” Cyril and Methodius were celebrated in the last century even in officially atheist Slavic states.

Like the flower from Andrei Platonov’s children’s fairy tale, theological truths literally sprout through the concrete and asphalt of impenetrable secularism.

Pentecost

Fifty days after Easter, the Church celebrates Pentecost. In the Russian Church and in the Churches that have shared a particularly close history with her, this feast is called the Day of the Holy Trinity. This means that the feast was renamed at some point

in history. As is often the case with tectonic shifts in ecclesiastical and liturgical life, there may be at least two reasons for this: a historical one and a theological one.

The fact is that Saint Sergius of Radonezh (1314–1392), the reviver of spiritual life in Russia, dedicated his monastery to the Holy Trinity. He celebrated the monastery’s patronal feast on the Day of Pentecost. From this practice, which became a great tradition, the famous icon of the “Holy Trinity” was subsequently created. It should be noted that in Greece, it is historically referred to not as the “Holy Trinity,” but as the Hospitality of Abraham. The icon as theology is, as it were, contrasted with the icon as event in these different Orthodox traditions.

The historical reason why Pentecost became Holy Trinity Day in the Russian Church is that, also during the time of Sergius of Radonezh, Russia was fighting for liberation from its subjugation to the Eastern empires, whose rulers had recently converted from paganism to Islam and had become much less tolerant toward the Orthodox.

The Feast of Pentecost, having become Holy Trinity Day, underscored the theological foundation of Orthodox Christianity.

This year, the Feast of Pentecost marks two remarkable coincidences. One of them can be described as historical, and the other as theological. According to the liturgical calendar, on this day, May 31, the Church commemorates the Holy Fathers of the Seven Ecumenical Councils.

In the Orthodox understanding, the Fathers of the Councils revealed to the whole world that Pentecost – as the life of the Holy Spirit in the Church – did not end with the era of the Apostles, but continues to live on in the Church’s decrees, in its moral life, and in its dogmas. This is a theological coincidence.

Another coincidence is that Pentecost coincides with the last day of spring. This is a reminder to us that the Spring of the World has ended. We have entered the last days. Great trials await the Church, but also great joy as the Second Coming of Christ draws near.

Spring is over. Most of us Orthodox believers are “Adult Men,” to borrow the title of Jean-Paul Sartre’s (1905–1980) novel of the same name; we are living in “The Age of Reason.” Therefore, both individually and as a whole, let us – the Church, as the Community of Believers – remain spiritually vigilant, watch over ourselves, and strive to correct our ways and improve, so that the Lord may return more quickly to those who await Him in deed and word.

Religion is a matter for adults, a source of blessing for life and the world; thankfully, to guide us on this path of virtue and service Jesus has given us the Holy Spirit.

Leavetaking of Pentecost

On the seventh day after the celebration of the Descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, the Orthodox Church celebrates the end of Pentecost. Thus, including the feast day itself, Pentecost lasts exactly seven days.

Starting the day after the end of Pentecost, All Saints’ Sunday, a new count of Sundays begins. Thus, All Saints’ Day marks the beginning of a new count of Sundays—33 in number, corresponding to the number of years of Jesus’ earthly life—which will continue until the start of the Sundays leading up to Great Lent.

This marks the beginning of a new liturgical cycle, a fresh start – the perfect time for Christians to wish one another a Happy New Church Season and Happy New Year!

INTERVIEW

AN “UNWANTED” COLLECTION

Prince Nikita Dmitrievich Lobanov-Rostovsky has shared the story of one of his collections.

*The interview was conducted
By IRINA DIN (KHOKHOLEVA) AND MARIA AFITSINSKAYA-LVOVA*



Prince Nikita Dmitrievich Lobanov-Rostovsky in 2025 / Photo: Alyona Summer

The Victoria and Albert Museum in London houses a remarkable collection of Russian posters from the 1920s, purchased from Prince Nikita Dmitrievich Lobanov-Rostovsky, a collector, philanthropist and art historian. In a talk with the *Mir Muzeya* (“Museum World”) magazine the collector has spoken about how it came to pass and why

he parted with the posters. There is not just a history of his collection in this talk about the Constructivists and Soviet customs, coincidences and people, but also a metaphor of time.

Irina Din: Nikita Dmitrievich, why did you take an interest in Russian revolutionary posters?

Nikita Lobanov-Rostovsky: Because it was the Russian revolutionary poster that became the leading trend in Europe in the 1920s. Just as half a century earlier Toulouse-Lautrec in France had transformed the poster concept into a concise and expressive form, so El Lissitzky and the Constructivists reduced the complexity of the poster, making it very clear and functional. Their aim was simple: to ensure the proletariat (working class) understood the new ideology. Posters from the 1920s are a significant page in the history of Russian art.

Few people know that the Victoria and Albert Museum in London has an extensive collection of such posters. And, of course, there are world-famous ones among them – for example, Lissitzky’s *Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge*. The story of how these posters ended up in the V&A is very revealing.

I. D.: Please tell us how you acquired your collection. Was it a one-time purchase or long-term collecting?

N.L.R.: On the advice of the American art critic John Bolt I met the Russian Jewish intellectual Viktor Kholodkov in search of theatrical sketches. He was a mathematician, but he also worked part-time selling books, paintings, and posters. He had two flats in Moscow: he lived in one of them, and the other was cluttered with all sorts of things. He told me about his posters. About twenty posters out of his collection of 500 seemed interesting to me. But Kholodkov



The Wilhelm's Cattle popular poster. Moscow: Ivan Sytin's lithography, 1914, 56.2 x 40.8



Dmitry Moor. An Agricultural Commune. C. 1920-1930. Woodcut. 36,5 x 54



V. V. Mayakovsky. *The Reign of Nicholas the Last* popular poster. Parus, Petrograd, 1917. The theme of this poster is the State monopoly on alcohol. The printed poster was accompanied by Mayakovsky's lines: "Hello Sasha! Now vodka is ours!" // "I know, Kolya: // It's a monopoly now!"

categorically refused to sell them individually. So I had to buy all of them.

500 posters is a huge volume. Some of them were half the size of this table (pointing to the table about two and a half metres long). It was in 1989. Imagine how 500 posters could be taken out of the Soviet Union!

I.D.: And how was it done? They were considered a cultural asset.

N.L.R.: Emigrating to the USA on a Jewish line, Kholodkov took these posters and plenty of books out of the country. How did he do it? Very simply. He found a carrier that transported containers between the Soviet Union and Italy. Cars often returned to Italy empty. Kholodkov

made arrangements with drivers, bought up trunks all over Moscow, filled them with books and posters, and lorries took them to Milan.

It was a small and not very honest business of lorry drivers. Permits to transport goods were issued for bribes, which were so small at that time that it was rumoured that even an elephant could be taken out if you knew the right drivers and customs officers. So everything went smoothly, and I got the whole batch straight away. In the Soviet Union customs documents did not describe the contents of goods that were being removed from the country.

The ban on taking out almost everything is a typical approach of all underdeveloped countries, where customs is one

of the country's main sources of income. This legacy survived even after the collapse of the USSR. For example, if you come to the Ukraine with anything that is over fifty years old, it is seized.

Unfortunately, I was in a similar situation too. A friend of mine was flying to Moscow, and I asked him to take a suitcase with books for the museum in Rostov Veliky. But for work reasons he had to stop in Kiev on the way, where the suitcase was seized at customs. Among the books was an old (about 150 years old), but not a rare edition by Goethe. This example demonstrates this psychology: in the Soviet Union bringing anything old into or out of the country was almost impossible.

I.D.: Why were you interested precisely in those twenty posters?

Because they are world-class. I have already mentioned Lissitzky's *Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge*. There are just a handful of genuine copies of this poster, but there are lots of fake ones. For instance, over the past fifty years at the Lenin Library (now the Russian State Library) I have been denied access to photograph any original under the guise of endless "restoration". The fact is that the originals, both at the Lenin Library and the V&A, have typographic marks that forgers do not reproduce. They can be used to distinguish a cheap fake from a real masterpiece.

When I received the posters, I didn't really need many of them, but the cost of the twenty that I was interested in exceeded the price of all the others.

By a happy coincidence, I was acquainted with the curator of posters at the Victoria and Albert Museum. They bought the whole batch from me in four or five stages. Even a letter has survived in which they were surprised: "Why are you selling the posters at such a low price and parting with them so easily?" I would have donated the posters to the museum, but I know from experience that gifts are often treated carelessly. And if they have been paid for, the demand from the keepers is stricter.

I sold a number of particularly valuable posters to the biggest collector in the world, the American Merrill C. Berman. He was a broker, traded pork belly futures at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange and amassed the most extensive collection of posters in the world. This explains how those Soviet posters ended up in London, and some of them in Chicago. I still keep a folder with confirmations of the transfer of the posters to the museum.



Maria Afitsinskaya-Lvova: You usually donated your collections to Russian museums. Why did you decide to leave this collection of revolutionary posters in Europe, at the V&A?

N.L.R.: It just happened this way. Because those posters had never been in my area of interests. I had got them almost for nothing and, in essence, they had been a random purchase. And frankly, I wanted to get rid of the unwanted stuff as soon as possible, handing the collection to safe hands. After all, I couldn't

take everything back... At that time, the V&A already had a significant collection of posters, and I had contacts there.

I.D.: Which posters did you decide to keep for yourself?

N.L.R.: I kept the theatrical ones, as they were relevant to my collection. As I have already said, their cost exceeded the price of the other 480 posters. So I parted with them without regret. The theatrical ones are now part of my collection.

TO OUR COMPATRIOTS

A VILLA IN SORRENTO: THE KOTCHOUBEY AND GORTCHACOW FAMILIES

A conversation between
NEONILLA PASICHNYK and ALEXANDER KOTCHOUBEY



Alexander Kotchoubey with his wife Anna in front of the Cathedral of St. Alexander Nevsky, Paris, France, August 2024

Spending time with Alexander Andreievich Kotchoubey always brings new discoveries. We have been friends since 2013, when we met in Kyiv, where Alexander

Andreievich attended a church sponsored evening gathering dedicated to traditional family values. There is no need to remind the reader that Alexander is a direct

descendant of Pushkin's Kotchoubey, described as "rich and famous." On his 55th birthday, Alexander, with his characteristic storytelling skill, shared with us fascinating details of his family history. The most incredible thing turned out to be that the granddaughter of the Russian Empire's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Elena Constantinovna Soldatenkov (née HSH Princess Gortchacow), and her daughter, who lived at the famous Villa Gortchacow in Sorrento, are relatives of the Kotchoubey family!

Alexander Andreievich, thank you for agreeing to share your family's story with us.

Let us jump right into the story of my mother's family and Sorrento. Much of the past – including the Gortchacow's connection to Sorrento – has been lost in our family's memory. Chance and curiosity helped me piece together traces of the past, which, in turn, contributed to a broader understanding of my family's historical journey. Quite by chance, while my wife Anna and I were traveling along the Amalfi Coast, I booked a room in Sorrento at a hotel called the *Parco dei Principi*. We sensed an aristocratic undertone in the hotel's name, possibly evoking the Italian and Russian nobility. You can imagine our surprise, when it turned out that I had not only booked a room in a hotel with a beautiful

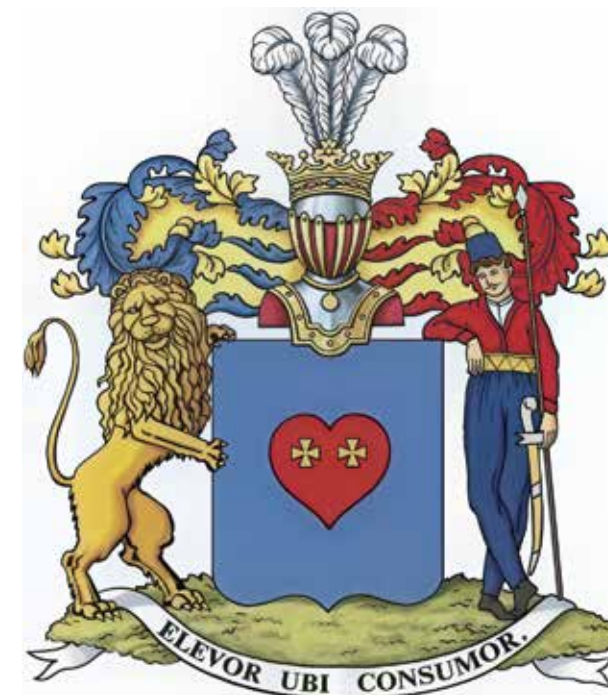
garden but as it turned out, on the hotel grounds stood a villa that had belonged to my family for nearly eighty years.

What an amazing discovery! The Kotchoubey's have traveled far and wide – not only in Russia, Europe, and the United States, but also on other continents – the members of this large family have set foot everywhere!

I don't know where to begin this story, given that the most skilled writers and archivists have already written extensively about Sorrento itself and the Gortchacow villa – something I, of course, learned later on from Renata De Lorenzo's study of the family of Elena Gortchacow-Soldatenkov, and the very good Russian translation by Mikhail Talalay.

But there's not a word about the Kotchoubey family...

I will therefore begin with my great-great-grandfather, HSH Prince Constantin Alexandrovich Gortchacow (1841–1926), son of the last Chancellor and Minister of Foreign Affairs, HSH Prince Alexander Mikhailovich Gortchacow (1798–1883) and his wife, HSH Princess Maria Alexandrovna, née Princess Urusova (1801–1853). Readers are well aware that the Chancellor was a classmate of Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin at the Tsarskoye Selo Lyceum. Among the most remarkable stories associated with their friendship, it is worth recalling, is that the Chancellor was not only the poet's last surviving classmate, but he was the one who hid the manuscript of the poem "The Monk" in his archives. He always



The Coat of Arms of the Kotchoubey family

considered these mischievous lines unworthy of Pushkin's pen. Until the manuscript was discovered in 1883 or 1884, the literary world considered the poem lost.

Is it possible that the future Chancellor Gortchacow was involved in the seizure of the correspondence between Pushkin and the Duke of Serracapriole, followed by the transfer of part of the poet's archive to Italy? In any case, because of the humorous lines written by the 14-year-old Pushkin in the poem "The Monk" ("...napping at Gortchacow's during supper"), the manuscript could have been not only hidden away but also destroyed. Thank God that this did not happen. Pushkin's character was modeled after Saint John of Novgorod! Perhaps we should return to the Gortchacows.

The story of the Chancellor and his sons deserves a separate account in its own right. For example, his son, HSH Prince Constantin Alexandrovich, married a wealthy

heiress, HSH Princess Maria Mikhailovna Sturdza, the daughter of the last ruling prince of the Principality of Moldavia. By the time of her daughter's wedding in 1868, my great-great-great-grandmother, Princess Smaranda Sturdza (née Princess Vogorides), did not yet own the villa in Sorrento.

Her son-in-law, HSH Prince Gortchacow, was wealthy in his own right and had managed to amass himself a considerable fortune in Russia. One of his businesses was a winery in Crimea, which held the exclusive right to supply church wine to all dioceses of the Russian Orthodox Church.

HSH Prince Constantin Alexandrovich Gorchakov was incredibly handsome, which aroused great admiration among women but caused the prince no small amount of trouble throughout his life. By 1883, the family already had five children. It was then that his father died. The Chancellor left a considerable fortune to his two sons.

This magnificent estate in Sorrento once belonged to the family of Count Paolo Leopoldo Bourbon of Syracuse, a cousin of the King of Naples. The estate was named *Villa Siracusa* after its owner. The coat of arms above the main entrance, which has survived to this day, features an eagle on the left – this is the coat of arms of the city of Chernigov. It should be noted that Chernigov is now located in Ukraine, but during the reign of the Rurik dynasty, it was part of the unified state of Kievan Rus'. The descendants of the Rurikids, specifically the Olgovich branch, the Gortchacow princes, use the Chernigov coat of arms as their heraldic emblem. On the right,



Portrait of His Serene Highness Prince Alexander Mikhailovich Gortchacow (1798–1883), portrait by Johann Köler. 1870s

visitors see a bull's head – this is part of the coat of arms of the Moldavian Sturdza *hospodars*.

You and your wife discovered the coat of arms and were able to determine that the villa belonged to the Gortchacows!

The estate, of course, was not yet known as the Villa Gortchacow when my great-great-great-grandparents, HSH Prince Mikhail Sturza and his wife Smaranda, learned of its sale.

Princess Smaranda Sturdza (née Princess Vogorides) was a very wealthy woman who had acquired a magnificent city mansion in Paris (the largest private plot of land in the city at the time), and it was likely her money that enabled the Sturdza couple to purchase the villa in Sorrento in the 1870s. Only after their deaths in 1884 and 1885 did their only surviving child, Princess Maria Mikhailovna Gortchacow (1849–1905), settle at the Villa Gortchacow following

her divorce from Prince Constantin Alexandrovich Gortchacow.

Princess Maria Mikhailovna completely restored this stunning villa and must have hosted extraordinary guests at equally extraordinary soirées or lavish balls, as was customary in the Russian Empire. Let us not forget that the couple belonged to two influential and powerful families. Both were extremely wealthy, even though they divorced in 1886. No matter how painful the divorce may have been, the estate remained in the hands of the Gortchacow family and, of course, was primarily used by HSH Princess Maria Mikhailovna. As a wealthy divorced woman, the princess spent her final years traveling between her numerous estates in Paris, Switzerland, and Italy.

Each of the Gortchacow's children eventually inherited property outside the Russian Empire. Since their youngest daughter, Elena Constantinovna, moved to Italy with her husband, Vassili Vassilievich Soldatenkov, one can assume that the couple made use of the villa in Sorrento.

And what is the relationship between your mother and the owner of the villa in Sorrento?

My mother was Daria Constantinovna Kotchoubey, née HSH Princess Gortchacow. HSH Princess Elena Constantinovna Gorchakova, the granddaughter of the distinguished Foreign Minister of the Russian Empire who owned the villa in Sorrento, was my mother's great-aunt. It should be noted that the villa's owner's husband, Vassili Vassilievich Soldatenkov, was the son of a prominent Moscow merchant who had recently been granted a noble title. He served in the Russian diplomatic mission in Rome. Like his wife, he attended the Imperial

Ball of 1903 in a rather remarkable falconer's costume. A year after their wedding, which took place in 1901, the couple had a daughter, Elena Vassilievna. A few years after their marriage, they separated, and by 1913, the divorce was finalized. Soldatenkov was known as a real playboy; he was passionate about auto racing, played chess, and, of course, chased after beautiful women. It was rumored that his mistress was Lina Cavalieri (1874–1944). Among the admirers of the opera diva was Prince Alexander Vladimirovich Baryatinsky – of course, before he married in exile the HSH Princess Ekaterina Yurievsky, the daughter of Tsar Alexander II from a morganatic marriage.

The Baryatinsky family has preserved the memory that the Italian opera singer and the Russian prince remained friends until his death in Florence in 1910. What became of the Gortchacow's villa afterward?

While the Soldatenkovs' divorce proceedings were underway, rumors began to circulate about Elena Constantinovna's – how shall I put it? – alleged preference for exclusively female company. The implication is clear to the informed reader. By the irony of fate, Elena Constantinovna ended up with the villa in Sorrento... Later, a companion who practiced the art of pottery moved into her villa. Elena Constantinovna was surely a skilled ceramacist herself.

Incidentally, Mikhail Talalay's own article, the Villa Gorchakoff in Sorrento: An Exotic Hub of Russian Life, mentions that this companion was the artist Nadezhda Lyubavina. In 1922, she married an Indian man (a participant in the national liberation movement), for whom she worked as a translator. In 1924, she left Russia with her

mother and husband, traveling via Constantinople to Milan; she visited Gorky in Naples and painted his portrait. So what became of Gortchacow-Soldatenkov?

Like her brothers and sisters, Princess Gortchacow inherited a considerable fortune, but the stock market crash of 1929, the war, and ill-advised investments left her almost penniless. After World War II ended, she was forced to sell and leave the villa. Elena Constantinovna died in 1948 and was buried in Rome.

Her former husband, Soldatenkov, achieved his greatest success in 1911 at a rather prestigious race, driving a Mercedes PS. He finished in third place, while the winner was the Italian Giovanni Ernesto Cheirano. His main contribution to the theory of chess openings is associated with one of the variations of the Queen's Gambit, which was even named after Soldatenkov.

Alexander Andreievich, please tell us more about your mother's parents, the Gortchacowa. Why has Villa Gortchacow been lost from the Kotchoubey family's memory?

My grandfather, HSH Prince Constantin Alexandrovich Gorchakov, lived in Milan with his wife, HSH Princess Maria Alexandrovna (née Wyrouboff, 1912–2000), after 1964. After retiring, they spent part of the year in Porto Ercole. There, my grandfather met the daughter of Vassili Vassilievich Soldatenkov with his second wife. My grandfather certainly kept in touch with his cousin Elena Vassilievna Gargiulo (née Soldatenkova) but my grandfather never bothered to tell the family about any of these acquaintances. This leads me to believe that the presence of the Gortchacows in Sorrento in the first half of the 20th century went largely unnoticed by

my grandfather and his brother, who had both grown up in Lausanne, Switzerland. I believe that the early death of their father, HSH Prince Alexander Constantinovich, in 1916, may explain the lack of ties with the wider Gortchacow family.

What are the origins of your family's close ties with Italy?

My father and his sister were born in Florence in the 1930s, but I would like to begin with a poem written in 1863 by Prince Piotr Andreievich Wiazemsky and dedicated to his friend, my great-great-grandfather Nikolai Arkadyevich Kotchoubey (1827–1865), who died in the city of "Serenissima" (as my friends and I like to refer to the old Venetian Republic among ourselves):

To Nikolai Arkadievich Kotchoubey

*Venice is a delight, but she needs the sun,
And she needs a crown
of diamonds and gold,
So that all that is lovely in her, all that is
southern there,
May shine without clouds or sunset,
But the sorceress needs the stars
and the moon,
So that in the bright twilight, in
the clear night
A silver belt, a pearl necklace
Shine with the adornment
of a bride's beauty.
And in an everyday dress beneath
a gray mist,
Beneath a weeping sky, in rain-laden
melancholy,
Her charm fails to work as her talisman,
And the queen looks like an unbearable
old woman.*

*You don't know what to do in this
hopeless sorrow.
There are clouds, here gloomy
waves roam,
And the wet sky, and the murky sea*



Photograph of His Serene Highness Prince Constantin Alexandrovich Gortchacow (1841–1926), at the 1903 Winter Costume Ball

*Cast a gloom over thought and feeling
Under this gloom, with a yawn from
the heart,
Like another Robinson in
a lagoon prison,
You sit face to face with eternal Friday,
And count seven sickening Fridays
in a week.
Here you will recall what Zavadovsky
aptly said,
Degrading the sea beauty to
the level of prose:
“It is impossible to live here;
the city is such
That to run to the shop – you must get
into a boat.”*

October 27, 1863, Venice

This poem has always haunted me but here is another happy coincidence. My wife and I came to Venice for our friends’ wedding anniversary and booked a room at a hotel on the Zattere. We were walking along the sidewalk by the canal and stopped just five minutes from the hotel to read the memorial to the great poet Joseph Brodsky. And suddenly I remembered that the Kotchoubey family had a palazzo in Venice, which now has new owners. I looked up the address on my phone and was surprised to find that it was just a few meters from where we were standing. This was the place where my great-great-grandfather died in 1865. The grounds were surrounded by a wall, and I could make out only a few details through one of the gates. Nevertheless, I found the place where he died. His widow, Elena Sergeievna Kotchoubey (née Princess Wolkonsky), had come to Venice from her late husband’s estate, Voronki (now in modern day Ukraine) together with Alessandro Poggio. The Italian Poggio was a Decembrist and a loyal friend of her parents – Princess Maria Nikolaievna Wolkonsky (née Raevsky) and Major General Sergei Grigorievich Wolkonsky, who was

born a prince but was stripped of his title by the Emperor as punishment for participating in the Decembrist uprising.

Did Italians in Russia marry members of the Kotchoubey family?

The Poggio family, who had arrived from Piedmont, had by 1865 become Russian, and their lineage was forever intertwined with the Wolkonsky and Kotchoubey families, as members of the family were buried together in the crypt on the Kotchoubey estate, Voronki. Years later, the widow Elena Sergeievna remarried, this time to a local landowner, Alexander Alekseevich Rakhmanov. They had two daughters, the half-sisters of my great-grandfather Mikhail Nikolaievich Kotchoubey – Maria Alexandrovna and Elena Alexandrovna. The elder sister married Colonel Alexander Ivanovich Giuliani, a Russian nobleman of Italian descent from St. Petersburg. In the years leading up to the revolution, Italy felt like a second home to them: Elena Sergeievna and her brother, Prince Mikhail Sergeievich Wolkonsky, often traveled to Italy, as did members of their families. They were connected through the Poggio family in Florence and through the Russian community in Rome. My great-grandfather accompanied his mother on these trips, and many years later, when his son, my grandfather Sergei Mikhailovich, settled in Florence in the early 1930s, a local photographer who had a studio in the city gave him photographs of Mikhail Nikolaievich taken half a century earlier.

Now it is clear why, following the 1917 revolution in the Russian Empire, the Kotchoubey family ended up in Italy.

The Revolution led many family members to Italy, where they spent

the final years of their lives. These included the Giuliani’s and their sons, Elena Rakhmanova, the Wolkonsky’s, and even the Kotchoubey family. My grandfather, Sergei Mikhailovich, who fought in the White Army’s OSVAG under General Denikin’s command, had no plans to move to Italy. My grandfather studied in Kyiv at the 2nd Kiev Gymnasium (judging by a photograph where he is wearing a school uniform), and then continued his education and graduated from the Nikolaev Cadet Corps in St. Petersburg. When the Civil War began, he immediately joined his two brothers who were fighting in the cavalry, while his fourth brother continued studying law at the University of Kiev. The Kotchoubey brothers left Sevastopol in November 1920, but only three of them managed to reach Bulgaria, where they settled for a time. After ten years in Bulgaria and the start of tours with Ataman Platov’s Don Cossack Choir under the direction of Nikolai Kostriyukov, my grandfather decided to leave Sofia and his first wife to study bel canto in Florence. His family lived there, and it was the center of opera education in Europe. He met my grandmother, Irina Georgievna Gabritchevsky, and they were married in the Greek Orthodox Cathedral of St. George in Venice. In that very cathedral where, in 1865, prayers for the repose of Nikolai Arkadievich were likely recited.

So how did the Kotchoubey family end up in the U.S.?

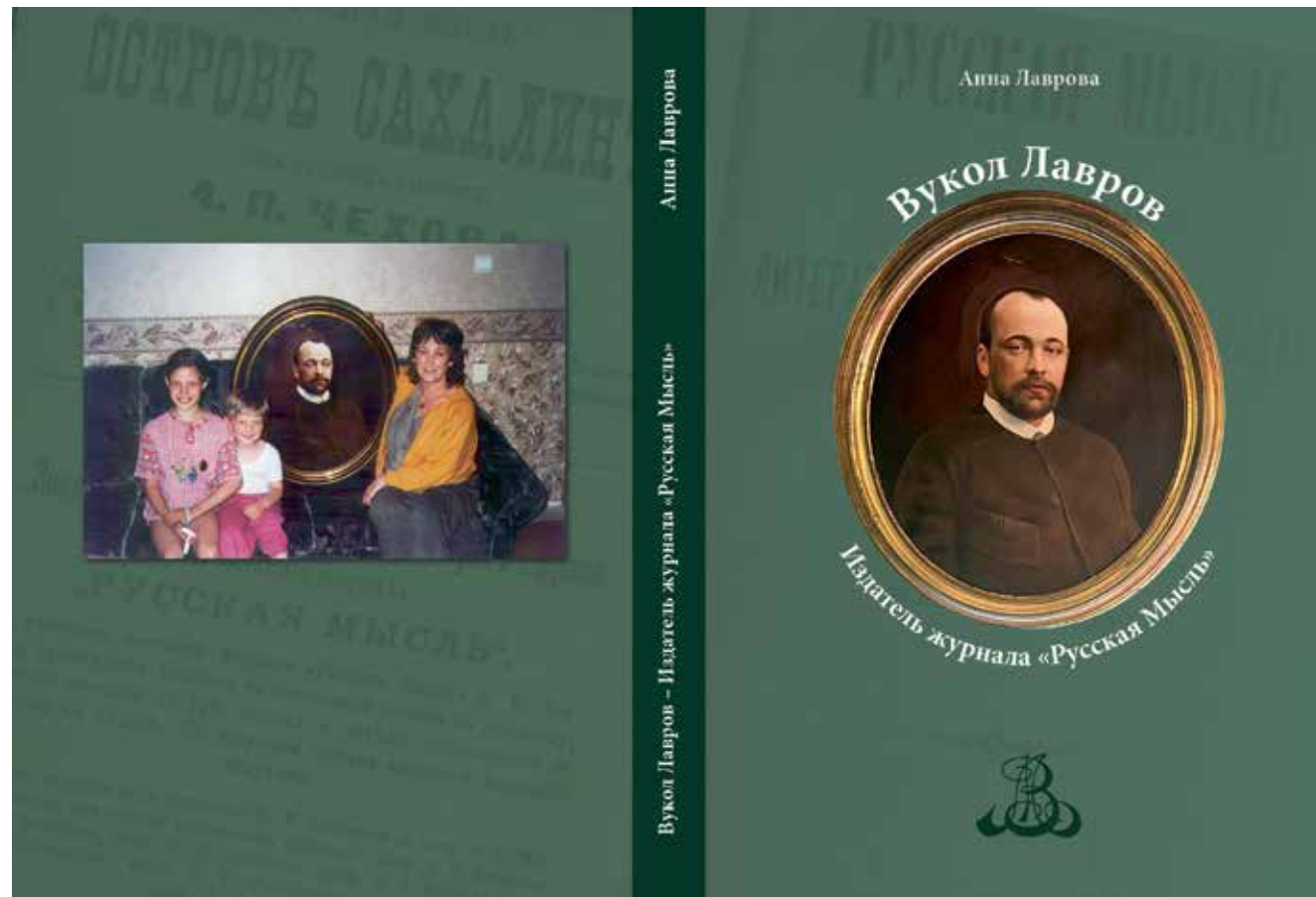
My father grew up in Florence and has vivid memories of the war years, especially the Allied bombing in 1944 of the Campo di Marte neighbourhood, where they lived. Bodies lay everywhere... It was a harrowing memory that has stayed with our entire family. Around that time, my father fell seriously ill and

needed to be hospitalized. Prince Emmanuel Vladimirovich Galitzine (1918–2002), personal assistant to Vice Marshal of the Royal Air Force, Sir William Dickson, was sent to Italy to a base in Florence. Connections with Russia were put to use, and Galitzine arranged for my six-year-old father to be treated at the British hospital. My father still remembers how Prince Galitzine visited him in the hospital and read him fairy tales.

As the war intensified, my grandmother volunteered for the American Red Cross. But the friendship that changed the course of our family’s life was the one with my grandfather’s distant relative, Sonia Clark (née Tomara). As background, her ancestor was Stepan Vassilievich Tomara (1719–?), who was married to Anna Vassilievna Kotchoubey (1722–1800). Sonia Tomara was the second wife of American judge William Clark, who in 1949 became president of the Supreme Court of Appeals of the Allied Forces in Nuremberg, Germany. He remained in that position until 1954.

By 1953, the economic outlook for my Kotchoubey grandparents was bleak, and the general elections in Italy, scheduled for June, were creating uncertainty, especially in Florence, which was a stronghold of the opposition Communist and Socialist parties. My grandfather had had too many problems with the communists, and he was relieved to accept the Clarks’ offer to pay for passage on the Andrea Doria to help the Kotchoubey family emigrate to the United States. They emigrated in March 1953.

This is by no means an exhaustive account of the Kotchoubey family’s ties to Italy, but rather a narrative spanning several generations that helps readers understand the relationship between a Russian family and southern Italy.



THE RUSSIAN MIND OF VUKOL LAVROV

The illustrated book, *“Vukol Lavrov. The Publisher of the Russian Mind Magazine”* (Irkutsk: Print-Line, 2024. 440 pages), will definitely interest our readers. Its author is Anna Mikhailovna Lavrova, a great-granddaughter of Vukol Mikhailovich Lavrov (1852–1912) who in 1880 founded the literary, political and cultural Russian Mind magazine, which was published in the Russian Empire till 1918, when it was closed by the Bolsheviks who had come to power.

Later *The Russian Mind* was revived as an emigre newspaper.

Over the years, such great writers and thinkers as A. P. Chekhov,

V. Ya. Bryusov, V. G. Korolenko, D. N. Mamin-Sibiryak, A. I. Kuprin, I. A. Bunin, A. Bely, M. A. Voloshin, A. A. Blok, D. S. Merezhkovsky, Z. N. Gippius, A. M. Remizov, N. A. Berdyaev and many others contributed to *The Russian Mind*.

Anna Lavrova’s fundamental work immerses readers in the brilliant era of Russian literature and culture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The book contains 575 illustrations, among them the rarest photographs from the Lavrovs’ personal archive. A unique appendix to the book is the Salon album by Vukol Lavrov.

“The merit of the book is not only the use of photographs and documents that had never been printed before,” notes Anna Lavrova. “The main thing is that I have published my great-grandfather’s salon album, in which thirty-seven writers, poets, artists, and actors signed their autographs. In his time my father photographed all the autographs from this album, so I have been able to reproduce them in my book based on the memories of my grandfather, father and other relatives.”

“In the spring of 2025 Vukol Lavrov’s album, which had been lost from our family archives, was put up for sale at the PiterOldBook auction in St Petersburg and named a museum-level item of global importance.”



SOYUZMULTFILM CELEBRATING ITS NINETIETH ANNIVERSARY

Works of the Soyuzmultfilm legendary animation studio have become an integral part of Russia’s cultural heritage. Founded on 10 June 1936 in Moscow, over decades the studio created cartoons, which brought up several generations of viewers. Throughout its history, over 1500 animated films have been released, many of which have entered the golden collection of world animation.

The history of the studio began with the merging of some small animation groups that had worked at Mosfilm, Sovkino and Mezhrabpomfilm. Initially the new studio was named

Soyuzdetmultfilm, but in August 1937 it was renamed Soyuzmultfilm.

In its early years the studio took the world’s advanced animation technologies as a pattern to follow. Works of the American animator Walt Disney greatly influenced Soviet artists. This contributed to the development of new artistic methods and techniques, which were later adapted to Russian cultural traditions.

Soyuzmultfilm’s heyday was from the 1950s to the 1980s. Over that period dozens of works were created that became part of the cultural

memory of Russian society and are still popular today.

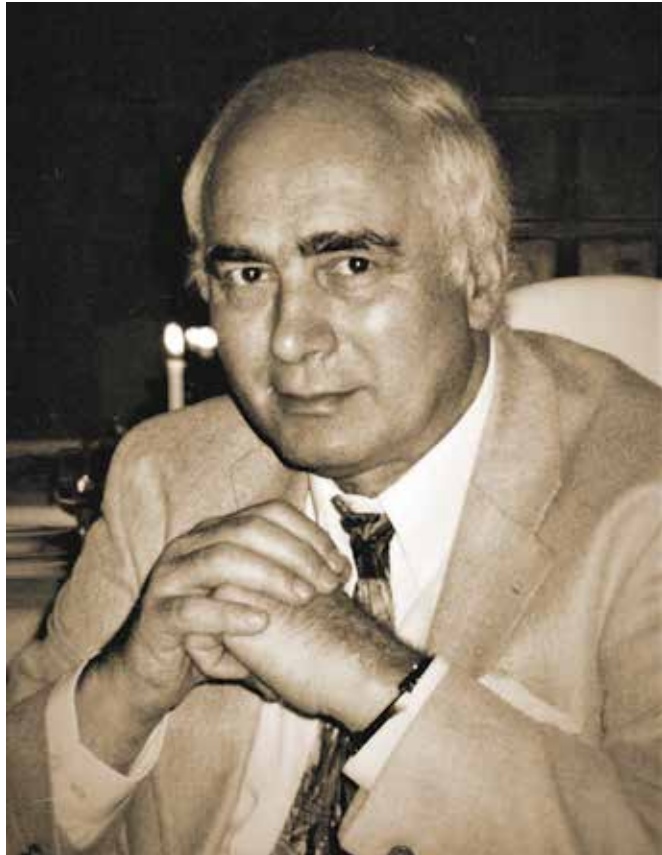
After the disintegration of the Soviet Union the studio went through a hard period due to economic difficulties and production cuts. However, in the twenty-first century Soyuzmultfilm started reviving actively. The rights to its classic works were restored, new projects and modern versions of famous animated series were launched. The studio also expanded its presence on digital platforms and continued to work on full-length animated films.

Combining rich legacy and modern technologies, Soyuzmultfilm strives to preserve the best traditions of Russian animation and at the same time create projects interesting to new generations of viewers.

TRIBUTE

IN MEMORIAM: VYACHESLAV KATAMIDZE

It is with deepest regret that the Editorial Board of the Russian Mind magazine informs the readers about the death of Vyacheslav Ivanovich Katamidze



Vyacheslav Katamidze, a brilliant journalist, political analyst, long-term contributor to *The Russian Mind* magazine, author of over thirty books, a deep and inspiring person, passed away on 10 May 2026 at the age of eighty-one...

Vyacheslav Ivanovich was born on 26 September 1944 in Tbilisi into the family of an officer. After school, he continued his education at the Military Institute of Foreign Languages in Moscow.

A Middle East expert, he worked in Kuwait, Egypt and other Arab

Later, Katamidze worked as a commentator for the USSR State Television and Radio Station (Gosteleradio USSR), made documentaries about Arab countries, headed an independent documentary film studio that created such films as *Treasure Peninsula*, *Aivazovsky*, and *A View from the Height of the Pyramids*; he was the author of the popular *Golden-Domed Moscow* documentary series. From 1995 he lived and worked in London.

A man of encyclopedic knowledge and always full of ideas, he could

not imagine his life without creative work, without constant work on new books, some of which he published under pseudonyms. He lived a vibrant and admirable life, leaving behind such interesting works as *A Walk Around London*, *Christopher Wren. The Genius of the English Baroque*, *Ghosts and Apparitions of London*, *Secrets of the British Museum*, *The Mystery of the Stratford Man*, *Shakespeare or Marlowe?*, *The Mysterious Bible* and many others.

In 2014 Katamidze was awarded the Belyaev Prize for the "Scientific and Artistic Book" category for his work *The Secret of the Order of the Temple*. His books, translated into many languages, are available in 319 libraries across the globe, including the British Library and the libraries of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge.

Katamidze's last novel (still unpublished), was the *Ivan and Eva* historical detective story about the destinies of people caught up in the epicentre of the dramatic events of the Second World War. It is hard to imagine that *The Russian Mind* will be left without Katamidze's vivid articles, full of in-depth analysis of both world and Russian history, and insightful research into the works of Russian artists and writers.

We express our heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of Vyacheslav Ivanovich. Eternal memory!

Editors
of *The Russian Mind*
magazine

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