
A Russian in Georgian England: an Anonymous still Unidentified

It is customary to trumpet one's discoveries rather than one's failures, but the confession of failure offered here is nonetheless intended as a sincere tribute to an outstanding scholar of eighteenth-century Russia and also as a challenge to Natal'ia Dmitrievna to provide the answer that has hitherto escaped me. Seventy years young, she has the time, the talent and the intuition to do so – and I trust she will, before she embarks on her own visit next year to the shores of never-foggy Albion.

It is over thirty years since I first found the reference to the *Putevye zapiski russkogo vo vremia puteshestviia po Anglii* (a) and was subsequently able to visit the Lenin Library to examine the notebook that contained them. (b) It is a diary, written in French, of a visit to England from 23 July, when the author left

(a) *Ukazatel' vospominanii, dnevnikov i putevykh zapisok XVIII-XIX vv.* (M., 1951), p. 174

(b) RGB, F. 183, Inostrannaia literatura, № 1673.

Calais for Dover, to 13 October, when he returned to France by the same route. It had been provisionally dated as between 1783 and 1785 but in fact, as the internal evidence soon revealed, the year was 1783. It is in many respects a fascinating addition to eighteenth-century Russian travel-writing but the anonymity of its author and its languishing in an archive have combined to make it virtually unstudied and unheralded.

In an article published in 1980 in one of the collections emanating from M.P. Alekseev's Sector for the Interrelationships of Russian and Foreign Literatures, I highlighted the diary as an important source for Russian awareness of the contemporary English theatre (a) and it was in the same year that it provided material in a chapter on 'Grand Tourists' in my book on the activities of Russians in Britain. (b) These mentions apart, the diary seems to have aroused no interest among Russian or British scholars studying travel literature or Anglo-Russian cultural relations. (c) I have not myself returned to

(a) 'Russkie zritel'i v angliiskom teatre XVIII veka', in M.P. Alekseev (ed.), *Russkaia kul'tura XVIII veka i zapadno-evropeiskie literatury* (L., 1980), pp. 167-9.

(b) *"By the Banks of the Thames": Russians in Eighteenth Century Britain* (Newtonville, Mass., 1980), pp. 244-51. Cf. "U temzskikh beregov": Rossiiane v Britanii v XVIII veke (Spb., 1996), pp. 270-6.

(c) For instance, O.A. Kaznina and A.N. Nikoliukin, *"Ia bereg pokidal tumannyi Al'biona...": Russkie pisateli ob Anglii. 1646-1945* (Moscow, 2001); Sara Dickinson, *Breaking Ground: Travel and National Culture in Russia from*

it, above all because of my continued inability to identify its author.

Anonymity as such should not however be the 'ultimate deterrent' from study of the diary. (a) Publishing authors sought to conceal their identity for various reasons, often hiding under pseudonyms or cryptonyms (hardly ever as ill-sustained and transparent as mine!): some soon revealed it or were quickly exposed, others kept the secret to their grave, leaving it to posterity (if it had the inclination) to do the detective work. Anonymity was, indeed, a literary convention. There are several published precedents from virtually the same period and in the same genre as the diary and relevant to England. Princess Ekaterina Dashkova's authorship of the *Puteshestvie odnoi Rossiiskoi znatnoi Gospozhi, po nekotorym Aglinskim provintsiiam* (1775) was probably known the day it was published, at least to the small number of subscribers to the journal in which it appeared. (b) The identity, however, of Vasiliï Malinovskii, the *Rossiianin v Anglii*, who published his fascinating travels through Britain in another

Peter I to the Era of Pushkin (Amsterdam; New York, 2006).

(a) An interesting recent contribution to the question with relation to English literature is John Mullan, *Anonymity: A Secret History of English Literature* (London, 2007).

(b) *Opyt trudov Vol'nogo rossiiskogo sobraniia*, II (1775), 105-44. In the same journal Mikhail Pleshcheev, a former counsellor in the Russian embassy in London, used the eloquent pseudonym of 'Angloman' to sign several pieces he had written (*ibid.*, II, 257-61; III, 72-4).

journal in 1796, remained unknown for almost two hundred years. (a) The situation is of course somewhat different with unpublished diaries, journals, and collections of letters that have been preserved in archives, where their authors saw no reason to parade their names on manuscripts and had no obvious desire to seek publication: they were at best circulated within the family or a small circle of friends. Such were the diaries and letters of the three brothers, Aleksandr, Pavel and Petr, sons of Grigorii Akinfievich Demidov, who were in Britain in 1758-9, (b) the recently published letter-account of Prince Mikhail Andreevich Golitsyn to his uncle Prince Nikolai Borisovich Iusupov from London in 1785, (c) and the *Putevye zapiski* of 1783.

Establishing authorship, whether or not the

(a) *Poleznoe i priiatnoe preprovozhdenie vremeni*, IX-XI (1796). See Paola Ferretti, *A Russian Advocate of Peace: Vasilii Malinovskii (1765-1814)* (Dordrecht; Boston; London, 1998), pp. 31-32.

(b) The identity of the brothers seems to have been established for the first time by Hugh D. Hudson, *The Rise of the Demidov Family and the Russian Iron Industry in the Eighteenth Century* (Newtonville, Mass., 1986), p. 110. Remarkably, two splendid editions of the Demidov papers have appeared in the same year: G.A. Pobedimova and S.N. Iskiul' (eds.), *Puteshestvie brat'ev Demidovykh po Evrope: Pis'ma i podnevnyye zhurnaly, 1750-1761 gg.* (M., 2006); A.S. Cherkasova (ed.), *Demidovskii vremennik*, II (Ekaterinburg, 2006), 85-610.

(c) L.Lu Savinskaia, 'Puteshestvie Mikhaila Andreevicha Golitsyna po Anglii. 1785 g. (K istorii obrazovatel'nogo puteshestviia brat'ev Mikhaila, Borisa i Alekseia Golitsynykh po Evrope. 1780-1788gg.)', in E.E. Rychalovskii (ed.), *Rossia v XVIII stoletii*, vyp. II (Moscow, 2004), pp. 262-89.

author deliberately sought anonymity or not, is nonetheless patently important not only for the intellectual biography of the writer but also for the interpretation and contextualization of what is written. The *Putevye zapiski* do not form part of a family or personal archive and the author's identity has to be established from the clues and leads found in the diary itself. Before addressing the question of authorship, however, some attention might briefly be given to other areas of interest the diary offers.

The author was London-based for most of the eleven weeks he spent in England. He arrived in the capital after travelling from Dover via Canterbury, Rochester and Deptford. He spent the next five weeks in the capital, showing admirable stamina as he visited an astonishing number of sights and sites. They included in the following sequence: Ranelagh, the Haymarket Theatre, Vauxhall, St James's Park, the Stock Exchange, St Paul's Cathedral, Court of St James's, Newgate Prison, the Guildhall, the British Museum, Kensington Garden; then a short tour outside the city to Richmond, Hampton Court, Windsor, and Eton; back in London, visits to the Royal Circus, Westminster Abbey and the Tower, followed by outings to nearby 'great houses' - Chiswick, Osterley, Sion, and Kew.

On 30 August, he set out on a two-week tour, accompanied by Prince P., following a classic itinerary that took them first to visit the famous gardens

and estates of Claremont, Cobham and Painshill, before passing through Guildford to Portsmouth. After Portsmouth they travelled west, first visiting Wilton House, the home of Lord Pembroke, before reaching Bath and then to Bristol, the most westerly point of their journey. On 9 September they were in Burford in the Cotswolds and proceeded to Stowe, “ce superbe parc” (f. 77v.), before visiting Blenheim Palace, where they had a long and amusing conversation with the gardener about earlier Russian visitors to the park, who included Nikita Demidov and Grigorii and Vladimir Orlov (f. 81v.). (a) They spent two nights in Oxford and were assiduous in visiting many colleges, the Bodleian and other libraries and museums, and the observatory. The diarist details the way of life and form of instruction of the students, but on seeing the academic dress of students and teachers, he confesses that “je n’ai jamais rencontré un de ces messieurs sans être obligé de rire” (f. 84v.).

Back in London by 14 September, he had another month during which he continued his hectic round of sight-seeing. He paid frequent visits to Drury Lane and Covent Garden theatres, where he was upset by the irreverence of the audience at a per-

(a) The gardener also mentions the very recent visit of “le comte Ouronsou”, who, the author suggests, is really “Woronzoff”. If it were, it would not have been Aleksandr Vorontsov, who had been in England at the very beginning of Catherine’s reign, or his brother Semen, who only arrived in June 1785.

formance of *Romeo and Juliet* (ff. 98-9), one of three Shakespearean tragedies he managed to see. He then turned his attention to the Academy of Arts, the Society of Antiquaries, and the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, an institution that never failed to impress Russian visitors. He visited the studio of Benjamin West (f. 104v.) and, two days later, the studios of Sir Joshua Reynolds, Thomas Gainsborough, and George Romney, but expressed his disappointment at what he saw (ff. 106-108v.). If not impressed by English art, he greatly admired the classical buildings of Robert Adam by the Thames (f. 23). Other places he visited included Westminster Hall, the Chelsea Hospital, Woolwich dockyard, the Arsenal, Greenwich Hospital, and two further hospitals, St Thomas's and Guy's, but, interestingly, he refused to visit Bedlam, which was a port of call for so many foreign visitors, for "je n'aime pas à me rejouir des malheurs attachés à la nature humaine. C'est pour ces sortes de sujets que la curiosité me manque absolument" (f. 115). The Monument and the Foundling Hospital were among the last places he visited. He left London on 11 October for Dover, via the naval town of Chatham, and returned to France.

The diary is the record of a visit of astonishingly sustained activity and curiosity, much more detailed and precise than the published 'doctored' accounts of such as Malinovskii and Karamzin. The

section devoted to the tour to Bath and Bristol is most reminiscent of Princess Dashkova's aforementioned *Puteshestvoie*, published in 1773. Overall, the account is more comparable to Prince Aleksandr Kurakin's *Souvenirs de voyage en Hollande et en Angleterre* (1772-3), which was published in a tiny edition in St Petersburg in 1815, and Vasilii Zinov'ev's letters (1786-7), published virtually a century later, although both these travellers enjoyed much more extensive itineraries. (a)

The traveller was generally impressed by his visit. His enthusiasm for London – “J'ai vu presque toutes les villes de l'Europe, mais Londres seule m'a étonné” (f. 9v.) – recalls that of Kurakin a decade earlier; indeed they share similar delight in English landscape gardens and in the beauty of English women, as well as a similar mixed reaction to Shakespeare and a dislike of the weather. Both are prone to sentimental effusions, not least at the moment of departure, and produce the pros-and-cons summing-up of their experiences that Karamzin – and not only he – was also to reprise. See the long paragraph that begins:

Voici le jour ou je quittai une ville qui m'a non seulement procuré de l'amusement , mais encore bien d'idées neuves. J'ai vu des hommes, donés de grandes vertus et de grands

(a) *Arkhiv kniazia F.A. Kurakina*, V (Saratov, 1894), 376-425; VI (1896), 205-39; 'Zhurnal puteshestviia V.N. Zinov'eva po Germanii, Italii, Frantsii i Anglii v 1784-1788 gg.', *Russkaia starina*, XXXIII (1878), 421-40, 593-98.

vices, un peuple dont les lois sages et les institutions les plus utiles et les mieux entendus pourroient le rendre parfaitement heureux, si l'abus du pouvoir politique, et les travers auxquels l'esprit humain pourroit être généralement assujéti ne frustreroient l'homme de tous les avantages d'une bonne constitution" (f. 117).

The diary bristles with the names and initials of numerous people, Russian and British, whom the author met during his stay. Many remain as elusive as he himself. He left Calais as one of a party of four – his companions were "le P.P., le Cte W. et Mr. de K." (f. 2), none of whom can be identified with any certainty. As we have seen, Prince P. was to be the author's constant companion during his tour, joining him on the excursion to Bath and returning with him to France. Nevertheless, he was constantly described in unflattering terms: he was a fop, who was extravagantly interested in his hairstyle, only willing to see the sights of Bristol, "après avoir fait bien arranger trois boucles de chaque côté" (f. 72); he infuriated the author on their return to London because of the time he took over his "toilette" (f. 105v.); and he was "toujours si occupé à barbouiller du papier, que je ne le vois qu'au déjeuner, au diner et à la comédie" (f. 97v.), seemingly out of an interest in architectural drawing. "Le Cte W." is named on only one further occasion in the diary. On 27 September he introduced the author to "Mr de Guriew, lieutenant du Regt. d'Ismaïlowsky" and also the

Russian ambassador's nephew (f. 103). Given the relative few princes and counts whose surnames begin with *P* and *V* respectively, it is frustrating not to be able to suggest possible candidates. The same applies to "M. de K.". Possibly, he was Stepan Alekseevich Kolychev (1746-1805), who had been in England years earlier but seems also to have been there in July 1783. (a)

One identification which may be advanced with confidence is that of Prince Andrei Ivanovich Viazemskii (1754-1807), who was "le Prince W." whom the author mentions on two occasions and is not to be confused with the "le Cte W". The diarist and Prince P. arrived in Portsmouth on 31 August, where they encountered Viazemskii (f. 60), who had set out from London two days earlier "pour y voir les chantiers" and was about to leave for Cornwall. (b) Viazemskii had been in England for some months and had travelled to Scotland earlier in the summer. He left England in September for Portugal and Spain and subsequently travelled in Italy, where he fell in love with a married Irishwoman, Eugenie (Jenny) Quinn, whom he later married and

(a) In a letter, dated Paris, 1 August 1783, De la Coste mentions what appear to have been recent meetings of a Prince Gagarin and "M Kalitchoff" with Reginald Pole Carew, seemingly in London (Cornwall Record Office, Truro, CC/J/13, no. 18).

(b) Letter, dated London 8 September 1783, from Ivan Simolin to Reginald Pole Carew, Antony House, Cornwall (Cornwall Record Office, Truro, CC/J/13, no. 42).

fathered a son, the noted poet and friend of Pushkin, Petr Viazemskii. (a) The diarist indeed noted his womanizing tendencies, which he evidently shared with the Russian ambassador Simolin: “ils courroient ensemble les filles. Ils firent regulièment la chasse de St James parc pour faire la curée du gibier” (f. 95v.). (b)

He was singularly unimpressed with Ivan Matveevich Simolin (1720-99), who had been ambassador since 1779 and who was “le seul ministre de Russie, que j’ai connu dans mes voyages, qui traite les jeunes russes, à lui recommandés, avec si peu de politesse” (ibid.). He mentions elsewhere Simolin’s disputes with his mistress and his servants (f.110). He met on several occasions Prince Petr Gagarin, an ‘embassy gentleman’, who had been in England since 1773 and was to be recalled the following year. Gagarin was “un misanthrope à plaindre don’t le seul plaisir est de s’enfermer entre quatre murailles dans la plus grande ville d’Angleterre” (f. 18). More distinguished members of the embassy whom he

(a) On Viazemskii’s travels, see *Arkhiv kniazia A.I. Viazemskogo* (Spb., 1881), pp. lviii- lxii. Unfortunately, Viazemskii’s travel diary (pp. 293-350) breaks off in Holland, just prior to his visit to England. Incidentally, Viazemskii mentions both Gagarin and Kolychov (see note 13), taking the waters at Spa (p. 342-3).

(b) It might be noted that the diarist himself showed great interest in English prostitutes, whom he first encountered in Rochester, describing them in some detail (ff. 5v.-6). He mentions their presence in the theatres (f. 12); he is again accosted (ff. 18-18v.); and finally, remarks on them at Chatham (f.120).

met were the long-serving Vasilii Grigor'evich Lizakevich and the embassy chaplain, the remarkable Iakov Ivanovich Smirnov (1754-1840), who escorted the author and his companions on a boat trip down the Thames (f. 34). (a) A final Russian whom he encountered at the inn in Dover where he stayed before his return to France was "le Prince Chichaskoy", Prince Aleksei Aleksandrovich Cherkasskii, who had just arrived in England (f. 121).

Although he complains that because of Simolin he met fewer people than he had hoped (f. 116), he nevertheless made the acquaintance of a number of interesting and influential people in English society. The ambassador at least took the author and two of his friends on 30 July to the Court of St James's to be presented to the King. Sadly, *The Morning Chronicle* reported the following morning only the presentation, without the naming, of "three Russian Noblemen, lately arrived from Russia" (b) and no court records exist. The Russians then met the Foreign Secretary, Charles James Fox, who had presumably arranged the presentation (ff. 17v.-18). The following day, 31 July, he met Reginald Pole Carew (1753-1835), who had recently returned from extensive travels in Russia, where he had been much in the

(a) For information on members of the Russian embassy and the Russian church in England at this period, see *By the Banks of the Thames*, chaps 1-2.

(b) *The Morning Chronicle, and London Advertiser*, no. 4432 (Thursday 31 July 1783).

company of Prince Potemkin. (a) Pole Carew took him to the British Museum, where he met Paul Maty (1745-87), one of the librarians. In the evening the diarist dined at the home of the Russian Consul Alexander Baxter, where other guests were Mrs Catherine Hamilton, the bosom friend of Princess Dashkova, and Baron Thomas Dimsdale, recently returned from his second visit to Russia to inoculate the young Grand Dukes Alexander and Constantine (ff. 20v.-21). A few days later, he went to Bushy Park, the home of the former Prime Minister Frederick Lord North (1732-92), where among the dinner guests were General Pasquale Paoli (1725-1807), the famed Corsican patriot living in exile since 1769, and his brother (ff. 24v.-25v.). Other Englishmen he names are Lord Clifford, whom he had met at Spa and again at Dover (f.3) and Sir Richard Temple and his family, whom he visited at Chatham (ff. 117-19).

So, finally, to the identity of the author. It seems inconceivable, given the number of clues he gives, that he remains elusive, but he does, at least for me. He was undoubtedly from a family of distinction and consequence. He had letters of introduction to

(a) Pole Carew had recently entered Parliament. His country seat was at Antony in Cornwall, where he was visited by Prince Viazemskii. On his visit to Russia, see *By the Banks of the Neva: Chapters from the Lives and Careers of the British in Eighteenth-Century Russia* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 353-5; *Britantsy v Peterburge: XVIII vek* (Spb., 2005), pp. 378-80.

prominent people in English society and had easy relations with aristocratic and noble Russians. Like so many of his privileged compatriots, he was obviously taking part in his 'Grand Tour', and old enough not to need the administrations of a tutor. He professes himself much travelled, having visited "presque toutes les villes de l'Europe" (f. 9v.) and mentions *en passant* "mon premier voyage d'Italie" (f. 87v.).

One of the most intriguing pieces of information about the author are his words when he is about to leave England:

Ce pays devoit estre ma patrie! Destiné dès mon enfance à y vivre et mourir, mon sort s'y étoit toujours opposé. Le hasard m'y avoit conduit. Cette terre natale s'étoit présentée à moi avec toutes ses charmes. J'étois sur le point de la quitter – et de la quitter pour toujours" (ff.120-120v.).

Earlier during a conversation in Oxford he was asked his nationality: "Russe apparemment?" - to which he replied:- "à peu près, mais pas tout à fait" (f.87). How does one interpret these words? Could his mother have been an Englishwoman living in Russia but married to a Russian? He has some knowledge of English, but has amusing difficulties at times in making himself understood, mispronouncing, for instance, 'lemon' and 'pepper' (ff. 75v.-76). Was he perhaps Ukrainian, but if so, why the references to England as "patrie" and "terre natale"?

Serendipity, in which I have great faith, might lead someone to chance upon a document or letter, in library or archive, which points to the presence in England in the late summer of 1783 of a Russian or Russians who have hitherto escaped my attention. Perhaps his identity (and that of his companions) is already obvious: I am more than ready to be enlightened.

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