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People of the Past and Present. Magazine *Stolitsa i usad'ba*, the Russian Nobility and Its Self-Presentation in the Final Years of the Tsarist Regime¹

*Abstract: As a ruling class for centuries, the nobility created a complex system of symbols and rituals which jointly formed the (political) culture in Russia. Especially during the second half of the 19th century, the position of the nobility was gradually but substantially being changed. Russian society evolved towards a civic society, mainly as a consequence of the Great Reforms of the 1860s. The nobility, traditionally the most prominent social estate (soslovie), was confronted with the emancipation of the serfs, the emergence of the middle-class and its rising influence. Therefore the dominant public role of the nobility was challenged. The article is focused on the public role of the Russian nobility in the final years of the tsarist regime. The author analyzes several ways of the nobility self-presentation towards the public and tries to answer the question how far the “portrait of the nobility” was real or imagined. The analysis is based on various primary sources, foremost on the magazine *Stolitsa i usad'ba* (City and Country Estate). The magazine, designed as a magazine of “beau monde”, was published between 1913 and 1917. It tried to present the crucial role of the nobility in Russia’s past and show its importance in the political, social and cultural life. Nonetheless such a presentation was full of contradictions. The publishers declared that the magazine was “non-political” and “non-class specific” but with the emphasis on the nobility and its distinctive role in the past and present it could hardly compete with the values of the lower classes. Even if the nobility had been able to cooperate with the industrialists and educated classes and create a new civic elite, for the peasants, it would have remained the old enemy. The lower classes refused to accept the elite as a whole, and the cultural scenario presented by *Stolitsa i usad'ba* had no future in revolutionary Russia.*

Key words: Russia – nobility – First World War – country estate – everyday life

1 The article is a revised version of the paper presented at the annual BASEES Conference 2014 (Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge). I am very grateful to Miloš Hořejš (Národní technické museum Praha / National Technical Museum, Prague), Michael Hughes (Lancaster University), George Gilbert (University of Southampton) and Matthew Rendle (University of Exeter) for their comments, and especially to Hana Šánělová (University Pardubice) for her thorough revision of the English text.

The second half of the 19th century in Russia was a period of gradual transformation of the estate society into a class and civic society. The abolition of serfdom, together with other reforms of Alexander II, was a crucial step starting this process. The nobility, a privileged estate, had to compete with the new situation. To what extent it was able to do it still remains the subject of debate among historians.² In this article, I do not want either to analyze this discussion or examine the process of disintegration of the nobility as a distinctive estate in detail. In the introduction, I only confine myself to a few summarizing statements.

The estate system (*sosloviia*) formally existed in Russia until the revolution of 1917. The nobility remained the first and privileged estate, but many of its hereditary privileges disappeared over the years. Hence we can identify with Seymour Becker's opinion: "*Estate consciousness was rapidly disappearing among the remaining noble landowners, and class consciousness was developing in its place.*"³ For the same reason, I believe for the nobility it is appropriate to adopt the definition of elite used by Dominic Lieven. At the beginning of the 20th century, especially after 1905, the nobles converged with other elite groups; in Lieven's words:

*"There were signs of growing cohesion within the elites. Nobles and industrialists were grouping themselves in the United Nobility on the one hand and the Congresses of Representatives of Trade and Industry on the other. The various sections of the elite were also organizing themselves in the Dumas, whose establishment brought central government and the provincial zemstvo nobility close together. It would be naïve to expect all the conflicts between government, nobles, industrialists and intelligentsia to be resolved within seven years merely by the creation of a parliamentary system. But the first step to resolving these conflicts lay through the organization of interest groups and parliamentary factions. Even in 1914 the form unity might take shadowy but nevertheless discernible."*⁴

2 The discussion was/is focused on the "decline of the Russian nobility". See Roberta T. MANNING, *The Crisis of the Old Order in Russia: Gentry and Government*, Princeton 1982; Seymour BECKER, *Nobility and Privilege in Late Imperial Russia*, Illinois 1985; with significantly different conclusions than Manning. Closer to Becker is Dominic LIVEN, *The Aristocracy in Europe, 1815–1914*, New York 1993. For a shortened version of his arguments, see D. LIEVEN, *The Elites*, in: *The Cambridge History of Russia*, vol. 2, Cambridge 2006, pp. 227–244. On Russian/Soviet side, see especially Avenir P. KORELIN, *Dvorianstvo v poreformennoi Rossii 1861–1904 gg., Sostav, chislennost', korporativnaia organizaciia*, Moscow 1979; Ekaterina P. BARINOVA, *Rossiiskoe dvorianstvo v nachale XX veka. Ekonomicheskii status i sotsiokul'turnyj oblik*, Moscow 2008. Barinova's conclusions about the chance of the nobility to survive the decline are rather skeptical.

3 S. BECKER, *Nobility and Privilege*, p. 173.

4 D. LIEVEN, *The Aristocracy in Europe*, p. 225.

The aristocracy on the one hand ceased to be a clearly defined estate and was divided and subjected to both external and internal pressures. On the other hand, the new class and civic consciousness was not common to all nobles. The definition of a nobleman as an exceptional person standing above others was still alive.⁵ I believe that the estate consciousness of the nobility did not totally disappear. The estate character (*soslovnyi kharakter*) of Russian society was important for many nobles, and they regarded this model of the organization of society valid even at the beginning of the 20th century.⁶ After all, in *The Union of the United Nobility (Soiuz ob'edinennogo dvorianstva)*, the organization which has already been mentioned, was not entirely clear whether it is an estate or class organization.⁷ Although it represented rather members of the conservative part of the nobility, it was not internally united.

This inconsistency was also reflected in the self-presentation of the nobility. On the one hand, the nobility showed its transformation into a new social class in which the origin and hereditary privilege did not play a vital role; on the other hand, this self-presentation contained visible nostalgia for the “old days” of serfdom, symbolized by the noble country estates.

Just as each person has their own rituals and confesses personal values and preferences, there are rituals and values shared by individual social groups or by society entirely. Each group is defined through these rituals and values creating their identity and presents itself to the other groups.⁸ In the first part of the article, I deal with the issue of what position the nobility reserved in Russian society, how it saw itself and what image it created and then presented to society. Self-presentation of the nobility is shown on the basis of the magazine *Stolitsa i usad'ba*. In the second part, I would like to point out the fundamental differences between the mentality of the nobility and the peasantry and thus prove that the values promoted by the nobility could hardly resonate in a wider society. Here, I use other primary sources, mostly the noble's memoirs and diaries which

5 A. P. KORELIN, *Dvorianstvo*, p. 22.

6 Count Sergei Dmitrievich Sheremetev (1844–1918) was such an archetypal conservative, patriarchal nobleman. See Douglas SMITH, *The Former People. The Last Days of the Russian Aristocracy*, London 2013, pp. 35–37. For further positive assessment of the estate society, see Alexei V. OBOLENSKY, *Moi vospominaniia*, Stockholm 1961, p. 41.

7 S. BECKER, *Nobility*, pp. 162–166, 168–169. Further on the United Nobility, see: Geoffrey A. HOSKING – Roberta T. MANNING, *What Was the United Nobility?*, in: Leopold H. Haimson (ed.), *The Politics of Rural Russia, 1905–1914*, Bloomington 1979, pp. 142–183.

8 David Cannadine's *Introduction*, mainly in its first part, offers an excellent discussion about rituals, symbols and power in monarchies, although it is not focused on Russia. David CANNADINE – Simon PRICE (edd.), *Rituals of Royalty. Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies*, Cambridge 1992, pp. 1–19. See also very inspiring collection of essays: Eric HOBSBAWM – Terence RANGER (edd.), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge 1983.

are the key to understanding the intellectual world of the aristocracy; especially, the memoirs of Princess Lydia Vasilchikova, which are full of insightful comments on the nobility/peasantry relations and the fatal discrepancies in the life values of both social classes.⁹

Nobility and its self-presentation: magazine *Stolitsa i usad'ba*

Publishing magazines “from life” was one possible form of the noble’s self-presentation. In the autumn of 1913, a new magazine *Stolitsa i usad'ba* was established in St. Petersburg. Vladimir Pimenovich Krymov (1878–1968), a journalist and writer, was the chief editor of the magazine.¹⁰ He succumbed to the charm of the countryside and peasant farming while studying at the Academy of Agriculture in 1901 and visiting various estates during his student practice. Then his interest in *usad'ba* (*estate*) started. He made extensive social contacts among the writers in St. Petersburg (M. Gorky, V. Rozanov) and was attracted by high society. Krymov was known among the aristocracy living in the capital, including the members of the Romanov family (e. g. he had an acquaintance with Grand Duke Andrei Vladimirovich) and maintained close relationships with Fyodor Vladimirovich von Shlippe, the Moscow Marshal of the Nobility.

The magazine was usually published monthly or bi-weekly, printed in a large format on high quality paper and richly illustrated (picture nr. 1). It was very much appreciated by bibliophiles, and the best St. Petersburg photographers (A. N. Pavlovich, Ya. V. Shteinberg, A. E. Belyaev) worked for it.¹¹ Many experts contributed to the magazine regularly: Nikolai Osipovich Lerner, a literary historian and expert on Pushkin, art historians Georgii K. Lukomskii (author of many texts on the history of country estates) and Ivan I. Lazarevskii (author of texts on the history of art collecting), and bibliographer Vasily A. Vereshchagin. Fiction writers popular for their light “gallant style”: Nikolai Ya. Agnivcev, Yuri D. Belyaev, Baron Nikolai V. von der Osten-Drizen (editor of bulletin *Vestnik Imperatorskikh Teatrov*), Yevgeny A. Znosko-Borovsky (also a well-known chess master) and A. Ya. Levinson belonged to the authors, too. Chief-editor Krymov specialized in reports from the upper classes. The last issue (Nr. 89–90) of the magazine was published on September 30, 1917. Why did the magazine cease to exist? According

9 Lydia VASILCHIKOVA, *Ischeznuvshaia Rossiia. Vospominaniia kniagini Lidii Leonidovny Vasilchikovoi 1886–1919*, St. Petersburg 1995.

10 A. B. USTINOV, *Krymov, Vladimir Pimenovich*, in: *Russkie pisateli 1800–1917*, vol. 3, Moscow 1994, pp. 184–185; *Rossiiskoe zarubezhie vo Frantsii 1919–2000, Biograficheskii slovar'*, vol. 1, A–K, Moscow 2008, p. 766.

11 The first Russian printed color photograph was published in the nr. 26, 20. 1. 1915.

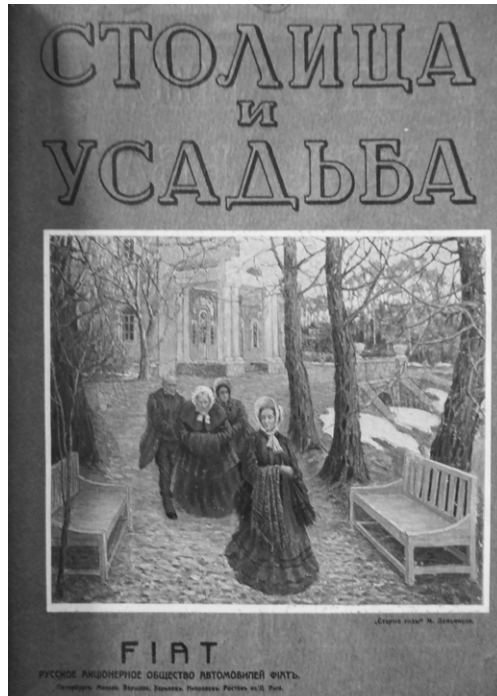


Fig. 1: The front page of *Stolitsa i usadba*, no. 1, 15. 12. 1913.

to Krymov, everything was over at that time. He saw and heard Lenin at one of the public meetings and concluded that the only option was to leave Russia.¹² On April 11, Krymov and his wife left Petrograd and started a journey around the world. Very likely, the shortage of material was a reason too; there was only low quality paper, no printer and not enough articles and illustrations in the September 1917 issue.¹³

What was the motive for publishing the magazine? In the first edition on the 15th December 1913, the editorial informed the readers:

“All newspapers have chronicles of accidents, but no one writes about the happy moments of life. Life is full of evil; there is much more sadness than happiness, but there is also good and beauty; however, it is not common to write about a beautiful life ... We print a portrait of an interesting man, his home, his elegant things, we write about the way of his life only when he dies, if he is

12 Vladimir KRYMOV, *Portrety neobychnykh liudei*, Paris 1971, p. 252.

13 I consider useful to mention that it is not easy to find original copies of *Stolitsa i usadba*. Outside Russia, it is only possible in specialized Slavonic libraries. Most of the issues, except the latest ones from 1917, I studied at the Slavonic Library in Prague. The latest copies are not available in Prague, but I found them in the Russian National Library in Moscow.

a victim of a train accident or takes part in a judicial process! Perhaps if somebody is active in public affairs, he has such a privilege, but not all interesting people work in this sphere, there are many others as well.

Foreign press – especially in England, a country with the most advanced culture – finished with this principle a long time ago. British newspapers publish not only obituaries, but they also write about joyous births, balls, hunts etc.

There is so little happiness in life that it seems necessary to talk about it as much as possible. The recent Russian country estate with its specific life has gone. City life is changing rapidly, some things are becoming better and others are vanishing... How many works of art, inspiration, human thoughts, noble traditions, and beautiful antiques have already died in those old estates, homes, objects that have already been destroyed by time or by man himself? A beautiful life is not available to everyone, but it does exist; it creates specific values which cannot be shared. We would like to capture the sketches of Russian life in the past and gradually draw a picture of what has left, what is now, what is changing, and emphasize the beautiful present. This is the editor's task. Politics, party affiliation or class hatred will be totally alien to the magazine."¹⁴

Therefore the editorial was full of nostalgia for the old days and effort to preserve the memories of the beauty of the past. Although the editorial did not mention the nobility directly, the focus on it was undeniable. The history of country estates was mainly the history of the nobility, so the magazine focused on the noble country estates with splendor manor houses or luxurious houses in the cities. Each issue of the magazine had a section entitled *Country-Estate in the Past and Present* (*Usadba v proshlom i nastoiashchem*) with a detailed description of its history and a lot of pictures.¹⁵

Really no difference was made in the approach to the owners of the residences. The choice was varied and random, mostly depending on the willingness of the owners. However, the owners themselves expressed their interests more than once. Affiliations to different political parties did not play a role. In one of the issues, the country estate Andrejevskoe was depicted (picture nr. 2); it was the property of Prince Anatoly A. Kurakin, a member of the conservative monarchist organization Russkoe Sobranie (the Russian Assembly) and a member of the State Council who belonged to the rightist faction.¹⁶ Another time, it was the country estate Gremiach (the Chernigov province) of Prince

14 *Stolitsa i usadba*, nr. 1, 15. 12. 1913, p. 4.

15 Nobles themselves were often authors of the articles. In the first issue, Alexander Stolypin, brother of the assassinated Prime Minister Petr Stolypin, wrote an article about their family country-estate Srednikovo. Baroness Sof'ia Bel'gard (born 1855) wrote an article about the country estate Maklec (the Tula province) belonging to her sister, Baroness Olga Vladimirovna Frederiks (1859–1920). See *Stolitsa i usadba*, nr. 71, 1. 12. 1916, pp. 3–5.

16 *Stolitsa i usadba*, nr. 49, 1. 1. 1916, pp. 10–11 (author of the article: Baron N. V. Drizen).



Fig. 2: The country estate Andreevskoe, property of Prince Alexei A. Kurakin, in Yaroslavl province (source: *Stolitsa i usadba*, no. 49, 1. 1. 1916, p. 10).

Vasily D. Golitsyn, the director of the Rumiantsev Museum and the man who stayed rather outside politics.¹⁷

There was no distinction between the old aristocracy and the new nobility. The articles about the country estate Sharovka (the Kharkov province), belonging to Baron Leopold Kenig, the owner of sugar refineries (picture nr. 3),¹⁸ and Natal'ievka, the property of sugar magnate Paul I. Kharitonenko, are good examples. Natal'ievka (picture nr. 4) was a new country estate, given as a model of contemporary and positive effort to make the country life "comfortable and beautiful".¹⁹ Natal'ievka could serve as proof that the exclusive world of the aristocracy was more open to the new nobility and industrialists,

17 *Stolitsa i usadba*, nr. 50, 15. 1. 1916, pp. 3–5.

18 *Stolitsa i usadba*, nr. 26, 26. 1. 1915, pp. 3–8.

19 *Stolitsa i usadba*, nr. 32, 15. 4. 1915, pp. 4–9. Natal'ievka was founded by Ivan Gerasimovitch Kharitonenko (1822–1891) and named after his youngest daughter, Natal'ia, who married Count Peter Stenbok (divorce 1907), and later Prince Mikhail Gorchakov (wedding 24th November 1907).

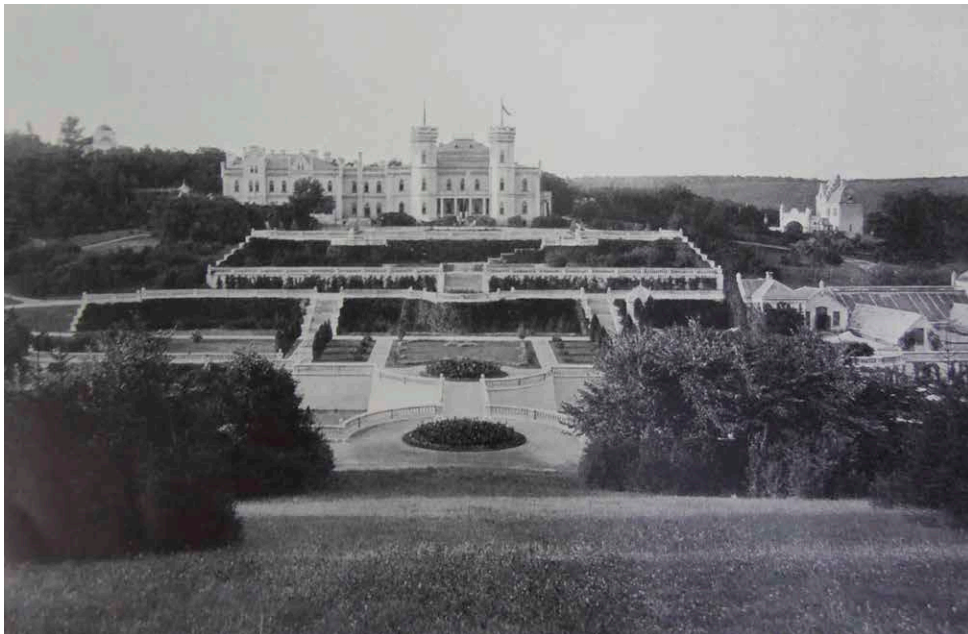


Fig. 3: The Sharovka estate, property of Baron Leopold Kenig, in Kharkov province
(source: *Stolitsa i usadba*, No. 26, 20. 1. 1915, p. 3).

who were undoubtedly a part of the Russian social elite (the Kharitonenko family was only elevated into the hereditary nobility in 1899).

Last but not least, presentations of different country estates were also a celebration of the Russian Empire. Besides country estates in central Russia, manor houses in the Ukraine, the Baltic countries and Finland were depicted. The Russian owners of estates were celebrated as “promoters of Russian culture” in the empire borderlands. Prince Alexei V. Obolensky, the owner of the estate at Lake Saimaa in Finland (picture nr. 5), and his wife were hailed as “pioneers of the implementation of the beautiful Russian culture in the region”.²⁰

Other sections of the magazine were focused on various aspects of a noble life with obvious inspiration by the lifestyle of the British aristocracy.²¹ In his memoirs, Krymov stated: “I decided to publish a magazine modeled after the English ones.”²² England was

20 *Stolitsa i usadba*, nr. 14–15, 1. 8. 1914, pp. 15–17.

21 See the discussion about the copying of the English aristocratic life-styles in: D. LIEVEN, *Aristocracy in Europe*, chapter 7, “Life, Manners, Morals”, pp. 134–158.

22 V. KRYMOV, *Portrety neobychnykh liudei*, p. 241



Fig. 4: Nataľievka, country house of Pavel I. Kharitonenko, in Kharkov province
(source: *Stolitsa i usad'ba*, no. 32, 15. 4. 1915, p. 6).

admired as a country with the most advanced culture, and *Stolitsa i usad'ba* followed magazine *The Ladies Field*, published in London since 1881, in many ways. *The Ladies Field* was more aimed at a female audience and focused mainly on the contemporary life of the upper class, while *Stolitsa i usad'ba* was more interested in history and art history. *The Ladies Field* had a fashion section, missing in the Russian magazine. However, the basic scheme of both magazines was very similar. Another English magazine – *Country Life* also served as a model, and the section about auctions was inspired by the chronicle of *The Burlington Magazine*. Similar “upper-class” magazines were published in various European countries, e. g. *The Sketch* in the United Kingdom (between 1893 and 1959) or *Sport und Salon: Illustrierte Zeitschrift für die vornehme Welt* in Austria-Hungary (between 1898 and 1918). However, *Stolitsa i usad'ba* made no references to foreign magazines (with the exception of *The Ladies Field* and *The Burlington Magazine*).

Almost every issue of *Stolitsa i usad'ba* contained reports relating to the tsarist court (e.g. the appointment of new ladies-in-waiting, court dignitaries etc.) and the social life of the nobility in St. Petersburg and Moscow, including photos of engaged couples and

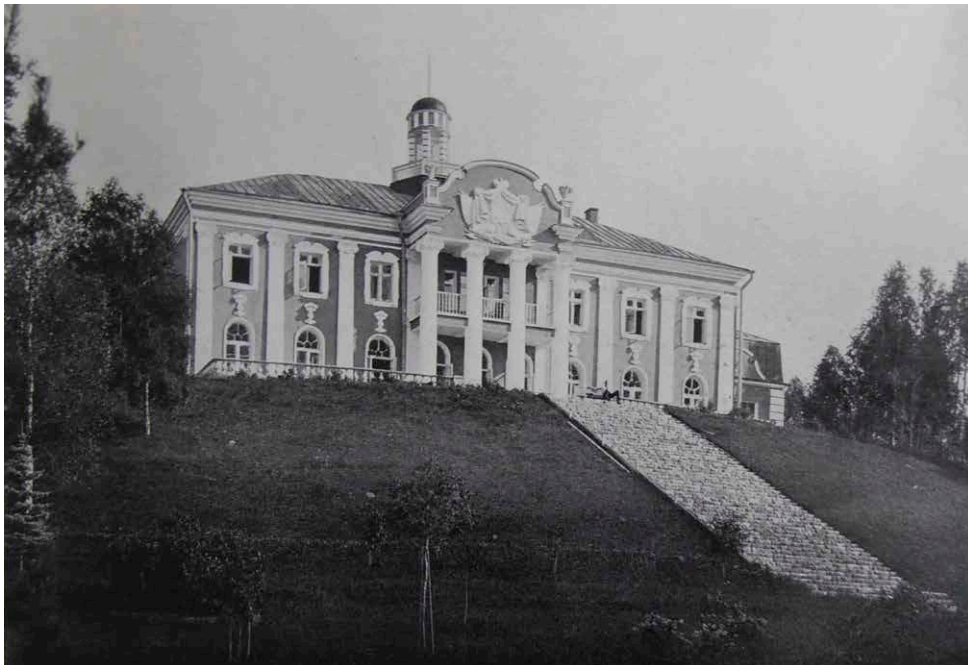


Fig. 5: The country house of Prince Alexei V. Obolensky, on the lake Saimaa in Finland
(source *Stolitsa i usadba*, no. 14-15, 1. 8. 1914, p. 17).

newlyweds, reports about marriage anniversary celebrations, balls, parties, and events in noble clubs (the Imperial Yacht Club in St. Petersburg, established in 1846, or the English Club in St. Petersburg, established in 1770). Reports on the city life alternated with images of the countryside. Photos of “pets” (picture nr. 6) showed another part of the nobility private life. Since the first edition, articles about foreign embassies, starting with the French one, were published. Chronicles of the life of high society, sections about sports, tourism and art collecting, as well as the part about history and present of the Russian theatre and famous Russian actresses, were almost obligatory for each issue. Articles about gypsies and the gypsy culture represented a special but frequent topic.

Hunting was a traditional activity which underlined the social exclusivity of the nobility (picture nr. 7). Simultaneously, the magazine showed more civil and contemporary leisure activities, especially sport. Sport activities were seen as a sign of a modern life, and the nobles were involved in a number of sports.²³ The most attention was devoted

23 For the growing popularity of sports activities among the nobility, see Louise MCREYNOLDS, *Russia at Play. Leisure Activities at the End of the Tsarist Era*, Ithaca – London 2003, Chapter 3, pp. 76–112.



Fig. 6: “Our darlings”. Mrs. von Shulman with her pets – Japanese Chin ‘Sadayako’ and Siberian tiger ‘Murik’ (source: *Stolitsa i usadba*, no. 10, 15. 5. 1914, p. 21).

to tennis, horse riding, sailing, chess, and sport shooting (*tir au pigeons*). The first issue of the magazine published a photo of Count Mikhail Nikolaevich Sumarokov-Elston, a Russian tennis champion (picture nr. 8).²⁴

Again, referring to the “English habits”, readers were encouraged to travel. Editor Krymov wrote: “*The Russians go but do not travel.*”²⁵ The reports about exotic countries should have been an inspiration: Egypt and Sudan, Southeast Asia, French Polynesia. The growing popularity of motor sports among the upper class was related to modern tourism. To be modern meant to own a car. Even Tsar Nicholas II, after some hesitation, became a devotee of cars.²⁶ *Stolitsa i usadba* regularly published advertisings for cars, mostly of English and American production (Napier, Packard). This was not surprising

24 *Stolitsa i usadba*, nr. 1, 15. 12. 1913, p. 23.

25 *Stolitsa i usadba*, nr. 11, 1. 6. 1914, p. 20.

26 His aide-de-camp Prince Orlov was a great promoter of motor sport in Russia and the tsarist court spent large sums on new cars. See Igor V. ZIMIN, *Povsednevnaia zhizn' Rossiiskogo imperatorskogo dvora: vtoroia chetvert' XIX – nachalo XX v. Vzroslyi mir imperatorskikh rezidentsii*, St. Petersburg 2010.



Fig. 7: „After the hunt“. Bear hunting at the estate of Count Illarion I. Vorontsov-Dashkov (source: *Stolitsa i usadba*, no. 19-20, 10. 10. 1914. p. 18).

in the context of European nobility because aristocrats became the pioneers of motoring very often. The ownership of a car was the sign of social exclusiveness and also modernity, as a car was commonly considered to be a revolutionary means of transport.²⁷

The First World War broke out relatively shortly after the magazine had been founded. The war significantly influenced the life of the Russian nobility. The officer corps of the army was still considerably recruited from the nobility and there was hardly any noble family whose members would not have somehow been dragged into war events.²⁸ The elite regiments of the Imperial Guard, composed almost exclusively of nobles, were deployed on the front in the early stage of the war and suffered terrible losses during the fall of 1914 and summer of 1915. Noblewomen were engaged in charitable activities,

27 For Austria-Hungary, see: Miloš HOŘEJŠ – Jiří KRÍŽEK, *Zámek s vůní benzínu. Automobily a šlechta v českých zemích do roku 1945* [Castles with a Scent of Petrol. Cars of Aristocrats in the Czech Lands up to 1945], Prague 2016. The enormous popularity of the motoring among the British aristocrats is well documented in: *Samochody wytwornego towarzystwa. Miodowe lata angielskich automobili 1902–1905. Automobiles of English High Society. The Honeymoon Years 1902–1905*, Kraków 2007. See also the journal *The Car Illustrated: a journal of travel by land, sea and air* published in the United Kingdom since 1902.

28 In 1912, there were 45,582 officers in the Russian military. Just over 51 % were from the hereditary nobility. The majority of generals (87 %) and colonels (71 %) remained nobles, but among lower ranks the number varied from a low of 40 % in the infantry to a high of 75 % in the cavalry. See Peter KENEZ, *A Profile of the Prerevolutionary Officer Corps*, *Canadian Slavic Studies* 7, 1973, pp. 129, 132.



Fig. 8: „Sport in Russia“. Photo of the Count Mikhail N. Sumarokov-Elston, the Russian champion in tennis, is in the center of the page (source: *Stolitsa i usadba*, no. 1, 15. 12. 1913)

managed the Red Cross units and served in field hospitals.²⁹ War patriotism and public service of the nobility belonged to the main topics of *Stolitsa i usadba* since August 1914. The magazine introduced new sections: *Petrograd in the Time of War*, *Moscow in the Time of War* and *Province in the Time of War*. Photos of noblewomen, as nurses, stimulated patriotism, and estate houses were shown in their new role of makeshift hospitals. The nobility was presented as a patriotic class working for the welfare of the country (picture nr. 9).

Creating the image of a rural idyll continued despite the war. Reports about life on country estates showed the union between the nobility and Russian countryside.

²⁹ Two of Princess Vasilchikova`s brothers (Vladimir and Dmitry, who was killed in 1917) served in the army, the third brother (Boris) did not because he was a District Marshal of the Nobility. Her husband, Prince Illarion Vasilchikov, served in the army as a volunteer until the State Duma reopened its sessions in 1915 (he was a member of the State Duma); his brother Georgii was killed on the front in 1916. L. VASILCHIKOVA, *Ischeznuvshaia Rossiia*, p. 279.



Fig. 9: “Military hospital of Countess Nadezhda A. Kapnist”. Countess Kapnist is standing, her daughter Margareta Petrovna is sitting from right (source: *Stolitsa i usadba*, no.24, 15. 12. 1914, p. 22)

The history of country estates was presented as an integral part of Russian history. Their construction and beautification was the noble contribution to the creation of a cultural landscape. At the same time, this was creating the illusion of a happy life in the countryside and closeness between the nobility and peasantry. In her book about the life of the nobility in the countryside, Priscilla Roosevelt aptly remarked: “*Here we see the final echoes of estate theatricality and of the general fascination with folk culture.*”³⁰ Princess Mariia Vasilievna Golitsyna milking a cow (picture nr. 10) is a perfect example of the aristocratic stylization to the role of “peasant-woman” in the “Russian Versailles”.

For whom was *Stolitsa i usadba* intended? It is estimated that it was mainly for the aristocracy and educated people in larger cities interested in Russian aristocratic culture. The price of the magazine was not inconsequential. The first issue cost 75 kopeks, but soon the price rose to 1 ruble per copy. For comparison, the popular magazine *Ogonëk* cost only five kopeks, pictorial magazine *Solntse Rossii* (*Russia’s Sun*) ten kopeks, and the price of a book printed in Suvorin’s publishing house *Deshevaia biblioteka* (*Cheap*

30 Priscilla ROOSEVELT, *Life on the Russian Country Estate. A Social and Cultural History*, New Haven – London 1995, p. 327.



Fig. 10: Princess Maria V. Golitsyna, in local costume, milking a cow at the family estate Gremyach, Chernigov Province (source: *Stolitsa i usadba*, no. 50, 15. 1. 1916, p. 5)

Library) ranged from fifteen to twenty kopeks.³¹ Even with regard to the number of copies, Krymov began cautiously. The first issue was published in an edition of one and a half thousand. Since it was quickly sold out, there were six thousand copies of the second issue printed. Krymov recalled that the circulation had been rising steadily up to twenty thousand copies at the end of the existence of the magazine. *Stolitsa i usadba* was primarily subscribed to by noblewomen, and even Empress Alexandra Fyodorovna subscribed to the magazine at the end of 1914.³²

Although the editors of *Stolitsa i usadba* designated the magazine as apolitical, non-partisan and non-class, it was not entirely true. Even if the first and second principles were more or less followed, the magazine could not be considered non-class because it dealt almost exclusively with the nobility. Country estates, though owned by wealthy non-nobles, were associated with the traditional aristocratic life. Land tenure and the related culture of country estates were the basis of aristocratic estate privileges for

31 For *Ogonëk*, see Jeffrey BROOKS, *When Russia Learned to Read. Literacy and Popular Literature, 1861–1917*, Evanston, Illinois 1987, pp. 115–116.

32 V. KRYMOV, *Portrety neobychnykh liudei*, pp. 242–243.

centuries. The material and cultural background of the Russian nobility, its city palaces, and country houses were inextricably linked with the era of serfdom. The vast majority of country estates shown on the pages of *Stolitsa i usadba* were built during the era of serfdom, and therefore the nobility kept and strengthened, in a sort of way, recalling “the old times” in the collective memory. Constant referring to the splendor past of country estates ultimately left one major impression – nostalgia. Nostalgia for ages when time was passing slowly, society was hierarchical, social roles were clearly defined, and the noble world was not confronted with any challenges. These old times came to life on the pages of the magazine. In a way, it was the displacement of negative memories of the Revolution in 1905. The happy idyll of rural life was as fictional as the idealized connection between the Romanov dynasty and the Russian people presented at the jubilee of the Romanovs in 1913 and other state festivities before the First World War.³³

The celebration of country estates at the beginning of the 20th century was a part of retrospectivism and nostalgia at the time of modernization. *Usadba* (country estate) and its myths became a symbol of the high Russian/national culture, incorporated into the mythic version of the Russian national identity.³⁴ In 1913, Count Pavel Sheremetiev stated:

“Our country nests are carrying the ancient torch of culture and enlightenment. God grant them success; if only they were spared the senseless movement to destroy them, supposedly in the interests of social justice.”³⁵

According to Laura Victoir, “By particular groups of the cultural elite and aristocrats, an estate was included in a version of Russian national identity that harked back to what contemporaries thought of as a golden age of estate culture.”³⁶

In this context, Laura Victoir wrote about the anthropomorphisation of “the old houses” portrayed as “shadows”, or “ghosts of the past”.³⁷ Undoubtedly, *Stolitsa i usadba* contributed to this trend and belonged to the context of the artistic magazines, a new sort of publication emerged in Russia at the turn of the 20th century. Magazines like *Mir iskusstva* (World of Art, 1898–1904), *Apollon* (1909–1917), *Starye gody* (Bygone Years,

33 For the detailed analysis of the Romanov jubilee and other state-organized festivities, see: Richard WORTMAN, *Scenarios of Power, Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy from Peter the Great to the Abdication of Nicholas II*, Princeton 2006, Chapter 21.

34 Laura VICTOIR, *Creating and Preserving a Myth: Changing Attitudes about Country Estates in Late Imperial Russia*, *Revolutionary Russia*, vol. 25, nr. 1, June 2012, p. 66.

35 *Ibidem*, p. 68.

36 *Ibidem*, p. 61.

37 *Ibidem*, p. 68.

1907–1916) were focused, in various degrees, on the phenomenon of country estates. The magazine portrayed the living conditions on estates, too. However, it did not picture ruins but luxurious houses along with their owners. The glorious past became the living present. And the future should have been also great. In Vladimir Krymov's words, "*After the war, Russia's future will be even better.*"³⁸

Stolitsa i usadba presented the nobility as an elite class. After the war broke out, it began to emphasize its public service and depicted the nobility as a patriotic class working for the country. At the same time, the nobility remained a class with a specific position in society based on rich traditions. In this presentation, the nobility and Russia were inseparable. However, such a cultural scenario combining modern civic values with the traditional picture of "lords" was hardly acceptable to the majority of society, particularly to the lower class primarily represented by peasants.

A world without peasants?

One of the most striking features of *Stolitsa i usadba* was its ignoring of the peasant world. Although country estates represented a sort of a symbolic island of the noble and western culture in the midst of the peasant world, no trace of this could be found on the pages of the magazine. Yet the relationship between the nobility and peasants, which definitely was not without conflict, constituted a crucial factor for the future of country estates.

Many nobles, both liberals and conservatives, believed that peasants were kind, and the nobility and peasants were close to each other and understood each other. Prince Alexei Obolensky, a moderate conservative, admired the diversity of the country and "moral purity" of peasants whom he considered to be "*naturally intelligent, hardworking and talented*".³⁹

However, not everyone shared this idea of the idealized rural world.⁴⁰ In 1912, Ivan Bunin, a famous Russian writer and member of a once wealthy noble family, said: "*In no other country is there such a striking gap between the cultured and uncultured classes as in ours.*"⁴¹ Bunin welcomed the October Manifesto in 1905, but the peasant unrests of the following year confirmed his skepticism about Russia's future. He had no illusions about the goodness of the Russian people (see his famous stories *The Village* or *Sukhodol*),

38 *Stolitsa i usadba*, nr. 16–17, 1. 9. 1914, p. 21.

39 A. V. OBOLENSKY, *Moi vospominaniia*, p. 63.

40 For the various noble ideas about the peasants, see E. P. BARINOVA, *Rossiiskoe dvorianstvo*, pp. 207–232.

41 D. SMITH, *Former People*, p. 57.

and that is why he criticized intellectual naive ideas about peasants, their needs and opinions.⁴²

Bunin was not the only one to perceive the coexistence of peasants and the educated elite as being very difficult. In his reflections on Russian history, philosopher Georgii Fedotov wrote:

*“A lord (barin) and a peasant (muzhik) sometimes seem to begin to understand each other, but that is a delusion. If the lord can understand his servant (Turgeniev, Tolstoy) then the servant does not understand either the life or the world of lords. And the lord’s understanding is limited, too: he can see the peasants’ life and thinking, however, he still cannot grasp a thousand-year tradition, the religious world of the peasantry – “Christianity” – which is behind them.”*⁴³

Princess Lydia Vasilchikova’s memoirs also show the difference between these mentalities and values.⁴⁴ Princess Vasilchikova recalled the peasants’ inertness and lack of interest in improving their economies. With some kind of resignation, she stated: *“The worst traits of a Russian peasant were manifested when he found himself among “his people.”*⁴⁵ She admitted that the nobility had not understood the peasant mentality, and there had been a gap between both classes. The relations from the times of serfdom had been broken, and new ones were not created yet. Princess Vasilchikova illustrated the difference in mentalities with the following incident. Her father, Prince Leonid Viazemsky, systematically built up his estate Lotarevo in the Tambov province. He built a church, a school and a hospital and tried to improve his peasants’ standard of living in every possible way. One day, while touring his estate, the Prince started to talk with a peasant who did not know his identity. He asked him whether the peasants were satisfied with what the lord was doing for them, and if they were grateful to him.

*“Satisfied? Yes, very satisfied”, answered the peasant, “How to be dissatisfied? But to be grateful? For what? After all, he has done all the things not for us but for the salvation of his soul. Who takes care of the others? But the salvation of your own soul, that’s different!”*⁴⁶

42 His fears were fulfilled in 1917. See his diary *Okaiannyye dni (The Cursed Days)*, St. Petersburg 2000.

43 Grigorii FEDOTOV, *Sudba i grekhi Rossii. Izbrannyye stat’i po filosofii russkoi istorii i kul’tury*, vol. 1, St. Petersburg 1991, p. 85. Aleksandr V. Davydov captured insincerity in the relationship between the nobles and peasants in his memoirs; he considered this the legacy of serfdom. *“It is evident that each side tried to cheat the other, but whereas the peasants guessed perfectly well the thoughts of the landowners, the latter were incapable of piercing the stone wall of the dissembling character of the peasant.”* Alexander DAVYDOFF, *Russian Sketches. Memoirs*, Tenafly, N. J. 1984, pp. 177–179.

44 L. VASILCHIKOVA, *Ischeznuvshaia Rossiia*, pp. 109–113.

45 *Ibidem*, p. 109.

46 *Ibidem*, p. 110.

Princess Vasilchikova thought that after the abolition of serfdom, the cultural contact between the nobility and the peasants had faded. “*I think the fundamental mistake of the educated Russians of my time, in their relationship with peasants, was that they considered them the same people as they were and attributed them their own feelings and thoughts.*”⁴⁷ Princess Vasilchikova wrote her memoirs during post-revolutionary emigration, so they could easily reflect the knowledge of later events. However, she was convinced that the brutal behavior of the peasants during the revolution originated in their mentality. Besides the other matters, an animal instinct prevailed among the Russians and was reflected by their “*atrocious behavior towards animals*.”⁴⁸ While Prince Alexei Vasilievich Obolensky linked the essence of the peasant question to the failing of the land reform (which was not carried out along with the abolishment of serfdom or shortly after it),⁴⁹ Princess Vasilchikova saw the problem neither in incomplete reforms nor in not receiving the constitution fifty years earlier but in the insufficient development of the moral principles of the peasantry:

*“If for urban people whose idea of peasants was limited by Turgeniev’s ideals on the one hand, and by the narodniks’ revolutionary articles on the other hand; if for these dilettantes of the rural life the Russian peasant of 1918 was a surprise, for us, the inhabitants of a village who grew up among them, their behavior was not, alas, a novelty. At that time, the only difference was that their atrocious behavior towards animals was transferred to humans. And that’s not such a big step.”*⁵⁰

In the absence of common values, it is not surprising how callously, brutally and uninhibitedly peasants proceeded against the nobles and their property. In the revolution of 1905–1906, peasants burned at least 1,000 noble estates.⁵¹ Princess Vasilchikova recalled the destruction of estate Zubrilovka, belonging to Prince Alexander A. Golitsyn-Prozorovsky, in the Penza province in 1905. The peasants not only destroyed the palace

47 *Ibidem*, p. 113.

48 *Ibidem*, pp. 113–115.

49 A. V. OBOLENSKY, *Moi vospominaniia*, pp. 33, 63.

50 L. VASILCHIKOVA, *Ischeznuvshaia Rossiia*, p. 113.

51 D. BAIRAU (BEYRAU), *Ianus v laptiakh: krest’iane v russkoi revoliutsii, 1905–1917gg.*, *Voprosy istorii* 1, 1992, pp. 22–23. Russian historian Anfimov states much more – 2,864 destroyed country estates. A. M. ANFIMOV, *Neokonchennye spory*, *Voprosy istorii* 5, 1997, p. 64. On the violence in the countryside and especially the new phenomenon of “hooliganism”, see Orlando FIGES, *A People’s Tragedy. The Russian Revolution 1891–1924*, London 1998, pp. 96–98; Stephen P. FRANK, *Crime, Cultural Conflict, and Justice in Rural Russia, 1856–1914*, Berkeley 1999, pp. 280–289; Joan NEUBERGER, *Hooliganism: Crime, Culture, and Power in St. Petersburg*, Berkeley 1993, p. 114; Neil WEISMANN, *Rural Crime in Tsarist Russia: the Question of Hooliganism*, *Slavic Review* 37/2, 1978, pp. 228–240.

and art collections but also “*carried out atrocities which we only became accustomed to in 1917*”.⁵²

Princess Vasilchikova considered envy to be the main motive for the destruction of somebody else’s property. Peasants were not hereditary landowners, the land belonged to the community (*obshchina*), and they did not have a deep relationship to material possessions.⁵³ The agrarian reform carried out by Prime Minister Petr Stolypin in the following years was far from complete. It only concerned a limited number of peasants and did not fundamentally change the peasants’ mentality.⁵⁴

It was not only a different relationship to the material possessions, land and animals. While the nobles emphasized their patriotism and put the service for the Russian homeland before everything else, peasants identified with the Russian state very little. This became evident in the First World War. Peasants were tired of the prolonged conflict. According to Princess Vasilchikova, they were particularly bothered with the fact that the war took the workforce out of a village and wanted the war to end soon.⁵⁵ Patriotism meant nothing to them; and it was one of the main reasons why the Bolshevik propaganda was so successful in the country in 1917. General Brusilov simply described the situation after the fall of the monarchy as follows:

*“The soldiers wanted only one thing – peace, so that they could go home, rob the landowners and live freely without paying any taxes or recognizing any authority.”*⁵⁶

Naturally, Brusilov’s words are simplified, but the fact that more and more peasants deserted from the army, and the Russian army began to decay rapidly during the spring and summer of 1917 is well known.⁵⁷ The soldiers of peasant origin wanted to return to their villages as soon as possible because grabbing the noble land and the destruction of country estates gradually started during the spring.⁵⁸ Often, it was the “completion of

52 L. VASILCHIKOVA, *Ischeznuvshaia Rossiia*, p. 132. The destruction of Zubrilovka was one of the most famous cases of peasant attacks on noble estates in 1905. For a detailed description of this peasant pogrom, see Vasilii VERESHCHAGIN, *Razorennoe gnezdo*, St. Petersburg 1908.

53 L. VASILCHIKOVA, *Ischeznuvshaia Rossiia*, pp. 98–99.

54 Boris N. MIRONOV, *Social’naia istoriia Rossii perioda imperii (XVIII – nachalo XX v.)*, vol. 1, St. Petersburg 1999, pp. 481–483.

55 L. VASILCHIKOVA, *Ischeznuvshaia Rossiia*, p. 301.

56 O. FIGES, *A People’s Tragedy*, pp. 379–380.

57 On the army disintegration, see Allan WILDMAN, *The End of the Russian Imperial Army*, 2 vols., Princeton 1980, 1987.

58 On destructions of country estates, see D. SMITH, *Former People*, pp. 93–96.

the land redistribution” of the years 1905–1906 and the revenge against the nobles who had defended their estates.⁵⁹

Princess Vasilchikova described the destruction of their family farm Lotarevo in the Tambov province as follows:

*“When the neighboring peasants came to destroy Lotarevo, they started gradually. First they robbed the poultry farm, then they stole pigs, sheep and cows, eventually they burglarized the stud farm ... and finished up with the house. The Lotarevo butler [...] narrated that the house had been plundered so perfectly that even the fire poker had not been left. He said, ‘If a stray dog came running, I would not oust him more!’ The tiled stove painted by my father was broken into pieces, and the door handles were broken off. After all, the main aim of the agitators was to prevent the owners from returning.”*⁶⁰

Even a few years later, Lydia could not explain how the people could behave like that. She was mostly taken aback by the passivity of the servants who had lived with her family for years but did not prevent the looting. Finally, she agreed with the opinion of a native Russian who she debated the revolution with: “Yes, we have to tell the truth; the Russian nation is holy but perfidious.” And a Ukrainian officer said to the Princess:

*“I am Ukrainian (malorus) and after the revolution, the peasants in our country also completely changed, but I’ve never seen such people as your Great-Russians (velikorosy) are, and I did not understand that in the world, such animals could exist.”*⁶¹

Many nobles believed that the traditional relations between them and peasants were disturbed by the revolutionary intelligence that manipulated the peasants (Princess Vasilchikova also spoke about “agitators”). Prince Boris Vasilchikov assumed that “*under the influence of the revolution in 1905 and with the assistance of intelligence, peaceful and patriarchal relations boiled in a systematic incitement of peasants against the nobility.*”⁶²

However, the dissonance in the relationship and the perception of one class by the other one had deeper roots than just the revolutionary agitation. The peasants’ hatred towards the nobility went far back into the past. After the abolition of serfdom, the antagonism was strengthened because the peasants were not satisfied with the reforms.

59 Various examples of the destruction of estates are summarized in O. FIGES, *A People’s Tragedy*, p. 365. See also Cathy FRIERSON, *All Russia is Burning*, Washington 2002, pp. 106–109.

60 L. VASILCHIKOVA, *Ischeznuvshaia Rossiia*, p. 409.

61 *Ibidem*, p. 411.

62 Boris A. VASILCHIKOV, *Vospominaniia*, Moscow 2003, p. 94. Prince Alexei Obolensky used the same words (“*quiet patriarchal life*”) when describing the country life at the end of the 19th century. See A. V. OBOLENSKY, *Moi vospominaniia*, p. 19.

They did not understand why they should pay for the land gained along with the personal freedom.⁶³ The traditional perception of the nobility was thus negative and more over, in the following decades there were several crises which further deepened the old animosity.

In his last book on the peasant traditional culture, Leonid Heretz identified three critical moments in the relations between the peasantry and the nobility. The first one came with the famine in 1891–1892. According to Heretz, “*The antagonism between the groups was even more drastic than educated Russians (and Western historians) could have imagined: the opposition was absolute, in the context of the dualism inherent in the traditional worldview, and the conflict between the groups was understood in apocalyptic terms.*”⁶⁴ The peasants believed that the cholera epidemic accompanying the famine was a part of the conspiracy:

*“To the popular mind, there was only one group possessing the combination of organization, learning, and malice required to identify the culprits behind the cholera – the lords.”*⁶⁵

In this moment of the crisis, it was significant that the memories of the serfdom were still alive. Then, the sins of the nobility from the time before 1861 were imputed to the young generation of “lords”. The revolution in 1905–1906 was the second moment. The weakness of the nobility was evident. In the anticipation of the land redistribution, peasants were attacking noble estates again. And even though the revolution had been defeated, their servile behavior changed. The fear of lords gradually disappeared, and just resentment and hatred remained.⁶⁶ The third moment came with the First World War. While the war propaganda emphasized the image of a brave, patriotic conscious soldier-peasant, the soldiers’ combat enthusiasm was very fragile, and the signs of resistance to the mobilization occurred in the autumn of 1914.⁶⁷ Peasants expected the redistribution of the noble land. They did not like the prolongation of the war, so a new conspiracy theory soon appeared. It said that the war was being artificially prolonged by the nobility

63 On peasants’ reactions to the abolishment of serfdom, see Geoffrey HOSKING, *Russia. People and Empire, 1552–1917*, London 1999, pp. 221–224. For more details, see Daniel FIELD, *Rebels in the Name of the Tsar*, Boston 1976.

64 Leonid HERETZ, *Russia on the Eve of Modernity. Popular Religions and Traditional Culture under the Last Tsars*, Cambridge 2008, p. 130.

65 *Ibidem*, p. 133.

66 *Ibidem*, pp. 183–184.

67 On the war patriotic propaganda, see Hubertus F. JAHN, *Patriotic Culture in Russia during World War I*, Ithaca 1998. On the peasants’ reaction to the mobilization, see Aaron B. RETISH, *Russia’s Peasants in Revolution and Civil War. Citizenship, Identity, and the Creation of the Soviet State, 1914–1922*, Cambridge 2008, pp. 22–26.

so that it could exterminate as many peasant soldiers, i. e. potential claimants to the land, as possible. This conspiracy theory, by Leonid Heretz called the great “*killing-off*”, was another blow to the relation between the peasants and the nobility.⁶⁸

On the eve of the revolution, even without the assistance of external agitation, peasants felt a deep hatred towards the nobility. The presence of agitators, or rather soldiers who deserted, returned to villages and were influenced by the revolutionary propaganda from the front, only accelerated the decision of peasants to occupy the noble land, which was their long-term goal. The important thing was that with the advent of the revolution, peasants and the lower classes of society did not distinguish between the nobility and other strata of the elite. All of them were “lords” and “bourgeois” (*burzhui*), thus enemies.

Conclusion: ‘The ship is sinking, but the orchestra is still playing.’

Having had the experience from the years 1905–1906, did the nobility anticipate the repetition of a revolution, new attacks by peasants, and the liquidation of country estates? Some testimonies indicate that the nobility suffered from the trauma of the revolution and was haunted by fear. Once, Countess Katia von Carlow had “*a sort of terrifying vision – she saw the hall and familiar corridors full of angry and menacing crowd with sticks and weapons, forcing their way along*”.⁶⁹ Some nobles noticed changes in the peasants’ behavior. They began to act more defiantly and disrespectfully after 1906: “*Instead of the peasants’ previous courtesy, friendliness and humility, there was only hatred on their faces, and the manner of their greetings was such as to underline their rudeness*”.⁷⁰ Sergei Podolinskii, Prime Minister Stolypin’s nephew, returning to his Tula estate in 1908, remarked:

*“Externally everything appeared to have returned to normal. But something essential, something irreparable had occurred within the people themselves. A general feeling of fear had undermined all trust. After a lifetime of security – no one ever locked their doors and windows in the evening – the nobles concerned themselves with weapons and personally made the rounds to test their security measures.”*⁷¹

Princess Ekaterina Sayn-Wittgenstein, eighteen years old in 1917, was expecting something wrong several weeks before the revolution. On February 12, she wrote in her diary:

68 L. HERETZ, *Russia*, p. 229–231.

69 D. SMITH, *Former People*, p. 58.

70 Aleksandr N. NAUMOV, *Iz utselevshikh vospominanii 1868–1917*, vol. 2, New York 1955, p. 72.

71 R. T. MANNING, *The Crisis*, p. 146.

*“In Russia, everything is going to the destruction of the country now. Each step of the government is leading to that. It seems that the country has never been so disorganized from the inside as now. Surely, all of this will be resolved in the near future, and, of course, it will result in a disaster. [...] I have never been a pessimist, and even now I would never say what I have written before a stranger, but everyone can think what he wants. Everyone must look at the true state of affairs soberly and with no illusions.”*⁷²

But on the other hand, or perhaps because of this concern, she fled from reality into the fictional world of peace and illusion. On February 23, she wrote:

*“Almost nobody talks about the plight of these days. Everyone somehow avoids actual interviews. Music in general, and especially opera, is the fashion of season. If now someone read my diary, he would know the atmosphere was very pleasant to me. The purchase of a gramophone was an impetus to the development of this mood. Since, listening to high-quality gramophone records has become our hobby. [...] We live so quietly and happily that, undoubtedly, something unpleasant that will disturb everything is going to happen.”*⁷³

Historian Douglas Smith writes: *“A sense of doom settled over Russia. The apocalypse seemed to be approaching and no one and nothing could stop it.”* And he adds Baron Nikolai Wrangel’s words said to Count Valetin Zubov on the terrace of Café de Rohan in Paris in May 1914:

*“We are on the verge of events, the likes of which the world has not seen since the time of the barbarian invasions. [...] Soon everything that constitutes our lives will strike the world as useless. A period of barbarism is about to begin, and it shall last for decades.”*⁷⁴

Such words sound prophetic today. However, not all the nobles were thinking alike. Princess Vasilchikova argued, on the contrary, that the life after 1905 returned to normal to such an extent that the events of the revolution did not serve as a warning. Nobody expected the repetition of a revolution twelve years later:

*“Between those years, none of my friends transferred money abroad, not because it was considered unpatriotic, but because, as I remember, there was no panic.”*⁷⁵

72 Ekaterina SAYN-WITTGENSTEIN (SAIN-VITGENSHTEIN), *Dnevnik 1914–1918*, Paris 1986, pp. 77–78.

73 *Ibidem*, p. 78.

74 D. SMITH, *Former People*, p. 59; Valentin P. ZUBOV, *Stradnye gody*, Moscow 2004, p. 41.

75 L. VASILCHIKOVA, *Ischeznuvshaia Rossiia*, p. 134.

A similar peace radiated from the pages of *Stolitsa i usad'ba*, too. The magazine remotely reflected the events of the war through charity bazaars or bays in which noblewomen cared for the wounded, but the world behind the front was being shown without conflicts. If the cloud of apocalypse had floated over Russia, it would not have overshadowed this ideal world. It was the same dreamy picture of old times as the paintings by Vasily Maximov (*Vsë v proshlom / Everything is in the Past*) or Vasily Polenov (*Babushkin sad / Grandmother's Orchard*).

The idealization of the noble life in the countryside was obvious. Although Krymov, in the first issue of *Stolitsa i usad'ba*, wrote how the face of estates had changed and how much it had been destroyed, his magazine did not report on anything like this. Other magazines, such as *Bygone Years (Starye gody)*, dealing with the culture of aristocratic residences and showing the real downfall, were significantly more pessimistic.

Stolitsa i usad'ba offered the escape to a peaceful and ideal world. In his memoirs, Krymov openly stated that he had wanted to “*stop the panic*” even if he had realized how idealistic such an effort was. He likened Russia to a sinking ship with passengers starting to panic. At such a moment, the captain has only one task, to stop the panic; therefore he behaves quietly, walks among the passengers on board, calmly smoking his cigar.⁷⁶

According to Russian art historian Valery Turchin, Krymov created an “*artificial myth*”: “*He did what is only possible in mythological consciousness: he stopped time.*”⁷⁷ But how can time be stopped? The last issue of the magazine (nr. 88–90, September 1917) could be transposed for the first, and nothing would change: the same beauties and the same advertisements for cosmetics and luxury cars. A sort of picture of eternity, as the beauties are not getting older thanks to cosmetics, and the architecture of noble estates is eternal.

When analyzing the new interest in country estates before the First World War, Laura Victoir declared:

*“In the wave of industrialization, social unrests, and changing societal paradigms, this exploration of the past, whose important topic the estates became too, was also an expression of antipathy to modernization.”*⁷⁸

But that is only partially true because the modernization could have various forms. *Stolitsa i usad'ba* visualized not only “the glorious past”, but also the modern side of

76 V. KRYMOV, *Portrety neobychnykh liudei*, pp. 251–252.

77 Valery S. TURCHIN, *O zhurnale ‘Stolitsa i usad’ba’*, in: *Russkaia usad'ba: Sbornik Obshchestva Izuchenia Russkoi Usadby*, Moskva 1999, p. 70.

78 L. VICTOIR, *Creating and Preserving a Myth*, p. 61.

the nobility life referring to the standard of western, especially British, elites' behavior: sports, traveling, motoring. Moreover, many estates belonged to the "new nobility", and merging the old aristocracy with the new business elite was also a kind of social modernization.

Stolitsa i usad'ba did not suggest that the nobility retreat from its position in society. On the contrary, it emphasized its inseparability from Russia. After all, noble country estates were not only a part of the past but also of the present. The Russian nobility did not live for itself but served Russia in the broadest sense of the word. Prince Alexei Obolensky captured it in an idealized form:

*"Always close to the people; our ancestors treated them like their brothers. Personal interests were always subordinated to the interests of the state, and the history of Russia has never seen any other image of the Obolensky family."*⁷⁹

The fundamental problem of this self-representation lay in the fact that the represented values were not common to all the classes of Russian society. They might be acceptable to the wider elite, not only the nobility but also industrialists or liberal intelligentsia. The elite appreciated subjects, objects and symbols to which peasants or common people had no relation, nor respected, nor understood their utility or symbolic meaning, and therefore did not need them, as demonstrated in the second part of the article.

The lower classes of society, peasants and workers (to a significant extent still linked to the countryside through their peasant roots), could hardly accept the role to which the nobility was stylized on the pages of *Stolitsa i usad'ba*. It was still the role of the ruling class in which the serfdom resonated powerfully. Even if the nobility had been trying to transform itself from a narrowly defined estate group into wider civic elite (and could have been successful), it would have been a futile effort to face the cultural scenario of the lower classes. The radical social revolution refused all the elites, and there was no longer a place for the world in the pages of *Stolitsa i usad'ba*.

79 A. V. OBOLENSKY, *Moi vospominaniia*, p. 50.

Resumé

Lidé minulosti a přítomnosti.

Časopis *Stolitsa i usadba* a sebe prezentace ruské šlechty v posledních letech carského režimu.

Šlechta, která byla po staletí vládnoucí třídou, si vytvořila komplexní systém symbolů a rituálů, které společně formovaly (politickou) kulturu Ruska. Především během druhé poloviny 19. století postavení šlechty procházelo postupnou, avšak zásadní změnou. Ruská společnost se vyvíjela směrem k občanské společnosti, zejména v důsledku tzv. Velkých reforem z 60. let. Šlechta, tradičně prominentská sociální třída (*stav*; *soslovie*), byla konfrontována se zrušením nevolnictví, nástupem střední třídy a jejím rostoucím vlivem. Dosavadní dominantní role šlechty byla tudíž ohrožena. Článek se zaměřuje na veřejnou roli ruské šlechty v posledních letech monarchie. Autor analyzuje různé způsoby sebe prezentace šlechty vůči veřejnosti a snaží se zodpovědět otázku, jak dalece byl „obraz šlechty“ reálný či imaginární. Analýza je postavena na různých primárních pramenech, především na časopisu *Stolitsa i usadba* (Město a venkovský statek). Časopis koncipovaný jako „žurnál vyšších kruhů“ vycházel v letech 1913–1917. Pokoušel se

ukázat klíčovou roli šlechty v ruské historii a její význam v politickém, společenském a kulturním životě země. Během první světové války zdůrazňoval vlastenectví a veřejnou službu šlechty ve prospěch států a národa. Nicméně taková prezentace byla plna protikladů. Vydavatelé deklarovali, že časopis je „nepolitický“ a „netřídní“, ovšem jednoznačným důrazem na šlechtu a její výjimečnou roli v minulosti fakticky zdůrazňovali stavovské rozdíly a stěží mohli soupeřit s hodnotami nižších vrstev. Byť šlechta dokázala spolupracovat s průmyslníky a inteligencí a spolu s nimi vytvářet novou občanskou elitu, pro rolníky zůstávala starým nepřítelem. Nižší vrstvy odmítaly elity jako celek a kulturní scénář prezentovaný časopisem *Stolitsa i usadba*, kombinující nostalgii po zlatých časech „šlechtických hnízd“ s moderním občanským uvědoměním akcentujícím národní význam šlechtické kultury, neměl v revolučním Rusku budoucnost.