RUSSIAN MIND

LA PENSEE RUSSE

№174/7–8 (5045)
JULY – AUGUST 2026

Russkaya Mysl
Russian/English

Founded in 1880
www.RussianMind.com



9 772046 868005

UK	£4.00
Germany, Austria, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal, Estonia	€5.50
Belgium, Greece	€5.50
France , Spain	€5.60
Switzerland	5.60 CHF
Hungary	2290 HUF
Poland	26.90 PLN

Литературная газета

Основана в 1830 году
при участии А. С. Пушкина
Издание возобновлено
в 1929 году при поддержке
М. Горького



Дорогие читатели!

Подписаться на любимую газету вы можете одним из следующих способов.

Подписка онлайн с доставкой по всему миру:

www.eastview.com
www.nasha-pressa.de



Подписка онлайн с доставкой по России:

www.lgz.ru
www.podpiska.pochta.ru

В каждом номере:

- *новости культурной и общественной жизни России;*
- *дискуссии известных политологов;*
- *интервью с медиаперсонами;*
- *рецензии на книжные новинки;*
- *обзор премьер театра и кино.*



Справки по тел.:
8 (499) 788 01 12

«Литературная газета» —
газета для думающих людей

EDITOR'S LETTER

IT IS UP TO US TO PRESERVE OUR HERITAGE!

Interest in the work of Nina Berberova, who was called "Miss Silver Age", was inspired by the 125th anniversary of her birth. Andrei Voznesensky, who dedicated not only beautiful lines to her but also the preface to the Russian edition of *The Iron Woman*, believed that she did not belong to the Silver Age generation at all; her generation had a different style of thinking, energy, and taste – it was the spirit of the mid-twentieth century. Yet, for some reason it was precisely young Nina Berberova whom such paladins of the Silver Age as Nikolai Gumilev and Vladislav Khodasevich chose as their Miss.

In the reader's perception, Berberova is forever rhymed with the Silver Age – a time of a great rise in Russian culture in many of its manifestations. It is generally accepted that the concept of the "Silver Age" arose within the Russian émigré environment. There, where many of Nina Nikolaevna's poems, which we happily publish, were written. Decades later, they are still like a breath of clean, fresh air. Her work is part of a great heritage that must be preserved.

The preservation of heritage is the theme of the current issue of the *Russian Mind* magazine, coming out at the end of the exceptionally hot summer in Europe.

In this issue, we remember those without whom the concept of the "Russian world" would be incomplete. These include Prince Alexander Alexandrovich Trubetskoy, for whom serving Russia was his life's work; Prince Dmitry Mikhailovich Shakhovskoy, a descendant of the Rurikid Dynasty and recipient of the Russian Order of Friendship, who passed away this year; and the hereditary aristocrat and collector of early twentieth-century theatre and decorative art, Prince Nikita Dmitrievich Lobanov-Rostovsky, who sees his goal as the preservation of Russia's cultural heritage.

August marks the 155th anniversary of the birth of Leonid Andreyev, of whom Leo Tolstoy once said: "He tries to frighten me, but I am not scared."

We could not fail to remember the artist Ivan Pryanishnikov as well – he belonged to that category of nineteenth-century Russian intellectuals for whom Europe was not a foreign land, but a natural cultural space.

And our great Fyodor Ivanovich Chaliapin! We are concluding the publication of excerpts from Elena Lebedeva's book on the famous singer and the Russian diaspora in France, and beginning to introduce readers to Anna Lavrova's recently published book about her great-grandfather Vukol Mikhailovich Lavrov, who founded the *Russian Mind* magazine in 1880.

Our invited guest is the People's Artist of Russia, singer, poet, composer and guitarist Zhanna Bichevskaya. Her repertoire includes several hundred(!) spiritual songs, Russian folk songs, romances and songs set to the poems of Silver Age poets. A true guardian of our heritage!

Preserving cultural heritage is a long and necessary task. Let us try to match the greatness of the plan. Today, this is one of the key priorities.

By Leonid Kolpakov

Russian Mind
№174/07–08(5045)
JULY – AUGUST 2026

CHAIRMAN of the EDITORIAL BOARD
Kirill Privalov

EDITORIAL BOARD:
Metropolitan Anthony
Rene Guerra
Peter Sheremetev
Sergey Yastrzhembsky

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Leonid Kolpakov
lk@russianmind.com

EXECUTIVE and PRODUCTION EDITOR
Karina Enfenjyan
karina@russianmind.com

CREATIVE PRODUCER
Vasily Grigoriev
cp@russianmind.com

DESIGN
Roman Malofeev
design@russianmind.com

TRANSLATOR
Dimitry Lapa

ADVERTISEMENT:
sales@russianmind.com

DISTRIBUTION:
distribution@russianmind.com

SUBSCRIBTION:
subscription@russianmind.com

PUBLISHING HOUSE:
RuMind DOO, Jurija Gagarina 231,
11073 Beograd, Serbia
Registration Number 21962945
CEO: Konstantin Filimonov

PRINTING HOUSE:
ArtPrintMedia DOO, Profesora Grcica 2,
21000 Novi Sad, Serbia

RUSSIAN MIND (print)
ISSN 2046-8687

RUSSIAN MIND (online)
ISSN 2046-8695

COVER:
Léon Bakst. Design for Nathalie Trouhanova's costume for ballet La Péri composed by Paul Dukas.1911.
From the collection of N. D. Lobanov-Rostovsky



Editors are not responsible for the accuracy of the information published in news reports, promotional materials and advertisements. Editors do not have the ability to enter into correspondence and do not return manuscripts and illustrations. Editors do not provide background information. Reproduction of any materials from the magazine "Russian Mind" is impossible without the permission of the editorial board.

Cases of the absence of sale of the magazine "Russian Mind", violations of the terms of delivery and other shortcomings in our work may be reported on
+44 (0) 203 205 0041
or send on e-mail:
info@russianmind.com

CIRCULATION: 7000 COPIES

PRESERVING HERITAGE

History is the preservation a nation's past for the sake of its future

By KIRILL PRIVALOV

"We are not in exile – we are on a mission." This aphorism is attributed to just about everyone! According to some sources, St John (Maximovitch) of Shanghai and San Francisco found these encouraging words for hundreds of thousands of Russian refugees scattered across all continents. Others attribute it to Ivan Bunin, though the first Russian Nobel laureate in literature never actually said anything of the kind…

Everyone who repeats this phrase and appreciates the conciseness of its wording can be fully understood – it is put clearly, resonantly and vividly. A successful aphorism eventually acquires a multitude of authors all at once. However, this phrase most likely belongs to the famous writer Zinaida Gippius, who spent a significant part of her life in the French émigré environment. At any rate, this is what Nina Berberova maintained – unlike Gippius, who did not establish her literary reputation in her native Russia, but exclusively in emigration.

I am inclined to believe Nina Nikolaevna, a wonderful journalist and fiction writer, and once my colleague at the *Russian Mind* magazine. I first heard her quote Zinaida Gippius in the late 1980s in Paris. At that time, I happened to interview Berberova for *Literaturnaya Gazeta*.

We met on Rue des Vignes ("Vine Street" in the prestigious 16th arrondissement of Paris), at the home of Alexandra Petrovna Boutan, a Parisian descendant of Alexander Pushkin's publisher Pyotr Pletnyov and a friend of Berberova, who frequently visited Paris from America, where she had moved after the Second World War and taught at Princeton University. The interview was soon published and titled by me in the style of Berberova's memoirs, *The Italics Are Mine – Not Only Italics*.

Berberova spoke then about her first husband, the outstanding writer Vladislav Khodasevich, about Maxim Gorky, whom she visited in Italy, about the mores of Russian Paris on the eve of the Second World War, about her work at Pavel Milyukov's *Posledniye Novosti* newspaper, and about the masonic circle of Alexander Kerensky, with whom her second husband, the journalist and artist Nikolai Makeyev, was associated…

Nina Nikolaevna also mentioned that Gippius' saying: "We are not in exile – we are on a mission", was later repeatedly popularised by Zinaida Nikolaevna's husband Dmitry Merezhkovsky. And she added, speaking of the great Russian writer: "And he himself was the best embodiment of this mission. All that remains now is for Russia to 'read' it correctly."

Today it seems to me that Russia did this rightly, albeit belatedly. We never stop marvelling at what a sharp prophet and profound sage this man was, whose work in the Soviet Union was aggressively forgotten and under an unexpressed partial ban.

"One of the deepest characteristics of the Russian spirit is that it is very difficult to move us, but once we have moved, we go to extremes in everything – in good and evil, in truth and falsehood, and in wisdom and madness," Merezhkovsky wrote in 1906.

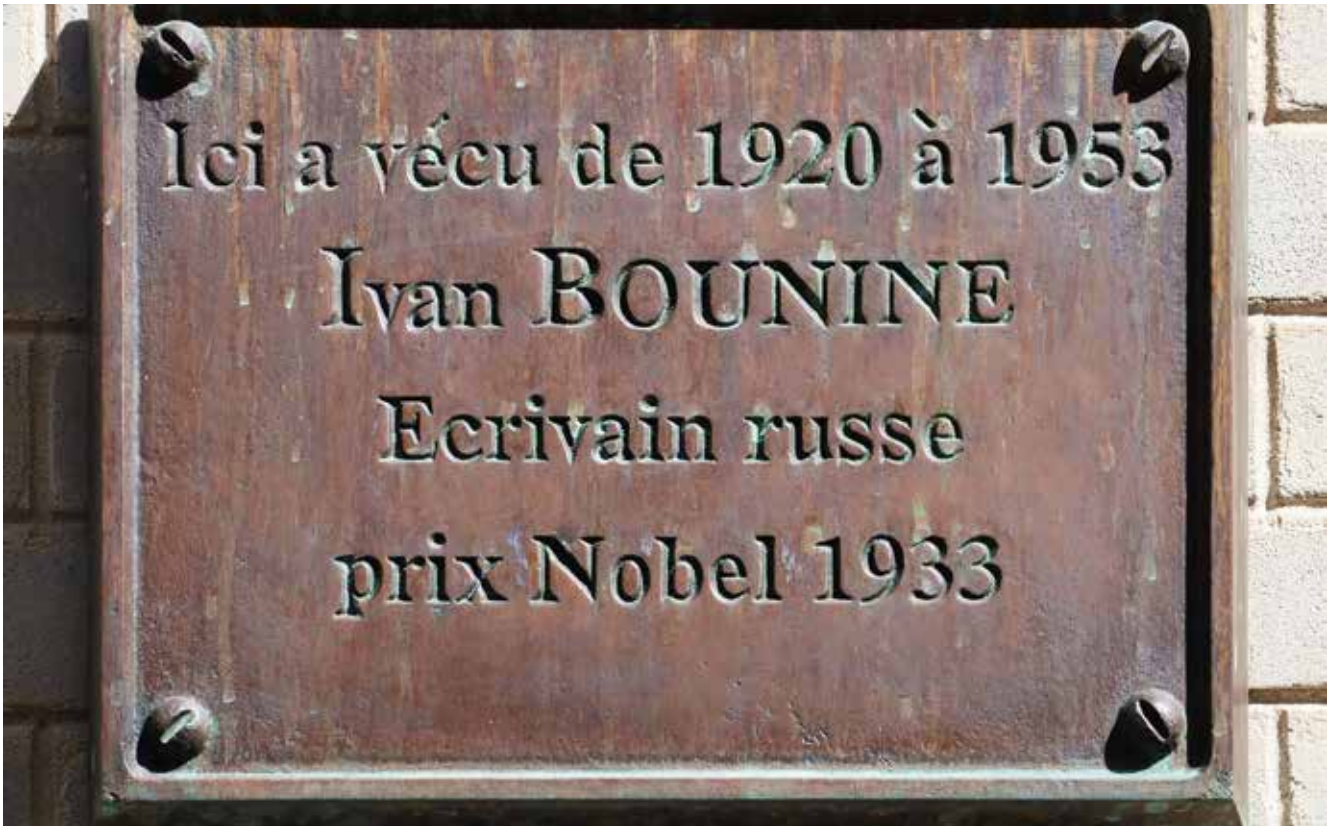
"Sometimes Misunderstanding Is Worse Than Any Kind of Hatred..."

"A small knowledge gives people pride, a great one gives humility: just as empty ears of corn lift their arrogant heads to the sky, while those full of grain bow them low to the earth" (*Resurrected Gods. Leonardo da Vinci*, 1900).

This man spoke with *The Resurrected Gods…*, built the Coming Temple, and witnessed the *Birth of the gods*. In his works, a Christian-exacerbated perception of existence sometimes takes the form of allegory.

Ivan Bunin once remarked that on a journey (especially if it is long), a person is naturally observant. Thanks to this observation, sharpened by emigrant wanderings across Europe, Merezhkovsky preserved for us, his descendants, a sense not only of an era, but of all Russian history. Moreover – of world history from its Biblical beginnings. He made the word flesh, and it lives among us. The beautiful Russian word preserved by Merezhkovsky. As the poet Andrei Bely wrote about the Paris flat of Merezhkovsky and Gippius, in it "they truly created culture, and the words spoken in this flat were 'hauled away' by agile wordmongers. Around Merezhkovsky, an entire export of new trends formed without any mention of the source everyone drew from. Everybody once studied here, catching his words."

If, however, a word is born too quickly, like a light breath, it risks turning into a dangerous handicap, as psychologists say, becoming



Memorial plaque in honour of the first Russian Nobel laureate Ivan Bunin, installed in the 16th arrondissement of Paris, on he facade of 1 Rue Jacques-Offenbach

for the author – paradoxical as it may seem – a flaw, sometimes even a sin. Perhaps an involuntary one, provoked, but no less vexing and painful for that. Hence, it seems to me, the belated regrets of Dmitry Merezhkovsky, who vainly sought a compromise between the unattainable "absolute good" and the "darkness" of the human heart, regarding his individual statements on Soviet Russia. This sounded with special sharpness in 1941, when his contempt for Bolshevism in a speech on German radio turned into something resembling a panegyric to Nazism. Admittedly, the writer quickly realised his mistake, for back in the 1930s he had spoken of the "powder keg of fascism." And he concluded his speech with passionate lines about Russia… But, as the French say, "it's already done". For many people in the Russian Parisian milieu, Dmitry Merezhkovsky became a pariah right till his death in late 1941. Zinaida Gippius too was subjected to ostracism in the Russian Parisian milieu as Merezhkovsky's intellectual partner and wife for half a century …

However, did everything happen this way in real life? Was it real? I'm not sure. A well-known axiom: historical misconceptions are more long-lived than historical facts.

But let's return to Nina Berberova and our meeting.

"One of the leaders of the French Jacobins, Georges Jacques Danton, when offered to emigrate to avoid perishing under the guillotine's blade, stated that you cannot carry away your Motherland on the soles of your boots," Nina Nikolaevna said. "From the perspective of Cartesian logic, so dear to the French, this is probably true. But it is pure, simplistic materialism. In the West, many prominent people have lost their souls while caring for the shell. As for Russians, action does not necessarily need hope, and persistence is by no means always accompanied by a thirst for victory. To understand a book, you must not just read it, but live through it. To understand Russians, you must live among them for some time. Only after this can you understand why Russians react so painfully and acutely to any attempts to break their way of life or distort their language. They see this as an assault on their history, culture, and, ultimately, their form of existence.

"I remember a story about how Dovid Knut, a rather good and well-known poet in Russian emigration, once came to see Vladislav Khodasevich. He brought some new poems and left them at Khodasevich's. The manuscript was so utterly



Vladislav Khodasevich and Nina Berberova in Sorrento. 1925

indigestible that it was not even fit to be returned. Yet, Khodasevich read it and, when they met, started ripping the poetry apart: 'It's grammatically incorrect here… And besides, words like this don't even exist.' To which Knut replied: 'But this is how they speak in our Chisinau!' Khodasevich flared up: 'This is how they speak in your Bessarabia, but they don't speak like this in Russian!'"

This is entirely true: the preservation of a nation is impossible without careful preservation of its language. And the guarantor of its protection is Russian literature. In all of its guises – whether "domestic" or emigre – it makes no difference. I cannot help but recall a press conference by the poet and memoirist Irina Odoevtseva, who had just returned to St Petersburg – still called Leningrad by Soviet inertia – after half a century of life in Paris. The Silver Age grand dame spoke at the Leningrad Central House of Writers; due to a fractured femoral neck, she could move only in a wheelchair, stubbornly referred to Gorbachev's perestroika as a "reshuffling" and uttered a timeless phrase: "There is no emigre literature; there is only one great Russian literature that you and I serve."

This is the kind of national idea we get. The preservation… How can one not recall Alexander Solzhenitsyn here: "I generally treat the term 'national idea' with caution, because it is abused. At one point, Yeltsin once proposed formulating a national idea in barely a week's time. What came of this? <...> I would propose a national idea that was set forth over 250 years ago by the statesman Ivan Shuvalov under Empress Elizabeth Petrovna. He suggested that Elizabeth be guided by the preservation of the people as the supreme law. What an idea! The preservation of the people as the main task."

Shuvalov's famed "preservation of the people" was, above all, the patronage of literature, education, science, and art. It was aid extended to talented Russians. Shuvalov, who twice declined the title of count ("I can say that I was born without boundless vanity, without a desire for wealth, honours and high rank," he said), supported the writer and playwright Alexander Sumarokov, protected Mikhail Lomonosov from the academicians of the pro-German orientation, and became the first president of the Russian Academy of Arts…

And most importantly – at least for me, a graduate of Lomonosov Moscow State University – Shuvalov, together with Lomonosov, drafted the project to establish the Moscow University and convinced Empress Elizabeth Petrovna to sign the decree on its foundation in 1755. And

when? Exactly on the birthday of his mother, the minor landed gentlewoman Tatiana Ratislavskaya: 12 January. This is the origin of Tatiana's Day, the main holiday for Russian students.

Shuvalov's "reforms" were not laws and decrees, but institutional projects: he created cultural institutions, set standards for education and the support of talent, and shaped an environment in which Russian culture could develop both independently and in dialogue with Europe. Shuvalov gifted the Academy of Arts an enormous collection of paintings from his private "museum", which later became the foundation of the world-famous Hermitage Museum collection. Ivan Shuvalov lived, as he himself put it, "for the sake of the successful dissemination of knowledge."



D. V. Filosofov, D. S. Merezhkovsky, Z. N. Gippius, V. A. Zlobin. Late 1919 — early 1920

FirstWe Are Russians, and Only Then Slavs

"It is as though the Russian temperament knows no middle ground!" Fyodor Chaliapin exclaimed from the bottom of his heart.

Having passed through the ordeals of the twentieth century and taken on the perturbations of the twenty-first century, Russia has arrived at an understanding what the country's best minds realised in the early nineteenth century.

As Pyotr Vyazemsky – Pushkin's friend, a brilliant poet and an authority under Alexander I, Nicholas I and Alexander II – proclaimed: "Our most fundamental misconception is that we consider ourselves more Slavic than Russian."

What does this mean for us? Only one thing: if our predecessors were able to build a great country, our task, at a minimum, is not to squander what have been accumulated and to preserve it for future generations, once and for all abandoning the utopian idea of universal brotherhood, even if it is an all–Slavic one. Let's focus on preserving our national wealth! We are not lacking in talent. For talent is nothing other than the ability to do that which no one has taught us. Russia, as time shows, is taught neither by the experience of other nations nor, at times, even by its own. Such is the uncomfortable truth. With us, everything is always anew, including our bumps and bruises. And we are not lacking in old scars.

"That old generation that once left Russia is no longer with us. I, for example, represent the second generation of emigres, but there are already the third and fourth generations," said Alexander Alexandrovich Trubetskoy, a member of the Editorial Board of the *Russian Mind* magazine, who passed away last year. "The most amazing thing, I believe, is that the first generation of Russians truly managed to pass on to many of their descendants the memory of Russia, its significance, and also the concept of the 'Russian idea'. That very concept of the Russian idea that Ivan Ilyin and Nikolai Berdyaev wrote about and that Vladimir Solovyov began to write about <...> As descendants of the departed Russian emigration, we received their 'message' with such power that we clearly perceive ourselves as bearers of this Russian idea; we have the understanding that it must be defended, that it must be promoted and explained in France and in Europe generally, where people are now gradually forgetting God…"

Time turns even a tiny midge, accidentally trapped in viscous resin, into amber history forever. And the history of a vast country is shaped by the biographies of its people, meaning each and every one of us. Voltaire was wrong when he claimed that "history is a lie agreed upon." No! History is the preservation of a nation's past for the sake of its future. In essence, our living history is our very Motherland with all her wealth, including intellectual and cultural.

"Can we ever forget the Motherland?" Ivan Bunin asked. "Can a person forget the Motherland? It is in the soul. I am a very Russian man. It doesn't fade with the years."

THE SALVAGED WORLD OF PRE-REVOLUTIONARY RUSSIA

The editorial staff of the Russian Mind magazine greets the prominent French researcher and collector of the Russian emigration's cultural heritage Rene Guerra on his eightieth birthday.

By ALEXANDER SENKEVICH



I first heard the name Rene Guerra in the early 1990s in Paris from a parishioner of the Orthodox Church of the Three Holy Hierarchs and St Tikhon of Zadonsk, situated in the 15th arrondissement of Paris in a former garage. She enthusiastically told me about a man, the owner of a massive collection of paintings and books by Russian artists and writers, who had ended up outside their homeland. According to her, he passed himself off as a Frenchman, but his Russian language revealed him to be a native of Russia. He was rumoured to have come from Odessa. He might be a Romani baron or something, but certainly not a French intellectual…

I heard this mysterious story over thirty years ago in the wonderful city of Paris. As we can see, the legend of the Count of Monte Cristo is timeless.

Today, the saying by the English philosopher Francis Bacon (1561-1626), the founder of English materialism and Lord Chancellor under King James I, remains relevant: "Nothing so much prevents and retards a man from advancing in truth as a presumption of his own truth."

Guerra's books are published not only in France, but also in Russia. Thus, his book They Took Russia with Them came out in 2003, followed in 2010 by Seven Days in March: Conversations on Emigration, co–authored with Arkady Vaksberg; in 2015, About Russians in Russian came out, and

in 2016 he co-authored Oh, This South! Oh, This Nice! Conversations on the French Riviera with E. A. Poltavskaya. This was followed in 2017 by the monumental work The Cultural Heritage of the Russian Diaspora with my preface, and in 2023 – by the ironic Franco-Russian Fanny in both French and Russian.

So what actually happened? How does a native Frenchman come to have such a magnificent, lexically rich Russian language, which makes some of my compatriots believe that he hailed from Russia?

Rene Guerra was born on 13 July 1946 in Strasbourg into a family of teachers. His father, Julian, a German teacher, and his mother, Jeanne, a math teacher, were originally from Nice. In 1952, the family returned to the land of their ancestors – the French Riviera.

It all began on an autumn day in 1957, when Rene, an eleven–year-old boy from a wealthy family, happened to meet Russian people – those whom the French called "White Russians" and regarded as outcasts. Interacting with his new acquaintances completely transformed young Rene's worldview. He was struck by their warm hospitality, combined with a charming simplicity and delicate soulfulness. He grew attached to the Russians immediately and forever. Through them, he came to love not only their language and culture, but Russia itself – and not just for a short time, but for the rest of his life. Through direct contact with Russians and indirect discovery via books and paintings, he experienced the unique, heartfelt atmosphere of traditional Russian life, the joy of human understanding and the greatness of Christian love, humility and self-denial. The living world of pre-revolutionary authentic Russia rose up before him. And this Russian world had no spiritual connection to the USSR.

My guess is that a sense of compassion also helped spark an attachment to these outcasts. After all, they had suffered immense hardships and misfortunes. There is a whole story behind each name! And each of them, like no one else, proved through his life the poet Velimir Khlebnikov's observation: "Art is the difference between someone's happiness and our shared misfortune."

I turn to the text of the Afterword that concludes volume 4 of Rene Guerra's extensive study Artists of the Russian Diaspora and the Art of the Book: "I got the Russia bug at an early age when, by a twist of fate, I started taking Russian lessons. My first teacher was Valentina Pavlovna Razsudovskaya, originally from Kiev, and the second was the poet Ekaterina Leonidovna Tauber-Starova (1903-1987). She did not just teach me the language – she became my spiritual mother."

Coincidence or not, genetic memory certainly played a part. After all, as Rene Guerra writes, his maternal grandfather, Ange, served as the majordomo to Ekaterina Dolgorukova, the morganatic widow of Emperor Alexander II. Meanwhile, his paternal grandfather, Ernest, the owner of a roofing business, installed the cross on the main dome of the Russian Orthodox St Nicholas Cathedral in Nice in 1912.

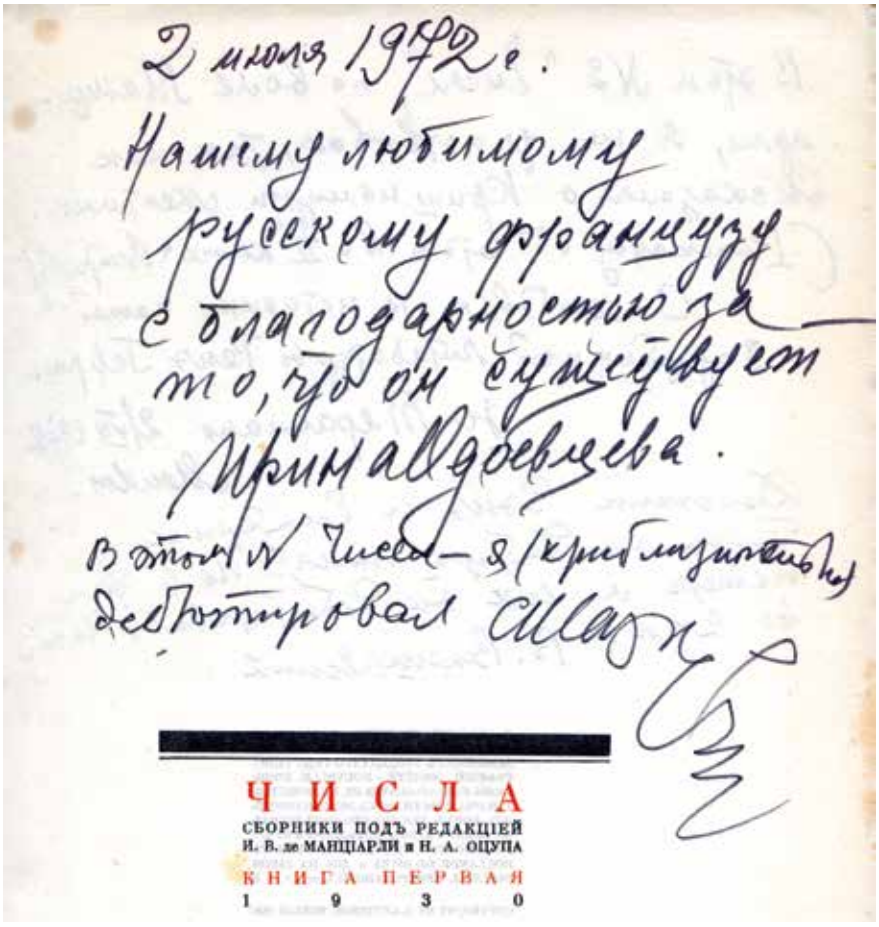
In Tibetan Buddhism the concept of "hidden treasures" (termas) refers to manuscripts and other sacred objects that have been safely concealed since ancient times in hard-to-reach caves of the Himalayan Mountains and the sands of the Gobi Desert. Human history sometimes sees times of vandalism and mass madness. Zealots of a new faith who come to power curse the old one and barbarically destroy all its signs, attributes and objects as useless and dead. Above all, with inhuman cruelty, they send representatives of an alien religious and philosophical tradition into oblivion. Yet the human spirit is indestructible, as are the treasures it creates. Seemingly lost forever, in the necessary historical moment, as if by God's will, they mysteriously reappear in different parts of the globe.

In the 1960s to the 1980s, both in the USSR and in France, very few people took any interest in the artistic and literary heritage of the first wave of Russian emigration. Still less did anyone care about its creators, who were living out their days in oblivion and hardship on French soil. Without the guardianship of interested parties, these treasures – spurned by the majority of collectors – faced only one destination after their owners' deaths: the flea market and the rubbish dump. There was as yet no fashion for Russian culture in exile back then. It emerged much later, during the final stage of Gorbachev's perestroika.

Lola Zvonareva's fundamental work The Silver Age of Rene Guerra, published in 2012 by the Rostok St Petersburg publishing house, tells the story of challenging conditions in which Rene Guerra salvaged books, magazines, manuscripts, paintings, and graphic works by outstanding Russian cultural figures who left Russia after the October catastrophe and what extraordinary people they were.

People may judge the work of our compatriots abroad differently when compared to twentieth-century masterpieces of world literature and art. Yet none of them can be accused of betraying their ideals and their life's work. Their works are entirely free from haste, bias, or the mark of mere artisanship. They captivate with their individuality, good taste, and a sense of free spirit embodied in words, colours and lines.

I feel a certain awkwardness when I hear lamentations regarding the supposed intellectual and artistic



A dedicatory inscription on the Chisla magazine (a Russian emigre publication issued in Paris from 1930 till 1934), written by the poet and author Irina Odoevtseva and addressed to Rene Guerra

decline of the Silver Age geniuses who ended up in foreign lands. To this day, a misconception – or, more precisely, an ideological prejudice – exists that leaving your native shores signifies the inevitable loss of national identity and, consequently, is fraught with creative sterility. This view on the nature of creativity has deep roots. This idea took hold in the Soviet mindset, taking on a distinct xenophobic tone. Meanwhile, such conclusions are not supported by facts. It is widely known what outstanding achievements in science and culture were made over the past century by representatives of the Russian diaspora.

Zvonareva's book contains Rene Guerra's comment on Zinaida Gippius' idea that "the Motherland is dearer and above all else, but without freedom there is no motherland." The French slavist is right in his conclusion that this stance of Gippius "found visible confirmation" and that "this is the most important lesson the emigration taught and left to posterity." He reaches a firm conviction: "Virtually the entire Silver Age migrated abroad. It turned out that you could take both Russia and freedom with you, whereas in unfree Russia, Russia itself did not exist."

Rene Guerra's collection work, which continues to this day, stands out for its wide reach across diverse literary and artistic materials, as well as the immense effort spent searching for them. It is hard to imagine how one man managed not only to raise this sunken Kitezh [a mythical, invisible city said to be beneath the waters of Lake Svetloyar in Russia. The word "Kitezh" is often used figuratively to symbolise a lost or hidden spiritual ideal] of the outraged Russian spirit from the depths, but also to restore it in all its human and artistic rights.

For many of Guerra's colleagues – French Russianists, mostly of leftist leanings – it was a road to nowhere, the whim of a wealthy French good-for-nothing who had learned to speak fluent Russian and was trying to act as an advocate of "exploiter-monarchists", some phantoms and literary ghosts long since written off and dumped on the ash heap of history. Now, with this road more than half travelled, history has unexpectedly confirmed Rene Guerra's intuitive wisdom and rightness.

So what is this wisdom like, as interpreted by Lola Zvonareva, a researcher of Rene Guerra's work? It is valid to consider that the Silver Age of Russian literature consisted of authors who held diverse views on the world and art. Despite the rivalry of various literary groups, within this conglomerate of opinions and preferences there existed a common, unifying bond: respect for the national Russian tradition. As N. S. Arsenyev wrote: "A living tradition and a personal feat, a striving forward and a deep rooting in the past and in the depths of the life of the spirit constitute one single whole – a single impulse, a single stream, a single powerful current. In order to participate fruitfully in the life of your nation and influence it, you must know what gave birth to its highest achievements and treasures, and yourself assimilate these creative, awakening, and fruitful forces."

Out of the a priori necessity for this cultural, historical, and religious continuity grew Rene Guerra's deep conviction that spiritual

slavery – which kills the conscience and the living essence of rational man – cannot be eternal, for it opposes the laws of evolution, as well as the very meaning and course of life. In the Soviet Union, the authorities' assault on the Russian spiritual tradition aimed at least at the constant desecration of ancestral faith – Orthodoxy – if not its complete destruction.

The term the "Silver Age" was introduced into critical discourse by the first-wave émigré literary scholars Nikolai Otsup and Vladimir Weidle, with the most significant aspect being the logical and rightful claim of the Russian literary diaspora in France (and elsewhere) to act as the successors and guardians of the Russian spiritual tradition.

In all fairness, however, we should note that certain Russian literary classics were published in huge print runs under Soviet rule. This paradox of ideological policy in the totalitarian USSR still awaits explanation.

Arriving in Moscow in 1968 as a Slavic studies trainee, Rene Guerra fell in with his intelligent and free-thinking peers on the one hand, and under the watchful eye of the "competent authorities" on the other. After all, he had been welcomed into the circle of "White Russians", representatives of the first wave of emigration – something his Communist-leaning teachers were not supposed to suspect.

Guerra grew particularly close in France to Boris Konstantinovich Zaitsev and, at his request, brought three copies of his book The River of Times to the USSR. It was a unique literary testament by the writer. The copies were intended for K. I. Chukovsky, V. P. Nekrasov, and L. N. Nazarova, an employee of the Pushkin House. Of course, the books were delivered to these people, and the "courier" became a target for the KGB as a "hardened ideological saboteur." All the twists and turns of the plot of "the KGB and Rene Guerra" are detailed by Lola Zvonareva in her book with such precision that they resemble the outline of a spy detective story. It features a candid confession by K. I. Chukovsky, along with his reflections on the nature of Soviet power (at the writer's request, Guerra recorded these revelations on a tape recorder); the tracking and final exposure of the foreign wrongdoer; and the direct oversight of this entire operation by the USSR chief ideologue M. A. Suslov... And at last, a triumph for the KGB: the confiscation of the ill-fated tape recording from Guerra's wife at the border and the prompt expulsion of the French "agent provocateur". It is like a gripping television series, featuring the defamation of the "villain" right there in France, the spread of tall tales that he is supposedly the son of a fugitive Russian princess named Gerasimov, and – in social life – a KGB operative...

Throughout the history of collecting, there is arguably no one who has opened their soul so wide to a foreign culture, felt such deep sympathy and offered such help to its creators, and so methodically, year after year, searched the world for all things Russian... Books with authors' signatures, magazines, newspapers, letters, postcards, manuscripts, works of painting and graphic art, everyday objects. For Rene Guerra, the very process of hunting for rare items happens as if by the way and takes on an almost mystical character. Many of his significant acquisitions of recent years have come to him "by chance".

The absence of funny and seemingly implausible stories in the book about how new treasures keep finding their way into the reserves of the French collector is perhaps the only significant gap in Lola Zvonareva's study.

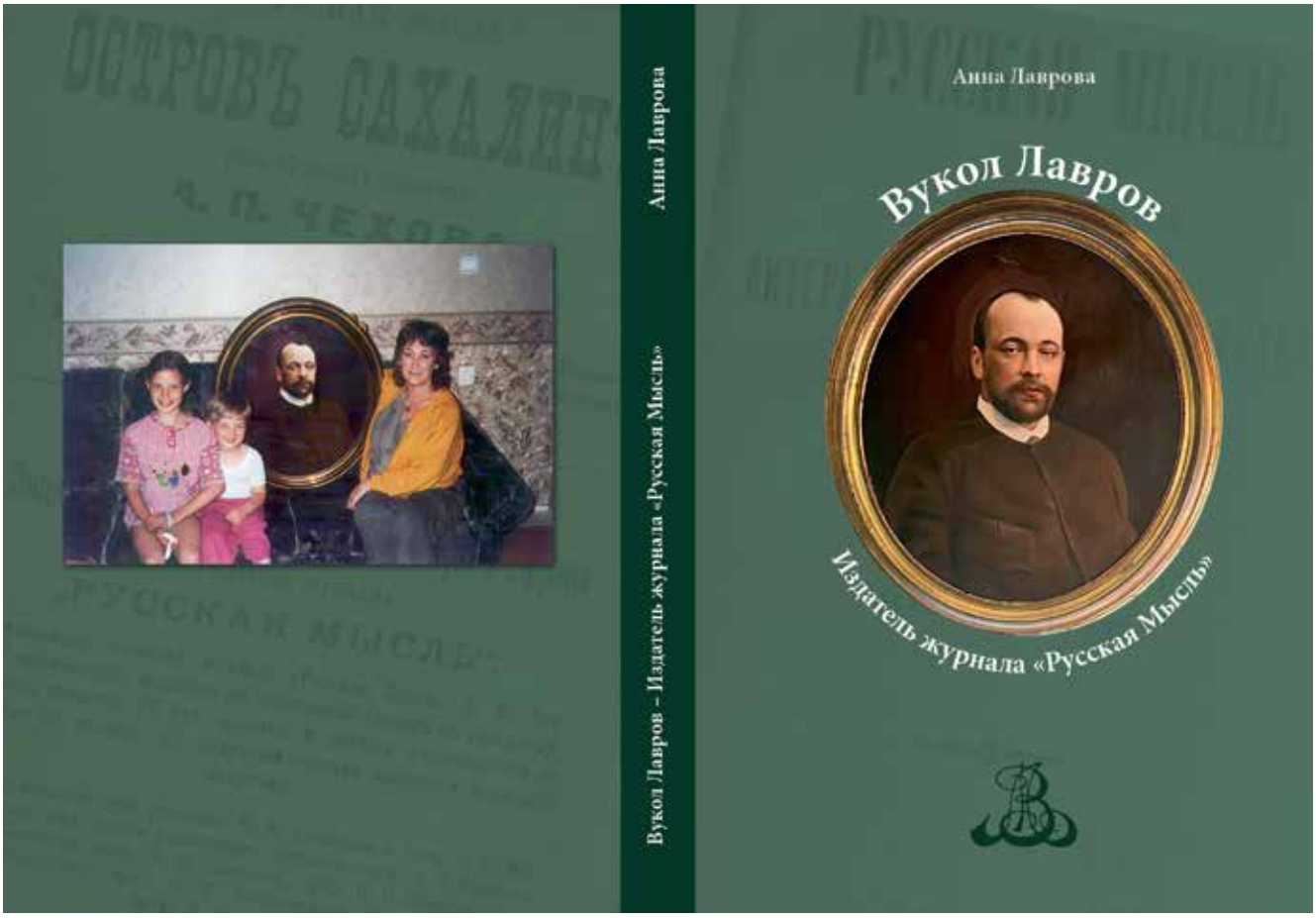
Most of Lola Zvonareva's book is dedicated to the "White Russians" – those "last of the Mohicans". Since Guerra did not meet many of them, he collected everything related to their lives and work with special zeal. In 1971, he acquired a flat in Meudon, a Parisian suburb, where wonderful Russian writers and artists constantly gathered around his dining table. Among them were M. F. Andreyenko-Nechitailo, Yu.P. Annenkov, D. D. Bushen, V. S. Varshavsky, A. E. Velichkovsky, Ya. N. Gorbov, N. A. Isayev, N. N. Obolensky, I. V. Odoevtseva, G. E. Ozeretskovsky, A.V. Rovskaya, G. A. Rubisov, E. F. Rubisova, E. L. Tauber-Starova, Yu. K. Terapiano, S. I. Sharshun, I. P. Shuvalov, and S. R. Ernst.

Short essays on prominent figures of the first wave of Russian literary and artistic emigration in France – whose books, magazines, manuscripts, archives, and paintings are housed in Rene Guerra's collection – lend great persuasive force to the indisputable fact that we are dealing not merely with an outstanding private collection, but with a unique, one-of-a-kind museum.

The illustrative material in The Silver Age of Rene Guerra is striking. It features hundreds of reproductions of books, illustrations, photographs, postcards, portraits, autographs, and personal inscriptions from writers, many addressed directly to Rene Guerra. Finally, Zvonareva's poetic album – a special appendix featuring poems dedicated by Russian exiles to their French friend – deserves mention. The appendix also features a selection of articles about Rene Guerra by various authors and a meticulously compiled bibliography of his own books, articles, talks, and interviews, as well as books and articles containing reviews of or references to his books, articles, publications, public speeches, and activities.

THE RUSSIAN MIND OF VUKOL LAVROV

We offer our readers excerpts from the book, "Vukol Lavrov. The Publisher of the Russian Mind Magazine", by Anna Mikhailovna Lavrova



Lineage

The Census Lists. Lavrov-Krechet

From childhood, I listened to my father's stories about the Russian Mind magazine, which was published by my great-grandfather Vukol Mikhailovich. When I got married and moved to live permanently with my husband in Moscow, I began studying old documents at the Central State Archive, the notebooks of my grandfather and father, old letters, certificates, and photographs – everything that has been preserved since the nineteenth century. I managed (thanks to earlier research into the census lists conducted by my father and his cousin Boris Vsevolodovich Doroshevsky) to trace our family tree back to the twelfth generation.

Legend has it that an ancestor of our Lavrov family, nicknamed Krechet ("gyrfalcon"), was one of the instigators of the Streltsy Uprising [a revolt by the Moscow guard regiments in 1698]. After the uprising was suppressed, he was executed by quartering on Peter I the Great's orders. His family was exiled to Russia's North, later moving to the district town of Yelets, Oryol province (a railway station near the Sosna River; now in the Lipetsk region), known since 1146. It was founded as a border fortress of the Ryazan Principality to protect



Vukol Mikhailovich Lavrov (1852–1912)
Anna Lavrova's archive



Varvara Nikolaevna Lavrova (Khrennikova; 1853–1908)
Anna Lavrova's archive

it against the Polovtsians. Grain, flour, and bread were exported from Yelets (mostly to Moscow). Leather and iron-foundry production were well established. The town was and still is famous for its hand-made lace. Yelets is also known as the birthplace or home of the writer I. A. Bunin, the philosopher and writer V. V. Rozanov, the painter V. N. Mashkov, the writer M. M. Prishvin, and the composer T. N. Khrennikov.

According to the census lists (name-based population censuses of Russia from the eighteenth to the first half of the nineteenth century, St Petersburg), it turns out that in 1720, Siluyan (Siluan) Lavrov-Krechet – the grandson of a strelets broken on the wheel – appeared in Yelets. Siluyan Lavrov, who settled in Yelets with practically empty hands, had a hard time. But gradually he set up a grain trade, got married, and in 1732 his son Matvei was born. Matvei, in marriage with Anisiya Mikhailovna (nee Sergeyeva), daughter of the priest of the Dormition Church in Yelets, had a son, Ivan, in 1758. Ivan, in turn, and his wife Ekaterina Alexandrovna had a son, Mikhail (1780–1852). Mikhail Ivanovich still bore the nickname Krechet, while his sons, Vukol, Mikhail (my great-great-grandfather), and Alexei Mikhailovich, already lost this addition to their surname, though they still used it sometimes.

I still have the abacus of my great-great-great-grandfather, Mikhail Ivanovich Lavrov. It is very beautiful and well-made, with the base reinforced with copper corners (42x26 cm).

Mikhail Mikhailovich Lavrov's Family

Sons Meliton and Vukol. The Exiled Pole Bolesław Ivanovich Zelinski and His Influence on the Young Vukol. Interest in Poland and Its National Heroes

Vukol Mikhailovich Lavrov (my great-grandfather) was born into a wealthy, traditional merchant family in the town of Yelets, Oryol Governorate, on 11 September (according to the old calendar) 1852, the year his grandfather Mikhail Ivanovich died, and was christened



From the desk register No. 2632 of the Governing Senate's Department of Heraldry.

CASE
on the elevation of the Yelets first-guild merchant brothers Vukol, Mikhail, and Alexei Lavrov with their families to the hereditary honorary citizenship.
Effective as of 2 March 1854.
Decision of 10 March 1854.

Anna Lavrova's archive



"The Yelets merchant's son Mikhail Mikhailovich Lavrov and his lawful wife Kapitolina Nikolaevna, both Orthodox Christians, had a son, Vukol... born on 12 September 1852 and baptised on the same day; his godparents were: the Yelets merchant (?) Adrianovich Kholin and the merchant's wife Alexandra Leonovna Voluyskaya; the Baptism was performed by Archpriest Pyotr Molishevsky with his church staff..."

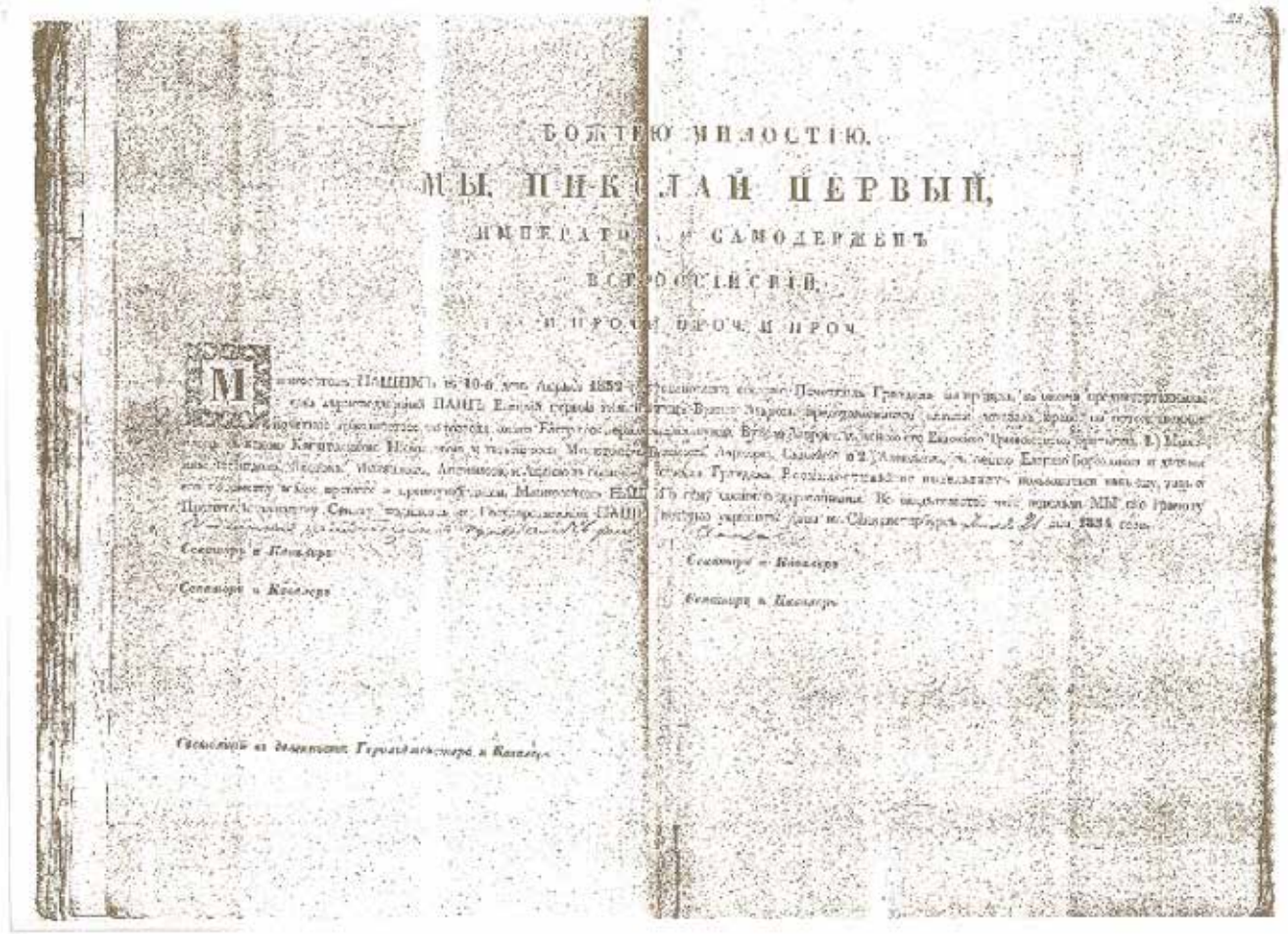
Anna Lavrova's archive

on the same day. He was named after his uncle, his father's brother, Vukol Mikhailovich. His godparents were "the merchant Vasily Petrov and the merchant's daughter, Nastasya Nikiforovna Rostovtseva; he was baptised by Priest Grigory Rodionov with his church staff."

Vukol's father, Mikhail Mikhailovich, along with his brothers Vukol and Alexei (all first-guild merchants), engaged in wholesale trade, supplying flour not only to nearby provinces but also to Saint Petersburg. According to legend, all three brothers initially lived in their father Mikhail Ivanovich's ancestral home before moving out. Mikhail Mikhailovich bought a very beautiful white house from the sons of Kirill Petrovich Zheludkov, who had sold the house after their father's demise.

Mikhail Mikhailovich Lavrov (1808–1877) was an extremely educated man. He subscribed to newspapers and magazines, owned a large library, and made his children read all the books in it.

Mikhail Mikhailovich created a wonderful home art gallery. In December 1852, he was elected mayor of the town, and he also served as the churchwarden



БОЖІЕЮ МИЛОСТІЮ,
МЫ, НИКОЛАЙ ПЕРВЫЙ,
ИМПЕРАТОРЪ И САМОДЕРЖЕЦЪ
ВСЕРОССІЙСКІЙ,
И ПРОЧ. И ПРОЧ. И ПРОЧ.

"By the Grace of God,
We, Nicholas I,
the Emperor and Sovereign
of All Russia,
and so forth, and so forth, and so forth.
By our manifesto of 10 April 1832, the estate of Honorary citizens was established, with the rights outlined therein; and since Vukol Lavrov, a loyal merchant of the first guild from the town of Yelets, proved his right to hereditary honorary citizenship with submitted documents; granting this Yelets first-guild merchant, Vukol Lavrov, together with his WIFE Yevdokia Trifonovna; his brothers: 1. Mikhail with his wife Kapitolina Nikolaevna and their children: Meliton, vukol, Larisa, Yevdokia and 2. Alexei with his wife Elena Borisovna and their children: Leonid, Yakov, Mikhail, Animaisa and Lydia the title of honorary Citizens, we most graciously order that both he and his descendants shall enjoy all the rights and privileges granted to this estate by our manifesto. In witness whereof, we have ordered this charter to be signed by the Governing Senate and confirmed with our State Seal: Given in St Petersburg on 21 July 1854.
The original has been signed by the Governing Senate."

Anna Lavrova's archive

of the Yelets prison castle. He was involved in charity work: in particular, he donated 3,000 silver roubles (which was a substantial sum at the time) for the repair of the Yelets prison castle. A document exists in which the "Yelets District department of the Prison Patronage Society" asks Mikhail Mikhailovich to accept the position of director of the local prison department. Ivan Bunin describes this very prison in The Life of Arseniev.

Mikhail Mikhailovich's wife, Kapitolina Nikolaevna (née Rakova; 1808–1897), was very devout, made endless pilgrimages to holy sites and taught her daughters Larisa (b. 1837), Alexandra (?), and Yevdokia (b. 1845) to do the same. She made



Vukol Lavrov's personal seal
Monogram in the centre: V. L. in Old Slavonic. In a circle (Lavrov's motto) in Latin: HOMO SUM ET NIHIL HUMANUM AD ME ALIENUM PUTO (I am a man, And nothing human is alien to me)

them pray for a long time, both morning and evening. The family had two sons: Meliton (b. 1843) and Vukol (b. 1852).

Kapitolina Nikolaevna was known for her extreme thriftiness, and she was strict and demanding with her children. The family was deeply patriarchal; all the children obeyed their father unquestioningly, and the daughters, too, obeyed their mother, who held a lot of sway over them.

The elder son, Meliton, helped his father with his trade operations. The younger, Vukol, was nine years younger, so he was looked after by his sisters, who adored their little brother, spoiled him, but also taught him geography, history, literature, music, and foreign languages. Naturally gifted, he boy quickly absorbed and remembered everything he heard. Vukol completed only three years at the town school in Yelets, as his father decided that it was time to prepare him for trade. Fortunately, the boy had received a thorough home education.

Mikhail Mikhailovich Lavrov, a man of progressive views, sympathised with the exiled Poles, welcomed them into his home, and helped them find jobs and housing. In 1863, after the Polish revolt, a Polish student from the Mathematics Department of Moscow University, Bolesław Ivanovich Zelinski, was exiled to Yelets. Vukol's father took a warm interest in him, sheltered him in his home, and Bolesław began tutoring Vukol in mathematics and the Polish language. According to the account of Vukol's son, Mikhail Vukolovich (my grandfather), Vukol won a gold medal at a mathematical competition held in the UK for an original solution to a problem. In addition, he learned Polish and spoke it fluently. Later on, he quickly and equally well learned Italian and French. He maintained warm, friendly relations with Bolesław Zelinski for the rest of his life. Zelinski had a son, Wáclaw, of whom it is only known that he committed suicide when he was young.

Under the influence of Bolesław Zelinski, the boy developed a keen interest in Polish history. He was particularly struck by the life of Valerian Lukasinski, who in 1830, following the Polish uprising, was imprisoned in the Shlisselburg Fortress on Orekhovy Island at the source of the Neva River. He was placed in a solitary confinement cell where he spent thirty-eight years and died there. Above his bed, Vukol hung portraits of Valerian Lukasinski and Tadeusz Kościuszko, also a fighter for Poland's freedom and independence. Later on, those portraits hung in Vukol Mikhailovich's study at his Maleyevka estate.

Nicholas I's Charter
Hereditary Honorary Citizenship

As early as 1785, Empress Catherine the Great set apart a prestigious category of honorary citizens among urban residents. In 1807, the title was granted only to people of creative professions, but later it was revived for all free people. The honorary title was granted no earlier than a decade of useful activity, and after the second decade, one could already apply for a hereditary honorary title. For instance, such a title could be received by a merchant who managed to remain in the first guild for twenty consecutive years. The recipient of the title of honorary hereditary citizen was presented with a special charter.

In June 1854, Mikhail Mikhailovich Lavrov and his brothers Vukol and Alexei Mikhailovich (with their wives and children) received charters granting them the title of hereditary honorary citizenship. They had to pay a fee of 330 silver roubles to the Senate Treasury for this, which they did. Thus, Mikhail Mikhailovich Lavrov, my great-great-grandfather, became a hereditary honorary citizen, a title that also passed to his descendants, but in the Soviet era this had to be forgotten.

Vukol Mikhailovich Lavrov
Involvement in His Father's Business. Marriage

When Mikhail Mikhailovich's son, Vukol, turned thirteen, his father decided that the boy had grown enough and should now help him and his older brother with business. Young Vukol had to learn the intricacies of his father's work, and by the age of sixteen – to travel around nearby cities; later, his travel range expanded, as he needed to find new buyers and negotiate with them. In Moscow, where he often visited, Vukol attended various literary clubs whenever he had the chance. He was simply obsessed with literature, reading voraciously not only what his father subscribed

to, but also what he bought himself during his travels. Though trade did not attract him in any way, he understood that visiting various cities in Russia allowed him to learn about life and make interesting acquaintances.

When he visited Moscow, he always tried to take part in its cultural life, attended lectures on literature and mathematics at Moscow University, went to theatres, especially the Maly Theatre, and spent long hours reading at the Rumyantsev Library.

When Vukol was not yet nineteen, he had to get married. His father decided so, and there was no way to dare contradict him. The father's word is law. His father himself chose a wife for his son from the wealthy Khrennikov merchant family, a young lady named Varvara Nikolaevna. Vukol didn't even have time to get to know his future spouse, let alone see her before the wedding had already been arranged. The young couple saw each other for the first time at their wedding.

Marriage wasn't in Vukol's plans, but avoiding it was impossible; such was his father's will, and such were the customs in merchant families of that time. <...>

His Father's Death

A Million-Rouble Inheritance. Vukol's Departure to Moscow

In 1877, Mikhail Mikhailovich Lavrov, Vukol's father, passed away, leaving a monetary inheritance of several million to his children, of which Vukol received over a million roubles. Vukol came from Moscow for his father's funeral, where he received his share of the inheritance, and immediately decided to devote himself solely to literature and art, and not to carry on his father's business. His older brother Meliton took care of it.

Varvara Nikolaevna never understood her husband's passion for literature and art. This led to endless disagreements and arguments. The young wife wanted her husband, the father of their children, to live in Yelets and continue the work that his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather had done. By that time, Vukol and Varvara already had five children.

But Vukol yearned for Moscow. He wanted to write books and run a newspaper or a magazine. His wife complained, but he quickly closed down the old business that had been a burden to him for years. He moved to Moscow, leaving his young wife and five children with a generous income. He spared no money on music and language lessons for the children though. He never set foot in Yelets again. Varvara Nikolaevna sometimes visited Moscow with one child or another. In the end she and all the children moved to live in Moscow and St Petersburg.

Early Days in Moscow

Getting settled. Reply to his wife's letter

On arriving in Moscow, Vukol stayed at a hotel, but looked for a spacious house. First of all, he visited the Maly Theatre, where he met actors he had already known from previous trips to Moscow, made friends with many of them and carried this friendship throughout his life. It was in this company of actors that Vukol met Sergei Andreyevich Yuryev (a translator, critic, and editor), with whom he shared his cherished dream of buying and launching a literary magazine. Later Vukol spared neither funds nor effort for this. Yuryev promised his support and help, and he kept his word.

Varvara Nikolaevna wrote letters from Yelets to her husband Vukol Mikhailovich in Moscow. She begged him to return to his hometown, but he ignored her requests. In response, Vukol ikhailovich invited her to come to Moscow with Anyuta or Pyotr and take a closer look at life in the city, thinking that she might like it and their family would reunite. However, Varvara Nikolaevna was disinclined to go to Moscow, as she couldn't leave the other younger children unattended. She wanted the father of five children to return to his native town. She complained about her husband to her family and friends, asking them to convince him, but none dared to do so. Varvara wrote accusatory letters to Vukol.

However, it was clear from Vukol Mikhailovich's letters that he would never return to Yelets, but he would not abandon his family, would always financially support his children whom he loved, as well as his wife. But he was unhappy that his spouse involved relatives and acquaintances in their family dispute; this irritated him, and in response to the accusations he wrote angry letters to Yelets.

Varvara Nikolaevna did not go to Moscow. Their eldest son, Pyotr, immediately took his mother's side and never saw his father again, coming only to his funeral. He did, however, write him a letter explaining why he had been expelled from the University following student unrest.

When the children grew up, Varvara Nikolaevna moved to Moscow, where Vukol Mikhailovich rented a house for them. Neither Varvara Nikolaevna nor the children wanted for anything: Vukol Mikhailovich paid for absolutely everything.

As their daughters, Lydia and Anastasia, grew older, they visited their father very often and later stayed for long periods at his Maleyevka estate, especially during the summer.

To be continued

MONUMENT TO BARON PYOTR WRANGEL IN SERBIA

The history of Russian emigration is first and foremost the history of preserving national culture, faith, and human dignity

By EKATERINA GRIG



Monument to the leader of the White Movement, General Pyotr Nikolaevich Wrangel, in Sremski Karlovci. Serbia. 2077. Sculptor: Vasily Azemsha

A monument to the last commander-in-chief of the Russian Army and leader of the White Movement, Baron Pyotr Nikolaevich Wrangel, was unveiled in the autumn of 2007 in Sremski Karlovci, a historic Serbian town on the Danube River.

It was a significant event not only for the descendants of Russian emigres, but also for the Serbian public: following the tragic events of the Civil War and the evacuation of the Russian Army from the Crimea in November 1920, it was the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes that became a true refuge for people who had lost their Fatherland and one of the main centres of Russian emigration. Tens of thousands of Russian Army officers, scientists, engineers, writers, philosophers, and members of the Russian aristocracy found shelter here. Many Russian Army institutions and emigre public organisations were then situated in Belgrade.

Wrangel was undoubtedly one of the key figures of the Russian emigration. He played a huge role in preserving the unity of the Russian Army outside of Russia. Wrangel took up his residence in Sremski Karlovci in 1922, moving there from Constantinople with his staff.

In 1924, Wrangel founded the Russian All-Military Union, which united most of the White Movement participants in emigration.

The White struggle is the honest revolt of the Russian people against the brazen violation of everything sacred to them: Faith, Motherland, and the age-old foundations of the state and family. It proves that honour is dearer than life and death is better than slavery to hundreds of thousands of Russian people. It is finding a purpose in life for those who, having lost their Motherland, family, and property, have not lost faith in Russia. It is the realisation of a sense of duty to the Motherland by tens of thousands of youths – the sons of future Russia. It is the salvation of Europe from the Red yoke and the atonement for the betrayal of Brest-Litovsk.

Pyotr Wrangel

In September 1927, the baron with his family moved to Brussels, where he died suddenly on 25 April 1928. In October 1929, General Wrangel's remains were reburied with military honours at the Russian Holy Trinity Church in Belgrade.

The history of the Russian emigration is not only that of defeat and exile. It is first and foremost the history of preserving national culture, faith, and human dignity. This is precisely the meaning that the monument to Baron Wrangel acquires in modern Serbia.

Today, Russian heritage remains an important part of Serbia's cultural world. Russian churches, necropolises, educational institutions, and memorial sites testify to the depth of historical ties between the two nations.

The idea to set up a monument to Baron Pyotr Nikolaevich Wrangel was conceived in the early twenty-first century thanks to a renewed interest in the history of the Russian diaspora and the role of Serbia in the fate of Russian emigres.

Work on the project was the result of cooperation between the Serbian authorities, representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church, public organisations of the Russian emigration, and Russian foundations engaged in the preservation of historical heritage.

The main goal was to create a monument seen not as a political symbol, but as a tribute to a man who played a major role in the fate of tens of thousands of Russian refugees after the Civil War.

The monument by the sculptor Vasily Azemsha is crafted in a realistic manner: the general is depicted in a military uniform, but in a calm and restrained pose, without excessive heroisation. Behind the monument, installed in front of the city hospital where refugees from Russia were housed in the 1920s, a large memorial stand is placed featuring photographs of officers and soldiers of the Russian Army who ended up in emigration in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.

Reflecting the tragic fate of the White Movement and the flower of the Russian nation forced to leave their Fatherland, the monument to Wrangel emphasises above all his personality as a man of honour who kept his dignity in the face of historical catastrophe.



Baron Wrangel in 1920

THE OPTICS OF EQUAL DIGNITY

A person's value is determined solely by the results of their creative labour, their talent, and the beauty of their thought

By GEORGY OSTROVSKY

The origins of the "Light" (First Creative Association Light) International Creative Association for the support of creative people with disabilities were established in the 1980s in the Far North, in the isolated taiga settlement of Marakan.

In the conditions of harsh winters and a severe shortage of visual information, reading became the key factor of development for the future founder of the project, Olga de Lacroix. An evidence of this early research habit is still preserved in the family archives – a certificate awarded to the "Most well-read resident of the settlement". It was then that a deep conviction was formed: a book is valuable when it is filled with visual images.

During the same period, a copy of the Yunost ("Youth") magazine fell into the young girl's hands, featuring Lyudmila Kiseleva's black-and-white graphic artwork titled "Where Childhood Goes": a minimalist silhouette of a child at the water's edge against the rising sun. This clipped magazine page accompanied Olga de Lacroix through decades, becoming in 2019 the visual foundation of the publishing branch of the "Light" association.

Lyudmila Kiseleva herself, born with a severe form of muscular atrophy, defied her fate to become an accomplished artist, journalist, and writer. She was a member of three creative Unions and a recipient of the Order "For Merit to the Fatherland", 2nd Class. Despite being bedridden, she initiated the restoration of an ancient church in Borovsk in honour of the Exaltation of the Life-Giving Cross and established a private children's home for abandoned orphans. It was she who personally blessed Olga de Lacroix for her service to art.

The "Light" project was born organically, responding to the real demands of life. Its practical launch was marked by the autobiographical book *The Grass that Broke Through the Asphalt* by the writer Tamara Cheremnova. Tamara, who lived for several decades in closed residential institutions due to a severe form of cerebral palsy (CP), managed to establish herself as a professional author and was subsequently included in the international BBC 100 Women list. Confronted with the fact that Tamara's copyrights were grossly violated, Olga de Lacroix could not remain indifferent and stood up in defence of the writer, initiating the publication of a collection of her fairy tales to restore the author's creative subjectivity. A regional television feature on this initiative sparked an overwhelming, avalanche-like response across the country, and manuscripts from all regions began pouring into the organizers. It turned out that the intellectual potential locked within four walls was not an isolated case, but a colossal hidden layer of culture. Assistance to a single individual evolved into a large-scale international civil initiative, developing on a voluntary basis. The published books of the project are non-commercial and are donated free of charge to library funds.

As previously detailed in the pages of La Pensée Russe (May–June 2026 issue), this charitable movement has united an international task force of 30 professional artists from eight countries, including France, the USA, and Germany. World-class masters are involved in this creative process, including Yulia Gukova, a member of the UNESCO International Association of Artists, Elena Kuznetsova, an art historian and expert of the Paris Louvre, and Igor Oleynikov, the only recipient of the Hans Christian Andersen Gold Medal in Russia.

Each publication has turned into an art event, successfully synthesizing three essential functions: artistic-aesthetic, social, and educational. Over the course of its development, the project has been honoured with 12 prestigious international and professional awards, including diplomas from the Association of Book Publishers (ASKI) and the "Image of the Book" international competition. The editions have entered the collections of the Russian State Children's Library and the Alexander Solzhenitsyn House of Russia Abroad, while public presentations were held on Red Square and in

the Mariinsky Palace. The audio versions of the texts were narrated by titans of cinematography – Vasily Livanov, a Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE), Inna Churikova, and the Oscar-winning director Vladimir Menshov.

The inner perfectionism of the "Light" project's organizers initially excluded the creation of books out of pity or condescension. If works are presented to the public, they must be of high quality, and every illustration becomes an independent work of art. A brief biography of the author, adapted for children's perception, is mandatorily placed before each literary text. This step fulfils a direct educational function, providing the child with objective information about the surrounding world. Most barriers and inhibitions regarding inclusion among adults are formed in childhood due to a deficit of correct knowledge on how to interact with a person with special health needs. As a result, society often rejects such individuals. The "Light" project completely abandons medical terminology, offering the format of play, co-creation, and shared reading.

On the first title page, the young reader encounters, above all, the professional and social status of a human being. The books feature authors who have accomplished themselves as practicing psychologists, keepers of books, professional fashion models, academic philosophers, composers, design engineers, and multiple winners of television intellectual quiz shows. The book transmits a fundamental thesis to the child: *"We are all different, but we are just like you. It is simply that someone needs strong glasses, someone needs a wheelchair, and someone needs a helping hand at a crosswalk. Adults are often mistaken in thinking that*



Original graphic artwork "Where Childhood Goes" by the artist Lyudmila Kiseleva, which became the visual foundation of the "Light" International Creative Association



Original graphic artwork "Where Childhood Goes" by the artist Lyudmila Kiseleva, which became the visual foundation of the "Light" International Creative Association

people with disabilities are incapable of leading an independent and fulfilling life. Everyone possesses individual talents and potential." Such an approach dismantles the practice of false pity, forming in the new generation an organic perception of human diversity.

For an author in forced isolation, it is often psychologically difficult to step out before a massive audience with a solo book. The format of a collective anthology serves as a protection for new talents, providing a reliable shoulder of companions and a powerful launching pad. The grateful reaction of the audience has demonstrated that the project has uncovered authors of such a scale that their work has already outgrown the boundaries of collective editions. The writings of these individuals open up a special optics to society, free from conventional stereotypes. People with disabilities see the world finer, deeper, and clearer, and through their tales, they are ready to share this unique vision with humanity.

A stellar example of such superiority is the destiny of Vladimir Bukhtiyarov. Having lost his sight in his youth, Bukhtiyarov demonstrated a phenomenal strength of intellect: he became a master of sports in chess and a permanent participant in the *Svoya Igra* ("Jeopardy!") television show, defeating sighted grandmasters. A member of the Union of Writers of Russia, a researcher, and a poet, and the author of a series of fundamental books, he served for many years as the editor-in-chief of the all-Russian magazine *Nasha Zhizn* ("Our Life"). His career is an example of high professional service.

Alongside opens up the path of Alexander Kononov. He states that he extracts benefits from his illness for the continuous strengthening of his mind and spirit. Living with a diagnosis of CP, Kononov graduated with honors from the History and Archives Institute of the Russian State University for the Humanities (RSUH) with a degree in "Historian-Archivist", defended his thesis, and became the author of the scientific collection *The Individual with a Disability and Russia: A Cultural Anthropological Szek* and a laureate of the authoritative A. Tvardovsky literary competition.

Maria Bubnova contributes her own unique voice. Having completely lost her hearing at the age of one and a half, Bubnova mastered speech through the highly complex system of Emilia Leonhard, graduated from university with a degree in "History", and raised five children. She is a recognized publicist, the author of books on the rehabilitation of the hard of hearing and deaf, and a finalist of the *Malaya Rodina* ("Little Homeland") All-Russian book competition in the "School Waltz" category.

The destiny of Sergey Karpeev from Kazan reveals yet another facet of overcoming – the power of devastating self-irony. A member of the Union of Writers of Russia and the author of the children's poetry book The Sun Was Going to Bed, Karpeev passed through a specialized residential institution and developed a unique, ironic literary style. In his texts, he courageously and humorously refers to his illness as an "unpleasant auntie named Illness", completely removing the fear surrounding the theme of inclusion for the children's audience.

The continuity of generations and the future of the project are embodied by the story of the young Anna Plesovskikh. Published

in thick literary journals, she became a laureate of the *Glagolitsa* International Independent Literary Award in the "Essays" category and the recipient of a special prize from the Russian State Children's Library. At the regional competition "Youth Elite", Anna was awarded the title of "Student of the Year". Anna is a multiple winner and laureate of prestigious academic olympiads in philology, literature, and journalism, conducted by leading universities of Russia. She graduated from school with honours, receiving state medals of the highest category for academic excellence.

New names from the "Light" universe join this same educational line-up. Among them are: Maria Fatkina, a professional fashion model who breaks the stereotypes of the glossy industry; Lyubov Malofeeva, a university researcher with a degree with honours and an Honoured Worker of Culture, who has dedicated many years to the preservation of book collections; Natasha Belyaeva, a postgraduate philosopher researching culture and anthropology in the space of a clean slate, and many others.

Each of these human destinies proves the effectiveness of the "Light" project model, which elevates an individual from the status of an object of charity to the status of an active creator of enduring cultural values.

At the current stage, the experience of the "Light" International Association opens up new perspectives for integration into the European cultural space. The synthesis of international graphics, sound synaesthesia, and inclusive book publishing pursues one global goal: the creation of a healthy social environment where a person's value is determined exclusively by the results of their creative labour, their talent, and the beauty of thought.



An illustration by Vladimir Rasputin for Alexander Kononov's fairy tale "The Journey of the Pink Petal"

SUMMERTIME COMMEMORATIONS OF SAINTS

In the months of July and August, the Orthodox Church enters into the remembrance of three remarkable saints

By AUGUSTIN SOKOLOVSKI
Doctor of Theology, Priest

In one of his works, the Russian writer Andrei Platonov (1899–1951) describes the moment when the soul suddenly realizes that summer is coming to an end. Yet instead of sadness, the heart is unexpectedly filled with joy and the desire to continue living, for another summer will surely come. In July and August, the Orthodox Church celebrates the memory of three remarkable saints. The first of them, according to the liturgical calendar, is Saint Metropolitan Photius.

Saint Metropolitan Photius

On July 15, the Church commemorates Saint Photius, Metropolitan of Kiev (+1431). According to the Old-Style calendar, his feast falls exactly in the middle of summer, making it easy to remember. Photius was later glorified as a saint. Shortly afterward, the Russian Church began to elect its own metropolitans, and his two immediate successors were not entirely successful. Thus, Photius became the last saintly Metropolitan sent from Constantinople to Rus'.

Although he was Greek and, at least at the beginning of his ministry, did not even know the Russian language, his glorification as a saint came gradually over the course of centuries. As was often the case with Russian saints, his canonization was not accompanied by the triumphant public acclaim that frequently surrounded such events.

His ministry proved to be remarkably long, lasting more than two decades. The future capital of the Russian state had been devastated by Edigu, ruler of the Golden Horde, in 1408, almost simultaneously with Photius' election to the metropolitan see. Only two years later, in 1410, did the new metropolitan arrive in Moscow, still bearing the scars of the invasion.

Photius brought ecclesiastical affairs into order after a period of devastation and the long absence of a metropolitan in the city. In 1425, exactly one hundred years had passed since the transfer of the metropolitan see from Kiev to Moscow. The transfer did not imply a renunciation. Moscow was the de facto capital, but it was not an ecclesiastical diocese. Therefore, Photius' title continued to remain "Metropolitan of Kiev." It is noteworthy that this event occurred precisely one thousand years after the First Ecumenical Council held in Nicaea in 325. Incidentally, in 2025 the Council of Nicaea marked its 1700th anniversary. Photius died in 1431, the millennial anniversary of the Third Ecumenical Council in Ephesus (431). As an educated Roman – by which the Byzantines referred to themselves – he could well have paid attention to such coincidences.

Shortly before his death, he was granted a vision of an Angel, who not only foretold his approaching departure but also indicated the time remaining for preparation. From the perspective of the theology of holiness, this is undoubtedly a special privilege granted to the righteous.

It is not entirely known how Photius appeared to his contemporaries. However, chronicles, documents, and letters create the impression that he seemed to have stepped down from an icon of the age of the Church Fathers. He was a monk by vocation and, from his youth, lived in obedience to an elder. He accepted his election as head of the Russian Church as an act of obedience and sought no personal advancement.

Formally remaining Metropolitan of Kiev – since the Moscow see did not yet exist at the time – he visited Kiev and in 1420 restored the weakened unity of the Kievan metropolitan see. It should be recalled that Lithuanian and Polish rulers were already attempting to install their own Metropolitan of Kiev, independent of the Russian Church.

After Photius' death, Bishop Gerasim attempted to occupy his see. However, he was immediately drawn into the internal conflicts of the then Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Taken captive by local rulers, he was burned in 1435. This terrible and martyr's death of the new metropolitan undermined the authority of the ruler, who, as a participant in civil strife, resorted to such an act in the hope of intimidating his opponents. Thus, Gerasim's death

ultimately had a reconciling effect in its consequences.

The next Metropolitan, Isidore, signed the Council of Ferrara-Florence in 1439, was expelled from Muscovy, and ended his days in Rome as Dean (i.e., senior member) of the College of Cardinals. After this, the Russian Church proclaimed its own independence. A council of bishops, independently of the Greeks, elected Bishop Jonah of Ryazan as Metropolitan.

Therefore, Photius should be regarded as the last hierarch of the Russian Church within the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. It is significant and biblically beautiful that this final hierarchical gift of Constantinople to future Russia proved so authentic amid the apocalyptic circumstances of the time.

Historians still debate when exactly Photius was formally canonized. Yet perhaps there is no need for certainty on this point. The Church is a community of pilgrims on the way to the Heavenly Jerusalem. It believes that Photius, the "brother-loving beggar," as Symeon the New Theologian (949–1022) called himself, dwells in the communion of saints and intercedes there for his fellow pilgrims, for the Church, and for the whole world.



Saint Metropolitan Photius. Fresco from 1644 in the Church of the Deposition of the Robe, Moscow Kremlin

St. Sergius of Radonezh

On the third day after the commemoration of Saint Photius, the Orthodox Church celebrates the feast of St. Sergius of Radonezh. The very expression "on the third day" is one of the most significant biblical and Gospel phrases. Among other things, it points both to the reality of the Lord Jesus Christ's death on the Cross and to the all-conquering power of God's intervention in the course of human history, manifested in His Resurrection.

On this day, July 18 (July 5, Old Style), 1422, thirty years after the repose of St. Sergius (the number thirty traditionally recalls the years of Christ the Savior's earthly life before the beginning of His public ministry), the saint's holy relics were uncovered. This took place in accordance with instructions given by St. Sergius himself in a mystical vision.

Throughout his life, Sergius lived in humility. This is not merely a figure of speech but a genuine characteristic of his personality. As his



Hagiographic icon of Saint Sergius of Radonezh. Late 19th century

reputation steadily grew among his contemporaries, the saint sought ever more earnestly silence and solitude.

In the Orthodox tradition, the Divine Liturgy is intended to be a manifestation of glory. The splendor of Orthodox worship is expressed through the harmony of majestic hymns, rich liturgical texts, splendid vestments, sacred gestures, processions, blessings, and – perhaps surprisingly – through the almost complete absence of silence.

There is, however, another image of Orthodox worship – one that is almost unknown. Some of the objects that belonged to saint Sergius are preserved in the museum of the Moscow Theological Academy, located within the Holy Trinity–St. Sergius Lavra. These include liturgical vessels and vestments. Those who have visited the museum and seen the surviving objects from his lifetime have also encountered a different vision of Orthodox worship.

It is a liturgy of humility, a liturgy of solitude, a liturgy of powerlessness, a liturgy of withdrawal from the world. This humble liturgy – let us call it "the liturgy of St. Sergius"– finds visible expression in liturgical vestments that are almost utopian in their simplicity and in wooden Eucharistic vessels. It is also present in the monastery conceived by its founder as a place of solitude, a city of angels, and a place of hiddenness. The whole of Sergius' life was a search for this biblical and profoundly Christian "utopian" ideal. After all, the word utopia literally means "no place"– the presence of something that simply does not exist in this world.

The Life of St. Sergius tells us that for a long time the number of his disciples never exceeded twelve, as though he had fashioned his monastery after the image of the Last Supper. The icon of the Holy Trinity, which emerged from the tradition of St. Sergius, had as its prototype the Greek icon of the Hospitality of Abraham, depicting the Patriarch and the three Angels. Once again, we find ourselves before a sacred meal.

The Life of St. Sergius also relates that Metropolitan Alexius (1292–1378), then head of the Russian Church, wished to appoint Sergius as his successor. Sergius declined. On another occasion, his own brother attempted to seize authority in the monastery founded by the saint. Sergius simply departed.

In a vision, the Most Holy Theotokos appeared to Sergius together with St. John the Theologian. Beside Sergius stood his disciple Mikhei, of whom no one would ever have known had it not been for this vision. It is as though, on the eve of so great a visitation, Sergius himself did not wish to remain alone. Yet he chose to take with him neither a metropolitan nor an experienced ascetic, but a humble, simple, and timid monk.

The Life of St. Sergius was composed as a work of praise. Yet even the details that have come down to us often reveal the most remarkable and authentic truths. It is said that before his death Sergius did not wish to be buried in the church, as befitted the founder of a monastery. Instead, he asked the brethren to lay him to rest in the common monastic cemetery.

Broken Testaments is the title of a work by our contemporary Milan Kundera (1929–2023). In it, the great writer describes the wishes of authors

and poets that were disregarded after their deaths for what was believed to be the greater good of humanity. Such actions may well be justified, yet they possess a profound and singular tragedy. After death, a person no longer belongs to himself…

With the support of Metropolitan Cyprian, the successor of St. Alexius, the monks buried St. Sergius not in the common cemetery, as he had requested, but in the church he himself had built.

According to the Gospel, Christ was baptized and began His public ministry at the age of thirty. Thirty years after his repose, St. Sergius appeared in a vision and commanded that his holy relics be uncovered. Thus began his glorification among the saints; Sergius himself went forth to preach.

He appeared to a simple man who sincerely loved him, lived near the monastery, and often came to pray at his grave. It is not known whether he had known Sergius during his lifetime. Perhaps he knew him only through the stories of his parents. Perhaps he himself had been born in answer to the saint's prayers, like the biblical figures whose parents overcame barrenness through God's mercy. We do not even know his name.

Yet it was to this man that Sergius appeared and said: "Tell the abbot that I am lonely beneath the earth, for I am surrounded by water. Why have you left me here for so long?"

St. Vladimir, Equal to the Apostles

On July 28, the Church commemorates St. Vladimir, the prince who became a remarkable embodiment of the meeting of peoples and cultures. A Varangian – a Viking by origin, and thus a son of the northern seas and the Baltic by birth; a Russian Slav by spirit; an heir to Greek and Roman civilization through his education; and a Christian by faith, he continues to inspire our historical memory like the Fair Sun – a symbol of enlightenment, mercy, and human fraternity.

In accordance with the Orthodox tradition of honoring those saints who brought Christianity to their peoples, he bears the title Equal to the Apostles. Following the practice of the ancient undivided Church in the West, it is equally appropriate to call the holy prince simply an Apostle. Thus, St. Vladimir is the Apostle of Kyivan Rus', the Apostle of Eastern Europe, and, indeed, the Apostle of Russia.

About ten years after assuming sole rule, he resolved to embrace Christianity. Vladimir is venerated as a saint in both the Orthodox and the Catholic Churches, and his feast is celebrated throughout the Christian world. Was his canonization merely an expression of the Church's and the people's gratitude for the Baptism of Rus' in 988, or did his other deeds also contribute to his sanctity, perhaps even bearing a prophetic significance?

Vladimir reigned from 978 to 1015 – thirty-seven years in all, twenty-seven of them after his baptism. If the chronicles are to be believed, he was born around 960, which means that he lived only fifty-five years. He spent the first half of his life as a pagan and the second half as a baptized Orthodox Christian. This striking division of his life into two equal parts is remarkable. It is a wondrous sign, a kind of biblical proportion, for God alone is the Lord of Time and the Author of Coincidences.

Today, the solemn celebration of the Baptism of Rus' is associated with the commemoration of St. Vladimir. Before the Revolution of 1917, however, the Baptism of Rus' was celebrated on August 14. This date coincides with the feasts of the Procession of the Life-Giving Cross of the Lord and the All-Merciful Savior. These are two medieval feasts of Constantinople. They would most likely have disappeared from the Church calendar had they not come to signify something greater. It was probably thanks to St. Vladimir and the Baptism of Rus', these feasts were not only preserved in the Russian Church but continue to this day to be accompanied by the Blessing of the Waters.

The feast of the Holy Prophet Elijah, celebrated on August 2, also holds special significance in the Russian Church. This, too, indirectly points to the historical date of the Baptism of Rus'. The Feast of the Prophet Elijah has long been associated with prayers for rain and, in some places, with immersion in water. The Russian folk belief that one should not swim after St Elijah's Day" may, beyond its folkloric significance, also allude to the theological truth that baptism is received only once in a person's life.

The chronicles preserve the famous account of St. Vladimir's search for the true faith. They relate that he rejected Islam because it prohibited the consumption of alcohol. Evidently, Vladimir feared the ritualization of everyday life and did not wish to impose dietary restrictions upon his people. He also rejected the form of Christianity preached by the Germans, considering it foreign because his ancestors had not accepted it. This proved to be a prophetic decision, for the "Christianization" of the Slavs by the Germans often ended in their complete assimilation.

Judaism, which had reached Rus' through the neighboring Khazar Khaganate, also troubled Vladimir, since the Jews had long before been expelled from Palestine by the Romans. The prince regarded this as an ominous sign. In the end, he chose Byzantine Christianity because of the splendor of the liturgy in Constantinople.

his detail is strikingly reminiscent of our own postmodern age, in which the aesthetic dimension of religion often assumes primary importance.



"Grand Prince Vladimir Chooses a Faith." Ivan Eggink. 1822

"Beauty will save the world," as Fyodor Dostoevsky prophetically wrote.

It is important to note that Vladimir's decision to embrace Byzantine Orthodoxy was not motivated by a desire for power or by political calculation. "Your grandmother Olga was wise, and she has already made this choice," told his advisers. "The Greek liturgy is magnificent, and we did not know whether we were on earth or in heaven," the envoys confirmed. Such were the arguments in favor of Orthodox Christianity. This justification of the religious choice contains no reference to any dogmatic formulations. This means that Vladimir's decision was neither dogmatic nor polemical. The choice of Byzantine Orthodoxy was not "anti-Catholic." Constantinople was the City of Light, the center of world civilization, and Vladimir chose what was best for his people. The formal division of the Churches had not yet taken place.

It is therefore no coincidence that, after his baptism, Vladimir began to promote literacy among his people and to construct buildings and churches. Unlike many rulers of the past, for him Christianity was not the will to power, but a promise of enlightenment and social service.

The chronicles report that after his baptism Vladimir decided to abolish the punishment of criminals in the name of biblical commandments. This gesture may be seen as the creation of a prototype.

The first Russian saints were Vladimir's sons, Boris and Gleb. After their father's untimely death, they refused to struggle for power against their brother and were treacherously murdered. Their veneration began shortly after their death. However, they could not be canonized as martyrs since they had not been killed for the Christian faith. Therefore, in order to glorify them, the Church effectively created a new form of sanctity: the holiness of the innocently suffering, the sanctity of the passion-bearers. Thus was established one of the key characteristics of Russian holiness, without which it is impossible to understand either Russian history or the works of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy.

More than nine centuries later, the example of Boris and Gleb was followed by the last Russian emperor, Nicholas II, who was glorified by the Church precisely as a passion-bearer. Moreover, many of the New Martyrs of the Russian Church suffered not for their faith in Christ, but were killed without guilt, on fabricated accusations invented by their executioners. The rulers executed "presumed criminals," although, like Vladimir, they should have stopped. In this lies the prophetic meaning of the holy prince's refusal to punish criminals. It is a clear and extraordinarily powerful warning of biblical scale for all future generations.

The year 1988 became a turning point for the Soviet Union – only three years remained before the fall of the Communist regime. At first, the Soviet government did not plan to celebrate the millennium of the Baptism of Rus', since the official state ideology was atheism and religion was regarded as a relic of the past. However, this decision changed abruptly. The Patriarch of the Russian Church, Alexy II, called atheism a "spiritual Chernobyl." The Church was granted official permission to celebrate the millennium of the Baptism of Rus'. Moreover, the state itself actively participated in these celebrations. It was then that many people remembered for the first time that, through St. Vladimir, many nations had been baptized into the Orthodox faith.

The celebration of the millennium of the Baptism of Rus' in 1988 marked a true return of Orthodoxy not only in Russia but throughout the world. It transformed Orthodoxy from a forgotten legacy of the past into an authentic Christian revival, the echoes of which became global, and whose fruits have filled the whole universe. The return to Orthodoxy had begun. We are all witnesses to this crown of miracles of the holy Equal-to-the-Apostles Prince Vladimir.



12-MONTH SUBSCRIPTION TO RUSSIAN MIND MAGAZINE

United Kingdom – 65 GBP
European Union – 70 EUR
The rest of the world – 88 EUR

ANNUAL
Digital Subscription – 30 EUR

TO SUBSCRIBE YOU CAN DO THE FOLLOWING:

1. Subscribe via Pay Pal on our website:
www.russianmind.com/payment/

2. Payment via platform Isubscribe

IMPORTANT
Please make sure that you provide the confirmation of your payment and contact details (home address, phone number and email address). You can contact us at rmoffice@russianmind.com