

International dialogue

THE JOURNAL OF THE PUBLIC INITIATIVE “RUSSIAN CULTURE — WITHOUT BORDERS”

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ИЗДАТЕЛЬСТВО
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THE EDITOR'S WORD

Dear readers!



Perhaps the key theme of this issue is creation, which we want to set against destruction, and this is one of the main goals of the “International Dialogue”, which we continue to produce, although, despite all our efforts, we have not yet been able to draw the attention of those on whom the future of this magazine depends.

Faith strengthens us, in which the Diocese of Vienna and Austria provides invaluable support, and personally the rector of St. Nicholas Cathedral of the Russian Orthodox Church (MP), Vladyka Alexy, whose articles we regularly publish and with whose blessing the magazine has become its information partner. In this issue, Vladyka Alexy opens the Russian North for you, namely Veliky Ustyug.

Thanks to donations from the parishioners of St. Nicholas Cathedral, medical equipment was purchased, which was urgently needed by the Republican Children's Clinical Hospital in Donetsk and which the initiator of the action, the elder of St. Nicholas Cathedral Dmitry Lebamba, delivered to Donetsk, as can be read in the article “Good Deed”.

Shortly after this trip, a themed evening was held at the Theater-Lab “At the Red Gate”, the leitmotif of which was creation. The evening was attended by those about whom we talk in the section “People and destinies” — Radik Gafurov and Dmitry Pogosov.

“International Dialogue” remembers its long-term friend and sponsor Sergey Nikolaevich Abramov, who left us so unexpectedly and untimely.

Cultural ties with Russia are maintained by the Russian House in Vienna, which recently hosted an exhibition by ceramic artist Alexei Kondrashev.

Father Sebastian, President of the Austrian Association of Teachers of Russian Language and Literature, instills in his students a love for Russia and its people and has regularly, for more than thirty years, organized the exchange of school groups of students from the Scottish Gymnasium in Vienna and the Moscow school, as he said in an interview with the International Dialogue.

Sergey Katyrin, President of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Russian Federation, shares the latest news of the international economy in each issue of the magazine.

Russian musical culture is represented in the article “Hero of the Russian Spirit”, dedicated to the work of Georgy Sviridov, in the publication “Musical Fireworks” about the concert of the star trio — Ildar Abdrazakov, Alexander Sladkovsky and the Russian National Orchestra — and in information about the premiere of the opera “Mandrake” at the Mariinsky Theater, created with the participation of artificial intelligence.

We are continuing our journey and will celebrate our tenth anniversary with the next issue, which gives real reasons for confidence in a stable future.

I wish you a pleasant reading!

Your Natalia Holzmüller



RUSSIAN CULTURE — WITHOUT BORDERS

INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC INITIATIVE

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Creation

Man is created for creation, and in the name of this he lives. This was discussed by the speakers and guests of the evening, which took place at the theater “At the Red Gate”, the educational theater of the Moscow Academy of Modern Art, where representatives of culture, science, public figures gathered and where the presentation of the new issue of the magazine “International Dialogue” took place.

Alexey Zabelin, Rector of the Moscow University of Finance and Law, opened the evening:

“International Dialogue” is a wonderful magazine, and I am glad that its presentation is taking place within the walls of our theater. A person does not live for discord, not to earn money, a person lives for creation. The “International Dialogue” magazine promotes creativity and friendship between peoples. Promotes a life of conscience and justice. Love and friendship are the most important values. And what, if not an international dialogue, brings us closer to universal happiness on our planet, where there will be no wars, no national, racial or other discord, and together we will create a bright future

for our children and grandchildren.”

Georgy Muradov, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Crimea to the President of the Russian Federation, continued the baton of speeches. He is a loyal, proven friend and colleague in good endeavors, in particular, in the voluntary public initiative “Russian Culture without Borders”. He knew that **Natalia Holzmüller**, editor-in-chief of the “International Dialogue” magazine, and **Dmitry Lebamba**, elder of St. Nicholas Cathedral in Vienna of the Austrian Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church (MP), had returned from Donetsk just before the presentation, where Natalia, as a journalist, accompanied Dmitry to carry out a humanitarian mission — the delivery of medical equipment purchased with donations from parishioners, in which The Republican Children's Clinical Hospital in Donetsk was in dire



need, which Georgy Lvovich emphasized in his speech.:

“...Unfortunately, so far the forces of “non-peace” — I will not say “forces of war” — are gaining the upper hand in many ways. But they cannot prevail over people like Natalia Holzmüller and Dmitry Lebamba, who went to Donetsk in these difficult times, which is in a difficult situation. They went not to sup-

port the special operation or military operations, but to help the hospital and children who need it, and today this is really a feat. Perhaps such people should multiply in our midst so that we can count on what humanity has been saying for thousands of years: we all want peace.

...They say Austria is an unfriendly country. Well no. And our president has repeatedly said that the people are friendly and the countries are friendly. It's all about the political elites that run these countries.

I thank Natalia for the continuous publication of her wonderful magazine, which is called the word “dialogue”, and even “international”. If there is no dialogue between the peoples, then hopes will probably disappear completely. I know how selflessly she does this, maybe spending her last funds in order to continue publishing a magazine that brings culture, friendship and peace to people.”

Since its creation, the “International Dialogue” magazine has been an information partner of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Russian Federation. **Alexander Shkirando**, head of the Media Relations Center of this organization, attended the evening:

“I am pleased that we have such a wide audience who visits our website and reads texts in both Russian and English.



The magazine presented on our website is known in 77 countries around the world.

I wish you all continued success! Together we will definitely win!”

During one of her visits to Moscow, Natalia Holzmüller met **Radik Gafurov**, whose life and work are multifaceted. Having learned from a conversation with Natalia that she was going to accompany Dmitry Lebamba to Donetsk as a journalist, **Radik Gafurov**, one of the honored guests of the evening, volunteered to help make this trip:

“I was pleasantly surprised to learn that people living in Europe



asked for help in such a noble cause. Since 2014, we have been paying attention to communicating with people who find themselves in difficult conditions in the territories of the DPR and LPR. I like that the rector of MFUA **Alexey Zabelin** spoke about creation, and this is confirmed by the cultural and informational direction of the magazine, which is published by Natalia Holzmüller. Creation is the meaning of our lives, and your trip is about creation. Building relationships — even when it's difficult. However, even in these times, friendship and humanity remain, and they are the most important thing.”

Dmitry Lebamba noted the role of the parish of St. Nicholas Cathedral in Vienna, which responded to his initiative and raised funds to purchase medical equipment for the treatment of children.



For her many years of activity in the name of maintaining and developing cultural dialogue between the peoples of different countries, Natalia Holzmüller was awarded the “Patron of the Arts” medal of the Wings of Life Charitable Foundation. Considering that Natalia provided charitable assistance within the framework of the projects (including the Mirovsky Orphanage in the Voronezh Region, the Spendiarov Music School in Yalta), as well as her gratuitous work on publishing “Art & Business” magazines, “International Dialogue” and organizing international themed evenings, the award, presented by the president of the Crimean Charitable Foundation, chairman of the all-Russian public organization for the promotion of friendship of peoples of Russia, **Sergei Tagashev**, has found a worthy hero.



In her speech, Natalia Holzmüller, in particular, noted:

“We strive to return the world to a normal state with the help of culture. We want to give people the opportunity to regain their

common sense and understand what the true values that are so much talked about are.”

True values were presented in the evening's artistic program, which was attended by those who support the Russian Culture Without Borders initiative, and was opened by the soloists of the White Steamship Children's Music Studio, a project of the charity foundation of the same name, which “International Dialogue” wrote about in a previous issue, **Matvey Lysyakov** and **Danya Kovalenko**.

Eleven-year-old Danya from the small town of Zelenogorsk in the Krasnoyarsk Territory showed



Danya Kovalenko

musical abilities in the junior kindergarten group and began simultaneously studying in a vocal studio and a piano class at a music school. In 2025, Daniil passed a qualifying audition and received an invitation to the anniversary shift of the White Steamship, where he was given the opportunity to become a soloist, and after the shift, the boy was enrolled in the Moscow Choral College named after A.V. Sveshnikov.

Evgeny Krylatov's famous song “Winged Swing” performed by Dani immediately touched the hearts of listeners, even such sophisticated ones as Honored Artist of the Russian Federation, laureate of the Glinka State Prize of the RSFSR and the “Onegin” National Opera Prize conductor **Vladimir Rylov**, a longtime friend of Natalia Holzmüller and a connoisseur of her projects, who be-



Alexey Zabelin and Natalia Holzmüller



Vladimir Rylov

believes that Natalia Holzmüller's patriotic endeavors and her partner Dmitry Lebamba — this is what Russian people should be doing.

Matvey Lysyakov raised the mood of the audience with the iconic Soviet song from the movie “Captain Grant’s Children”, “Sing us a song, merry wind!”, written in 1936 by Isaac Dunaevsky based on the words of Vasily Lebedev-Kumach, praising courage, cheerfulness and the desire for victory: “Whoever is cheerful laughs, who wants to — whoever is looking for it will always find it!”

The creative life of fourteen-year-old Matvey Lysyakov began in early childhood. From the age of three, he arranged puppet the-



Kirill Brytkov and Timofey Sukhinin

ater performances for relatives and friends at home, and at the age of four, during classes at an early development school, he heard children practicing vocals and said: “I want to sing with them.” Six months later, he already performed at the “Admiralty Star” International competition, where, in addition to the title of laureate, he received the Young Talent prize. In five years of his creative life, Matvey became a first-degree laureate and the winner of the grand Prix of Nikolay Didenko, the founder and permanent artistic director

of the “White Steam Ship” Charity Festival, who noted and highly appreciated Matvey's musical abilities, strongly recommended that he audition at the Sveshnikov Choral College, where Matvey has been studying since 2021.

Mikhail Khokhlov, one of the influential musicians and musical figures, a pianist, teacher, conductor, and director of the Gnessin Moscow Secondary Special Music School, who has long been familiar with Natalia Holzmüller, also made a significant contribution to the evening's program by singling out talented students from the school.



Matvey Lysyakov



Quartett of Gnessin Music School



Nika Vann

A quartet of young but already well-known musicians consisting of Katerina Popova, Anastasia Chaikina (violin), Margarita Rusakova (viola) and Daniella Gureeva (cello) performed Allegro non troppo from Dmitry Shostakovich's string quartet, and this performance, which transported listeners to the classical world, was also enthusiastically received.

Kirill Brytkov, a laureate of international competitions, ac-

companied by Timofey Sukhinin, touched the audience with a soulful interpretation of Benedetto Marcello's Adagio, a wonderful piece of music that became especially popular thanks to Bach's transcription.

The patriotic pathos of the concert was conveyed by the soloist of the International Philharmonic of Young Talents, winner of international competitions and festivals Nika Vann in Peter Andreev's popular favorite song “Mother Earth”.

Dmitry Pogosov, a member of the Governing Council of the First Moscow Cadet Corps, ended the evening, with whom Natalia Holzmüller has close friendly relations. At Natalia's request, Dmitry performed Oleg Gazmanov's song “Gentlemen Officers”, dedicated to honor,



... with Elena Skvortsova, Executive Executive director of the Society for Friendship with Austria

loyalty to duty — a symbol of patriotism and respect for military rank, which the audience listened to standing.

The guests remembered the evening for its soulful chamber atmosphere. It was made possible by MFUA-MASI, the Society for Friendship with Austria, the DEAN Publishing House, the Vienna and Austrian Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church (MP), and, of course, thanks to the performers and those who helped ensure their participation in the program — Nikolai Didenko, Mikhail Khokhlov, and Lada Mekrulova, a teacher of pop and jazz vocals, President of the Foundation for Cultural Support “Art for All Time”.



Dmitry Pogosov



A GOOD DEED

The most important thing in life is the ability to think not only about yourself, but also about others, and to help as much as possible, giving even when sharing, as they say, the last. According to Dostoevsky, this means having a worldwide responsiveness, and this quality is characteristic of Russians, wherever they live, in Russia or abroad. Russia, as the guardian of traditional values, where the flow of life is subject to the natural laws of the universe, is increasingly attracting people of different nationalities living in different countries of the world.

Children are the future of the planet, they need protection and help to become brave and strong and then take care of their parents. The connection of generations, historical memory.

There are many Russians living in Austria, and the place where they can gather and feel at home is St. Nicholas Cathedral of the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, built mainly with funds allocated by Emperor Alexander III, one of the most beautiful in Europe.

Those who visit this temple, of course, cannot remain indifferent to the fate of children who find themselves in a very difficult situation due to the circumstances, and they try to help as much as possible by donating money to purchase what children's hospitals need.

St. Nicholas Cathedral in Vienna attracts the largest number of Russian-speaking people. On Sundays, their number reaches from eight hundred to a thousand people. There are services in German, and there are Austrians among the parishioners who have been baptized and who are attracted by the spirit of Orthodoxy.

When the events in Ukraine began, some active parishioners



Head of the Uroandrology Department Vladimir Maltsev, Oksana Marmuta und Dmitry Lebamba

came up with the idea of charity. The Vienna and Austrian Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church (MP) has been providing charitable assistance to children's hospitals since 2014.

A separate circle was set up in the temple, where donations were collected. Initially, funds were collected for Lugansk. A year ago, after studying the situation in the region, cathedral elder **Dmitry Lebamba** offered to help the Republican Children's Clinical Hospital in Donetsk. Metropolitan Vladimir of Donetsk and Mariupol helped to find contact with this hospital. Oksana Marmuta, the chief physician of the hospital, told Dmitry that the hospital was in dire need of medical equipment for urology, which was manufactured only in Austria, and he suggested using

the funds raised where there was an urgent need.

The action was carried out with the blessing of the rector of St. Nicholas Cathedral, Bishop Alexy of Vienna and Austria, and in coordination with the parish council of the cathedral.

Oksana Marmuta, Chief Physician of the Republican Children's Clinical Hospital:

"The Republican Children's Clinical Hospital was in dire need of laparoscopic equipment for the treatment of pediatric urology, which would reduce the time of both the operations themselves and the postoperative period of the child's stay in the hospital.

Our hospital treats children also from Luhansk and Kherson regions. They treat everyone who needs help, from newborns to adults.

The urology department is the only one in the republic, and the only specialists in this field in the republic work here."

The imported equipment has already been delivered to the operating rooms, and this action has confirmed that there are no borders for helping children.

Dmitry Lebamba is used to checking that the business he started is being successfully carried out and the goal has been achieved, so he decided to personally make sure that everything he had planned came true and, having flown to Moscow from Vienna, came to Donetsk, proving that national unity is stronger than distance. His stay began with a concert in the hall of the Donetsk branch of the Assembly of the Peoples of Russia in Donetsk. This is how the Orthodox faith and art united Donetsk and Vienna, despite the hundreds of kilometers separating them.

The opera singer included Tchaikovsky's romance based on Alexei Khomyakov's poems in the concert program, "Feat", which sounded special in this context, because, in Dmitry's opinion, it reflects the inner state of the people who live in these territories today, and the mission he initiated is cultural and humanitarian.

The concert was organized by **Ekaterina Zarembo**, a lecturer at the Donetsk Faculty of Secondary Vocational Education at the Prokofiev Donetsk State Academy of Music, a lecturer at the Znanie Russian Society, and a wonderful singer who participated with Dmitry in this classical music concert, where works by Glinka, Rachmaninoff, and Ippolitov-Ivanov were performed:

"Despite the difficult time, we are here we live and create. We have incredibly talented people and listeners who want to go to concerts and spiritually nourish themselves. Recharge with the blissful energy of music.

The concert was held under the slogan of the Friendship Bridge,

cultural interaction between Austria and Russia. It was held with the support of **Victoria Romanuk**, Chairman of the All-Russian public and state Organization "Assembly of the Peoples of Russia" in the Donetsk People's Republic.

Art can do anything. Art is like a temple, and the atmosphere of the concert was like a temple of art. We conveyed the beauty of the soul through our voice. This was a landmark event and a good start to 2026."

Natalia Holzmüller, a Russian compatriot and a member of the Russian Union of Journalists, who has been permanently residing in Vienna since 1991 and is an Austrian citizen, participated in a trip to Donetsk with a humanitarian mission prepared by Dmitry Lebamba. She is engaged in international cultural projects, and the largest of them is the Russian Ball, which she has held annually in Vienna for 11 years and which has consistently been among the

top ten of the nearly 400 balls held in the Austrian capital during the season.

Since 2022, Natalia Holzmüller has been the editor-in-chief of the "International Dialogue" magazine, which is published by the St. Petersburg DEAN Publishing House in Russian, English and German. The "International Dialogue" magazine is actively supported by the Vienna and Austrian Dioceses, and materials created by the rector of St. Nicholas Cathedral, Bishop Alexy of Vienna and Austria, are regularly published there.

Since 2025, the magazine, which has been an information partner of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Russian Federation since its foundation, has become an information partner of the Diocese of Vienna and Austria. Natalia considered it necessary to cover the humanitarian mission in the "International Dialogue" and, as a journalist, accompany Dmitry on this trip, using her



Dmitry Lebamba and Ekaterina Zarembo



...with Victoria Romanyuk

contacts in Russia to help deliver medical equipment to Donetsk, which was carried out thanks to the Good People Foundation.

The concert under the slogan of the Friendship Bridge made the most encouraging impression on her.

Natalia Holtzmüller:

“It was held in a chamber atmosphere. It was amazing how people listened to these wonderful performances. Dmitry has a unique voice with a velvety timbre. The repertoire was wonderful, and overall the concert had a huge emotional resonance. It seemed like it was taking place in some noble mansion, as people purposefully came to listen to the magnificent singing and touch the beautiful. I was captivated by their sincere reaction, their joy. And that was our goal: to show that we are not indiffer-

ent, that we care not only about the fate of children, which was the main point of the campaign, but also information for people, especially in the Donetsk People’s Republic, that normal people in different countries still sympathize with Russia and its culture. and that everyone longs for peace.

I went there without any fear, although I understood that the DPR was a war zone. During my trip to Donetsk, my heart was filled with joy, because I want goodness and peace on the whole planet, in all countries and for all peoples. And, of course, the fate of the new region of Russia against the background of what is happening in the world now worries me. Not only me, but also many, like me, Austrian citizens. I easily made the decision that I would go to Do-

netzk and see everything with my own eyes, as befits a journalist who honestly performs his duty.

From the first meeting with the rector of St. Nicholas Cathedral, Vladyka Alexy and Dmitry Lebamba, we established an amazing understanding, and a new stage of my life began, as if I had grown wings. I am a cultural expert and I do not interfere in politics. Although art is connected with politics, I will never enter into a political discussion in my life simply because I do not understand the subtleties and perceive what is happening on an emotional level. I position myself as a goodwill ambassador, as a people’s diplomat.”

Dmitry Lebamba’s campaign was made possible largely due to his dedication and professionalism. It was a very laborious pro-



Concert host Viktor Boyar, accompanist Oksana Averina, Ekaterina Zaremba, Dmitry Lebamba and Natalia Holtzmüller

cess, a whole chain of links that led to the desired result, in which the community, members of the parish council and the audit commission participated. Not only Russian people and Orthodox parishioners of other nationalities helped raise funds, but also tourists who regularly visit this magnificent temple.

Dmitry Lebamba:

“A common good deed allows us to remain human. It’s nice when help is in demand and beneficial, when you purposefully help someone who needs it. Our mission has nothing to do with politics. There’s a lot going on in the world, but children, the future of the planet, have nothing to do with it.

I have the brightest impressions from meetings with people in Donetsk. There is a movement towards restoring a normal lifestyle, which is facilitated, as it seemed to me, by the positive attitude of the people.

We manage to build a friendship bridge at the level that our capabilities and circumstances allow us to do. It’s important to be

honest with yourself. There is no wall between ordinary people, and it is necessary to look for points of unity and cohesion.

There are quite a lot of people from Donbass in the parish of St. Nicholas Cathedral. Communicating with them, I understand that there are no obstacles to doing good deeds there. Parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church abroad help Russian compatriots to the best of their ability, because there are many of them among our parishioners. The atmosphere of our temple is special. Some even say: It was like being at home. All week these people hear German, speak it, and then on Sunday they come to visit their parents. Helping people is our usual business, which we do not do because we have to, but simply because it is a part of our lives.

There are Ukrainians in our parish who see the situation from different angles. They come to our community, the united canonical church of their ancestors. Many parishioners are closer to the Church Slavonic language in which prayer is

performed, whether they are Serbs, Bulgarians, Moldovans, Georgians — residents of the post-Soviet space. People come for the warmth they feel. Any boundaries, including political ones, are erased in the temple. The temple is about the soul, about goodness, about humanity. The temple is for man to remain human and preserve the image of the Creator. It is necessary that we embrace our traditions so that people realize where they come from, where these values come from, and how Russian culture was created. When you understand where Russian culture comes from, it’s easier to embrace it and come into harmonious contact with it. Our doors are open to everyone, the temple is open from eight in the morning until six in the evening. Here you can be alone with yourself and with God.”

The publication was prepared by Natalia Holtzmüller for the “International Dialogue” magazine, the information partner of the Diocese of Vienna and Austria.

SERGEY KATYRIN: RUSSIAN TRADE HAS FOUND NEW CENTERS OF ATTRACTION



In recent years, the geography of Russia's foreign trade has been fundamentally transformed. In an interview with Sergey Katyrin, President of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Russian Federation, to the „International Dialogue” magazine, he talked about what the new figures mean for business, which markets are becoming systemic, and what role the CCI of the Russian Federation plays in these processes.

— *Sergey Nikolaevich, how do you assess the current structure of Russia's foreign trade?*

— Data from the Federal Customs Service confirms a steady shift in trade geography. In 2025, Asian countries accounted for 73.4% of Russia's total trade turnover, compared with 72.6% a year earlier. At the same time, the total volume of trade with them decreased by 1.6%, reflecting the gen-

eral turbulence of the global economy, rather than a change in strategic course.

The share of European countries decreased to 18.6% (19.7% in 2024), and trade turnover with them decreased by 8.6%. At the same time, cooperation with American countries is growing: their share has increased to 4.1% with an increase in trade turnover of 6.3%. Africa maintains a stable share of 3.9%, despite a decrease in volumes of 2.4%.

This means that reorientation is an established structure. Russia has found new centers of attraction in trade and is systematically working with China, India, the countries of Central Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America.

Therefore, the international activities of the CCI of the Russian Federation are aimed not at finding pros-

pects, but at supporting existing and growing markets.

— *How has the structure of Russian exports changed in 2025?*

— Mineral products have traditionally remained the mainstay of exports, but their share, according to the Federal Customs Service, decreased from 60.9% in 2024 to 53.9% in 2025. In absolute terms, exports of mineral products amounted to 225.3 billion dollars, which is 14.8% less than a year earlier.

At the same time, growth is noticeable in a number of non-resource areas. Exports of metals and products made from them increased by 17.4% to \$74.7 billion. Chemical industry products increased by 21.6% to \$33.6 billion. Machinery, equipment and vehicles grew by 26.6% to \$29.6 billion. Positive dynamics was also noted for wood and pulp and paper products — 10.6 billion dollars, plus 4.9%.

This is an important signal: the export structure is becoming more diversified. Yes, the mineral sector is still significant, but the decline in its share, while processing industries are growing, indicates a structural shift.

— *What does the import structure show?*

— Machinery, equipment and vehicles traditionally account for the largest share in imports — 48.6% against 52% a year earlier. In monetary terms, this is \$135.6 billion, a decrease of 7.7%.

Imports of chemical products amounted to 55.5 billion dollars, an increase of 3.8%. Food products and agricultural raw materials showed significant growth, up 15% to \$43.4 billion. Textiles and footwear increased by 1.1% to \$18.3 billion. Imports of

metals and products made from them decreased by 1.3% to \$17.7 billion.

Thus, imports are gradually adapting to new logistics routes and suppliers, while dependence on machinery and technical products remains high.

— *What are the main challenges facing businesses in new markets?*

— The modern foreign trade environment is objectively more complicated than it was a few years ago. Intuition is no longer enough. An error in choosing a settlement model, contract form, or certification scheme can cost the company the entire transaction. Therefore, knowledge is becoming a competitive factor today.

We have noticed an increased interest in training programs in the field of foreign trade, international law, export procedures, currency and logistics risk management.

Business needs systemic competencies. That is why the CCI of the Russian Federation is strengthening its educational direction, consulting support and support for export projects. In the current conditions, high-quality training is not an additional option, but an essential element of the export strategy.

— *Is it possible to talk about a possible reversal when sanctions are lifted?*

— We proceed from a pragmatic approach. Even if certain restrictions are relaxed, businesses have already built new logistics, financial and cooperative chains. There will be no return to the previous model of the 2010s.

The possible lifting of some sanctions may expand the toolkit — simplify calculations, reduce transaction costs, and expand insurance coverage for transactions. But strategic diversification will continue. Russian business will not focus on one area.

Our position is simple: open markets benefit everyone. However, sustainability is achieved through multi-vector approach.

— *What role do the business councils at the CCI of the Russian Federation play in this process?*

The CCI of the Russian Federation has more than 40 business councils that promote the development of foreign economic relations with various countries.

These are not formal venues. They are used to select partners, organize B2B contacts, coordinate regulatory issues, support contracts, and discuss

certification, logistics, and settlements in national currencies.

The councils allow building a direct dialogue between entrepreneurs, banks, and industry associations. In a complicated foreign trade environment, this is especially important.

— *Vienna is traditionally mentioned in this context. Is its value preserved?*

— Vienna has historically been an important point of business interaction between East and West. For many years, contacts have been formed on the site of a number of Austrian business structures, business forums have been held, and professional dialogue has been conducted.

Today, the format of interaction has changed, but business communication has not been completely discontinued. Vienna remains a symbol of a neutral negotiating platform and an example of how a business is able to maintain a professional dialogue even in difficult political conditions.

It is important for the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Russian Federation to maintain communication channels wherever possible and be ready to restore more active cooperation in the event of a change in foreign policy conditions.

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Russia is always on the move

I often repeat the words spoken by Russian President Vladimir Putin that Russia does not have unfriendly countries, but only unfriendly political elites, and I constantly receive confirmation of the validity of these words.

Having heard about the priest of the Benedictine abbey, Father Sebastian, for a long time, I did not know him personally. We first met at the Scottish Gymnasium of the Benedictine Order, founded by decree of the Kaiser in 1807, where he teaches religion and the Russian language. From the first minutes of our acquaintance, I was captivated by Father Sebastian's openness and kindness.

How did Russia come into being in your life?

At the age of 14–15, I became interested in the history of the USSR. It was the time when Mikhail Gorbachev ruled the country. My father regularly read the German magazine "Der Spiegel", and during the holidays, I also enjoyed reading it, asking myself the question: how can the political system in such a large country be "rebuilt" in a short time? Then came the days of the country's first president Boris Yeltsin and its first chairman of the Council of Ministers, Viktor Chernomyrdin.

During my studies at the gymnasium, I chose Russian as my foreign language. When I was in the fifth grade, our teacher was Benedictine Boniface Tittel, a priest who knew me because I played the organ in the church where he served. And so he decided to do something nice and useful for me.

My father, an entrepreneur in the woodworking industry, had connections with Belarus and Russia, and his business partners often visited our house. That's



Father Sebastian

how I got my first impressions of your country.

Since business contacts with Russia were developing successfully at that time, my father advised me to ask Boniface Tittel to study Russian with me additionally. He agreed, and every Saturday, an hour before evening Mass, we studied Russian. I carefully prepared for these lessons at home.

After graduating from high school, I enrolled at the Technical University of Vienna in the Faculty of Technical Chemistry and wanted to spend one semester in Spain, as I was studying Spanish, but Father Boniface said it was better to choose Russia, since Russian is in demand in Austria. Thus, in 1995, I spent a

semester in Moscow, at the Gubkin Academy of Oil and Gas.

After returning to Vienna and continuing my studies at the university, inspired by my stay in Russia, I decided to write a thesis on the topic of comparing the refineries of Lukoil — Permnefteorgsintez in Perm and the plant of the Austrian company OMV in Schwechat, near Vienna.

Every year Father Boniface took part in trips on "Friendship Trains" from Vienna with visits to Kiev, Leningrad and Moscow. He maintained constant contacts with the Russian Orthodox Church and attracted me to this. He also introduced me to the customs and rules of behavior adopted in Russia, explained what is accepted and what is not, how to react in a given situation, for which I am eternally grateful to him. Now I pass on the acquired knowledge as a relay race to my students.

What did you particularly like about Russia?

I was immediately captivated by the hospitality of the people who provided me with a separate room in their apartment. I was struck by the country's vast expanses and eventful history. The friendly at-

titude of Russians towards Austrians. Russian culture, religious traditions, and the magnificent churches with ancient icons that surrounded me in Sergiev Posad, where I was collecting material for my thesis on the reform of the Russian Orthodox Church in the field of theological education at the Moscow Theological Academy, made a great impression on me.

My goal is to teach young children the Russian language, to arouse their interest in the country, so that they can see and understand with their own eyes how they live in Russia, what the mentality of Russians is, and, having comprehended this, to find friends there.

The exchange of school groups was interrupted due to the pandemic, but in the summer, outside of this program, I flew with the guys to Russia. Since the beginning of the special operation, for political reasons, official support has disappeared — both from our gymnasium and from partners in Moscow. However, we teachers, who have been working together for 37 years, decided that it would be a shame to destroy what had existed for so many years and stop communication between the youth of our countries. Next February, we will carry out an informal group exchange. There are families among the parents of my students who are ready to accept schoolchildren from Moscow, and for the summer I offer a trip there to graduates of the gymnasium, since I have no right to take students with me. As before, they will live in families.

Last year, 28 people participated in the week-long summer trip. We visited Moscow, St. Petersburg and Tallinn. 22 people have already signed up for the upcoming summer trip.

Visas are required for such trips, and we are supported in this by the Russian Society for Friendship with Austria, the Russian



Fater Boniface with the directors of the Scottish Grammar School and the Moscow School

Embassy in Austria and the Austrian Embassy in Russia. We can rightfully say that we are carrying out public diplomacy, which is supported by official diplomats.

Do you have your own teaching methods for the Russian language?

For me, the method of teaching a language is determined by the personality of the teacher himself. During classes, it is necessary to arouse students' interest in the country and its people. Young people prefer stability and confidence in the future to negativity and grumbling. It's pointless to dig into a bunker. We need to raise the flag of truce, go outside and convince ourselves that we are right.

Last November, for the first time, we organized the Russian language Olympiad in our gymnasium, without financial support from outside. This event was authorized by our director. In addition to Russia, Germany, Switzerland and Croatia were represented in the competition. The Director

said that he admired the youth's interest in the culture of another nation, which would give them the opportunity to rethink their ideas and contribute to the restoration of international dialogue. There is a lot of talk and discussion now, but it is time to move on to action. But not in the direction of destruction. There are many people who destroy, but we must create. Destroying is much easier than rebuilding.

We, teachers and parents, have been building exchanges between groups of schoolchildren for a long time and persistently, investing our money, time and energy in this endeavor (the trips were funded by parents, we had no sponsors), and this cannot be thrown into the landfill.

No one dares to destroy the bridges that we have built!

We note that our efforts are appreciated by diplomats in both Russia and Austria.

All wars, sooner or later, end in peace.



Father Boniface and Father Sebastian with a group of schoolchildren in Moscow



Eternal memory

When Sergey Nikolaevich Abramov's assistant, Kristina, whom I became friends with, called me and told me that he was passed away, I couldn't believe my ears. The passing of a man whom I had known well for a long time, with whom I shared common interests, who understood the need for what I was trying to do to restore international cultural dialogue, and was one of the sponsors of my patriotic projects, is a tragic event. In this case, it was also completely unexpected and incredible, because although Sergey Nikolaevich is a doctor by profession, we never talked about diseases, and for me he was the epitome of a flourishing life — handsome, smart, successful, realistic, optimistic, which is not so common.

In each issue of the "Art & Business" magazine, which I published for many years in Austria, where I permanently reside, and then the "International Dialogue magazine",



...with Natalia Holzmüller

interviews with Sergey Nikolaevich were published, excerpts of which I would like to share with readers:

Today is really a difficult time. We assume that soon all the problems that exist in world politics and the global economy will slowly give way, as the people of the world, all sane people want life to become better and more beautiful. We all need to try to make the problems fade into the background and so that we feel solid ground under our feet and a perspec-



tive for the development of the entire global community as a whole.

You spent some part of your life abroad, but you returned to Russia. What does Homeland mean to you?

First of all, this is the place where I was born, where my parents and people very close to me lived, who, fortunately, still live today, so I do not perceive the words "Homeland" and "native blood" separately. We are all of the same blood, we were born in Russia and we will live in it. For me, abroad is a place where I spent a certain amount of time, studied a little and, most importantly, learned to see the difference between my homeland and other countries. I lived in New York and came back only because I consider myself a patriot. I love my country and I will continue to live in it for the rest of my life.

What does it mean to be Russian?

Russians love their homeland, Russian traditions, and the country as a whole, because we have something to be proud of. For example, Tchaikovsky and other outstanding Russian composers, the great Pushkin and other world-famous poets. Russian culture and history have always been a shining example to follow beyond its borders.

Under what conditions is a happy future for the planet possible?

The planet will be happy if, instead of disagreements between peoples and faiths, mutual understanding comes between the populations of all countries. Peace will come if we all want to be tolerant and learn to understand and respect each other's interests.

What does the phrase "Art & Business" mean to you?

As a businessman, I believe that supporting cultural dialogue is not only a way to preserve and develop art, but also a key to business success. Art and culture help to create a unique atmosphere that attracts guests. For example, in my "Hermitage" Hotel, located in the historical heart of Moscow, orchestras and other art groups really often stay. This is a great opportunity not only for the guests to enjoy high-class performances, but also for us, businessmen, to create a special value and distinctive feature of our hotel.

My role as a businessman is a bridge between cultures that promotes dialogue, mutual understanding and cooperation.

Art has always been a part of my life. Since childhood, I have been studying music, and this has left its mark on my worldview. Beauty, creativity, inspiration — without it, the world would be gray. When I had the opportunity to help, I realized that supporting art is not just a desire, but the duty of those who are lucky enough to succeed.

If you love art, you cannot remain indifferent to its fate. I don't just donate money — I participate in the process. Sometimes I advise, sometimes I just enjoy the results. The main thing is to see that your efforts are not wasted. Culture is the soul of a nation, and it must be protected.

What is your advice for those who want to do charity work but don't know where to start?



Participants of the International Television Competition „Blue Bord“ at the „Christmas in the Hermitage“ evening

Start with what is really close to you. It doesn't matter if it's music, painting, or theater. Support should be informed. And don't be afraid to start small — even one scholarship or concert can change someone's life. And when you see these changes, it's impossible to stop.

Sergey Nikolaevich Abramov was a member of the Management Board of the Moscow Chamber of Commerce and Industry, CEO of the shipping company Caesar Travel LLC, president of the holding company Cezar Club Corporation.

From the obituary signed by Vladimir Mikhailovich Platonov, President of the Moscow Chamber of Commerce and Industry, with whom Sergey Abramov had business and friendly relations:

"Sergey Nikolaevich was a man of rare spiritual generosity, inner nobility and sincere participation in the destinies of people. With his bright charisma and ability to find a way out of the most difficult situations, he has gained a well-deserved reputation not only in the professional community, but also throughout the Russian business world. His advice was distinguished by wisdom, balance and deep responsibility, and his personal example served as a guide for colleagues and partners.



Density of life

When I invited Radik Gafurov to talk to me for the column “People and Destinies” in the “International Dialogue” magazine, he was delighted:

“It’s a very good column.

Fate is, on the one hand, something that is predetermined; and on the other hand, we ourselves, within the framework of this predestination, adjust fate through our life path, development. For me, fate doesn’t end right now. To date, I have passed and realized a certain stage. Perhaps, on my deathbed, the meanings of my fate will appear completely different. Right now, what I call “the density of life” is important to me. I like to live ten lives at the same time. I have diverse interests, I meet many different people, and I’m interested in learning about them. Through people, I can contribute to this world. A person can only know what is inherent in himself. Through our inherent qualities, we can interact on a human-to-human level. A separate defining milestone in my life is the invisible presence of the Almighty. There come moments when you feel the divine presence in your life, and this is probably the most important thing. God connects us with our ancestors and helps us understand them. God unites us with something greater than ourselves. This is the only force that you can rely on and that will definitely never give up on you, no matter what state you are in — in a state of emotional uplift, hoping or losing hope.

I study the density of life through people, through my interaction with this divine, and this interests me very much. Everything in this world gets boring quickly. Any pleasure, food, any experience.

I recently realized that it doesn’t matter if you’re looking at sand, water, or snow. It’s all beautiful, but these are just different pictures of our world, and inside us it all turns into electrical signals that control our hormonal background, our endocrine system.

People sometimes try to see as much as possible. But perhaps the most fascinating thing is the interaction with other people, which we often underestimate. Yes, other people may have a different culture, but the fundamentals of human existence are the same everywhere. Monotheism has spread everywhere. The indigenous peoples of South America are Catholics, Islam came to Southeast Asia, to the peoples inhabiting the islands of Indonesia and, at the same time, to us, the Tatars, people who live in a continental climate. A person who studies people through people is never bored. And he can never say, “I don’t want anything,” because he has creative energy.

The Lord has endowed me with some skills, understanding of meanings, and I like to create projects that will remain a contribution to people beyond my earthly existence. Not so that they would say that I did it, but so that it would become a legacy, the efficiency of my life. I don’t think Tretyakov really wanted to have a world-famous gallery, he just collected paintings so that the works of art he collected would be preserved and would please people. There are many things in this world that people have created, and sometimes we don’t even know who created them, but we admire and are inspired by them. For example, the Egyptian pyramids. We know the rulers of



that time and in whose honor the tombs were built, but we do not know who built them. Meanwhile, millions of tourists come to see the miracle of engineering, because people, without modern construction technologies, were able to build what still seems very difficult.

Fate presupposes leaving behind meanings and legacies on the physical and spiritual levels. I like to create. I had a lot of projects. I would not like to concentrate on my life path, because it is standard. I was born in Ulyanovsk. I grew up in the countryside, so I can mow, and I can feed myself on the land. It has experienced agricultural, industrial, informational and post-informational patterns. I worked with my own hands at a furniture factory. Studied. From the point of view of learning about this world, I was extremely lucky. I was born in 1978 in a country called the Soviet Union, and I still consider it my homeland, because the community of a large number of people over a large area is always better than dismemberment, when, say, each settlement has its own diocese. You can always



Radik Gafurov with distinguished guests at the Gulfood exhibition in Dubai, including Damir Mukhetdinov, First Deputy head of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Russian Federation and Aidar Gazizov, Head of the Halal Certification Center

find out how we differ from each other, but what are we united in? People are united in the fact that there is a God above them and that, in principle, everyone wants approximately the same thing. At least on a basic basis — to eat, to continue your family, not to get sick, to experience pleasant experiences.

The collapse of the USSR was a great tragedy for me. I saw the 90s. Since I grew up in Ulyanovsk, I often visited Naberezhnye Chelny, near my village. I’ve seen banditry, youth groups. I saw with my own eyes the war, the need of people who simply did not have food. I also saw prosperity. There are a lot of rich people in my environment now. I’ve seen both happy and tragic people. Someone has already left, having lived a short bright life, and someone is living, but not so richly.

Of the projects that I carried out, the largest was for three hundred thousand people. I was a contractor there. And the most interesting for me is my author’s All-Russian Men’s Festival, which

I held for the first time in Tatarstan in 2020. At that time, I was in my early forties, the notorious average age for men, when you ask yourself, “Why all this?”

At that time, I had three children, and now I have four. I think I’ve seen enough of everything and experienced enough, but the question came to my mind — who is educating men now, what is the social ideology?

I started putting together small clubs, and then it turned into a

festival, where we just provide a platform for public and sports organizations, for those who deal with family values, so that they can come and realize themselves, realize who a modern man is. It used to be easier. A man is a man of work, a creator. A worker, engineer, or researcher, an athlete, or a cultural figure. Defender of his fatherland, his family. There was a great attachment to family values, and there was an ideology that said that you live for something high.





Why did most of our intelligence officers not work for money? Because they really believed in the good, the bright, in this world. They wanted to give more opportunities and more rights to more people. Not to the elites.

How could illiterate people be launched into space in less than half a century? Who is Gagarin? A peasant's son. His father was illiterate. Men formed a whole galaxy of cultural workers, doctors, and engineers. Thanks to the men, the country was rebuilt after the wars. From a backward tsarist country, Russia has become a powerful nuclear power, and we are ahead in fundamental sciences. Our mathematicians are still the best in the world. We have also become a symbol for a huge number of countries. Thanks to us, China, as the Chinese themselves say, has emerged from a hundred years of shame.

And where is the man who created all this now? It doesn't exist. We were somehow ideologically

dissolved into the general mass of individualists seeking pleasure, pseudo-beauty. We boast that we have a big house, a good car, and we can go to a beautiful island with a beautiful girl, but we don't know the names of astronauts or outstanding scientists. And this idea of finding the meaning of a man's existence led to the 2020 festival, which was very successful and attracted 20,000 people. Now my task is to have such a festival in every region of Russia, where we would gather men and help them find an ideological core within themselves and a path to each other.

I have been supporting guys who participate in various conflicts for a very long time. Since 2020, I have been producing individual food packages — rations. This is a purely charitable activity. My task is to give a person who is going through the most difficult period of his life, a period of trials, a piece of goodness and pleasant sensations through food. We have

the most delicious rations. Yes, they are more expensive than others, but the goal is for a person to eat deliciously and through this touch human warmth.

Through an attempt to find an ideology, I once created an Association of Muslim Entrepreneurs in Russia.

Since I am a Muslim, it was important for me to bring together people involved in business on a platform that not only helps to create a business, but also makes us think about why we are doing this.

Since 2008, I have started holding the Ulyanovsk Regional Ifar together with like-minded people. 150–200 people gathered for the first event. Now more than 5,000 people come to the regional ifar. In 2011, by the will of the Almighty and with the support of the leaders of the republic and the Muftiate, I founded the Republican Ifar. Then there were about 2000 participants. Today, it gathers from 15 to 20 thousand people annually. With God's help, to implement projects that people need — apparently, this is the main meaning of my destiny."



How do you rate yourself as a person?

"A man in search of meaning is probably about me. I'm an optimist in my life. At the first stage, I always treat people with kindness and openness. Sometimes my excessive trust makes it difficult to soberly assess the true motives of others. But on the other hand, these are my lessons. And they also allow me to see more possibilities in this world.

Of course, I take a tough stance towards people who have lost their trust. But then I ask myself: what were their motives? And maybe sometimes it's worth forgiving? After all, most people are weak. And often they need to be given new chances to get better. It is in this search for a balance between forgiveness and love, between a real view of life and people, that I live in this philosophy."

One of Radik Gafurov's projects, which he is certainly implementing with God's help, is the Center for Social and Spiritual Adaptation to the Peaceful life of the participants of his military, which he called the "Outpost". This center will create conditions for integration into society, provide psychological, spiritual and moral support, provide an opportunity for active contact with culture and the acquisition of skills in mastering traditional crafts of the peoples of Russia.

The Church of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross has already been erected in the center, and the Zamzaniya Mosque has been designed.

It is planned to build houses for the participants of the SVO, their families and guests, organize a subsidiary farm, set up a park with a playground, allocate an area for active recreation — sports and mass events.

The center will bring together various faiths and communities based on their common socio-cultural and spiritual traditions.



Food packages-rations for participants in a special operation



Love for the Motherland

We met on July 9, 2018, on the anniversary of Ilya Sergeevich Glazunov's passing away, at the Novodevichy cemetery, where he is buried.

Ilya Glazunov played a crucial role in my life. We continued to communicate after my departure to Austria, in connection with which I did not know that Dmitry Pogosov had become his friend and confidant on many issues, but then I immediately noticed him. He brought a huge bouquet of red roses and communicated with everyone as his own person.

Our acquaintance turned into a friendship, as if blessed by Ilya Sergeevich, whom we both loved.

Dmitry: "My great friend, mentor and teacher is the great Russian artist Ilya Sergeevich Glazunov, People's Artist of the USSR, who played a significant role in my development and helped me see that life is much broader than the focus of pressing problems. With his help, I felt even more deeply what love of the Motherland is, and it happened at a time when the very expression "to love the Motherland" was incomprehensible to most. Back in the 90s, no one thought about it, didn't really understand it, or even remembered it... Unfortunately!

Now more and more people understand the love of the Motherland and accept it. It is important for everyone to remember this and carry it with them through life, to weave this feeling into their family and into their relationships with others.

It was a great honor for me to take part in organizing Ilya Glazunov's exhibitions at the Manege and in many of his other activities, including the reconstruction and construction of his art gallery on Volkhonka Street."



Dmitry graduated from the Suvorov Military College and the Higher Military School of the Strategic Missile Forces, served as an officer in the Strategic Missile Forces, and after being discharged from the armed forces, he began entrepreneurial activity in the field of real estate, becoming the founder and CEO of the investment and real estate company Nostalgia.

His long-term friendship with Glazunov influenced not only Dmitry Pogosov's worldview, but also his lifestyle. Dmitry followed in the footsteps of his teacher, whose home was like a museum. Both in his apartment and at the Nostalgia agency, history literally comes to life. From the portraits on the walls, the tsars and generals of the Russian Empire look at you, and each piece is able to characterize not only an event, but a whole historical period.

Russian Army shoulder straps, military headdresses, and a cabinet from France during the War of 1812 with images of Napoleon and Josephine, which a Russian general brought from the Paris palace to Russia in 1814, can be seen in Pogosov's collection, as a true connoisseur of rare items.

Like all talented and caring people, Dmitry lives a vibrant life, constantly inventing and implementing bold, difficult projects.

On March 11, 2004, a theatrical concert took place on the stage of the Kremlin Palace, as part of his musical and patriotic project "Songs about Our Motherland". For the first time since 1913, the Kremlin played the anthem of the Russian Empire "God Save the Tsar!", which was the national anthem of Russia from 1833 to 1917, and the program included songs reflecting the historical path of the Russian state up to the present day.



The first cadet ice ball. February 26, 2024. Moscow. Red Square

Today, Dmitry's thoughts and time are occupied by the "Cadet Ball on Ice", a fundamentally new project designed to combine the aesthetics of ballroom culture and figure skating, which was first held in 2024 and 2025 at ice arenas in the very center of Moscow and has the basis to become a new, unique tradition aimed at cultural, sports and patriotic education youth.

Dmitry Pogosov is the Executive Director of the Cadet Brotherhood Charitable Foundation and a member of the Governing Council of the First Moscow Cadet Corps,

which was established in 2018, to mark the 240th anniversary of the foundation and the 25th anniversary of the revival of the First Moscow Cadet Corps. The history of the creation of cadet corps begins in 1778, and the revival dates back to 1993 and is associated with the name of Colonel Vladimir Vladimirovich Kirsanov. The descendants of the cadets maintained relations with each other, gathered to honor the memory of the deceased officers. At one of these training camps, it was decided to revive the cadet corps. First, a cadet class appeared, and the first cadet oath was taken. This great and important work continued on the basis of the boarding school, which was transformed into the First Moscow Cadet Corps. Now the corps of seven cadet schools is headed by Major General Vladimir Yakovlevich Krymsky.

Dmitry's son, Roman Pogosov, whom his father, like the rest of his children, is rightfully proud of, is a graduate of the cadet corps.

Dmitry is also proud of his wife, the beautiful Olga, whom he told me about on the day we met. She comes from the Spanish aristocratic Bernaldo De Quiros family. Grandma Louise, as the Pogosovs call her, was evacuated in 1937 as a nine-year-old girl from the Spanish civil war in the USSR. Her deep sense of inner dignity, the ability to create beauty around herself, an atmosphere of diligence and perseverance in the face of any difficulties were passed on to her beloved granddaughter.

Olga: "As a child, I spent a lot of time with Grandma Louise. Her wise advice shaped me. She also taught me purely practical things. By the age of seventeen, I was able to cook well, keep the house tidy and beautiful. When our first



Cadet Pogosov reads Pushkin's poem „To the Slanderers of Russia“. March 7, 2014



child, Roma, was born, my grandmother flew specially from Madrid to help me, a very young 20-year-old mother. Family ties were of great importance to her."

Olga was barely 17 years old at the time of the meeting with Dmitry, who had a marriage, a divorce, and a 9-year-old son, Arthur:

"My friends kept saying: 'Dima, she's still very young,' and he replied, 'This flaw will pass quickly, I'll marry her, and she'll bear me many children.'"

While Olga was growing up, Dmitry romantically courted her.

A little over two years after they first met, they got married. Registration took place on September 4, 1999, on Moscow City Day. The capital was festively decorated for this day, and the mayor's office provided good weather — the clouds over Moscow were dispersed for this occasion. Dmitry rented almost the only limousine in the whole of Moscow at that time, in which he and his guests drove along the Avenue of the Newlyweds, in Victory Park, so iconic for them, where their chance acquaintance took place. Dmitry told everyone that the city was decorated precisely on the occasion of their wedding, and there would even be a fireworks display in the evening! Numerous guests from other cities happily believed this, and the Pogosovs still remember their surprised faces with a smile.

Dmitry and Olga have created a family atmosphere and culture where everyone feels good together. For example, they go on vacation to the sea as fully as possible: Olga, Dmitry and their children are joined by Dmitry's father and his son from his first marriage, Arthur, with his family. The hotel

restaurant connects several tables to have breakfast, lunch and dinner together. Joint sports, cultural, educational and entertainment events are certainly organized. Dmitry orders a photo shoot and prints postcards with images of all his loved ones after each trip.

By Decree of the President of the Russian Federation, Dmitry and Olga Pogosov were awarded the medal of the Order of Parental Glory for their great achievements in strengthening the institution of the family and raising children. This high state award was presented to the Pogosov family by Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin on behalf of the President of Russia.

Dmitry: "Being the head of a large family is not an easy task, because you are personally responsible for everything that happens. Harmony in the family is a feeling when you cannot live without a person for a long time. I can't be without children and Olya for a long time. Why do families break up? They say love has gone somewhere... So it must be protected. I also think that people should not postpone marriage for the distant future, otherwise the solution to this most important and life-defin-



The entire Pogosov family. July 2024



ing issue may literally go on forever. The sooner the young people start a family, the more chances they have to get used to each other, the easier it is to work out common rules of life that will suit them both."

Olga: "It doesn't seem to me that we have any clear knowledge of how to live happily in a family. Love, patience, the ability to smooth out the corners — that's all."

My acquaintance with Dmitry, which turned into friendship, was providential, and friendship arose on the basis of love for the Motherland, therefore Dmitry Pogosov, its worthy representative, always supports my patriotic projects, for which I express my deep gratitude to him.

Natalia Holzmüller

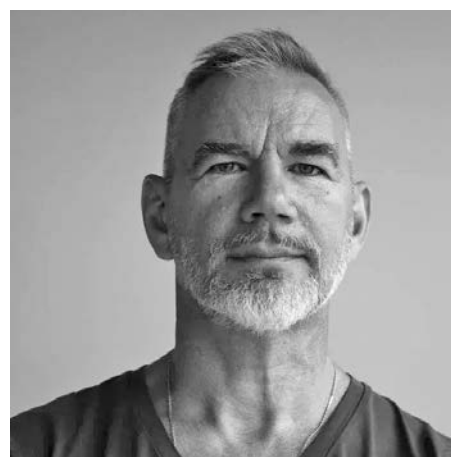


Award ceremony with Moscow Mayor Sergey Sobyenin

The connection of the times

Tile art and architectural ceramics have existed in Russia for more than ten centuries. The earliest, ancient Russian tiles date back to the 10th century — they are the same age as the baptism of Rus.

The tradition of this type of decoration lives on in the work of Alexei Kondrashev, whose exhibition was held at the Russian House in Vienna.



The artist told the “International Dialogue” magazine about his fate and formation.

"I was born in Chelyabinsk, in the Urals, where I lived until I was nine years old. Then my father and his family went to Kaluga, where I attended art school. There were no artists in our family, but my grandfather, an architect, was good at drawing.

I was attracted to the beauty of the world, and I wanted to portray it in order to receive joy and give it to people.

From Kaluga, where, by the way, the tile industry flourished at the end of the XVIII — beginning of the XIX century, I returned to Chelyabinsk and entered a vocational school to master the profession of a graphic designer.

When I learned that there was an opportunity to study at the Moscow Institute of Technology to become a jeweler, I decided to enroll

there. However, it turned out that there was no such specialization at this institute anymore, and instead I was offered to master the profession of a fashion designer. I managed to enroll the first time, which was not taken for granted, as this area was very popular. We had great teachers, and I learned a lot from them. In my fifth year, I learned that the famous couturier Vyacheslav Zaitsev teaches composition at this institute. I started attending his classes and found myself among the students he selected who could prepare a thesis under his supervision. I got an “excellent with praise” for it, and Zaitsev invited me to stay to work in his salon at the Fashion House. Under the Zaitsev brand, I developed models that quickly sold out.

This success inspired me, and I decided that it was time to start an independent career, but I remained in the fashion world. The deputy director of the Scientific Research Institute of Light Industry suggested that I try myself in a new field and choose it myself. So I opened an industrial modeling laboratory, where I successfully worked for three years, and then, due to the circumstances, at the request of my father, I moved to another field and began to help him in business.

Fate willed me to take up farming. After receiving the land, I began to cultivate it, then bought cows in Germany and founded a dairy farm.

My father, a wonderful man, once felt the need to help the church of the Tikhvin Icon of the Mother of God in the village of Kozlovo, which he often passed by.

The village of Kozlovo belonged to the outstanding navigator and statesman Ivan Semenovich

Unkovsky, who in 1852–1853 successfully guided the frigate Pallada from Kronstadt across the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean to the shores of Japan.

At the personal request of Emperor Alexander II, Unkovsky was appointed governor of Yaroslavl province, where over the 16 years of his activity he proved himself to be an outstanding administrator and an implacable persecutor of embezzlers, earning numerous awards and commendations.

After completing his service, Ivan Semenovich settled on his estate and built a stone church at his own expense in honor of the legendary Tikhvin Icon of the Mother of God, whose appearance in Novgorod dates back to 1383. “Walking luminously through the air” from one village to another, “invisibly carried by angels”, the icon appeared to the locals until it reached the banks of the Tikhvinka River. After the admiral's death, his wife was in charge of completing the construction. The facade of the building, built in the pseudo-Russian style, was to be decorated with ceramic tiles.

In the thirties of the 20th century, the church was closed and converted into a collective farm



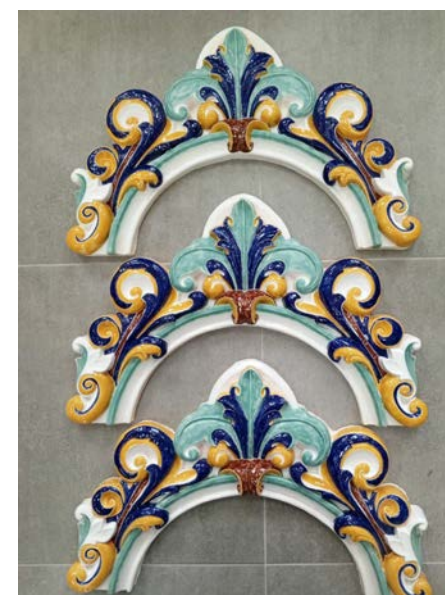
barn where grain was stored, and only in 1990, it was desecrated and transferred to the Kaluga Diocese. The building was in a ruined state, but the parishioners put it in order in a short time. Icons appeared, candles lit up, crosses miraculously preserved.

Restoration work has begun. The future parishioners worked selflessly, sparing neither time nor effort. I decided to return to my artistic path and also began to take an active part in the restoration of the temple, including painting the marble floor. Having studied the technique of making tiles, I

founded a small workshop, and we began to make tiles to decorate the facade of the temple, as Unkovsky had planned.

I also created the image of the Tikhvin Mother of God from ceramics, trying to make it as similar as possible to the original attributed to the brush of the Evangelist Luke.

First, I sculpt an image from plasticine, then a plaster mold is made. The most difficult thing is the casting of the product, where there is always an element of wonder. I am convinced that I am not alone in this process, that higher powers are helping me, and I am satisfied that my work brings the beauty of the world to people.”





Recently, the All-Russian Museum of Decorative Arts in Moscow hosted a personal exhibition featuring Alexey Kondrashev's tiles, which recognize traditional Russian motifs (birds, diamonds, the Tree of Life) in an absolutely unique, modern interpretation.

An exhibition in his beloved Vienna, where icons were also presented, gave an idea of the artist's art.

Having repeatedly visited the Austrian capital, Alexey also visited the magnificent St. Nicholas Cathedral, to which he decided this time to present an icon of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker, consecrated by Bishop Alexy of Vienna and Austria.



Alexey Kondrashev with Bishop Alexy of Vienna and Austria



Outpost is the Center for Social and Spiritual Adaptation to the Peaceful life of the participants of his military

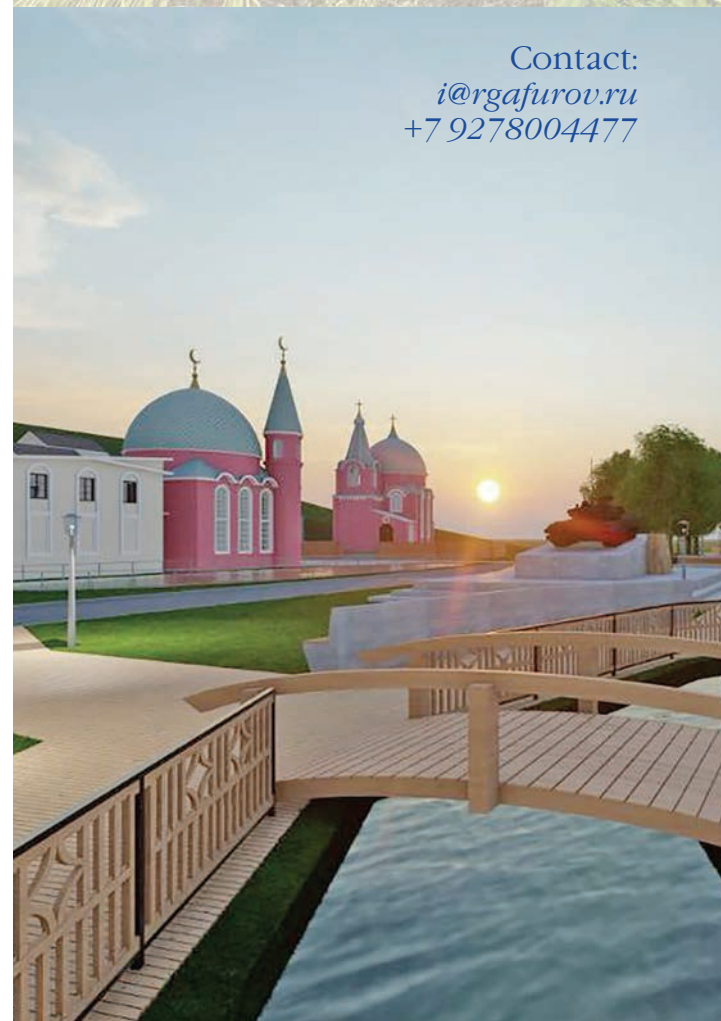
This center will create conditions for integration into society, provide psychological, spiritual and moral support, also an opportunity for active contact with culture and the acquisition of skills in mastering traditional crafts of the peoples of Russia.

The Church of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross has already been erected in the center, and the Zamzaniya Mosque has been designed.

It is planned to build houses for the participants of the SVO, their families and guests, organize a subsidiary farm, set up a park with a playground, allocate an area for active recreation — sports and mass events.

The center will bring together various faiths and communities based on their common socio-cultural and spiritual traditions

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"MANDRAKE"

Tchaikovsky and artificial intelligence



Love talismans, rituals of black magic...

On Midsummer Night, a mysterious mandrake plant blooms in a magical forest at midnight. It is necessary to dig out its root — and the cherished wish will come true. Love attraction, increased many times with the help of mandrake, unites lovers in indestructible unions.

The action of "Mandrake" takes place in ancient times. The Knight fell in love with a Beautiful Lady, but she did not reciprocate his feelings. The knight finds a mandrake root, and the plant suddenly turns into a beautiful girl. She falls in love with a brave knight and becomes his page. But under the influence of enchantment, the Beautiful Lady also fell in love with the hero. The knight is happy. The young Mandrake dies.

The premiere of the opera on the new stage of the Mariinsky Theatre became the central cultural event of the XXVIII St. Petersburg International Economic Forum. Since March of this year, the opera has been included in the repertoire of this theater.

"Mandrake" was recreated and completed with the participation of composer Peter Dranga and Sberbank's neural networks: *GigaChat* helped write the libretto,

SymFormer refined the musical fabric, and *Kandinsky* created visual and set design solutions that were implemented under artistic control and with deep respect for the style of the era.

Peter Dranga: "When I was offered to undertake the restoration of the opera "Mandrake" in collaboration with artificial intelligence, I did not doubt for a minute. The story of this opera, conceived by Tchaikovsky and his friend Sergei Rachinsky, and its stunning plot cannot fail to capture. Friends dissuaded Pyotr Ilyich from continuing to work on the opera, because it seemed to them that it would not be a success. But my friends, on the contrary, encouraged me to take up this work. For me, the biggest stress is inaction and not knowing what to



do, but here I clearly knew what was required of me. At the beginning of the work, we went to the Tchaikovsky Museum in the city of Klin, to the house where he lived. It was a wonderful trip: we met with the director of the museum and the curator, they provided us with drafts, showed us various materials necessary for this work.

I had previously listened to The Chorus of Flowers and Insects, and the artistic direction of this opera was generally clear to me. Of course, I applied artistic colors and wrote music, inspired primarily by

history, because music is always written on the libretto. I was very careful about the composer's authorship, the stylistic "hooks" and guides that were originally set in the context of creating the opera, and I got so carried away with my work that I stopped keeping track of time altogether: I started writing at eight in the morning and finished late at night.

Artificial intelligence is now helping in many areas, and art is no exception. This does not mean that we can afford to be lazy. This means that we can focus much

more on art, on artistic expression, and technology will help do the rest.

I believe that works created with the help of AI can already become part of culture and modern classics. But at the same time, I am convinced that the value of a human artist — with his inner world, emotions and intuition — will only increase. After all, it is he who sets the direction, formulates the idea and fills the result with meaning.

We have a very interesting story of interaction, when artificial intelligence offers options, helps to refine, speeds up the process and makes it even more interesting. And this is by no means a competition, but an absolute collaboration. I think it will help us all a lot in the future. And the opera should change not only our characters, but also all those who watched it. Because people always do certain things in the name of something. They are growing spiritually. The opera is about that. And everything happens inside the head that the audience sees on stage. This is the personification of the Mandrake itself."

Sberbank CEO German Gref, who attended the premiere, is a big proponent of AI.:



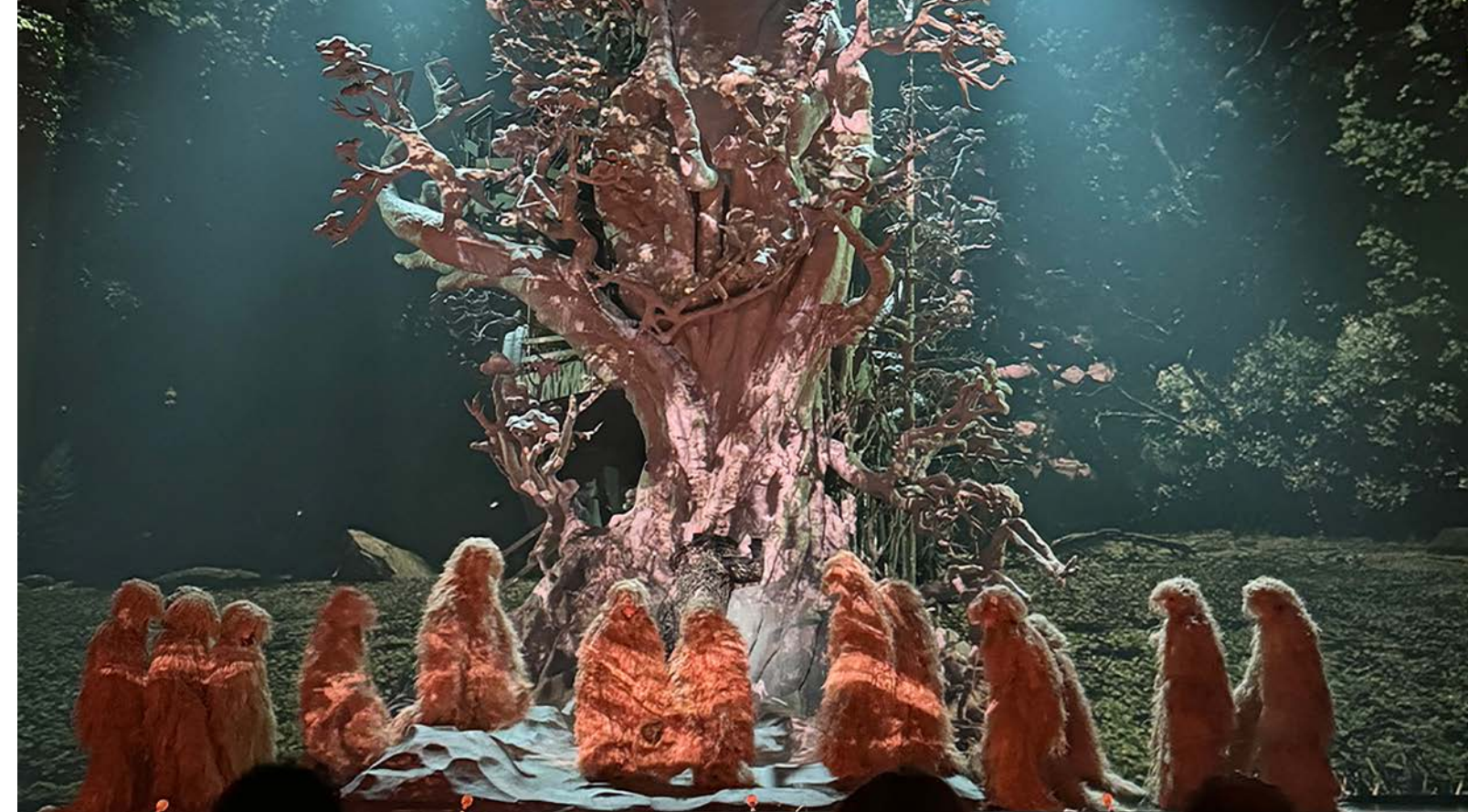


“First of all, this is an indicator that we can go back 185 years and, I hope, correctly implement those ideas that were not fully realized by great geniuses.” At the same time, he stressed that AI is just beginning its active impact on culture, but sees no danger in this process: “For some reason, we start with the word “danger” — is there any danger that we are sitting and watching a new work today, which is a continuation of a five-minute song written by Peter Ilyich? “Mandrake” is a

joint work of a large number of people: our wonderful musician, composer Peter Dranga, the brilliant maestro Valery Gergiev and, of course, the artists of the Mariinsky Theater. And all this is implemented together with artificial intelligence, which saves a huge amount of time. Imagine how long it takes to arrange a score for a large symphony orchestra. This is not the composers' favorite work, because it takes up years of their lives. And thanks to artificial intelligence, a person can focus

on creativity — the realization of what is inside him. And artificial intelligence can be a very powerful helper and inspiration.”

Valery Gergiev, Artistic Director and General Director of the Mariinsky Theatre and General Director of the Bolshoi Theatre of Russia, stressed that the latest technologies in world theaters play a significant role, and the most difficult thing is to use these modern capabilities in the world of opera and ballet so as not to sever the natural connection with the musical composition.



The production brought together more than 170 artists, including a symphony orchestra, choir and soloists. The performance has become an international project not only in terms of scale, but also in terms of performance: it involves soloists, choirs and orchestras performing on leading stages in Europe and Asia. During the summer show, the main roles were performed by Vasily Ladyuk and Alina Chertash, laureates of international competitions and recognized soloists, whose performances take place at the largest opera venues in the world.



Musical “Fireworks”



Posters of concert halls and theaters in Moscow always offer a huge selection for music lovers. But this variety has its own guiding stars, magnets for the audience.

Such a magnet was the evening at the Tchaikovsky Concert Hall with the participation of People’s Artist of Russia Ildar Abdrazakov and the Russian National Orchestra conducted by People’s Artist of Russia Alexander Sladkovsky.

The hall was packed to capacity and literally electrified by the amazing performance of all the members of this trio.

The two protagonists of the last New Year’s Eve celebration have known each other for almost thirty years, and their friendship was reflected in their stage-like, theatrical behavior, which, however, did not have anything that would violate the rules of good taste. On the contrary, their looseness emphasized artistic freedom based on a sense of proportion. They first met on Theater Square, near the Mariinsky Theater, where Ildar Abdrazakov was already a leading soloist, and apparently immediately found a common language, feeling mutual sympathy, which has not weakened since.

It is very important when people are on the same wavelength, that is, they feel mutual emotional and psychological attraction, in which a

sense of humor plays an important role, which, as you know, is not common to everyone. Both of our heroes have no shortage of it, which is evident both in life and in creativity. According to eyewitnesses, even before going on stage, at a time of special tension, it does not leave them and helps to support each other.

The program of the evening at the Tchaikovsky Hall was not limited to style, genre, or era.

In the language of their favorite and familiar melodies, the performers seemed to be talking to the audience. The academic monologues of Ildar Abdrazakov in the romances of Mussorgsky, Rachmaninov, and Glinka were juxtaposed with compositions by Alexandra Pakhmutova, Andrei

Petrov, and Gennady Gladkov. Ildar Abdrazakov came up with the idea of the program, and Alexander Sladkovsky corrected it:

“We decided not to burden the audience on the eve of the New Year and included in the program the works of the composers of our youth, whom we grew up on, which we sing, which our parents and our friends sang.”

The Russian National Orchestra conducted by Sladkovsky complemented the vocal program with instrumental pieces. The works of Kabalevsky, Prokofiev, Sviridov became separate sounding paintings of this musical kaleidoscope.

The maestro, with his usual sense of humor, noted: “It is not the content of this program that is dear to me, but the company, the



Russian National Orchestra. By some miracle, after many years, I have the good fortune to stand at the console of this orchestra again. Ildar Abdrazakov and I have managed to maintain friendly relations over the years since our long-standing acquaintance. We’ve performed on different stages many times, and it’s always an incredible energy explosion to be next to such a master and accompany him.”

For the first time, Ildar Abdrazakov gave a New Year’s concert as a People’s Artist of the Russian Federation, and for him it is not only an honor, but also a responsibility for the emotions and moods that he gives to the public.

The result was more than convincing. Before the concert, Alexander Sladkovsky promised that the snow that had fallen heavily in Moscow would melt from the intensity of the performers’ feelings and that he looked forward to the joy they would give to each other and the audience.

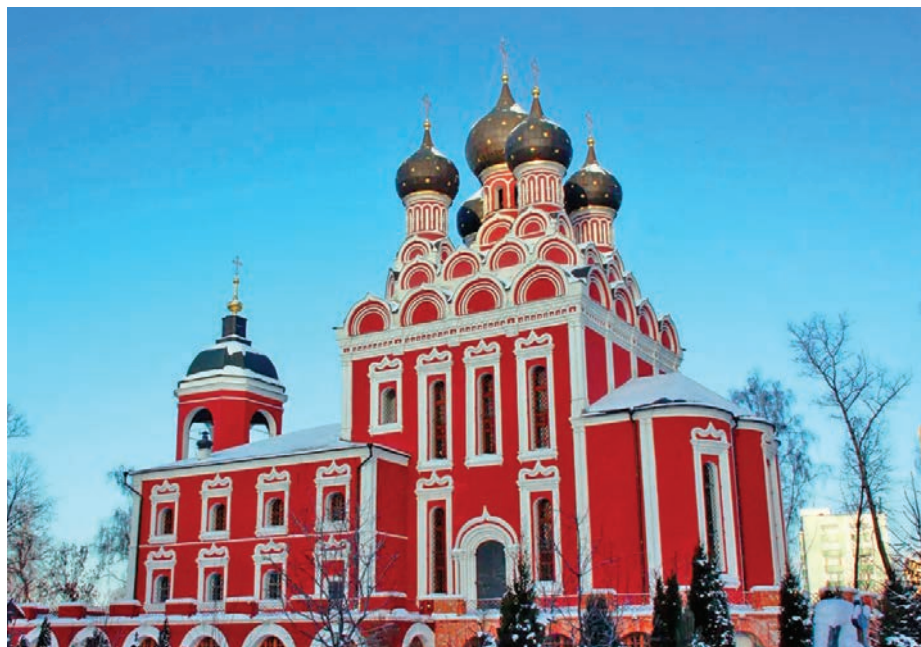
The storm of applause and enthusiastic shouts of “bravo” — the real ecstasy of the audience — convincingly confirmed that his premonitions were justified.



The Hero of Russian spirituality



Georgy Sviridov, one of Russia's most original composers, was born in the small county town of Fatezh, Kursk province. There were five churches in the town at that time, the ringing of whose bells awakened George's delicate hearing from infancy. Russian way of life with constant visits to the temple, prayer, the beauty of churches, Russian song, wonderful nature — everything nourished the young soul. He



music. The crimson sound filled my heart with jubilation."

According to Sviridov, one can study the breadth of the Russian character. There was a struggle in his soul, but the divine won, which largely determined his work.

The famous Russian singer Alexander Vedernikov, a close friend of the composer, recalls:

"Sviridov was an Orthodox man. Firstly, because he is Russian to the core, to the last molecule. (He hated everything that was hostile to Russia.) He did not perceive the Orthodox faith in a Talmudic way, but as a living idea that motivated the work of Russian geniuses at all times. He adhered to the true faith, not ostentatious. He carried his Faith in his soul."



Composer in Kursk

The composer lived a long life. He was born shortly before the revolutionary upheavals of 1917. He witnessed the fall of the Russian Empire, the formation, rise and collapse of the Soviet system, and the collapse of the USSR. He survived two revolutions, three wars, the NEP years, and the Stalin era.

Sviridov occupied a unique place in the cultural hierarchy of the official USSR. He was recognized by the authorities as the "main Russian composer" of the Soviet period, praising his Homeland, while maintaining deep inner spirituality and creative independence. His relations with the state were distinguished by a high degree of official recognition.

Sviridov was favored by the Soviet government, being one of the most titled composers of his time — People's Artist of the USSR, winner of the Stalin and Lenin Prizes. He was awarded the Order of Lenin four times and served as the first secretary of the Union of Composers of the Russian Federation.

Many of Sviridov's works became an integral part of Soviet culture. The main theme of the orchestral suite "Time, Forward!" was used as the screensaver of the "Vremya" news program.

The composer recalled how he received an offer from the famous director Mikhail Schweitzer to write music for his upcoming film: "And I came up with the idea, which immediately flashed through my mind with a sharp rhythmic formula, to make such a small film drama... In those years, I worked pretty fast,

and we made a new recording of music, written without taking into account time measurements, right there."

Although Sviridov received top prizes, his music was far from socialist realism.

His musical illustrations for the film "The Snowstorm" based on Pushkin's novel, whose poetry he turned to throughout his career, became a cultural phenomenon.:

"The desire for inner harmony, the consciousness of the high destiny of man — that's what sounds especially to me in Pushkin now. The great and eternal Pushkin does not belong exclusively to any time, each time sings it in its own way. Therefore, when composing music, I did not want to stylize it in the Pushkin era, but wrote in the language that I had developed. I also did not try to "modernize" Pushkin, to adapt him to express any "topical" thoughts, considerations, but only tried to follow him, to his unattainable height, as far as my strength would suffice."

At the age of nineteen, at a difficult time for a young musician, Georgy Sviridov began working on romances based on Pushkin's poems: "The Pushkin Cycle. One of my best things. It should be called "Poor Youth." That's exactly what my youth was like. Poor, destitute (since then I have always been resigned to poverty, I have never been offended by it, I have not complained), homeless... Only life itself, fate, and an unconscious hope in God promised hope."



In his diaries ("Music as Fate") and conversations, he often referred to the ideas of God and religious consciousness, which contradicted official atheism.

Sviridov remained in memory as a "Russian genius" of the Soviet



period, who managed to reconcile deeply popular, almost Orthodox creativity with official recognition from the Soviet state and remained an ardent patriot of Russia all his life:

"I am a Russian person!!! What else can I say?. I have Russian blood in me. I don't think I'm better than others, more wonderful, but that's who I am, a Russian person. And I'm proud of it."

First of all, I want to be understood by those who understand my native language. I knock on indifferent hearts, I want to reach them, wake them up to life, say my words about it, that life is not so bad, that there is a lot of hidden good, noble, pure,



fresh in it. I call on all of you to raise your voice in defense of our great culture, our great literature. I urge you: don't be ashamed of the fact that we are Russian people! I urge you from the height of your age, and don't be angry with me for saying this: we should be proud that we are Russian people! These words must finally resound in every heart of our compatriots, and then we will find ourselves.

Russia is a grandiose country, whose history and modern life are intricately intertwined with a wide variety of ideas, trends and influences. Her path is extremely complicated, not everything has been solved yet, she is always on the move, and we can only guess how her fate will turn out. Her story is

extraordinarily instructive, it is full of all sorts of achievements, great contradictions, mighty ups and is full of deep drama”.

The writer Valentin Rasputin:
“Just as a ploughman who sows and harvests a field, who does unceasingly forage, knows only one Russia and with this knowledge, this work does not allow it to disintegrate, so Georgy Vasilyevich in all periods of his work composed only one Homeland — with a thousand-year history, a song, bright, immortal...”

Alexander Vedernikov:
“Sviridov is like a powerful stream in the giant river of ours, created by the Russian geniuses of national musical culture. A



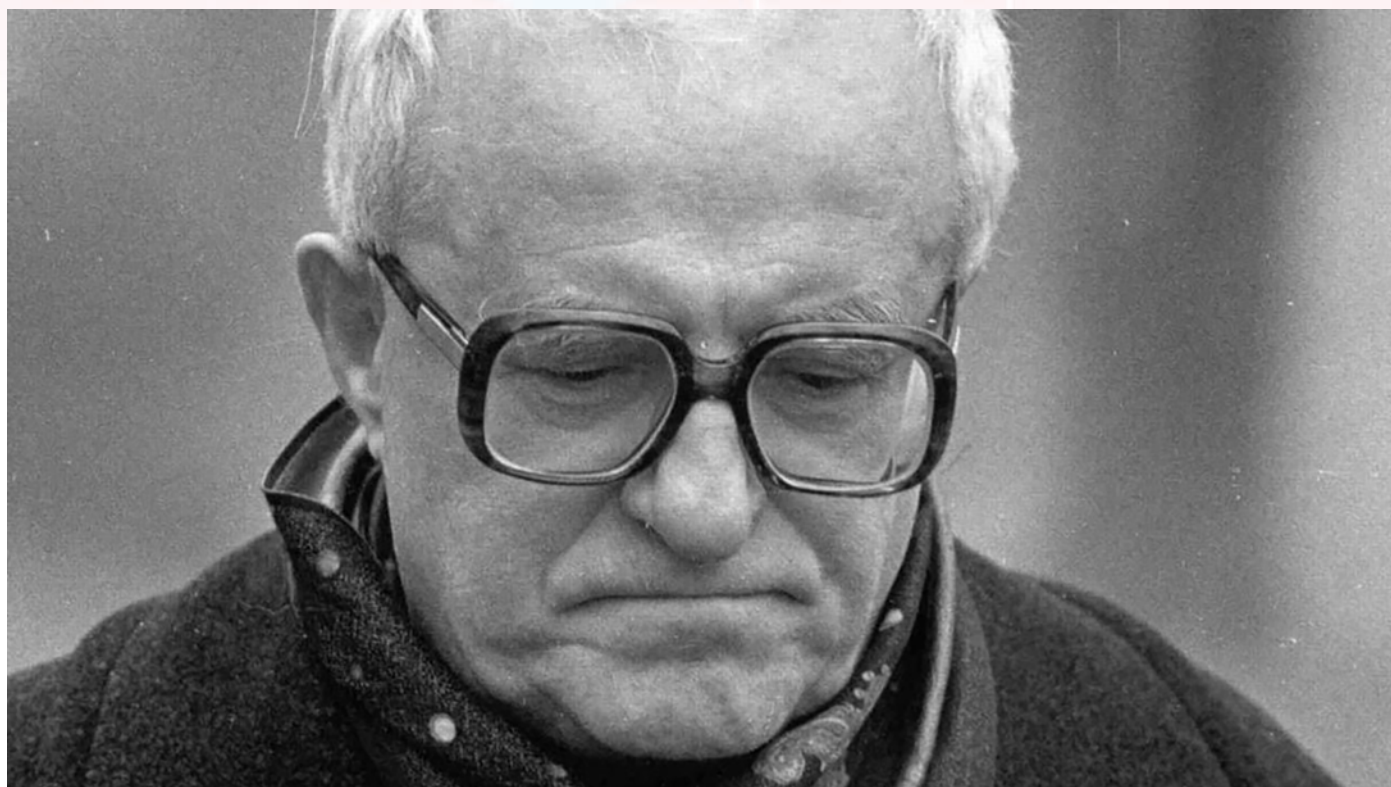
fresh, renewed stream that is inexhaustible, like this mighty river.”

Writer Valentin Rasputin:

“Like a ploughman who sows and harvests the field, who constantly works on the land, he knows only one Russia, and with this knowledge and this work, he prevents it from disintegrating. Similarly, Georgy Vasilyevich, throughout all periods of his creative work, composed only one homeland — a homeland with a thousand-year history, a homeland of songs, light, and immortality.”

Alexander Vedernikov:

“Sviridov is like a powerful stream in our gigantic river, created by the Russian geniuses of national musical culture. A fresh, renewed stream that is as inexhaustible as this mighty river.”



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Федор Достоевский
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Revelations of the Russian North Veliky Ustyug

Bishop Alexy of Vienna and Austria was the Most Holy Bishop of Velikoustyug and Totem for almost a year, but his memory preserves the blessed impressions and joyful memories he received in these parts, which His Eminence shared with the readers of the "International Dialogue" magazine.

If you drive north from Moscow along Yaroslavskoye Highway, you will begin to immerse yourself in the shrines of the Russian North. A short distance from Moscow, you are greeted by the monastery of the Abbot of the Russian Land, the Holy Trinity-Sergius Lavra. Next, the path leads past the holy, beautiful temples of ancient Russian architecture — in Pereslavl, Rostov the Great, Yaroslavl, on the way to which you can visit the Godenovsky Cross. Then we come to the Vologda region, which today is one of the first in the Russian Orthodox Church in terms of the number of saints. Reverend Kirill Belozersky, Nil Sorsky, Dmitry Prilutsky — just listing the names of the reverends would make a short article. Everything here is literally filled with the prayerful spirit of holy Russia.



Bishop Alexy at the Cathedral of St. Procopius of Ustyug

What do you remember about Veliky Ustyug?

The first and most striking impression is the grace of this place.

Veliky Ustyug is an ancient city of the Russian North, whose history dates back to the 12th century, when the Rostov-Suzdal princes came here and founded the Gleden fortress.

At the end of the XV century, Veliky Ustyug turned into an important trading center on the way from European Russia to Siberia. When establishing the "sovereign's lot", Ivan the Terrible included it among the oprichnina cities.

The city itself and its surroundings are one of the most beautiful places in the Vologda region and throughout Russia. Without exaggeration, Veliky Ustyug can be called a fabulous city, which is rightfully called the great.

Almost every evening I went for a walk in the city. There were no evening services on weekdays at the Cathedral of St. Prokopius of Ustyug, but it was enough for me to walk around the temple for ten or fifteen minutes, and I had the full feeling that I had attended a service.

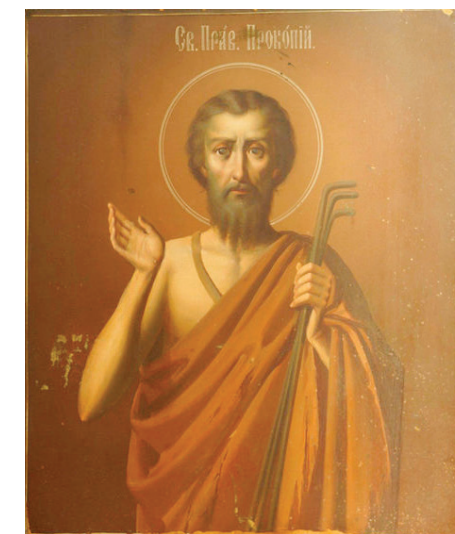
Of course, the Cathedral of Prokopius of Ustyug in the

Cathedral Courtyard, where the relics of this one of the greatest saints are located, played an important role in this, and if only to get closer to his holiness, it was worth being in Veliky Ustyug.

Saint Prokopius is a German from Lubeck, and a church in the Berlin and German dioceses of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad is named after him in Bavaria, in the city of Bischofsheim an der Rhen.

The Church of St. Prokopius has existed in Hamburg since 1965.

In the first half of the 13th century, during the days of



Novgorod's glory and power, a German merchant arrived one day with a rich cargo of goods, among the overseas trade guests who came every year in large numbers. At that time, no one could have imagined that this young merchant, raised in contentment and luxury and imbued from infancy with Catholic teaching hostile to Orthodoxy, would voluntarily decide to expose himself to all kinds of hardships and sufferings for the rest of his life, that with apparent lack of intelligence he would preserve wisdom and purity of heart, reach the height of moral perfection, become an ornament to the Orthodox Church, a great a miracle worker, defender and patron of his new fatherland. Prokopius was struck by the beauty of churches and monasteries, the ringing of bells, and the piety of the

people. Moved to the depths of his soul, he did not want to return to his homeland anymore, deciding to convert to Orthodoxy, and began to look for a person who could teach him the dogmas of faith and the statutes of the Orthodox Church. He was pointed out to the Khutyn monastery, where at that time the elder Varlaam Prokshinich lived, who, convinced of the sincerity of Prokopius' desire to convert to the Orthodox faith, began to teach him the commandments of God, the rules and regulations of the Orthodox Church. Instructed in the faith by Barlaam, Prokopius was baptized, distributed his possessions and began to work in the monastery.

After learning that a foreigner was working in the monastery, people began to go there specifically to look at him. Human fame, which had disturbed his humble heart, became an unbearable burden for him. Fearing to lose his heavenly glory because of her, Prokopius revealed to Elder Varlaam his spiritual sorrow and began to ask him for advice and blessing to retire somewhere where no one would know him. The elder sent his disciple on his way with prayer and blessing, and, without any means of subsistence, without even taking anything for the journey, Prokopius left the monastery in poor clothes. Wandering along the Sukhona



River, Prokopy reached Ustyug, where he undertook the arduous feat of foolishness for Christ's sake.

Over time, people discovered that there was a sanctity behind his foolishness. He always carried three pokers. If the poker was turned up, it means that the year will be good, if it is down— it will be bad. There were people he talked to. One of the highlights of his life was the stone cloud's aversion from Veliky Ustyug. Unexpectedly for everyone, he began to worry, called the people to prayer, and he himself prayed in front of the image, which is now called the "Annunciation of Ustyug." Now the icon itself is in the Kremlin, not in Veliky Ustyug.

The deliverance of Ustyug from the destruction of the stone-fire cloud was the most important of the many miracles of the righteous Prokopius. It happened in 1290, 13 years before his death. One Sunday afternoon, when there were many people in the cathedral, the fool suddenly addressed everyone with such an admonition: "The wrath of God is approaching! Repent, brothers, of your sins, and propitiate God with fasting and prayer, otherwise the city will perish from the hail of fire."

A week later, a terrible day came for the citizens of Ustyug: at noon, complete darkness fell from an impending black cloud, which horrified and confused Ustyug residents. Lightning flashed from all sides and terrible thunderclaps were heard. The ground beneath his feet began to move. It was only now that the townspeople realized how deep the abyss of their sinfulness was, which had brought down God's wrath, and realized the need for repentance. Everyone flocked to the temples and tearfully prayed to the Lord for mercy and aversion of misfortune. Blessed Prokopius, together with all the people, fell down before the icon of the Mother of God and prayed fervently for all those who had sinned. And then, in the cathedral church of Veliky Ustyug, a miraculous sign was publicly revealed from the holy image of



the Annunciation of the Most Holy Theotokos — fragrant myrrh exuded from the icon in abundance, which filled all the church vessels. At the same time, a change took place: the stifling heat disappeared, the lightning and thunder subsided, and the clouds parted. We soon learned that 20 versts from Ustyug, in Kotovalsky volost, red-hot stones fell with hail. There is a religious procession to this place because it is impossible to get there by car. There are still fire-baked stones there that are not peculiar to this area. Having arrived in Ustyug at the best of his age, blessed Prokopius reached a great old age, but remained cheerful in spirit and continued his amazing exploits with youthful fervor. He went to services every day, and the fact that he died was guessed by the fact that he did not come to the service that day. On July 21, the day of his death, snow fell, which only melted in the evening. And only at the place where he died, in front of the Arkhangelsk monastery, snow remained. The relics of Saint Prokopius are kept under a bushel, which protected them in Soviet times, and they were not damaged. Moving away from the holy gate to the end of the bridge, Prokopius lay down there and, making the sign of the cross around himself, folded his arms crosswise on his chest and prayerfully expired.

As if to ensure that his holy and long-suffering body would not be left without a veil, snow fell that same night, despite the summer season, and a snowdrift blew over the relics of Blessed Prokopius. Ustyug residents were amazed when they got up in the morning and saw houses and streets covered with snow. All the bread and vegetables were gone, they thought. But it was a hot, sunny day, and by evening the snow had melted without damaging anything. Meanwhile, the cathedral clergy noticed that, contrary to the constant custom that the blessed one had maintained for many decades, he was not in the church at morning singing, and they began to ask the



townspeople about him, but no one could say anything. Then they began to search for him all over the city, went to all the churches and could not find him anywhere. It was only on the fourth day that they found the holy body of the blessed one at the end of the bridge to the monastery, lying on the bare ground and covered with a snowdrift that served as a cover and still had not melted, whereas in other places it was already dry everywhere.

The stone on which he loved to sit on the riverbank, watch the passing boats and pray that they would not drown, formed the basis of the Cathedral of Prokopius of Ustyug, and it can be seen today. The cathedral was built around this stone.

When Prokopius came to Ustyug, the elderly spouses John and Mary were still alive, who earned the name of the righteous from their contemporaries. While fooling around in the city, he sometimes went to their house and talked to them about the benefits of the soul, which gave them unspeakable pleasure, since both he and the righteous couple, although in different ways, aspired to the same goal. Their relics are also located in Veliky Ustyug.

When Batu Khan swept through the southern parts of Russia in a devastating tornado, the northern princes realized that it was better to negotiate a shameful tribute than to allow complete ruin, as happened

with Kiev, Ryazan and others. Veliky Ustyug was one of the cities that paid tribute to the Mongol-Tatars, and was not subjected to the devastating invasion of nomads. A Basque named Buga was sent to the city to collect tribute. As a rule, the governors of the khan, by right of the strong, behaved absolutely unceremoniously and drove the people to hatred not only with extortion, but also with arrogant, cynical behavior. Buga behaved exactly the same way, which turned the townspeople against him. And when one day he forcibly took the beautiful young Maria, the daughter of noble and worthy parents, as his concubine, the patience of the people came to an end. The whole city rose up and moved to the house where Buga lived to kill him and free the girl. It is known that the Mongol-Tatars very rigidly established and maintained their own rules and ruthlessly punished cities if Baskaks were killed there. Maria knew this perfectly well and understood what would happen if Bug was killed. And the Lord gave this young girl the courage to commit a truly selfless act. She took Bug by the hand, went out to the armed men and said: “I love this man, and he is ready to become a Christian and marry me legally.” He confirmed her words: “Yes, I am ready.”

The name of St. Cyprian of Ustyug is also associated with Veliky Ustyug.

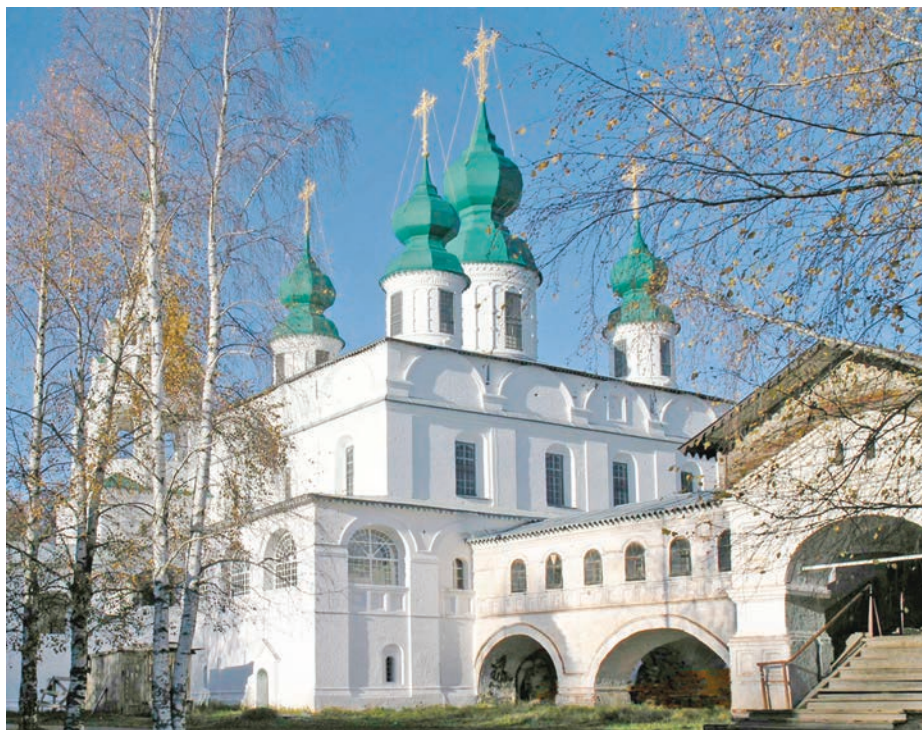


St. Cyprian of Ustyug was a rich landowner, but, despising the charms of the world, he assumed the angelic image with the name Cyprian in the monastery of the Holy Trinity in Gleden. The inhabitants of the newly founded city of Ustyug asked St. Cyprian to establish a monastery somewhere near the city. The Monk Cyprian, having walked around the city and examined the area, chose a place near the Lakes, behind the Ostrog scree, and first set up a cell, and from 1212 he began to build a monastery in honor of the entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the temple and a church in the name of Archangel Michael. The inhabitants of Ustyug, seeing the godly life of the ascetic, brought him everything necessary for the establishment of the monastery, and many began to asceticism together with St. Cyprian, who received everyone with joy and love. The holy monastery grew. St. Cyprian, in the words of the Ustyug chronicler, “was recognized as the head of the holy monastery and the shepherd of Christ’s flock,” but out of humility did not accept priestly dignity. The stone that served as his headboard testified to the monk’s exploits. During night prayers, the ascetic held it in his hands in order to stay awake and constantly in prayer.

The Mikhailo-Arkhangelsk Monastery for men is the oldest monastery in Veliky Ustyug.

The history of the monastery's main temple dates back almost eight centuries. The elegant and picturesque wooden Cathedral of Archangel Michael was one of the most interesting buildings in ancient Ustyug. The stone temple was built at the expense of the Ustyug merchant Nikifor Revyakin in 1653–1656.

The decoration of the interior of the Cathedral of Archangel Michael is a tall three-tiered carved gilded iconostasis of the XVII–XVIII centuries, which combines two styles — Baroque and classicism.



St. Michael the Archangel Monastery

In 1919, the Mikhailo-Arkhangelsk Monastery was closed, and until 1941, a concentration camp, a correctional labor house, an investigative department, a prison and a motor transport college were located on the territory of the monastery; there were machine tools in the refectory. One day, a man came

to the monastery and asked to be allowed into the refectory, where he found the corner where his cell had been located.

And how do people live in Veliky Ustyug?

The Russian North is an autonomous region where people live in harsh conditions and have a very special way of life.





Monument to Semyon Dezhnev

Ustyug residents have always been travelers. The residents of the city even got to America, and it took a whole year. We dragged boats through the passes, and then walked along the Arctic Ocean. In the Far East, they founded the city of Khabarovsk. There is also the city of Prokopyevsk, named after Saint Prokopius, with a population of 200,000 people.

In the center of Veliky Ustyug stands a monument to Semyon Dezhnev, an outstanding Russian mariner, explorer, traveler, and explorer of Northern and Eastern Siberia. He discovered the strait separating Asia and North America, which is now called the Bering Strait, although Semyon Dezhnev discovered it long before

Vitus Bering and thereby proved that America is an independent continent, and from Europe to China can be reached by the northern seas.

Ustyug is still a member of the Hanseatic League of Modern Times, an organization that aims, among other things, to develop cultural exchange.

Veliky Ustyug is a nature reserve city, one of the oldest cities in the Russian North, with a unique historical environment.

The war did not reach Veliky Ustyug, and for me, who grew up in Oryol, which was rebuilt and razed to the ground during the war, it was surprising to find myself in a city where there was no military action. But Ustyugans, of course, fought, and on May 9, fifteen thousand participated in the march of the Immortal Regiment, that is, half of the city. I was struck by this patriotic outburst.

And today there are heroes in the Vologda region. For example, Sergey Preminin, originally from Krasavino (just over 20 kilometers from Veliky Ustyug), who in 1986, at the age of 21, as a sailor on a nuclear-powered submarine off the coast of the United States, drowned it out at the cost of his own life after a fire broke out, preventing terrible consequences for the whole world. In the event



Sergey Preminin

of an explosion of a reactor containing ballistic missiles with nuclear charges, the coast of America would be affected by radiation, and ocean currents and winds would spread radioactive contamination across the Atlantic. Every year, Americans come to his symbolic grave on the shores of the Atlantic Ocean.

In the 17th and 18th centuries, the Cossacks formed in Veliky Ustyug, which played an important role in the development of Siberia and the protection of the northern borders of the Russian Empire. The Ustyuzha Cossacks participated in campaigns, land development and the organization of the postal service.

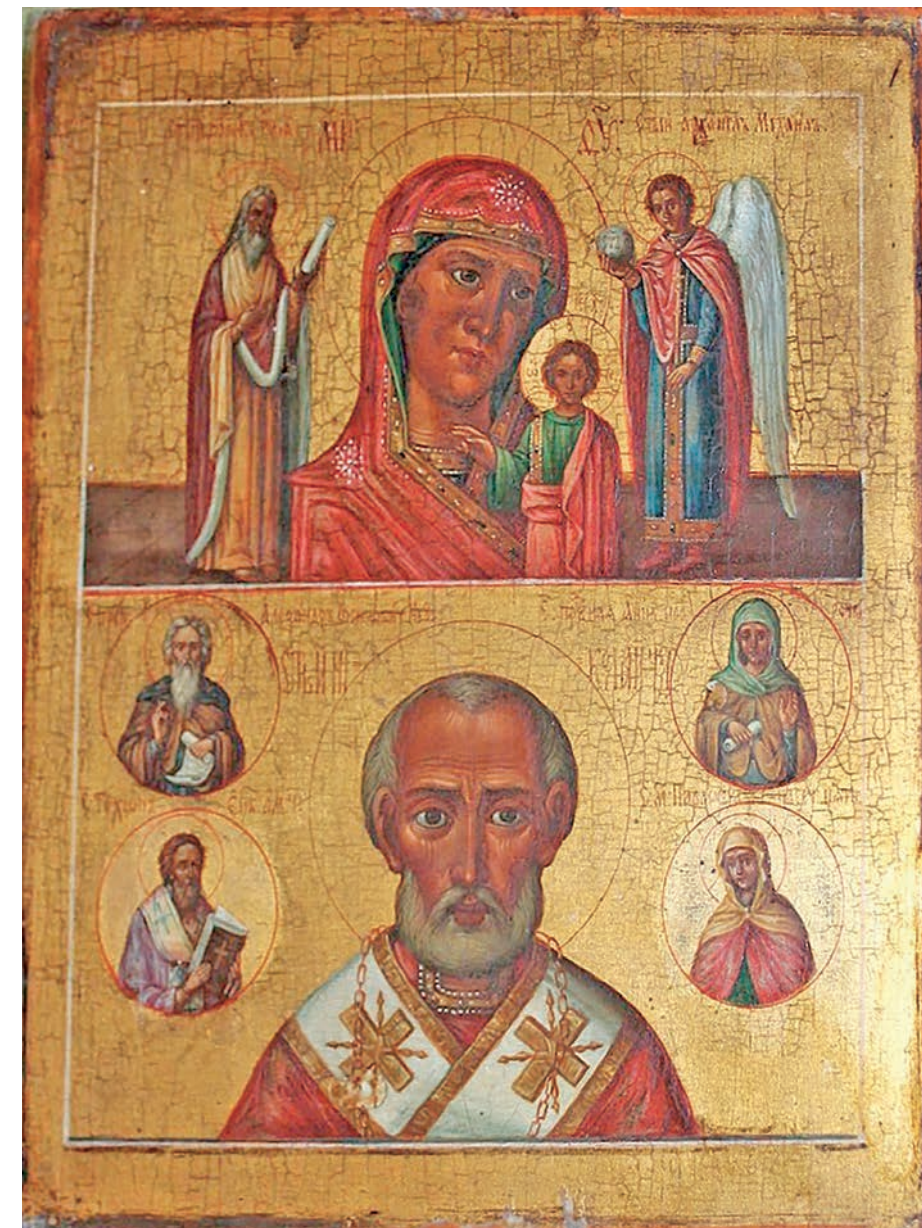
Currently, there are public Cossack organizations in the city that preserve cultural traditions and engage in patriotic education. Together with the city administration, these organizations managed to open a cadet corps, where 300 people are currently studying, and all of them are Orthodox. Parents even came to us and asked us to baptize the child, because they do not accept a cadet school without baptism. They live by the motto of the Russian officer's code of honor: "Soul to God, service to the Fatherland, honor to no one."

Ustyugans are similar in appearance, but when you start communicating, you realize that they have completely different personalities. People still have faith because there was less persecution of religion in Soviet times.

Have you ever experienced miraculous phenomena during the service in this blessed place?

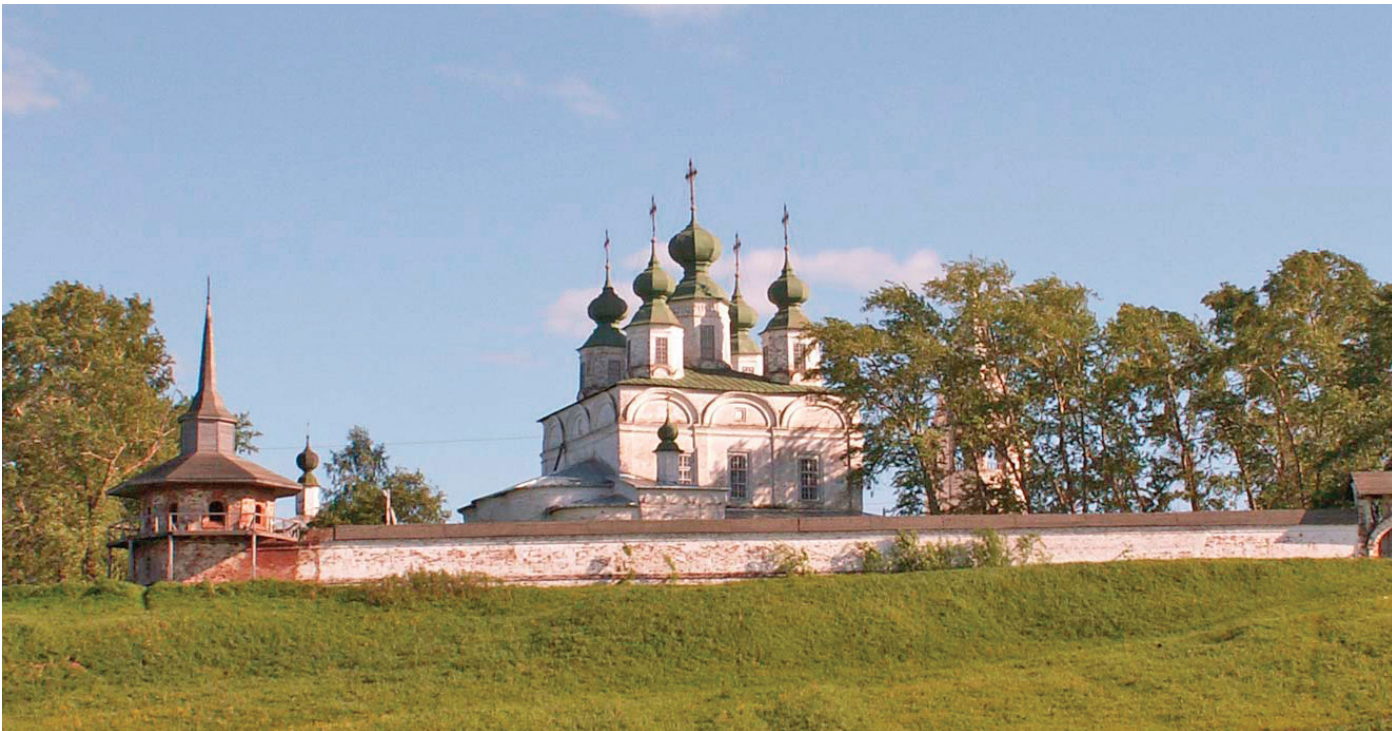
Yes, and this is due to the miraculous icon of Our Lady of Kazan, Dunilovskaya, attributed in the early 19th century to the Sretensky Cathedral in the city of Nikolsk, near Veliky Ustyug. Her iconography consists of two squares — the Mother of God and St. Nicholas.

During the revolution, they wanted to remove it and already



Icon of the Holy Mother of God of Kazan Dunilovskaya





Gleden Trinity Monastery



Iconostasis of the Cathedral of the Gleden Trinity Monastery

put it against the wall, but because of the gap it fell through the floor. Since they couldn't get it, the temple was closed, and only a twelve-year-old girl was able to enter there and take the icon with her. For seventy years, the icon was passed around, being in a different house every day, and so the icon was preserved. A temple was built in her honor in the place where the arrow that was fired for this purpose fell. We served the liturgy in this church, and then went to the place of the icon's appearance. It was in the summer. The sky is cloudless, the sun is shining, and they tell me to take an umbrella, it always rains there. I wondered where the rain would come from on a day like this. We arrived at the place, I start the akathist, and it starts to rain. From where? My hood is getting wet, and so are my clothes. After the akathist, I say a sermon. I finish it, and the rain stops instantly. The sun is shining again.

The city has a very beautiful architecture. Wonderful temples in the Old Russian style, which I really appreciate.



In Ustyug, any temple is a masterpiece. Nearby is the Gledensky Monastery. Gleden is the ancient name of Ustyug. When the Sukhona River changed its course, the city fell into disrepair because it lost the river where ships had to be unloaded. However, the

Trinity-Gledensky Monastery remained. There is no monastic life there yet, but it remains as an architectural monument. There is an iconostasis in the Italian style, completely unexpected for these places, which would do honor to any temple.

Veliky Ustyug has the residence and post office of Santa Claus, and this tourist destination is actively developing. Tourists go there, and it generates income. But it is extremely important to me that people, through this trip to Santa Claus, can come into contact with deep spirituality.



Bishop Alexy with the clergy of the Veliky Ustyug and Totem Diocese bevor his departure

Общество Дружбы с Австрией



The regional public organization “Society for Friendship with Austria” (ODA) was established in 2013. Among its members are reputable figures of science and culture, heads of public organizations, representatives of public diplomacy. The President is Alexander Nikolaevich Pronin.

Russia’s dialogue with European countries has now acquired special importance, and the role of organizations designed to maintain bilateral contacts with Austria and help implement various international events in both countries cannot be overestimated.

The Russian Society for Friendship with Austria is an example of how to build good-neighborly relations.

Oleg Atkov, an honorary president of the Society for Friendship with Austria, is a Soviet cosmonaut, Hero of the Soviet Union, cardiologist, scientist and public figure.

The ODA consolidates public, youth, and cultural Russian-Austrian ties, striving to strengthen Russia’s positive image abroad.

Much attention is paid to memorial and patriotic work with compatriots and citizens of the Republic of Austria who advocate for the intensification of multilateral European cooperation based on public diplomacy; measures are being taken to preserve the historical heritage in Austria related to the liberation of Europe from Nazism.

Interstate projects, competitions and Olympiads are being implemented to support the Russian language and culture in Austria and promote cultural exchange. We are working with Austrian educational institutions where they study Russian, and with foreign schools in Russia.

Special attention is paid to initiatives related to literature, art, and music, which contributes to the support of international humanitarian dialogue.

The task of the ODA is to build a friendship bridge between Russia and Austria.

