

The Crimean **MAGAZINE**

TOPICS IN THE ISSUE:

ECONOMY

Every year brings its victories

CRIMEA FOR ALL

Where history stands still

INTERVIEW

An angel's voice

TREASURES OF CRIMEA

WE BUILD *information bridges*



Крымский
ЖУРНАЛ



 Крымское
информационное
агентство



**КРЫМСКАЯ
ГАЗЕТА** 



EDITORIAL

W

Crimea is not just a location. It is a cradle of civilisations, a crossroad of eras, a land where history itself wrote its most inspired pages. It can surprise even those who think they know everything about it. The familiar silhouettes of palaces still breathe of centuries gone by. Behind economic indicators are people's lives and changes reshaping the landscape of the peninsula. Its international ties rest on the solid foundation of ancient traditions of communication and modern-day encounters.

In this issue of the Crimean Journal, we will look at the figures again to demonstrate the republic's achievements across basic industries, and behind every figure lie hard work, willpower and focus on the future. We will tell you about the achievements that are shaping Crimea's development and opening up new horizons for it.

We will visit the most famous palaces to see how they change and yet preserve their heritage, how history acquires new shapes, and how the favourite sites of several generations of tourists offer new reasons for visiting them.

The pride of place in this issue has been given to the Swallow's Nest. Its silhouette is instantly recognisable, but how much do we really know about it? Behind its iconic view lie bold designs and historic events, which have made it one of Crimea's symbols.

We will continue telling you about the peninsula's international relations, its ancient and modern ties with China, and its connection with Serbia. These materials show that the past provides the basis for modern-day dialogue, and that cultural memory can build bridges across continents and through the centuries.

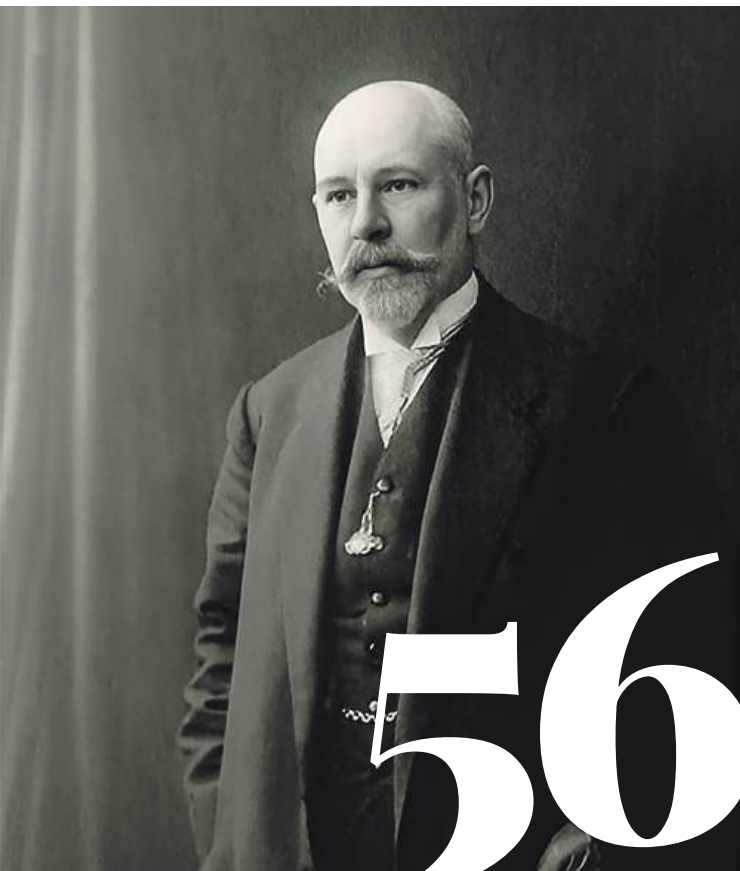
We will talk about creativity in an interview with a famous opera singer, who represents Crimea on the international stage. Music also connects countries and nations, and it can be more eloquent than words. Her voice sings of ancient Tauris, modern Crimea, and eternal beauty that is immune to time.

Read the Crimean Journal, discover the new dimensions of the peninsula – its history, its culture, and its future. And visit Crimea to see all this with your own eyes. Crimea will welcome you hospitably, just as it has done for centuries, giving inspiration to poets, artists, travellers and lovers.



**Best wishes,
Editor-in-Chief of Crimean magazine
Mariya Volkonskaya**

CONTENTS



On the cover: photo by Yevgeny Letov

4

Crimea in figures
12 years of sustained growth

8

Economy
Every year brings its victories

14

International Affairs
It is always easier to be friends

18

Crimea for all
Where history stands still

34

Interview
An angel's voice





42

Crimea in the spotlight

48

Symbols of Crimea

The Swallow's Nest: Secrets and symbolism

56

Cultural bridge

Rooted in the earth, intertwined by branches

66

Healing Crimea

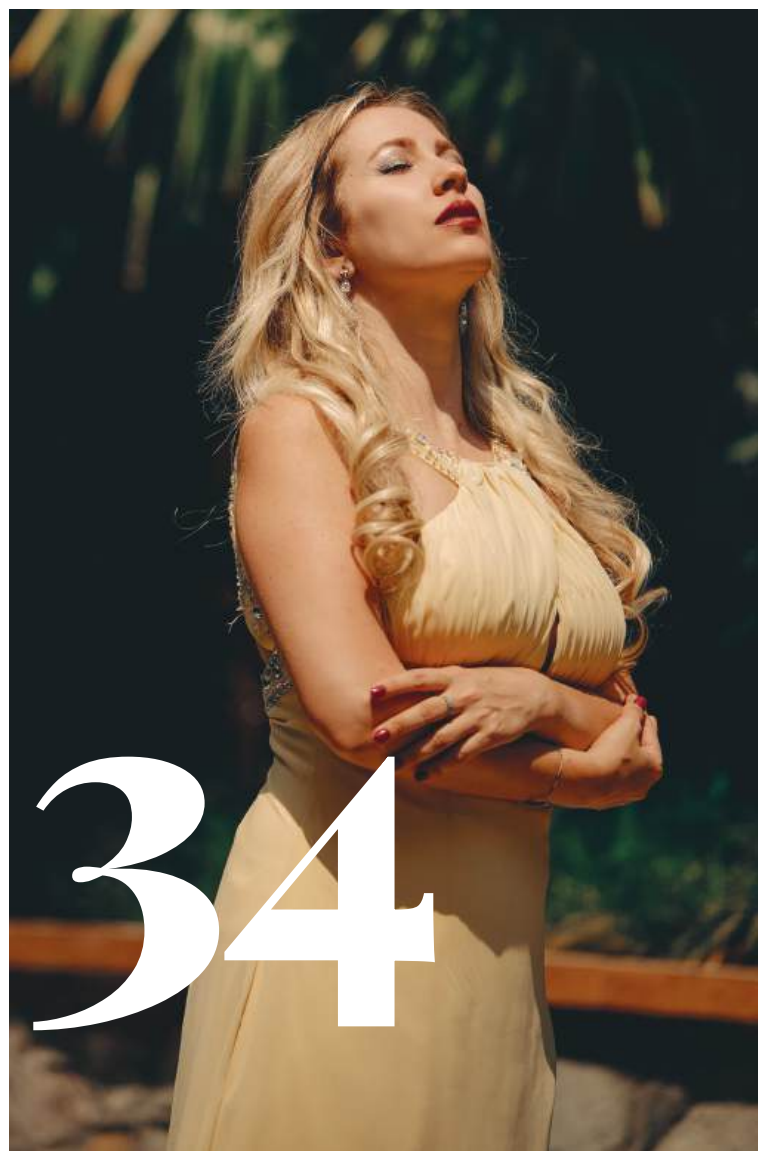
Precious mud

68

Bonds across time

There is some subtle, imperious connection...
Crimea and China: A New Horizon

74



12 years of sustained growth

Text: Oleg Anfailov

ON 18 MARCH 2026, THE DAY OF CRIMEA'S REUNIFICATION WITH RUSSIA, PRESIDENT VLADIMIR PUTIN HELD A VIDEOCONFERENCE WITH THE GOVERNMENT MEMBERS. DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER MARAT KHUSNULLIN AND HEAD OF THE REPUBLIC OF CRIMEA SERGEI AKSYONOV REPORTED ON THE PENINSULA'S SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STATE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME, AND PLANS EXTENDING THROUGH 2030.

General development progress (2014–2026)

-
- **1.3 tn roubles** allocated for the development of Crimea and Sevastopol (with the majority directed to Crimea)
 - **760 bn roubles** allocated for transport infrastructure
 - **1,670 km of roads** brought up to standard
-

- **52.5%** – share of regional roads meeting standard requirements (below 50% as of early 2025)
- **More than 760** facilities and projects completed since 2014 (including 58 in 2025)
- **99.8%** – budget execution rate of the state programme as of 2025

Investment and economy



More than 1 tn roubles

in extra-budgetary investment attracted to the economy of Crimea (surpassing the target of attracting 1 tn roubles over four years)

More than 1,600 residents

registered in Special Economic Zones (SEZs)

130,000 jobs

created through SEZ projects

More than fivefold

increase in regional budget revenues compared to 2015

Construction and housing



2.6 mln sq m

of residential and non-residential real estate commissioned in 2025 (27% higher than in 2024)

12%

more real estate built per capita than Russia's average

More than 14 mln sq m

of housing constructed since 2014

Transport and roads



760 bn roubles

allocated to transport infrastructure over the past 12 years

1,670 km of roads

brought up to standard

52.5%

of regional roads in standard condition (target: 60% by 2030)

Under construction:

- Alushta bypass road (scheduled for completion in late 2026)
- Exit road from the Tavrida Motorway towards Sudak
- Expansion of the Novorossiysk Motorway (Simferopol-Dzhankoi) to four lanes as part of the Azov Ring Road project

A slip road to the village of Privetnoye is currently being designed

Ecology and sewage treatment facilities (STPs)



24 facilities

included in the sewage treatment plant (STP) construction and renovation programme

54 bn roubles

allocated to the STP programme

8 STPs

put into operation

12 STPs

currently under construction

4 STPs

at the design stage (the largest facilities in the Republic of Crimea)

95% -

planned share of purified wastewater, previously discharged into the Black Sea, upon completion of the programme in 2030

15,000 cbm per day -

capacity of the new STP in Mindalnoye (Sudak)

Treatment capacity has tripled compared to the facilities that operated before 2014

Tourism



7.4 mln people -

tourist flow in 2025

Increase of 1.1 mln people

compared to 2024

Tourist numbers have nearly doubled since 2014

11 km of embankments

are planned for construction and renovation, including in Koktebel, Saki, and Yevpatoria

Social infrastructure



113 facilities

completed in 2025 under national projects in education, healthcare, culture, and sports

14 facilities

completed in 2025 under the state programme for the development of Crimea

Federal Children's Rehabilitation Centre in Yevpatoria - first stage opened, providing capacity for 300 children

Artek International Children's Centre - construction of new facilities is underway

EVERY

YEAR

CRIMEA'S
LARGE-SCALE
INFRASTRUCTURE
MODERNISATION
REMAINS HIGHLY ACTIVE.
THE REPUBLIC HAS
MADE ANOTHER BIG
LEAP IN CONSTRUCTION.
A REVIEW OF KEY
PROJECTS.

BRINGS ITS

VICTORIES

Text: Oleg Anfailov

Photo: Gala Amarando, Yevgeny Letov

THE ROUTE IS SET

The construction of new motorways and interchanges is ongoing in Crimea, which is logical because its economic development and the success of the tourist season depends on logistics. The main event in August was the opening of traffic of the Donskoye-Perevalnoye section of the 9.4 km bypass of Simferopol. The project includes the construction of two flyovers, two overpasses and 18 culverts.

It was implemented as part of the presidential project to build exit roads from the Tavrida Motorway towards the sea.

It is important that the two sections of the 25.2 km Category 1B four-lane motorway opened to traffic simultaneously.

Since these sections run across the mountains, the road-building companies applied non-standard engineering solutions accumulated during the construction of the Tavrida Motorway. The bypass of Simferopol will reduce transit traffic through Simferopol, the republic's capital city, and redistribute it from the motorway towards the Southern Coast of Crimea, reducing traffic congestion. The project has been estimated at 33 billion roubles.

But the main infrastructure breakthrough of the year was the construction of a 7.8 km four-lane Bypass of Alushta. Surface coat laying began there in June. The project includes the construction of three interchanges at different levels, a bridge across the Ulu-Uzen River, a 35-metre-high viaduct, seven overpasses, and about 1.4 km of retaining walls. The project is expected to be completed ahead of schedule in October 2026.

Overall, the 16 km Perevalny to Alushta section is to be completed in 2028; the road is to be widened to four lanes. The reconstruction of the Alushta-Yalta road is also nearing completion. The section toward the Artek children's centre will open in July 2026, and the remaining section towards Massandra in the first quarter of 2027.

Other large projects are underway in western Crimea. The second stage of the reconstruction of the road towards a large resort city includes a roundabout and a 7 km four-lane road with a design speed of 90 km/h.

In addition, the first section of the road that will connect the Tavrida Motorway with Sudak and the Tavrida art cluster opened for construction traffic between Lgovskoye and Grushevka in May.

Figures:

IN 2026, CRIMEA WILL ALLOCATE 45.3 BILLION ROUBLES FOR ROAD BUILDING, RECONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE. PLANS PROVIDE FOR COMPLETING 57 FACILITIES, INCLUDING 45 ROADS (TOTAL LENGTH 270 KM) AND 12 BRIDGE STRUCTURES. OVER THE PAST 12 YEARS, ALLOCATIONS FOR TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE REACHED 760 BILLION ROUBLES, WITH 1,670 KM OF ROADS IMPROVED.





PARK RENAISSANCE IN THE CRIMEAN CAPITAL



Simferopol is undergoing a real green renaissance this year. The reconstruction of Shevchenko Park and the territory around the Lower Pond is almost over, and the improvement of Gagarin Park is underway. The improvement of Children's Park is to be completed in 2026.

The highlight of the project is the Salgir River Embankment, which will become the main promenade of Crimea's capital city. The 7.2 km pedestrian route will have new benches and modern lights and video surveillance.

Figures:

IN 2025, THE MODERNISATION OF 94 TRASH ENCLOSURES IN SIMFEROPOL INCLUDED THE ACQUISITION OF 385 GARBAGE BINS; 90 ROAD SECTIONS, 27 YARDS AND TWO PEDESTRIAN ROUTES WITH AN AGGREGATE LENGTH OF 47 KM WERE EQUIPPED WITH LED LIGHTING; 23 MOTORWAYS AND 68 HOUSE TERRITORIES IN A DISTRICT OF 153 RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS WERE REPAIRED.



CULTURAL HERITAGE REVIVAL



Since 2014, a total of 7.6 billion roubles have been invested in the restoration and renovation of 203 cultural facilities and cultural heritage sites. This project will continue in 2026.

The restoration of the famous Stamboli Dacha, a cultural heritage site of the 19th century in Feodosiya, is 98 percent complete. At the same time, the restoration of the front porch of the Vorontsov Palace has begun. The restoration of the Khan's Palace (Hansaray) in Bakhchisaray is underway. The main building is practically ready, and the entire complex of buildings will be completed by December 2026.

The renovation of Livadia Park will last at least five years; huge investment in the 37hectare area

will cover the replacement of utility networks and the restoration of 60 hardscape elements (pavilions, fountains and retaining walls). A recently created interactive map of the park includes both existing objects and lost heritage.

Reconstruction projects in Kerch include the Eltigen Landing Memorial, the building of the Romanov Girls' School (to be transformed into a museum), the Pushkin Theatre, and the Kerch Fortress. The restoration of the [Konstantin Ushinsky] Gymnasium No. 1 in Simferopol is underway, and the design project for the restoration of the Arendt-Rebets Estate, an architectural landmark of the mid-19th century, is being prepared.

Figures:

ALLOCATIONS FOR THE RESTORATION OF CRIMEAN LANDMARKS IN 2026 TOTAL 2.2 BILLION ROUBLES. PLANS PROVIDE FOR COMPLETING THE RESTORATION OF THE STAMBOLI DACHA, THE SIMFEROPOL CITY DUMA AND THE CITY HALL (CRIMEAN STATE PHILHARMONIC) IN SIMFEROPOL, AS WELL AS A MADRASAH IN BAKHCHISARAY.

Stamboli's Villa



FEDERAL CHILDREN'S REHABILITATION CENTRE KORABLIK MOYNAKI

The Federal Children's Rehabilitation Centre Korablik Moynaki has opened in the combined territory of the Moynaki mud cure clinic and the Rodina resort centre in Yevpatoria. It offers—orthopaedic, audiological, ophthalmic and neuro rehabilitation services for children aged three months to 18 years. It has a hospital department for 300 beds and a day care department with 75 beds.

The centre has accepted its first patients from the historical regions of Russia. A dormitory for visiting specialists will open at the centre by the end of 2026. The overall territory of the centre is about 100,000 square metres.

Figures:

THE CONSTRUCTION OF ALL BUILDINGS OF THE CENTRE IS TO BE COMPLETED BY THE END OF 2026.





OVERALL RESULT



Crimea continues to change rapidly. Large-scale renovation plans include roads, parks, cultural facilities and social infrastructure. Hundreds of billions of roubles have been invested in Crimea's development in the 12 years since its reunification with Russia. The main result of these investments is not just figures and reports but real improvements which the people and visitors of the republic can see every day.



it is always easier to be friends

Text: Oleg Anfailov

Photo: Gala Amarando

HEAD OF CRIMEA SERGEI AKSYONOV
MET WITH MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES
FROM EUROPE, ASIA, AFRICA,
AND LATIN AMERICA.



WE RETURNED HOME

One of the most unexpected questions came from Chinese journalists. Luo Haojing and Zhao Xing asked whether the residents of Crimea had been pragmatic in 2014. Had Ukraine invested 200 billion roubles in Crimea rather than 20 billion roubles, would the referendum still have taken place, and would Crimea still have chosen the path leading it towards Russia? Sergei Aksyonov responded firmly and without hesitation:

"The residents of Crimea did not set conditions or ask questions about what would happen next, and what size salaries or pensions would be. Everyone was tired of living like that. We were not going to Russia for money or the budget. We were returning home."

He noted that Crimea had always been Russian and had become Ukrainian only by chance "through Khrushchev's decision, who did not ask anyone about their opinion."

"It was about reconstituting historical justice, nothing more," the Head of the Republic said.

THE TRIALS BROUGHT US CLOSER TOGETHER

A journalist from Ecuador was interested in how Crimea has managed to preserve friendship among 170 ethnicities and different religions. Aksyonov explained that before 2014 the Ukrainian authorities had tried to drive a wedge between the peoples of Crimea in order to prevent its rapprochement with Russia.

"We endured this up until 2014 and did not fall into that precipice. The pressure that came after 2014 brought us together even more," he said.

The Head of the Republic emphasised that there were no disagreements in everyday life, and that those who attempted to sow discord quickly faced "the full extent of Russian law."



PEOPLE MAKE THE RIGHT DECISIONS

Japanese journalist Kazuhiro Hayashida asked about the possibility of building warm relations between Japan and Russia despite the current political situation. Aksyonov said that if the people of Japan wished so, they would compel their government to make the right decisions.

"Today Japan is actively helping Ukraine. I don't know why it is doing that. Before 2022, they had absolutely nothing in common," he said.



At the same time, the Head of Crimea expressed hope that Japanese tourists and businesses would return to the peninsula.

"We are not enemies, and Crimea is a 100-percent safe place," Aksyonov said.

A question from a journalist from Malaysia concerned the possibility of developing contacts despite the detention of a Russian tanker by the Malaysian authorities.

"We are entirely in favour of it and would welcome it," Aksyonov said. "But I see the unfriendly steps recently taken by the Malaysian leadership. They should not listen to their Western partners, but act fairly. It is always easier to be friends than to fight."

JOIN US AT THE EXCAVATIONS

Miranda Tapia Ivonne del Carmen from Nicaragua had a question about education and separate budget allocations for archaeological research. Aksyonov noted with gratitude that Nicaragua had been the first country to open an honorary consulate in Crimea.



"We have special relations with you," he said. The Head of Crimea stated that schools were 90 percent equipped with modern facilities and that the main task today was not simply to provide knowledge, but to raise patriots.

"We want children leave school as citizens who love their Motherland," he said.

Aksyonov paid particular attention to archaeology. He referred to a recent scandal in which an archaeologist was detained in Poland for conducting excavations in Crimea. "They have lost their minds and are persecuting people on fabricated grounds," he said. He then immediately issued an invitation to the journalist:

"As soon as things quiet down, we will send you a schedule of archaeological expeditions. That will give you a chance to join the one you choose."

After the meeting, Krymsky Zhurnal had a chance to speak with Miranda Tapia Ivonne del Carmen, who said she was a trained historian and archaeologist and that it was her first time in Crimea.

"I am currently studying in Moscow, and I would very much like not simply to see Crimea, but to take part in real excavations and see artefacts from ancient and medieval periods," she said.

In closing, Sergei Aksyonov stressed that sanctions had not broken the spirit of the Crimeans, but made them stronger. He expressed confidence that after the end of the special military operation, international contacts would be restored and Crimea would offer its partners access to tourism, agriculture, industry, and much more.



WHERE HISTORY STANDS STILL



THE DIRECTORS OF THE PENINSULA'S
PRINCIPAL PALACE MUSEUMS HAVE INFORMED
THE CRIMEAN JOURNAL ABOUT THE MISSION
OF THE CUSTODIANS OF HISTORY AMIDST
CIVILISATIONAL CHALLENGES, THE RETRIEVAL
OF LOST TREASURES, AND THE ESTABLISHMENT
OF NEW CULTURAL CLUSTERS.

Text: Oleg Anfailov

Photo: Yevgeny Letov





CRIMEA FOR ALL

CRIMEAN PALACES ARE EXPERIENCING A RENAISSANCE. ATTENDANCE AT THE LIVADIA PALACE HAS INCREASED FROM 260,000 VISITORS IN 2023 TO 385,000 IN 2025. VORONTSOV PARK WELCOMES UP TO 2.5 MILLION GUESTS DURING PEAK PERIODS. THESE FIGURES REFLECT SYSTEMATIC EFFORTS TO TRANSFORM MUSEUMS FROM MERE EXHIBITION SITES INTO CENTRES FOR THE CULTIVATION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY.

Director
of the Livadia Palace Museum
Larisa Kovalchuk



THE THREE PILLARS OF LIVADIA

W

"We have three main tasks today: renovation of the park, restoration of the building, and re-exposition," states **Larisa Kovalchuk, director of the Livadia Palace Museum**, clearly outlining her priorities. Each of these areas is an epic in its own right, with distinct challenges and discoveries.

The renovation of Livadia Park is projected to take a minimum of five years. Its 37 hectares require more than mere maintenance of the green spaces. "Substantial investment is required to replace all the utility networks. The landslide situation is quite complex. Over 60 minor architectural forms – gazebos, fountains, retaining walls – need restoration," the director enumerates. The museum has developed an interactive map: you click and a before-and-after photograph appears. Some fountains are entirely lost, but photographs have survived that will enable their recreation.

"It is better to work for longer, but to a high standard, so that it endures for centuries, as with Krasnov's work," observes Larisa Kovalchuk, philosophically.

The palace's architect, Nikolay Krasnov, constructed a building where every detail was considered. "The walls themselves, the panels, the built-in wardrobes – they are already museum exhibits.



The door handles are still Krasnov's, memorial ones," the director emphasises.

Re-exposition is the most delicate subject. In 2025, a Russian nationwide competition was announced for a new concept. Fourteen teams from across the country submitted their projects, divided into two categories: the re-exposition of the memorial space, and the creation of a new museum site akin to the New Chersonese.

"We are, after all, more in favour of the museum remaining a memorial one," Kovalchuk firmly declares. After reviewing all the projects, a competent jury with the participation of the Minister of Culture of the Republic of Crimea and officials from leading federal museums reached a

unanimous verdict: the Livadia Palace must remain a memorial space.

Visitor preference statistics are intriguing: 49 percent are interested in the Yalta Conference, 51 percent – in the Romanovs at Livadia. "Everything is of interest – both that theme and the other. Therefore, we will not change. But we will delve deeper into both the Romanov theme and the theme of the Yalta Conference," says the director.

The plan for the restoration of the interiors has been meticulously developed. "We conducted research – that is a considerable amount of work by the museum's staff. What the walls should look like, where the sockets should be – we worked through every last detail," Kovalchuk relates.





Малая гостиная
императрицы Александры Фёдоровны
в Ливадийском дворце

HIS MAJESTY THE OBJECT

"Any museum object is the greatest treasure. If it is a memorial one, it will tell its own story best of all," insists **Alexander Balinchenko, director of the Alupka Palace and Park Museum-Reserve**. Kovalchuk shares this philosophy: "We would like to recreate the authentic interiors of the palace, so that a few more generations can see how the last Russian tsar lived."

The history of the return of objects to Livadia reads like a detective novel. After the revolution, when the palace became a health resort, the imperial furniture was written off as "unnecessary" and sold through second-hand shops. "It seems to me that even residents of Livadia may have items of furniture from the palace in their homes," Kovalchuk supposes.

The museum appealed to residents via print publications: "We did not suggest returning them for free – we suggested buying them back." The breakthrough occurred when the head of a private museum of Nicholas II in Moscow approached the director. Her father had spent decades collecting objects linked to the imperial family. After Head of the Republic of Crimea Sergey Aksyonov decided on funding, it became possible to acquire 60 unique exhibits.

"I am deeply grateful to the Head of the Republic, Sergey Aksyonov, for making that decision, and to the Minister of Culture, who conveyed this necessity to him," Kovalchuk stresses.

However, the most remarkable tale surrounds a pair of vases from the Empress's boudoir. Their return was accompanied by an account: the family passed down from generation to generation that the vases were from Livadia. Museum staff began to search for confirmation of this and found a photograph of the boudoir in which the vases stand in their places. "After 95 years, we have returned them to their place. It is some kind of mysticism!" the director does not conceal her emotions.

Another returned exhibit is a kitchen cupboard from the small dining room bearing the marking "Great Palace, Livadia." For seven years it stood in a storeroom until it was restored. The cupboard's uniqueness lies in four ventilation holes on its rear semi-circular part. Exactly the same holes were discovered in the corners of the small dining room – as if the cupboard itself indicated its historical place.



Director of the Alupka Palace and Park
Museum-Reserve
Alexander Balinchenko

**IN 2025, THE
CULTURE MINISTRY
OF THE REPUBLIC
OF CRIMEA
COMPLETED
THE REPAIR AND
RENOVATION OF
NINE CULTURAL
FACILITIES
AND HERITAGE
LANDMARKS
WORTH IN TOTAL
OVER 938 MILLION
ROUBLES.**

**OVER 2.2 BILLION
ROUBLES ALLOCATED**
FOR THE RENOVATION
OF CRIMEAN CULTURAL
FACILITIES IN 2025–2026
HAVE BEEN DIVIDED
BETWEEN FEDERAL
AND REGIONAL
PROGRAMMES,
INCLUDING PROJECTS
IN ALUPKA,
SIMFEROPOL AND
BAKHCHISARAI.
**PLANS PROVIDE FOR
COMPLETING THIS
WORK AT 39 FACILITIES.**





Renovation of the Blue Room
of the Vorontsov Palace

RESTORATION AS A PHILOSOPHY

At the Vorontsov Palace, the Blue Drawing Room is being restored for the first time. "Restoration costs a great deal," Balinchenko acknowledges. The Head of the Republic, Sergey Aksyonov, pays a lot of attention to museums and culture, he notes.

The work is financed from the republican budget and is being executed by the firm that restored the Stroganov Palace. The foreman of the restoration section, Dmitry Sergeyev, demonstrated the process: everything is being stripped back – both the walls and the stucco moulding. In certain places, elements of the stucco have fallen off completely, in others they have partially detached. The restorers soften the moulded flowers to straighten them. The entire drawing room is handcrafted. "It is difficult to give a timeframe, because colossal academic work lies behind the manual restoration of every element of the pattern," Sergeyev explains.



Renovation
of the Blue Room
of the Vorontsov Palace

CRIMEA'S CULTURAL CAPITAL

Alupka is on track to becoming a cultural cluster of a new kind. Old City is more than just a tourist project. It aims to create an accurate historical reproduction of the 19th century Vorontsov Estate when those who contributed to developing Crimea took up residence in the palace's vicinity.

"Calling Alupka Crimea's cultural capital is no longer met with condescending smiles," Balinchenko pointed out. A major investor

– Sber – helped the township renovate Vorontsovskaya Street, redevelop the territory of the Temple of Holy Archangel Mikhail, upgrade all the trails in the park, and install a unique fire extinguishing system, which is designed to be effective without damaging museum exhibits.

"This approach can be scaled to fit Yevpatoria, Feodosia, and Kerch, or any other location with a historical centre," the director noted. This effort requires the museum, government officials, socially responsible businesses and grassroots activists to work together for creating a prosperous territory.





LOOKING BEYOND ALUPKA

Alupka museum reserve's Massandra branch has enjoyed as much, if not more, attention. The Massandra Palace's custodian, Tatiana Litvinova, stressed that many original interiors were well preserved. The central lobby was designed to resemble medieval Romanesque architecture of the 10th to 12th century with a low entrance and an arched ceiling, thick walls and narrow embrasure-like windows. Wall panels covered with majolica ceramic tiles painted with cobalt lighten up this somewhat brutal interior.

The British Enlightenment era inspired the design of the billiard room. Its sculpted ceiling decorations include Tudor-style elements, while the fireplace in the corner mimics the Victorian style and is covered with woodcut engravings. All these elements were preserved in their original state.

The billiard room also presents works by Russian painters of the second half of the 19th century who were commissioned by the imperial family to supply them with paintings. The only decorative elements that did not survive to this day in its original form were the paintings on the ceiling and the tsar's symbols on the decorative wooden elements in the palace's rooms and on the fireplace. However, some of the original paintings were discovered under a layer of plaster. Litvinova reaffirmed the palace's commitment to restoring these paintings along with the initials of the imperial family members.



Николай I

**IN 2025, OVER 2.2
MILLION PEOPLE
VISITED CRIMEAN
MUSEUMS.**

THE NUMBER
OF VISITORS
TO CRIMEAN
MUSEUMS AND
RESERVES OVER
THE PAST TEN
YEARS REACHED
28 MILLION.



The study of Emperor Alexander III
in the Massandra Palace



TECHNOLOGY AND TRADITION

Both directors hold balanced, albeit opposing, views on the matter of technology in the museum space.

"Is artificial intelligence just a tool or can it replace humans? If it is a tool, like a coffee grinder, you can also grind your beans by hand, it will just take more time," Balinchenko said, adding that for him there was an ideal triad consisting of an exhibition in its traditional sense with genuine exhibits, i.e., his majesty the artefact, coupled with the palace grounds where people can get an immersive experience, and a cutting-edge technological space for expanding the horizon further.

"We have plans to create a virtual reality room here in Alupka to show how the Vorontsov Park and the palace were built and, even more importantly, to emphasise Mikhail Vorontsov's immense contribution to developing Crimea, Novorossiia, and the Caucasus," the director said to describe his vision for the future.

But Kovalchuk opted for a more conservative stance. "I am not a fan of digital twins. Livadia is a memorial museum and must remain unchanged," she noted. This does not prevent the museum from being proactive on social media. It restructured its website and uses all the available messaging services. "Once we complete the renovation processes, visitors will be able to feel the presence of the Imperial family as if you were about to run into the Emperor when turning a corner," the director mused.

MUSIC UNDER A PLANE TREE

Crimean palaces have perpetuated a historical tradition of hosting concerts on their grounds. "The Blue Living Room was the place where people who came to see the plays and musical performances convened. Their conversations paved the way for joint undertakings to develop Crimea," Balinchenko said.

But the Blue Room has too many original decorations. This is why concerts take place under a plane tree. "Titled In the Shadow of the Vorontsov

CRIMEA FOR ALL

Plane Tree, these events offer about 200 seats. The concert begins at 8 pm. This timing helps the audience to be transported from a summer evening to a southern night without leaving their seats as it gets darker, while being surrounded by all this magnificent architecture and lighting," the director said to describe the atmosphere.

The Crimean State Philharmonic, the Alexander Dolinsky Symphony Orchestra, the Musical Team of Russia project and the St Petersburg House of Music regularly perform at these concerts. There is a special vibe at the Massandra Palace when it hosts concerts.

There have also been theatre productions, for example, the Sacrament under the Clock Tower Theatre, productions by the Academic Musical Theatre of the Republic of Crimea, and the Russian Theatre of Drama. "We will have more performances of this kind, and we are holding talks to offer more diversity and find the best possible ways to present these projects and their unique productions," Balinchenko pointed out.

YOUTH OUTREACH

The museums have been paying special attention to working with children and young people. "People are changing for the better in terms of the way they view history. There is a growing interest in it among them," Kovalchuk said. She went on to share what happened at a research conference on the Yalta Conference. "There was a group of very young people, maybe 11th graders, who were asking reenactors about various documents. They had a very lively and interested conversation. This is when I happened to pass near them, and I thought: Why is there so many people? Seeing these youngsters, so eager to learn new things, was very gratifying," she noted.

The Vorontsov Palace has created a one-of-a-kind publishing project by releasing a graphic novel titled Adventures in the Magical Vorotsov Palace. "We used the comic strip principle for a noble cause. This is a story about a boy and a girl who happen to be in the palace at night. Lions and various other characters talk to them. This is a children's book, but all the information



it presents is accurate from a scientific perspective and was adapted by a children's writer and a painter," Balinchenko said.

"A museum is like spring water with a stream of pure information rushing out of it. There are so few real, genuine things around these days. All the genuine things are in museums, while we live in a world of replicas," the Vorontsov Palace's director mused on a somewhat philosophical note.

SCIENCE AND COOPERATION

Scientific work in Crimean palaces is not armchair research but a dynamic process the result of which is exhibitions and discoveries. "Every museum researcher has one or two focus subjects. Some research the Crimean Conference, other study the period when the palace was a health facility, which is also part of its history. Some research the lives of princesses, others investigate Nicholas II, and still others study the palace's architecture," Kovalchuk said.

There are eight researchers in the Livadia palace, who never stop looking for new information, working in the archives, and delivering reports at conferences. The museum hosts two to four large scientific forums every year: an event devoted to the 1945 Crimean (Yalta) Conference, the Romanovs and Crimea annual in May, and the biennial Krasnov readings.

"The results of scientific work include publications and reports at conferences. But the most important result is an exhibition," the Livadia Palace director emphasised.

Exhibitions are the pinnacle of scientific cooperation between museums. The Vorontsov Palace regularly holds joint projects with Russia's leading museums. It organised The Trip. The Coronation. The Family exhibition about Alexander III jointly with Tsarskoye Selo. The exhibition Happy to Be Back Home, organised with the Gatchina Palace, revealed the connection between the emperor's favourite house in Gatchina and the house of his dreams in Massandra.

The annual event Alexander III and His Brave Don Cossacks is a remarkable project arranged jointly with the Museum of Don Cossack History, the Novocherkassk Museum, Rostov Regional Museum of Local Lore and the Sholokhov Museum Reserve. "The project reveals the story of relations between the emperor and Cossacks. These major exhibitions feature over 150 items, many of which are put on public display for the first time," Balinchenko said.



THERE ARE ABOUT 1.5 MILLION ITEMS ON DISPLAY IN CRIMEAN MUSEUMS, INCLUDING ANCIENT EXHIBITS AND MODERN ITEMS. ABOUT 15,000 NEW ITEMS HAVE BEEN ADDED TO THE MUSEUM'S COLLECTIONS IN 2024, AND OVER 3,600 ITEMS SINCE THE BEGINNING OF 2025.



The Sholokhov Museum Reserve sends delegation of Cossacks, who demonstrate the Cossack way of life which has been preserved to the present day. "Visitors can see items from the past that are an integral part of Cossack traditions and how they are used today," the director said.

The Nikita (Nikitsky) Botanical Garden plays an important role in scientific cooperation. Vorontsov Park is the botanical gem in the constellation of Russia's palace and park complexes. "It is a Mediterranean park. St Petersburg is located in the northern geographical region, a southern taiga. We have the largest and most diverse collection of heat-loving plants," Balinchenko noted. The Nikita Botanical Garden provides assistance to research, plant protection, and historical studies because this masterpiece of park architecture was created by the garden's previous administrations.

CIVILISATIONAL MISSION

"Museums have a new mission at this age of struggle between civilisational constructs. The Russian code, our distinguishing features and self-determination are of crucial importance," Balinchenko said about the museum's new role. The answers can be found in the connection between generations and authentic items and spaces.

Both directors are grateful to the republican authorities for supporting their museums. "Our top authorities are aware of the problem," Kovalchuk emphasised. Their awareness is not limited to words. With budgetary allocations of 96.5 million roubles in 2025, the Livadia Palace reported an income of 104 million roubles.

The Crimean museums have ambitious plans. The Livadia Palace is preparing for the 130th anniversary of the coronation of Nicholas II, the 170th anniversary of the coronation of Alexander II, and the 115th anniversary of the palace itself. The Vorontsov Museum is developing a virtual space project.

The Crimean palaces have proved that museums in the 21st century are not a display frozen in time but a living organism that connects eras and shapes the future through reflecting on the past.



INTERVIEW

AN ANGEL'S VOICE

Text: Diana Maslova

Photos: Yevgeny Letov,
and courtesy of Yulia Khromchenko's
personal archives



“HERE, THE PIPE ORGAN IS DETACHED FROM CHURCH RITUALS AND WORSHIPING AND ARTISTIC EXPRESSION REIGNS SUPREME WHILE MUSIC FLOWS.” IN HER INTERVIEW, YULIA KHROMCHENKO, A SOLOIST AT THE LIVADIA CENTRE FOR PIPE ORGAN MUSIC, WINNER OF INTERNATIONAL CONTESTS AND EDUCATOR, DISCUSSED HER PERFORMANCES ABROAD, HUMOUR IN MUSIC, WHEN SHE LOST HER VOICE IN FRONT OF A HUGE AUDIENCE, AND RUSSIA’S BIGGEST PIPE ORGAN.

BRIDGES OF CULTURE

You were among the finalists of a prestigious academic singing competition in the United States in 2014, went on to win the American Protégé in New York, and later had your debut at the Carnegie Hall. You took part in Boston University’s Opera Project. What are your most vivid memories from this period?

Carnegie Hall topped it all. It left the biggest impression on me. Before that, all I knew about this venue came from the writings of great musicians. Imagine how happy I was to be able to perform on this stage. This hall has excellent acoustics and an incredible atmosphere, a rich history and an outstanding audience too.

While at the Boston University, what surprised me was the way people cared about musical education there. I was really amazed by the fact that students could play so many historical instruments such as harpsichords and old pipe organs. These are extraordinary instruments, and very few musicians have a chance to get

a feel, let alone play them, throughout their careers, but in Boston students can play these instruments as part of their curriculum.

You have met many world-class musicians. Which of these encounters had the biggest impact on you? Have you stayed in touch?

I had the privilege of performing with Yevgenia Lisitsyna, an outstanding pipe organ player. She is a world-class musician and I learned a lot from her, including during her workshops. I also hold very warm memories about working with Simona Frenkel, an organist from New York. She gave me lots of professional advice. We try staying in touch to the best of our ability.

Nevertheless, you returned to your home stage. In what ways is music education in the United States and Europe different from the Russian system?

Young singers enjoy more freedom abroad, while education in Russia is very strict. It requires maximum clarity, discipline and a sense of perfection. There is more flexibility in foreign higher education institutions, where people get more opportunities to explore their inner selves, experiment and make mistakes.

The Livadia Pipe Organ Hall regularly serves as a concert venue for musicians from around the world. What left the biggest impression on your foreign colleagues?

We hosted performances by outstanding musicians from Austria, Germany, Italy, France, Switzerland, Latvia, Poland, Norway and other countries, including Heribert Metzger, John Keys, Gianluca Libertucci, Holger Gehring, Christoph Krummacher, Francesco Anile, Yevgenia Lisitsyna, Marek Toporovski, Guy Beauvais, Honoré Bauchu, Mikhail Kazinik...



Many of them stay in touch with us and really hope to be able to come to Livadia again to take part in concerts, festivals and creative meetings.

Almost all of them expressed their amazement not only at the pipe organ, the way it sounds and the acoustics we have in this hall, but also Livadia's vibe, the history of this place and the beauty of Crimea's southern coast. I cannot forget what Mikhail Kazinik said in this context: "Crimea is a marvel. It is like planet paradise, a place that must be open to the entire world. People must be able to come here and marvel at every stone, every cave, every fortress, and every turn of the road. I have crisscrossed the entire world and not seen anything which could be compared to Crimea. Politicians come and go, while land, culture, knowledge and the human spirit linger."

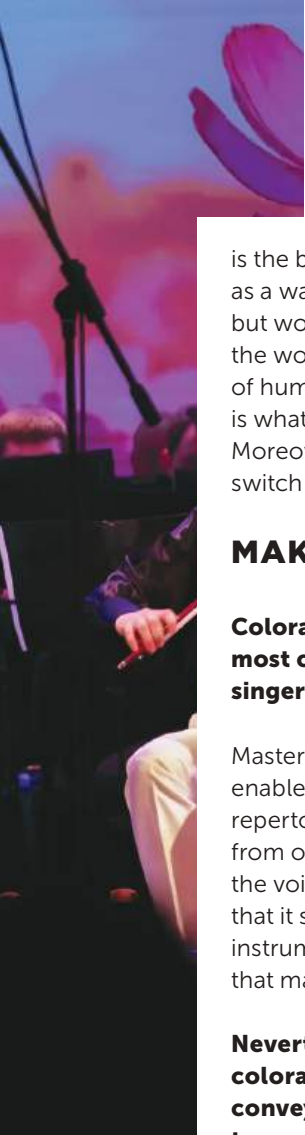
I also remember what one of the foreign musicians said after a festival. He said that Crimea was a true pearl that outshines even Nice, while living here brings immense joy. He went on to confess that he would like to spend every summer in Crimea.

You know Mikhail Kazinik quite well and took part in his school. How did working with him change the way you view music?

He is an incredibly educated person and a deep thinker. For him, music is not just a set of technical tricks but part of a single cultural space intertwined with literature, philosophy, painting and history. His method relies on going beyond perfectly playing the notes and provides for developing conceptual thinking, emotional perceptions and the ability to understand the inner meanings of a musical piece. He also follows a very unconventional principle of holding what he calls an integrated sound-wave lessons during which several teachers representing various kinds of music work with a single student.

Kazinik also strongly believes that a teacher must tell a joke every ten seconds. Do you also often tell jokes during your classes?

Indeed, I do that quite often (Smiling – Editor.). He had a wonderful way of framing this notion when he said: "Positive laughter



is the best remedy for fighting stress, as well as a way to prevent people who do nothing but work from forgetting just how beautiful the world around them is." Having a sense of humour while exploring cultural matters is what sets musicians apart from others. Moreover, jokes help remove any tension, switch focus and better follow the teaching.

MAKING MUSIC YOUR OWN

Coloratura soprano is viewed as one of the most challenging voice types. What can a singer do with it?

Mastering the coloratura soprano voice type enables singers to master a very spectacular repertoire that requires a lot of virtuosity, from opera to chamber music. Sometimes the voice can become so agile and precise that it starts sounding much like a musical instrument. It is this sense of sophistication that makes the coloratura soprano so striking.

Nevertheless, some believe that the coloratura soprano makes it harder to convey a sense of deep drama, as if a light tone colour could limit the emotional capabilities...

I would like to challenge you on this matter. Drama cannot be reduced to tone colour. It comes from who the singer represents and what they stand for, from the way they understand music and whether the singer can make the piece their own.

Of course, every voice type is special. The chest voice in coloratura soprano is usually not as dense as for a mezzo soprano. Opera pieces requiring a coloratura soprano voice are usually about fairy tale, fantastic heroic female

characters because there is a lot of brightness, clarity and agility in this voice. The fact that people often compare this type of singing with a flute is not a coincidence since in some pieces their respective tones often morph into a single whole.

This, however, does not mean that this voice is unable to create drama. A good singer can create depth and emotion regardless of the voice type.

There is a widespread belief among music lovers that if a singer can easily handle high notes that means that he or she has a strong voice. Is there any truth to this notion?

There is a widespread belief among music lovers that if a singer can easily handle high notes that means that he or she has a strong voice. Is there any truth to this notion?

In itself, the ability to handle high notes does not tell you anything about how good the singer is. What makes a great vocalist is the ability to



master the voice, its range, breathing, the ability to use complex techniques, dynamic tones, and being able to switch between various registries.

But there is more to it. Being able to perform on stage, charisma and the ability to connect to the audience, while using music to tell a story – all this instrumental too. This is when the technique, musicality and the singer's persona all come together to create a genuine feel of performing art with a big "A."

The way you feel, your emotions, acoustics and even weather can all affect your voice. How do you handle a situation before a concert when you understand that your voice is not at its best?

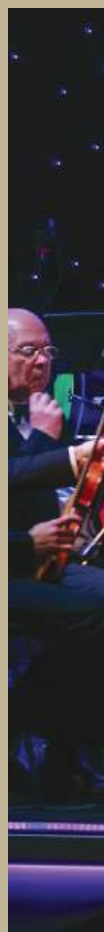
My approach consists of ensuring that I get enough sleep and proper nutrition. If possible, I give my vocal cords some rest. Just talk as little as possible so that the vocal cords can recover. As for all these folk cures such as consuming raw eggs, butter or what have you, I think that these are myths, even if they can serve as a placebo.

Have you ever lost your voice right before having to enter the stage?

Of course. (*Smiling – Editor*) For some reason, this usually happens ahead of my biggest performances. There were times when it happened when I had to sing for a very high-profile audience. This is like Murphy's Law, you know. There was an opera festival in Sevastopol recently with a symphonic orchestra. I had a very high fever on the eve of the concert and literally lost my voice. However, I was on the stage the very next day. Of course, I did everything possible to recover, even if I still felt weak and had to perform with a fever.

How did you manage to do it?

Performing on stage puts you in an incredible state. You can feel completely exhausted right before entering the stage, but as soon as you hear the music your body literally switches into a different gear. When you get a feel of the character and allow music to take over you, this relegates everything else into the background, be it any ailments, weakness, or discomfort. Your professional attitude kicks in, i.e., the experience you have accumulated over all these years.





I remember one time when I had to perform a very complex opera piece. I had a feeling that the second wind kicked in while I was singing. But as soon as the music stopped and I had to take the curtain, I felt that I was completely exhausted.

You have been teaching vocals for many years now. Can you learn to be an opera singer or it is all about natural talent?

For a student who did not have any prior training, you cannot know whether he or she will become an opera singer. No one is guaranteed to be able to perform on stage. This is a very delicate and lengthy process. Of course, natural abilities do play a role, including the tone, range, the way vocal cords have been formed, having a sense of music, and cognitive abilities. Some people are gifted with incredible talent, and they can make headway faster. This does not mean, however, that others will not be able to achieve serious results. Hard work, discipline and the desire to put in the effort is what makes the difference, by and large.

Do you have your own method for enabling people to find their true singing voice?

There are certain principles, such as a proper breathing techniques, working with the vocal core and gradually improving the technique. But beyond these basics, it all comes down to the person. One student can instantly master their body and the voice follows, and the person understands everything, while others require a different approach.

Artificial intelligence has already learnt to write music and generate a singing voice. What do you think about it?

I do not see any reason not to have this experiment. Why not? This could be quite interesting. That said, there is no way AI can replace a real singer. Every singer experiences music in a particular way by investing their experience, emotions, character and the way they understand text and music into every piece of music they perform. It is this individual touch

that gives birth to real art. Tone, breathing, and inner emotions, and the chemistry between the singer and the audience is something that cannot be programmed.

MUSIC FROM HEAVEN

It was your family that built the Livadia Pipe Organ Hall. In fact, your father, Vladimir Khromchenko, was among those who pioneered this project. What makes this space so unique? How is it different from other concert venues?

When this pipe organ was built, this was a completely unique project and experience for the entire Soviet Union. There was nothing similar of this kind anywhere else, which made this project completely unprecedented.

The place where you find a pipe organ most of the times is a church or a cathedral such as the Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris or the Sagrada Familia. There are many examples of this kind all over Europe. But here, we are in a completely different setting. This is a standalone concert venue where the pipe organ is detached from church rituals and worshiping and artistic expression reigns supreme while music flows. Of course, it also hosts chamber music concerts, choirs, opera performances, but the pipe organ is still the heart and soul of this space.

Mr Khromchenko built the pipe organ for the Livadia Organ Music Centre with his own hands. Today, it is one of the biggest pipe organs in Russia and the post-Soviet space. How has this experience influenced you as a musician?

The hall opened in 1998 when I was still in secondary school. I literally grew up with this instrument, watching as my father designed all the structures, made drawings, adjusted thousands of pipes, and how this huge mechanism came to be.

Of course, this had to have an impact on me. When you get to witness the birth of an instrument that is so complex and sophisticated, you get to know and understand it from a completely

different perspective. Instead of viewing it merely like an instrument that can produce music, you can see what makes it and its inner workings.

This has a lot in common with how our vocals work. A singer must understand how his or her voice works. The same reasoning applies here. When you know how the instrument is engineered, this completely changes the way you work with it, making your interaction much deeper and more interesting.

Today, you and your brother are continuing your father's work. What was the biggest challenge in terms of preserving this legacy?

Preserving the instrument and ensuring its maintenance was the hardest part. This is a huge pipe organ. It is a very complex and delicate instrument which requires constant care, time and serious investment.

My elder brother, who is the hall's director, does most of the work. You have to keep an eye on whether the organ is properly adjusted at all times, while taking into account the temperature and humidity levels. The pipe organ instantly responds to any changes in the environment.

We have big windows with tainted glass in this hall. In the summer, it gets hot inside very quickly due to sunlight, which affects the instrument. This is why we must constantly seek to balance out these factors in order to ensure that we have the proper environment in the building.

Apart from running the concert hall, do you have any other ideas or projects these days?

We are trying to perpetuate everything our father conceived. This includes caring for the park which surrounds the concert hall, planting it, and gradually completing projects he did not manage to finish.

And we are constantly expanding our repertoire, since we want our audience to discover new music every time they come here and to return for new experiences. There is so many wonderful music around the world that this can be a perpetual undertaking.



We are also gradually upgrading the hall, including its design, interior and other attributes. All this creates a certain atmosphere.

Your father used to say that a pipe organ forms a single whole with the hall where acoustics matter just as much as the technical arrangements. Is an organ a partner or a rival for you?

I am very comfortable with the pipe organ. In terms of the way it sounds, it has much in common with a symphonic orchestra. In fact, the voice sounds really well in the Livadia Hall. It literally flows and fills the space. Singing here is a great joy.

There is no competition between the organ and the singer. It is true that if you pull out all the stops and have a full tutti performance (*engaging every major rank of pipes simultaneously* – **Editor**), there is no voice that can handle this volume, but the same is true for an orchestra. But this never happens if you form a team. There is chemistry between the organist and the singer.

What are your current priorities? Do you want to evolve as a singer or to create an environment for nurturing new singing talent?

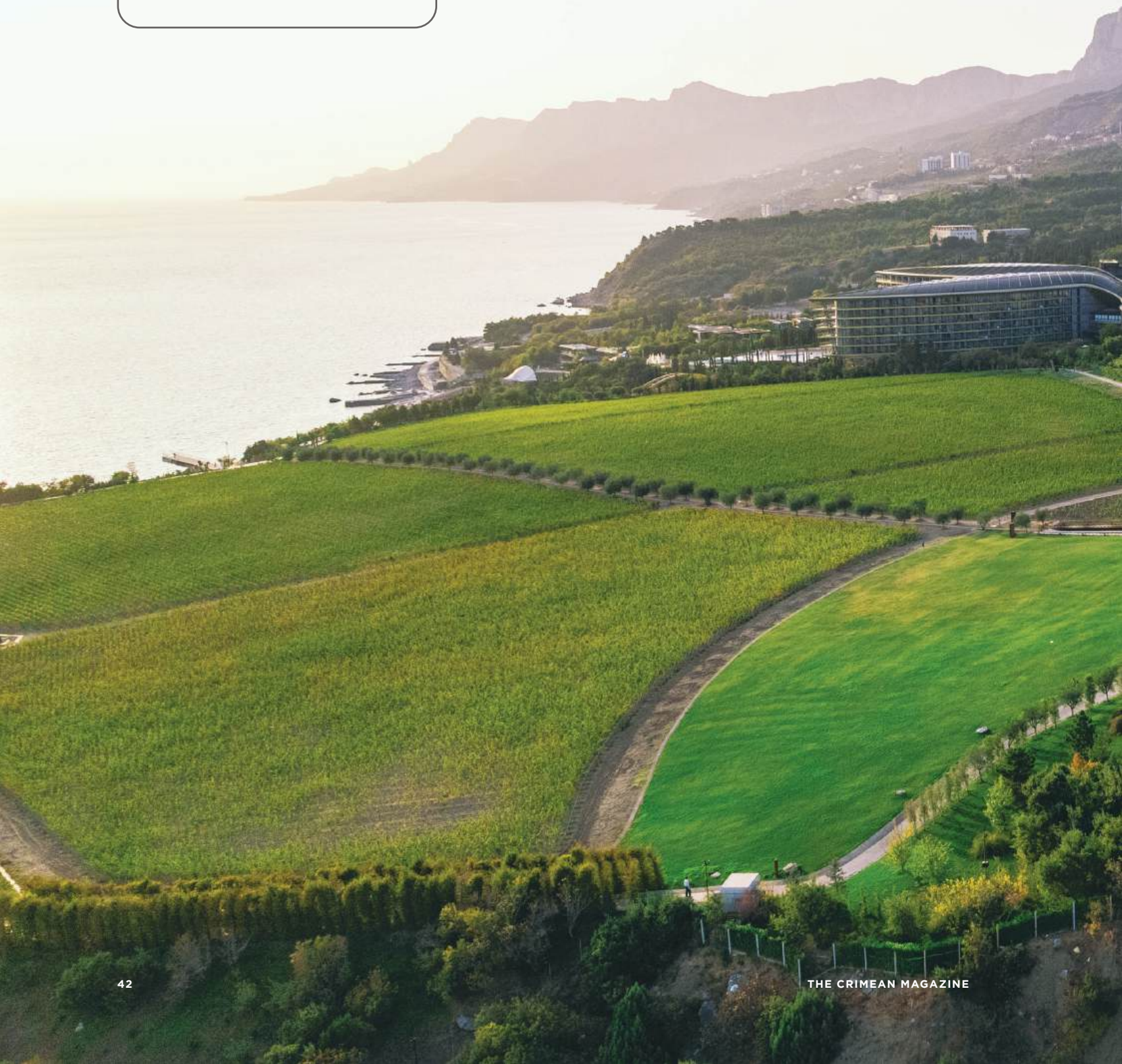
Performing on stage remains a priority for me. At the same time, I really love creating an enabling environment for young talent, which includes opening my own school.

ANY MUSIC LISTENING ADVICE?

I have a special knack for performing the Dinorah's aria *Ombra leggera* from Giacomo Meyerbeer *Dinorah*, as well as Cunégonde's *Glitter* and *Be Gay* from Leonard Bernstein's *Candide*.

Crimea is changing, with new infrastructure, tourist centres, cultural spaces and platforms for business meetings offering more possibilities for recreation, work and life on the peninsula.

Photo: Mriya Resort









New facilities are improving the peninsula's landscape, becoming standalone focal points, leading to the appearance of new routes, and creating new reasons for visiting Crimea and its events locations.

Photo: New Hersones

An aerial photograph of a luxurious coastal estate. The property features three rectangular swimming pools with blue mosaic tile interiors, arranged in a row on a manicured green lawn. Each pool is surrounded by white lounge chairs and small flower beds. The estate is bordered by a dense forest of tall, green pine trees on the left, which meets a rocky shoreline and the deep blue sea. The sky is clear and blue.

These changes mean new jobs, more opportunities for local businesses, and a more comfortable environment. Ultimately, the development of the tourism, business and cultural infrastructure is becoming part of everyday life in Crimea.

Photo: LUCIANO FOROS 5*



THE SWALLOW'S NEST:

Text: Ivan Kovalenko

THE FAMOUS CASTLE IS MARKING A MODEST MILESTONE: 15 YEARS AS A CULTURAL CENTRE.

YET THE STORY OF THE SWALLOW'S NEST STRETCHES BACK MUCH FURTHER. OVER THE PAST 140 YEARS, THIS ICONIC LANDMARK HAS WITNESSED A REMARKABLE SUCCESSION OF EVENTS, ITS HISTORY EVERY BIT AS DRAMATIC AND CAPTIVATING AS ITS FAIRYTALE SILHOUETTE SUGGESTS.

Dr Tobin's estate, with its little house perched above the sea, was already appearing on postcards by the late 19th century.

For 140 years, the miniature castle perched atop the cliff has been the first to greet the rising sun.

Photo by
Vitaly Yeryomenko

An 1886 guidebook, *The Town of Yalta, Its Surroundings and Health Resorts*, records that Dr Adalbert Tobin, physician to the Imperial residence at Livadia, established "the finest boarding house on the southern coast" at Cape Ai-Todor.

Soon afterwards, travel guides began referring to one of the estate's buildings by a memorable name: "One of the cottages on Dr Tobin's estate, known as the Swallow's Nest, has been built with extraordinary daring upon a sheer cliff."



A bird's home

The Swallow's Nest resembles the home of its feathered namesake in more ways than one.

Observers have long noted that swallows return year after year to the same place, patiently rebuilding their nests regardless of the obstacles they encounter. According to folk tradition, a swallow's nest is a happy omen, a sign that the place possesses a benevolent spirit and that its inhabitants will enjoy peace, harmony and prosperity.

Ornithologists also point out that swallow families follow an enduring pattern surprisingly similar to human life: the male builds the nest, while the female presides over the household.

Where the waves meet the dawn

Along with the castle, the cliff itself acquired its present name during the 19th century. It was dedicated to Aurora, the ancient Roman goddess of the dawn, and with good reason: few places offer a more spectacular sunrise over the Black Sea. Yet the owners of the estate were not merely romantics. They were also educated people who knew that the Latin word *aurora* was closely associated with *aura*, meaning "a breeze" or "a gentle breath". Today, the word *aura* has become firmly established in esoteric traditions, where it refers to the invisible energy said to surround every person.

In the Middle Ages, however, the cliff bore a very different name: Monastyr-Burun, or Monastery Cliff. It adjoins Cape Ai-Todor, whose name echoes the Greek words *hagios* ("holy") and the name Theodore. Early travellers described the ruins of what appeared to have been a Christian church. Among its surviving features were white marble columns crowned with carved crosses, clear evidence that the sanctuary had once held considerable importance.

White marble columns topped with crosses at Tauric Chersonesus, Sevastopol. Travellers marveled at similar columns standing on Cape Ai-Todor.



SYMBOLS OF CRIMEA

The elegant villa that Dr Tobin built for his beloved wife, Elizaveta Alexandrovna, became known as the Swallow's Nest.

A maiden on the cliff

During the second half of the 19th century, this beautiful but untamed stretch of coastline began to take shape under the care of Dr Adalbert Tobin.

A trained surgeon and military physician, Tobin distinguished himself during the defence of Sevastopol in 1854-1855 before joining the hospital serving the Imperial estate at Livadia.

Shortly before purchasing land at Ai-Todor, Tobin married a genuine baroness. Combining the dowry of his wife, Elizaveta Alexandrovna, with his own income, the medical doctor decided to invest in resort property. He built guest cottages on the lower part of the estate, while at the very edge of the cliff he commissioned a private residence for his beloved wife. It was given a fitting name: the Swallow's Nest.

Why he chose to build a house in such a breathtaking yet utterly impractical location remains one of the estate's enduring mysteries.

Keeping it in the family

After her husband's death, Elizaveta Alexandrovna decided to part with her extraordinary cliff-top residence. In 1902, the Swallow's Nest was purchased by Sofia Steingel.

Members of her large German family had served the Russian Crown for more than two centuries. During the second half of the 19th century, the Steingels became prominent entrepreneurs, building railways and developing oilfields across the Empire.

It remains unclear which member of the family financed the purchase. One thing is certain, though: Sofia Alexandrovna acquired the charming villa at a favourable price, as Elizaveta Tobin happened to be her own sister.

Usually shrewd in business, the Steingels made an unfortunate investment on this occasion. Powerful coastal winds had already weakened the little house, leaving it in a dangerous condition. Restoring the building was evidently more trouble than it was worth, and before long the picturesque residence was put up for sale.

In 1904, Sofia Steingel's villa was immortalised by Sergei Prokudin-Gorsky, the pioneer of Russian colour photography.

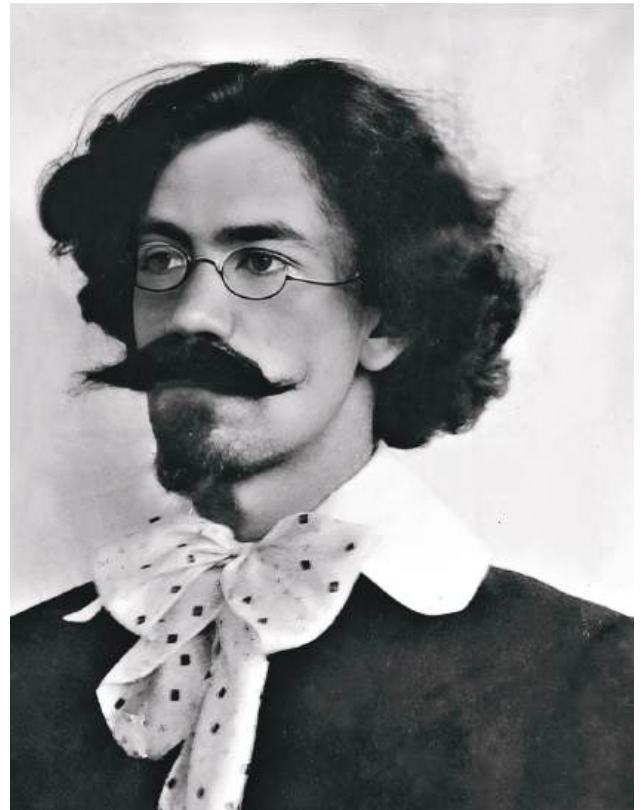
A passion for theatre

The estate's third owner, Maria Rakhmanova, belonged to one of Russia's wealthiest merchant dynasties. The family acted decisively: the ageing wooden house was demolished, and in 1913 the fairy-tale castle that we know today rose dramatically above the cliff.

The project was entrusted to Nikolai Sherwood. The Rakhmanovs, who had commissioned townhouses and apartment buildings in Moscow, were well acquainted with the distinguished Sherwood family of architects. By happy coincidence, the young architect had settled in nearby Alupka.

Sherwood's love of the theatre left an unmistakable imprint on the castle's design. Decorative stonework, pointed windows and elegant turrets were fully in line with the romantic Gothic style and created an atmosphere of romantic mystery.

Behind its fairy-tale appearance, however, everyday life remained surprisingly modest and reminiscent of the Middle Ages. The castle was lit by kerosene lamps, heated by fireplaces, supplied with running water only in the kitchen, while its drainage system consisted simply of pipes leading over the edge of the cliff.



Architect Nikolai Sherwood, designer of the Swallow's Nest. His contemporaries described his creations as "fantastically grand and delightfully unconventional."

Lightning splitting the sky above the castle symbolises the geopolitical upheaval that engulfed Crimea during the Civil War.



Home is where the heart is

Maria Rakhmanova left Moscow for Taurida to make the Swallow's Nest her home. Yet dark clouds were already gathering over the peninsula. In 1914, the outbreak of the First World War set in motion the upheavals that would culminate in revolution and civil war. Crimea endured a succession of changing governments, famine, devastation, and lawlessness.

Amid the turmoil, however, the Swallow's Nest remained a haven. Here Maria found family happiness with her husband, Vladimir Kyulev. A man of artistic and scholarly interests, he continued his intellectual pursuits despite the uncertainty surrounding him. Before long, however, the realities of life proved as relentless as the waves crashing against the cliffs below. Realising that peaceful life was no longer possible, the couple locked the house that had never truly become their home and left Crimea.



The 16th century icon The Nativity of Christ, one of the treasures of the Simferopol Art Museum. Icons of this kind may once have graced the interiors of the Swallow's Nest.

A blessed silence

When the Soviet power was finally established in Crimea in 1920, representatives of the Workers' Control Committee inspected the abandoned estate. Their inventory offers a vivid glimpse into the lives of the castle's last private owners. The commission noted luxurious furniture fashioned in the Old Russian style. "The rooms are strewn with torn books, letters, photographs and postcards," the inspectors recorded, adding that "Rubbish has been thrown into the sea."

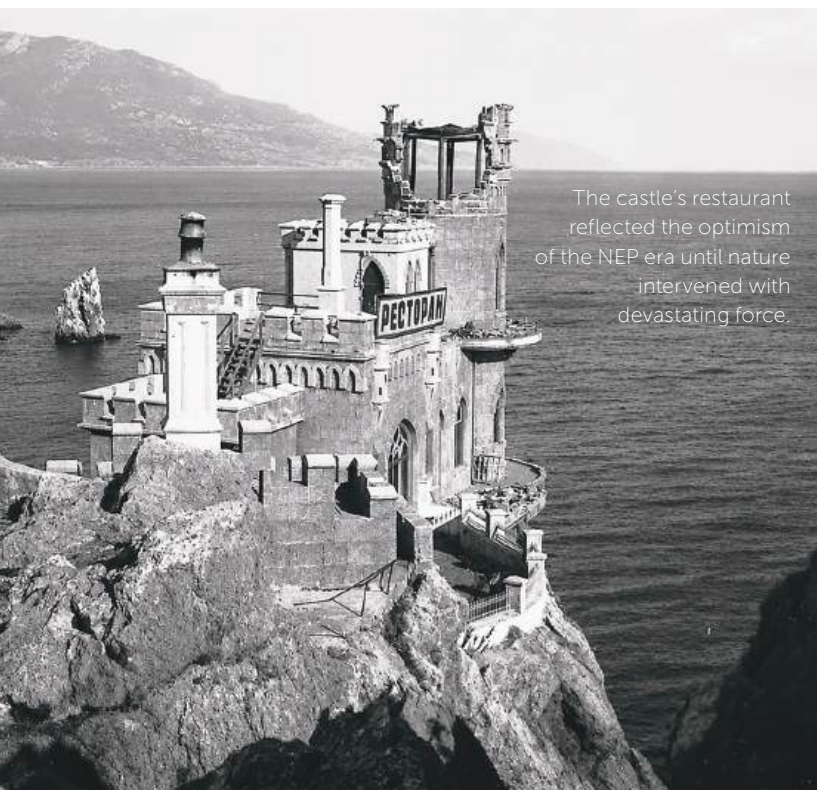
The sea may have swallowed many of the castle's secrets, yet the surviving inventory reveals much about the Rakhmanov family. Devout adherents of the Old Believer tradition, they assembled an exceptional collection of medieval Russian icons. After the Revolution, the collection became state property and was transferred to the Tretyakov Gallery, from where individual works were later distributed to museums across the country. It is therefore entirely possible that some of the ancient icons displayed in Crimean museums today once adorned the walls of the Swallow's Nest.

The ties of time were broken

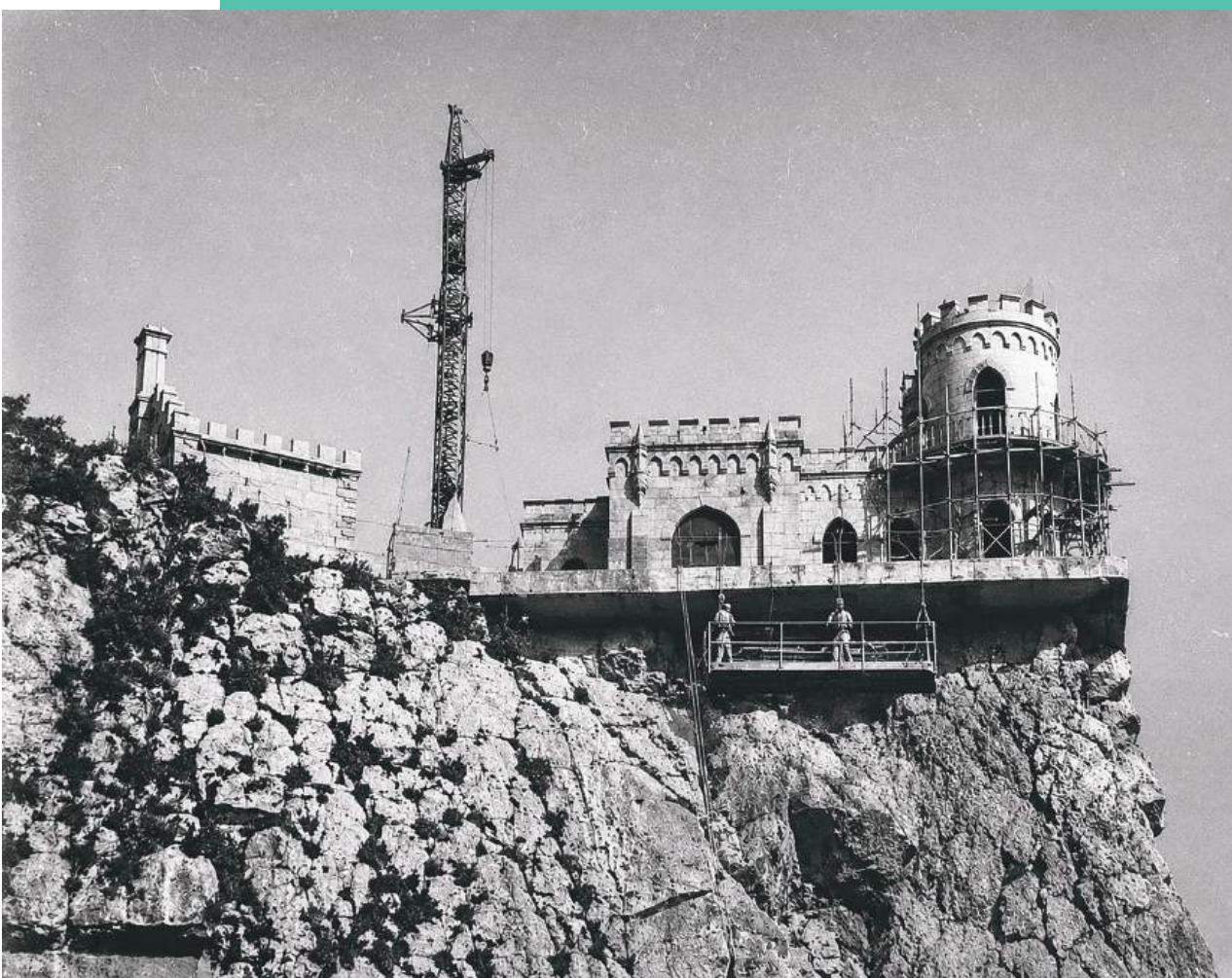
The romantic castle enjoyed an unexpected new chapter during the years of the New Economic Policy (NEP), when limited private enterprise briefly returned to Soviet Russia.

The former merchant's residence was transformed into a restaurant. Its new life proved remarkably short. In September 1927, a powerful earthquake struck Crimea. The upper part of the main tower collapsed into the dining room, crushing tables and chairs. By extraordinary good fortune, the last visitors had departed only minutes before the strongest tremor, and no one was hurt. At the same time, part of the cliff itself gave way, leaving the Swallow's Nest dramatically suspended above the sea.

Images of the damaged castle soon appeared on postcards sold to raise funds for victims of the earthquake. Yet the castle itself was not restored. The damaged tower was shortened, the observation deck closed to visitors, and the building stood neglected for almost four decades.



The castle's restaurant reflected the optimism of the NEP era until nature intervened with devastating force.



Restoring the Swallow's Nest was an extraordinary achievement.

Rebuilding a landmark

Major restoration finally began in the mid-1960s in preparations for the 50th anniversary of the Soviet power.

The dangerously overhanging section of the castle was carefully dismantled, with every stone meticulously numbered. Engineers had the cliff cleaned from debris and reinforced it using one of the oldest and most reliable construction methods: cavities in the rock were filled with molten lead to create a solid, earthquake-proof foundation. Upon this base, the tower was rebuilt using its original stonework, complete with newly crafted battlements and spires.

The restoration demanded extraordinary skill and determination. Heavy-duty machinery could not safely reach the site, so every building material had to be carried by hand. Suspended at dizzying heights above the sea on temporary platforms, the workers accomplished what many considered impossible.

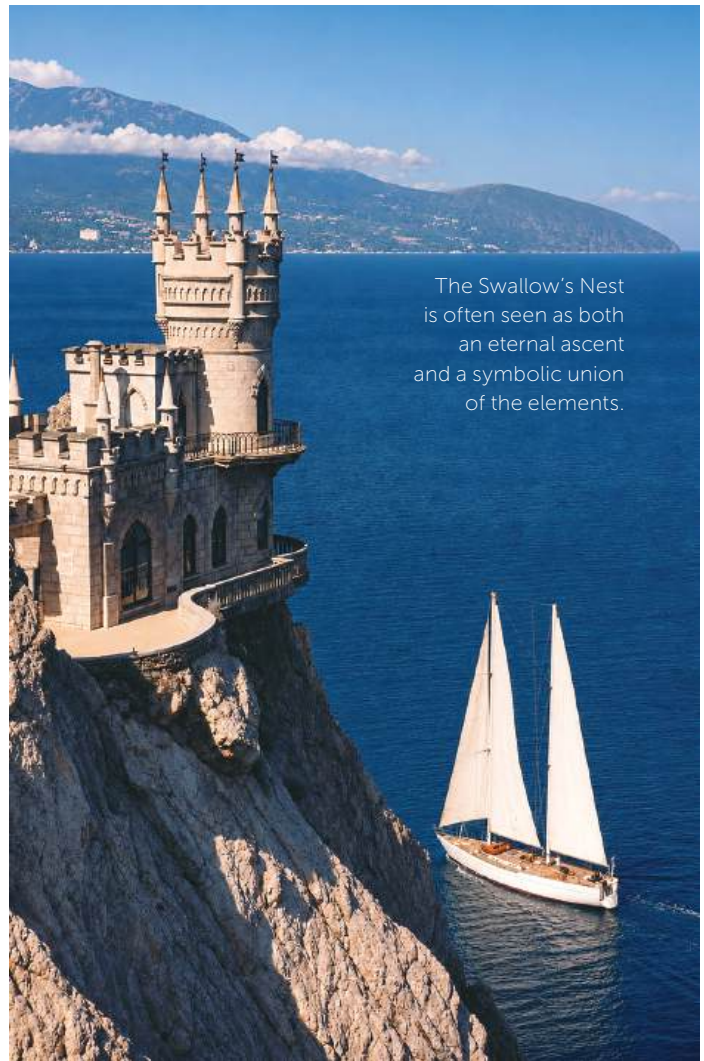
In 1971, the Swallow's Nest assumed the appearance that we know today. A restaurant once again opened in the castle and, for several decades, dining there became one of Crimea's most fashionable experiences. Forty years later, however, the restaurant closed its doors, making way for the exhibition spaces that visitors enjoy today.

Legends woven in stone

A place as striking as the Swallow's Nest was always destined to inspire legend over its 140 years in existence. Even the earliest guidebooks spoke of mysteries surrounding the site. One claimed that Monastery Hill was known as the "Mountain of the Koh-i-Noor," while suggesting that somewhere within Aurora Cliff lay the cave of the Golden Fleece. Such tales have long fired the imagination, and the ladies' eyes shine like the Koh-i-Noor diamond, the symbol of world history, while the gallant knights accompanying them are ready to set off in search of the Golden Fleece, only to lay it nonchalantly at their feet.

Demonic creatures peer down upon visitors from the castle's interior.

These playful figures support not only the ceiling beams but also the rich decorative traditions of medieval Gothic architecture.



The Swallow's Nest is often seen as both an eternal ascent and a symbolic union of the elements.

An unending ascent

Viewed through the lens of symbolism, the Swallow's Nest takes on an even deeper meaning. From the restless waters of the Black Sea rises the solid permanence of the cliff. Crowning the rock stands the castle itself, poised seemingly between earth and sky, facing the sunrise in the east. In this interpretation, the monument unites the four classical elements - water, earth, air and fire - into a single harmonious whole.

The castle is marked by another distinctive feature. The structure rises naturally from the retaining wall to the terrace, from the terrace to the castle walls, upward through the upper storey and finally to the slender tower crowned with soaring spires. The Swallow's Nest is more than a picturesque building; it is an enduring symbol of aspiration, its architecture expressing an eternal upward journey while its history unfolds step by step across the centuries.

Looking to the future

Over the past fifteen years, the Swallow's Nest has evolved into one of Crimea's foremost cultural attractions, welcoming visitors through a rich programme of exciting events.

Among its most spectacular occasions was the World Championship Cliff Diving Super Final, when the world's finest divers launched themselves from a platform on Aurora Cliff at the height of an eight-storey building, demonstrating breathtaking skill above the Black Sea.

For five consecutive years, the castle has also hosted the festival We Know How to Be Friends, celebrating cultural ties between Russia and India.

Visitors are equally drawn to the exhibition Sacred Flax, featuring remarkable Orthodox icons woven entirely from flax fibres by master artisans Vladimir Denshchikov and Natalia Malygina.

The Swallow's Nest provides a spectacular backdrop for world-class sporting events, including the World Championship Cliff Diving Final.



**THE TIES BETWEEN
CRIMEA AND SERBIA GO
BACK ONE THOUSAND
YEARS,** WHICH IS WHY
RELIGION AND LANGUAGE,
POLITICS AND CULTURE,
MEMORY OF ANCESTORS
AND HUMAN DESTINIES
ARE INTERWOVEN

ROOTED IN THE EARTH, INTERTWINED

Text: Ivan Kovalenko

Photos: the author and from
open sources

by branches

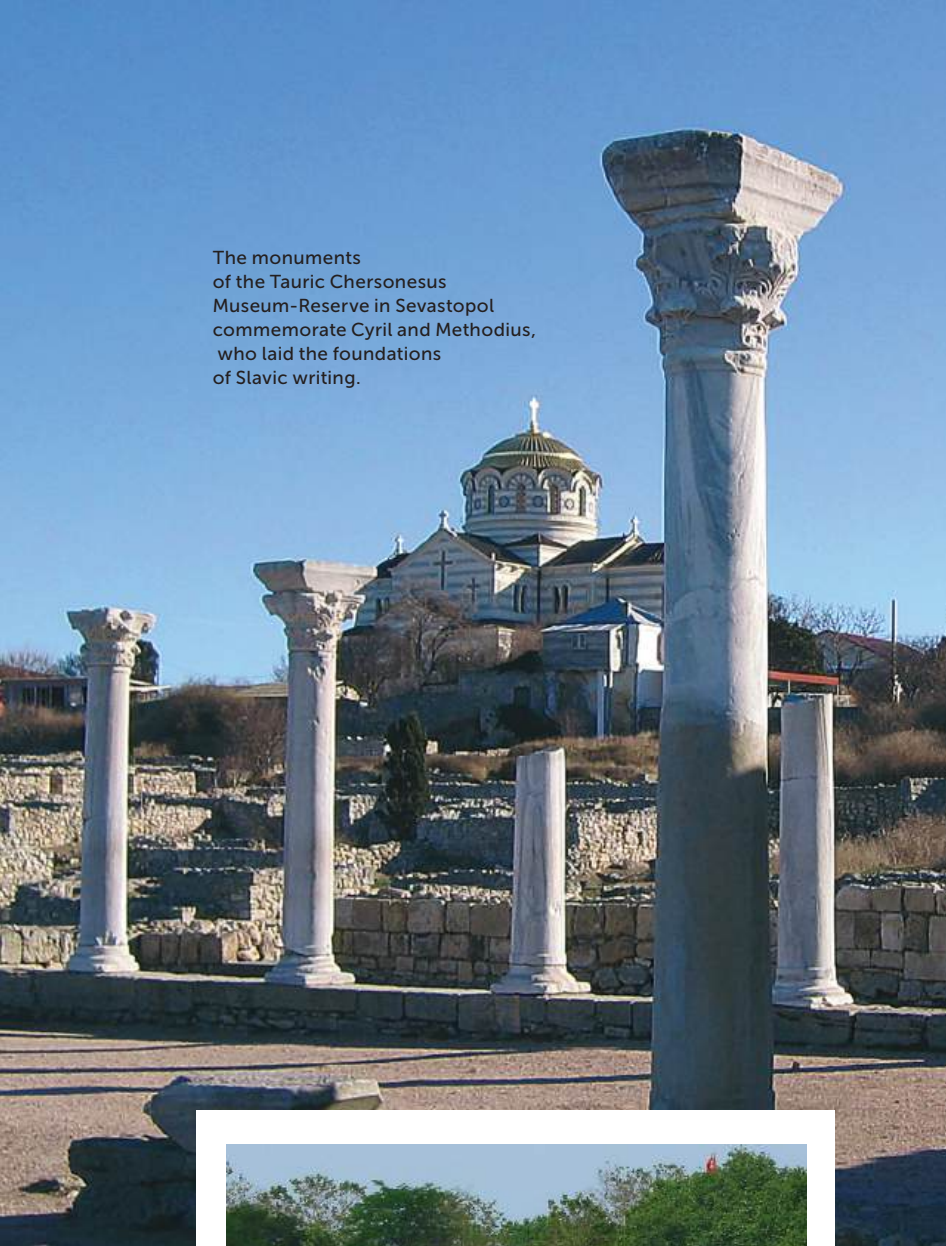
The foundation of foundations



This unity relies on the legacy of St Cyril and St Methodius.

The Life of Cyril reports that in 860 he visited Chersonesus (modern-day Sevastopol), where he found a Gospel and Psalter written in "Russian letters." This experience provided an important boost to the creation of the Slavic alphabet and the translation of Holy Scripture. Thus, the foundations of Slavic writing were laid in Byzantine Korsun.

The monuments of the Tauric Chersonesus Museum-Reserve in Sevastopol commemorate Cyril and Methodius, who laid the foundations of Slavic writing.



The disciples of Cyril and Methodius spread literacy across the Balkans, and in Serbia their endeavour was continued by Sava, a religious statesman who played a key role in the formation of the national church. The memory of the saint has been preserved in Crimea as well: in the name of the Ay-Sava locality near Sudak, and in the fate of a medieval cave monastery near the village of Ternovka in Sevastopol. The monastery flourished under the protection of a Christian principality and was destroyed during the Ottoman invasion in the 15th century. In modern times, this connection gained symbolic continuation, and an icon of Saint Sava of Serbia in the monastery began to exude myrrh.

Russia lends a shoulder

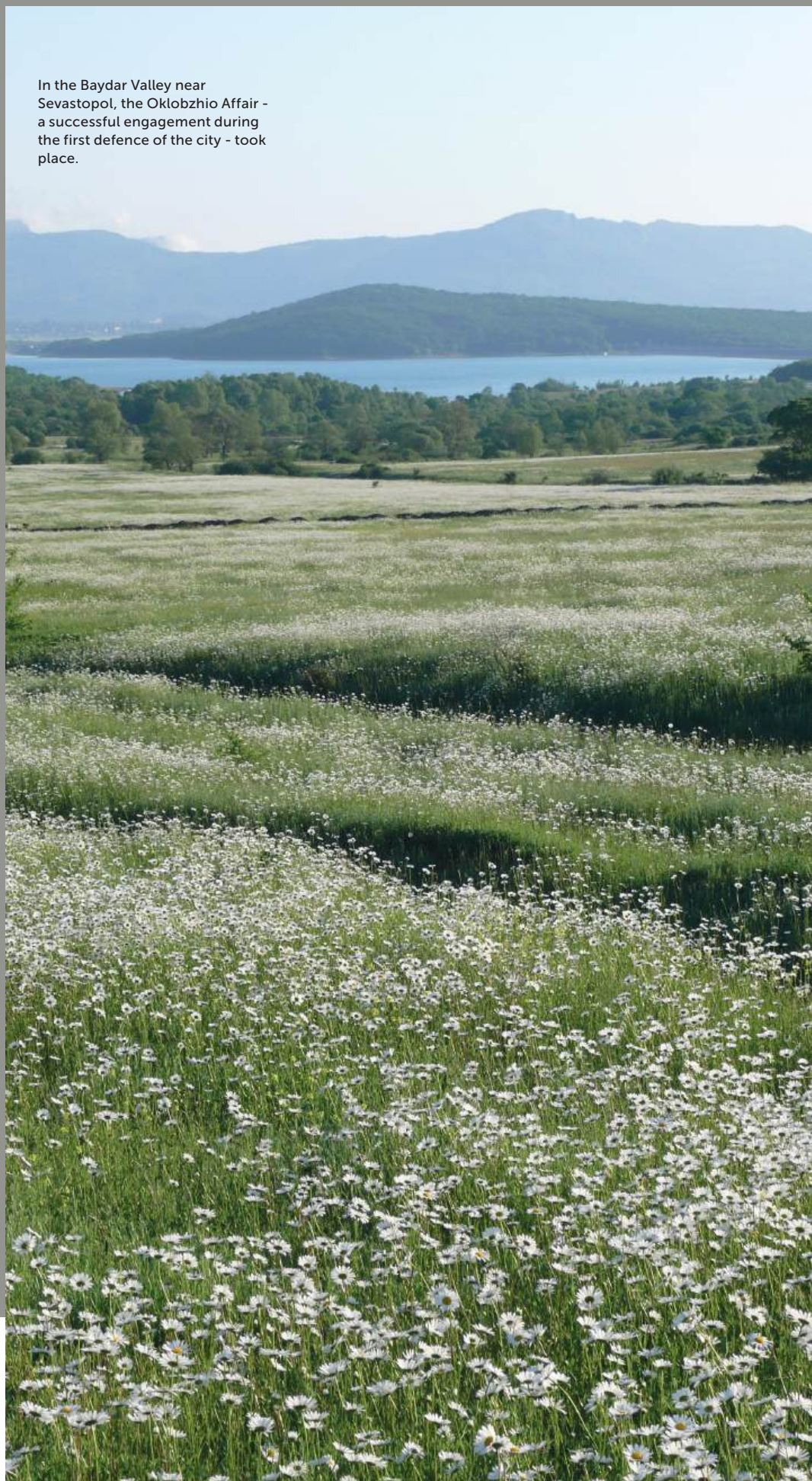
In response to Europe's attempt to punish the "Russian bear" by launching the Crimean War, Russia's leading thinkers advanced the idea of Pan-Slavism - the political unification of Slavic peoples based on ethnic, cultural and linguistic commonality.

IN 1783, CRIMEA BECAME PART OF RUSSIA.

COUNT MARKO VOINOVICH WAS AMONG THE FOUNDERS OF THE BLACK SEA FLEET. A DESCENDANT OF A NOBLE SERBIAN FAMILY, HE ROSE FROM MIDSHIPMAN TO ADMIRAL, FOUGHT NAVAL BATTLES AGAINST TÜRKİYE, AND, AS SQUADRON COMMANDER, WELCOMED CATHERINE II TO SEVASTOPOL. THE MEMORY OF VOINOVICH IS PRESERVED IN THE NAME OF GRAFSKAYA WHARF WHICH IS THE CEREMONIAL SEA GATE OF THE CITY.

DURING THE CRIMEAN WAR, COLONEL IVAN OKLOBZHIO, OF SERBIAN DESCENT, DISTINGUISHED HIMSELF WHEN IN LATE 1855 HIS DETACHMENT CONDUCTED A SUCCESSFUL RECONNAISSANCE-IN-FORCE IN THE BAYDAR VALLEY, UNEXPECTEDLY ATTACKING A FRENCH CAMP. THE OKLOBZHIO AFFAIR SHOWED THAT THE RUSSIAN ARMY RETAINED INITIATIVE AND COMBAT CAPABILITY EVEN AFTER HEAVY LOSSES.

In the Baydar Valley near Sevastopol, the Oklobzhio Affair - a successful engagement during the first defence of the city - took place.





Emperor Alexander II



Nikolay Danilevsky

Nikolay Danilevsky was among the ideologists of Pan-Slavism. He wrote the main work of his life, *Russia and Europe*, in 1871 at his Crimean estate near the village of Mshatka (modern-day Sanatornoye). "For every Slav- Russian or Serbian... after God and His Church - the idea of Slavdom must be the highest idea," the "apostle of Slavdom" pointed out.

Danilevsky's ideas of unity and a special historical mission of the Slavic world were close to the Serbian political elite. Symbolically, in the same year 1871, when Danilevsky's work was published, Emperor Alexander II received the young ruler of Serbia, Milan Obrenović, at his Livadia estate. Thus, Russia demonstrated readiness to support a nation that was close in spirit.

Archistrategos of the Slavic army

The practical embodiment of Pan-Slavism showed itself in 1876. Russia supported Serbia in its fight against the Ottoman Empire, and thousands of volunteers arrived in the country, including



Ruler of Serbia
Milan Obrenović

CULTURAL BRIDGE

experienced military commanders, among them General Mikhail Chernyayev. His military career began during the defence of Sevastopol. The young officer took part in all battles, received two orders, and a gold-mounted sabre with an inscription "For Bravery."

Becoming a supporter of Pan-Slavic ideas, Chernyayev acquired the influential newspaper Russky Mir and became its editor. In 1876, he took an oath of Serbian citizenship and led the insurgent army.

The patriotic spirit of the Serbs did not replace their military training. The army suffered defeats and was close to being annihilated. Milan Obrenović asked Emperor Alexander II for help, and the Emperor demanded that the Porte immediately conclude a peace treaty with Serbia and Montenegro. The Turks backed down.

Blessed are the pure in heart

Colonel Nikolay Raevsky was a reliable ally of General Chernyayev. A distinguished descendant of a famous family, he was born in Kerch and literally nurtured by Crimean soil as he inherited



Hero of the Crimean War General
Mikhail Chernyayev



ALONGSIDE SOLDIERS,
A DETACHMENT
OF **CRIMEAN SISTERS
OF MERCY LED BY
MARIA FREDERIKS
AND MARFA SABININA
WENT TO SERBIA.**
THESE HEROIC WOMEN
ASSEMBLED A FULL
FIELD HOSPITAL
FOR 100 BEDS AND
SELFLESSLY CARED
FOR THE WOUNDED.



Malakhov Kurgan



At the site of Nikolay Raevsky's death in the village of Gornji Adrovac, the hero's family built the Church of the Holy Trinity.



large southern coast estates Tesseli, Partenit, and Karasan. However, he soon abandoned agricultural life and went as a volunteer to Serbia to defend Slavic brotherhood.

Raevsky was killed in battle, but his short life embodied the code of honour of a Russian officer, "Soul to God, heart to a woman, duty to the Fatherland, honour to no one." Legend has it that shortly before his death, the bachelor Nikolay proposed to a Serbian girl, promising her his heart, and fulfilled that promise: his heart was buried in an ancient monastery, while his body was laid to rest at his family estate in Russia.



RELATIONS BETWEEN RUSSIA AND SERBIA DEVELOPED IN THE CULTURAL SPHERE AS WELL. AT THE PERSONAL INVITATION OF ALEXANDER II, **QUEEN NATALIJA OBRENOVIC VISITED YALTA SEVERAL TIMES.** SHE TOOK PART IN A CHARITY EXHIBITION-SALE OF WOMEN'S HANDICRAFTS. SHE SPENT EASTER 1893 AT LIVADIA WITH THE IMPERIAL FAMILY.



A SIGNIFICANT MARK IN RUSSIAN HISTORY WAS LEFT BY THE SERBIAN STANKEVIC FAMILY.

NIKOLAY STANKEVIC FOUNDED A LITERARY-PHILOSOPHICAL CIRCLE THAT BECAME A PRECURSOR OF SLAVOPHILISM. ALEXEY STANKEVIC WORKED AT THE IMPERIAL HISTORICAL MUSEUM, HEADING ITS LIBRARY, WHICH WAS BASED ON A VALUABLE COLLECTION OF BOOKS ON RUSSIAN AND SLAVIC HISTORY.

THE STANKEVIC VILLA IN SIMEIZ BECAME ONE OF THE CULTURAL CENTRES OF THE SOUTHERN COAST OF CRIMEA. IN THE SUMMER OF 1917, SERGEI RACHMANINOFF, THE MOST "RUSSIAN" COMPOSER, GAVE A CONCERT IN ITS MUSIC SALON.

Fanatics of irreconcilable faiths

The paradoxes of the early 20th century Russian history were reflected in the fate of Danila Serdic. A Serbian railway worker who came to Russia seeking employment, he joined the Tsarist army at the outbreak of the First World War.

During the Civil War, his cavalry brigade distinguished itself in battles in Northern Taurida and during the assault on the Chongar fortifications of Crimea. For exceptional bravery and dedication, the 24-year-old brigade commander received the highest award of the young Soviet republic, the Order of the Red Banner.

The Civil War ended in Crimea in November 1920. From the ports of Sevastopol, Yalta, Feodosia, and Kerch, hundreds of thousands of Russians were leaving Russia. General Pyotr Wrangel led the exodus.

Belgrade became one of the main emigration centres. "Only the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes extended a helping hand to us," Wrangel said. The country accepted about 40,000 people. A state commission for Russian refugees opened in Belgrade.

Wrangel died in 1929. According to his will, the Belgrade Trinity Church, which was built with funds from Russian émigrés and the King of Yugoslavia, became his resting place.

Fate reflected in works

The life of Nikolay Krasnov was a vivid embodiment of the Crimea-Balkans connection.

A peasant's son, he graduated from the Moscow School of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture and at 23 became the city architect of Yalta. For over 30 years he worked in Russia and nearly 20 years in Serbia, which sheltered his family and allowed him to



Villa Dyulber in
Miskhor

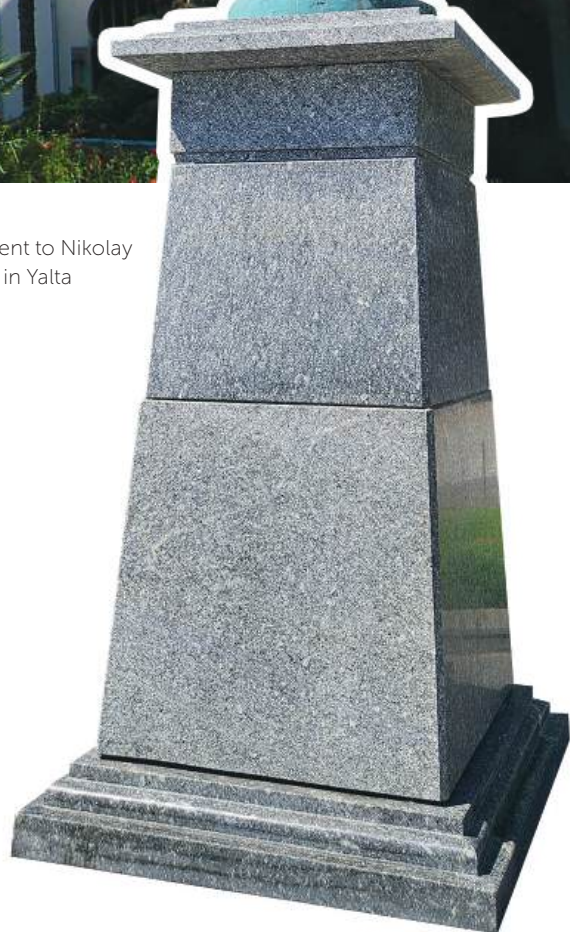
continue his work. The academician created the image of European Belgrade.

Monuments to Krasnov grace both Yalta and Belgrade. His life is the tale of an outstanding master who seamlessly united two worlds. The buildings Krasnov designed in Crimea and Serbia stand as reminders of a cultural bridge between these two lands - a bridge that has endured changing eras, states, and political systems.

Architect of the Highest Court

"Heart-stealing." This is one interpretation of the word Dyulber, the name of the villa built in Miskhor for Grand Duke Peter Nikolaevich and his wife Milica, daughter of the Montenegrin king. Another major project was the estate Chahir, built for Grand Duchess Anastasia Nikolaevna, Milica's sister. The exotic appearance of

Monument to Nikolay
Krasnov in Yalta





Ruler of the Kingdom
of Serbs, Croats and
Slovenes Alexander I
Karađorđević

the buildings reflected a romantic world where different cultures intertwined.

The pinnacle of Krasnov's work was the Livadia Palace built in 1911 from white Inkerman stone in the style of the Italian Renaissance. The southern residence of Nicholas II became a symbol of imperial Crimea.

With an open heart

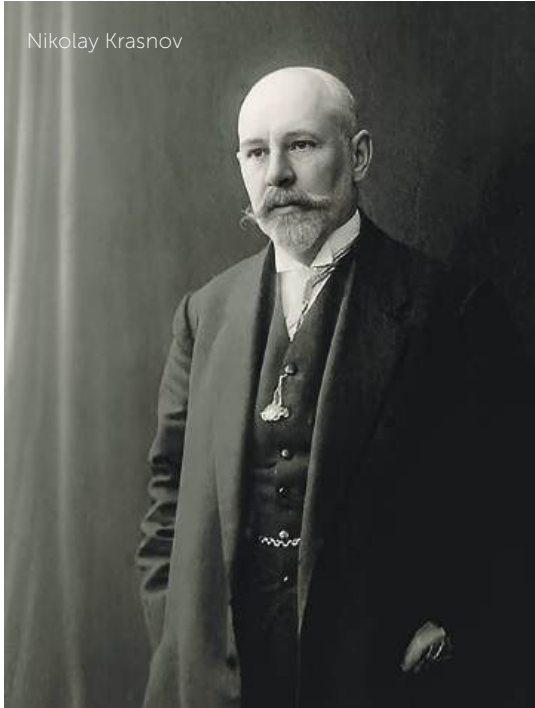
In 1914, Russia, defending Serbia, entered a war that later turned into a civil conflict. The convinced monarchist Krasnov left Russia with his family at the first opportunity. From 1922 he lived in Belgrade.

King Alexander I Karađorđević strongly supported the architect. Working in new circumstances,

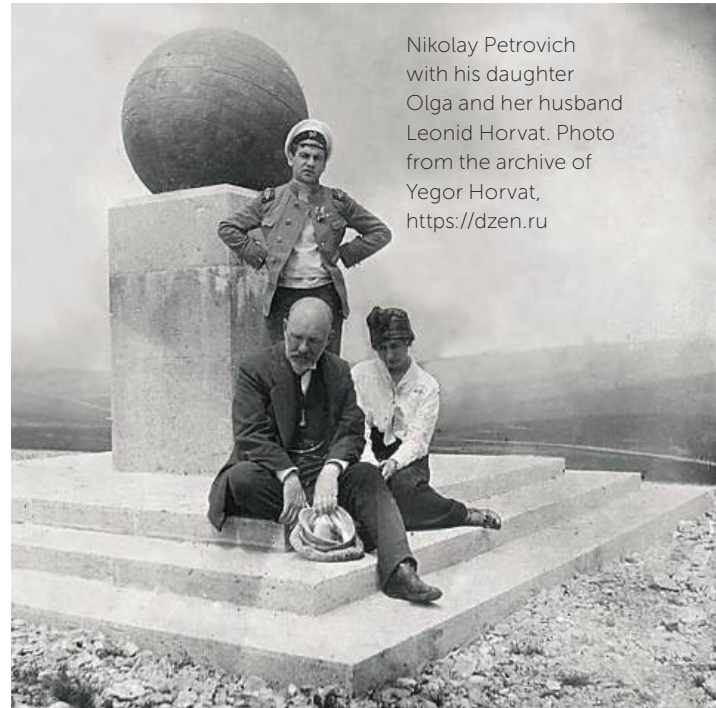


Livadia Palace

Nikolay Krasnov



Nikolay Petrovich with his daughter Olga and her husband Leonid Horvat. Photo from the archive of Yegor Horvat, <https://dzen.ru>



Krasnov preserved his artistic individuality. While designing administrative buildings, he adhered to strict academicism, while in ecclesiastical and restoration projects he sought to artistically express the traditions of Serbian architecture.

He signed his works in Serbian - Nikola Krasnov - emphasising his connection with his new homeland.

So many threads intertwined...

Symbolically, Krasnov was connected with Crimea and Yugoslavia not only through work, but also through family ties.

His daughter Olga married Leonid Horvat. While still a

student, he worked on the construction of the Livadia Palace. Krasnov noticed the talented young man, introduced him to his daughter, and they soon got married in Yalta.

Leonid came from a well-known Serbian family in Russia which gave the world several prominent figures. Vladimir Horvat became First Deputy Head of the Ussuri Railway. Dmitry Horvat took part in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 and later became one of the leaders of the White movement in the Far East. The dynasty was founded by Ivan Horvat, a statesman who led the settlement of New Serbia in Novorossiia, where Serbian settlers were relocated in 1751-1764.

PRECIOUS *mud*

Text: Alexei Nezhivoy

Photo: Poltava Crimea Health Resort

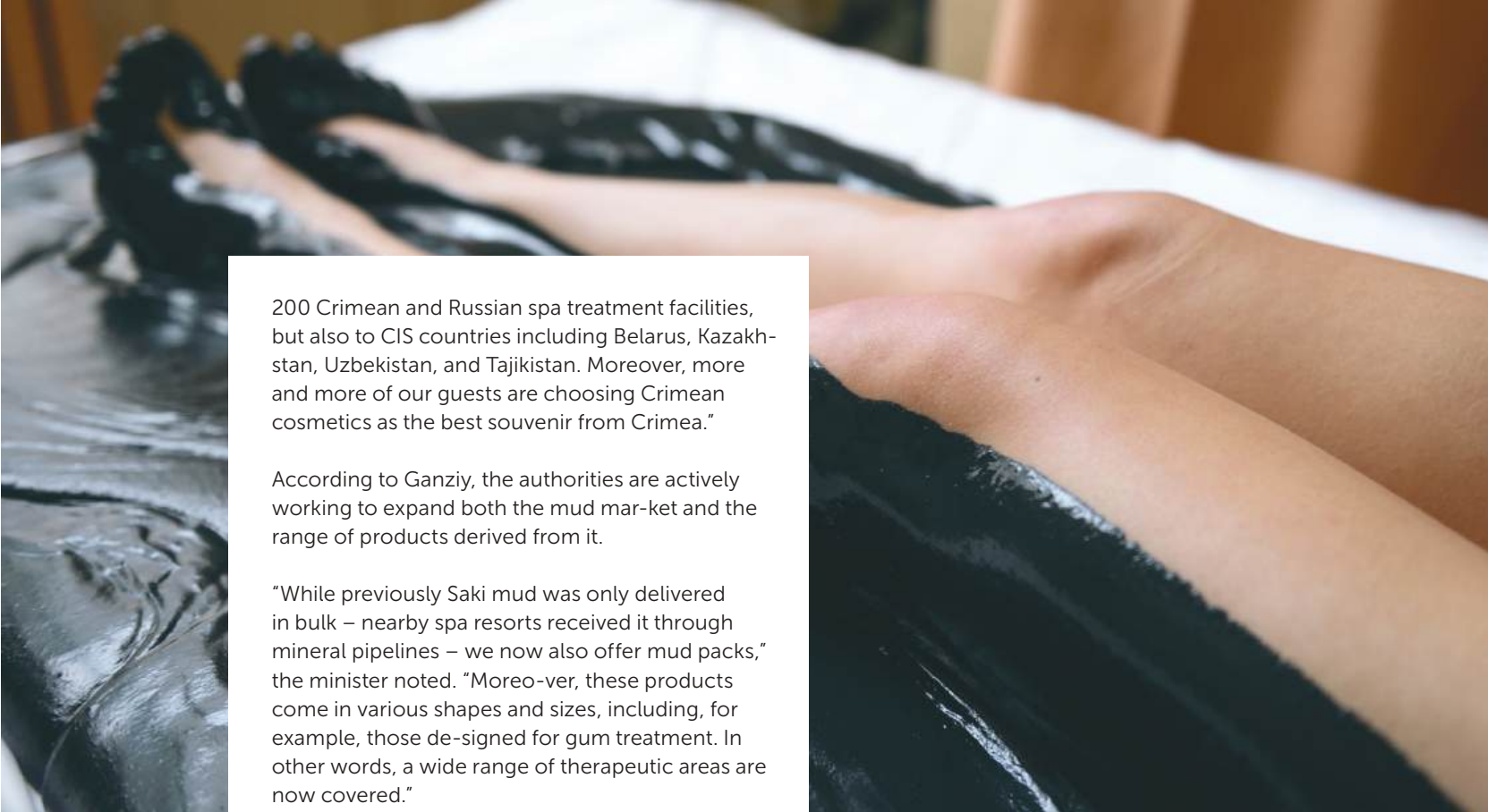
THE SAKI MUD DEPOSIT IS KNOWN WELL BEYOND CRIMEA, AND THE LOCAL RESORT OWES ITS EXIST-ENCE LARGELY TO THESE THERAPEUTIC RESOURCES.

A history reaching back to antiquity

The healing properties of Saki mud have been known since the time of Herodotus. How-ever, mud therapy did not become a formal medical practice until the 19th century. Even then, many prominent figures, including Tsarevich Alexei, came to Saki for treat-ment. During the Crimean War, thanks to the renowned surgeon Nikolai Pirogov, the mud was widely used in the rehabilitation of wounded soldiers.

The development of the industry, however, gained real momentum with the establish-ment of GGRES (Crimea's state-run hydrogeological operational facility), which cele-brated its 100th anniversary this year. Largely thanks to the enterprise, both the thera-peutic mud and the Saki resort became widely known beyond the peninsula.

"The benefits and healing properties of Saki mud far exceed those of the Dead Sea," said Sergei Ganziy, the regional Minister of Resorts and Tourism. "Crimean mud is said to be effective against over 100 ailments. Today, the company's product line includes more than 50 items – from traditional mud packs to modern gel formulations, cosmetic masks, and brine-based products. They are supplied not only to over



200 Crimean and Russian spa treatment facilities, but also to CIS countries including Belarus, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. Moreover, more and more of our guests are choosing Crimean cosmetics as the best souvenir from Crimea."

According to Ganziy, the authorities are actively working to expand both the mud market and the range of products derived from it.

"While previously Saki mud was only delivered in bulk – nearby spa resorts received it through mineral pipelines – we now also offer mud packs," the minister noted. "Moreover, these products come in various shapes and sizes, including, for example, those designed for gum treatment. In other words, a wide range of therapeutic areas are now covered."

Extraction and preservation

GGRES specialists not only extract the mud but also monitor the conservation of its deposits year-round, regulating the water-salt balance of Lake Saki through a complex system of hydraulic structures.

"Extraction takes place from the eastern basin, where the depth from the lake surface to the deposit is approximately 80–100 centimetres. Unique equipment designed specifically for our

deposit has been installed. In 2020, the complex hydraulic structures were upgraded. This is a crucial system for protecting our therapeutic reservoirs, because Mikhailovsky Pond is one and a half metres higher than the therapeutic lakes, and there are high water situations when we actually save Lake Saki by releasing large volumes of fresh water," explained Valentin Ivanitsky, Chief Technologist at GGRES.

He noted that pumping stations, canals, and pipelines ensure the conservation of the mud.

"In the summer, when intense evaporation leads to increased mineralisation, we pump in large volumes of seawater using a deep-sea water intake," Ivanitsky noted. "This allows us to maintain the chemical and biological parameters necessary for preserving the therapeutic mud and brine. Increased mineralisation can lead to a loss of their therapeutic properties. There is a range set by state standards that we must adhere to, and this is done under the supervision of the Central Testing Laboratory."

Ivanitsky also reported that for several years, the enterprise extracted approximately 2,300 to 2,900 tonnes of mud annually. Last year, production increased to 3,100 tonnes due to rising demand. Experts estimate that at the current rate of extraction – provided conservation efforts are maintained – the deposit will last for approximately 500 years.

THERE IS SOME SUBTLE, IMPERIOUS CONNECTION...



The green porcelain cup found during excavations of the Mangup hillforts in the Bakhchisaray District. That celadon ceramic cup was used by the rulers of the Principality of Theodoro in the 15th century.

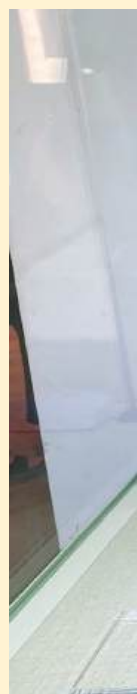
Text: Kirill Belozyorov Photo: Kirill Belozorov, Gala Amarando

TIES BETWEEN THE CELESTIAL EMPIRE AND TAURIDA GO BACK 2,000 YEARS.

The path of celadon ceramics

Part of the Great Silk Road ran across Crimea, where a close relative of Marco Polo, a merchant and famous traveller whose book introduced Europe to the miracles of China, lived in Sougdaia, an ancient hub now known as Sudak.

The archaeological finds that testify to the diversified nature of transnational trade include celadon ceramics glazed in the jade green celadon colour. It became very popular in the 13th century throughout the world. During excavations in the Mangup hillforts on top of a mountain where the capital of a Christian principality stood 700 years ago, scientists unearthed a "green ware" cup, a typical example of luxury Chinese tableware. Over a hundred fragments of ceramics that imitated celadon were found in other parts of the excavation site. Such tableware was cheap but beautiful and hence popular.



Iron Age fashionistas

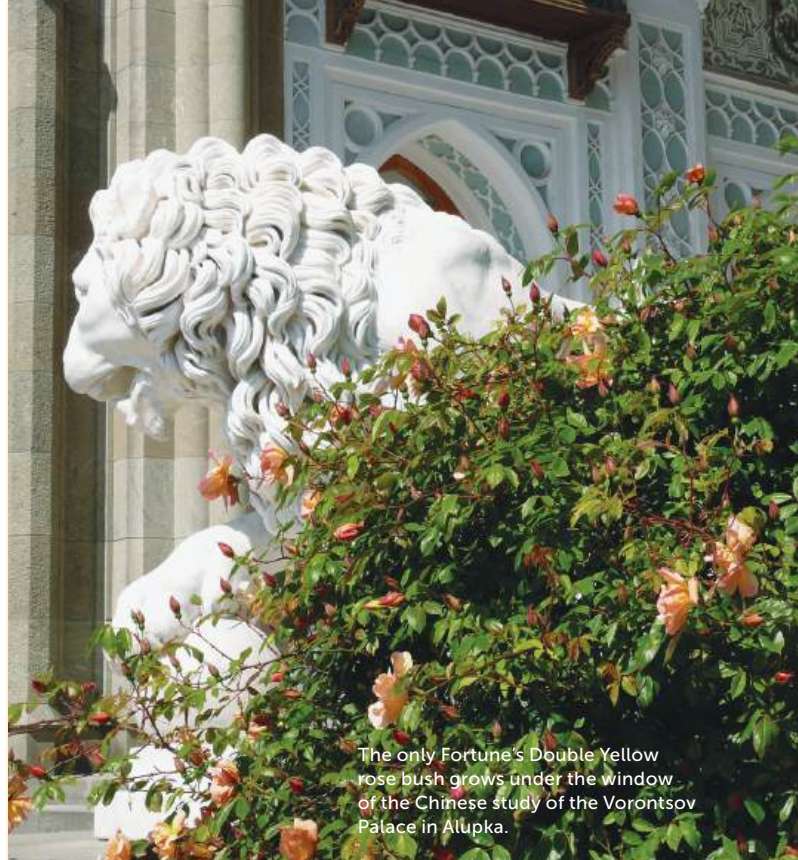
The items found during excavations of the Ust-Alminsk necropolis in the village of Peschanoye, Bakhchisaray District, created a scientific sensation. One of the Sarmatian chieftains established his headquarters on this seaside cape in the 1st century. He presumably controlled part of the caravan route from China to the Roman Empire via Crimea. This assumption is confirmed by the fragments of caskets in which trendy women of that period kept their jewels and perfume.

The caskets were coated in black lacquer with red geometric ornaments. The ingredients of black lacquer were kept top secret, which is logical, considering that wooden parts have almost disintegrated but the lacquer coating was in an ideal conditions, which helped scientists restore the unique artefacts.

Such items were extremely popular in China at the turn of the era. Only the nobility could buy such seemingly modest caskets, and women of the Sarmatian elite, who were buried on the shore of the Pontus Euxinus (Black Sea) 2,000 years ago appreciated them too.



The Chinese caskets found during excavations of the Ust-Alminsk necropolis in the village of Peschanoye, Bakhchisaray District, created a scientific sensation.



The only Fortune's Double Yellow rose bush grows under the window of the Chinese study of the Vorontsov Palace in Alupka.

Roses at the Chinese study

In 1814–1817, the imperial botanical garden near the settlement of Nikita on the southern coast of Crimea received its first wild roses.

The rose shrubs that were unknown to European scientists were delivered from China to Britain's Royal Botanic Garden in the early 19th century. Their discoverers named them *rosa banksiae* (or Lady Banks' rose) and *rosa bracteata* (or the Macartney rose), and these varieties soon won the world.

The undemanding Chinese roses quickly adjusted to the Crimean climate and were used by the garden's director, Nikolai von Hartwiß, to breed new varieties.

Roses were given the pride of place in the estates of Mikhail Vorontsov in Alupka. Yelizaveta Vorontsova, the wife of the developer of Taurida, issued orders to plant Chinese roses in the garden, and some of them are still blooming.

The walls of her rooms, which she called "the Chinese study," were hung with authentic rice straw mats. These unique items, which are over 200 years old, are decorated with silk and bead embroidery.

The elite variety of the Spring Dawn Chrysanthemum on Su Ti Dam was delivered to the Nikitsky Botanical Garden from Shanghai in the early 1950s.



Ornamental gardening

The Nikitsky Botanical Garden has been a trendsetter in landscape design for over 200 years, supplying all Crimean estates with plants and bushes. The Chinese section includes bamboo, wisteria, ginkgo, palms and, of course, chrysanthemums. China is the birthplace of this wonderful flower.

The first chrysanthemums were delivered to the Nikitsky Botanical Garden soon after its establishment, and in the 1950s a new elite collection was delivered to Yalta from Shanghai to commemorate

the signing of the Soviet-Chinese Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance. The chrysanthemum varieties Snow Swept Stone Terrace (Xue Fu Shi Tai), Spring Dawn on Su Ti Dam, Beijing Lights, Purple Moon, Swallow (Yanzi), and Phoenix Palace in Crenelated Heights (Wei E Feng Hou) served as the genetic foundation for many modern types. These rare varieties are the gems of the Chrysanthemum Ball held every autumn since 1953. The musical refrain of the festival is "They Faded Long Ago, the Chrysanthemums in the Garden," a romance by Yalta resident Nikolai Kharito.



A monument to the Big Troika in Livadia. The outcome of the Yalta (Crimean) Conference in February 1945 helped strengthen China's international standing.



Rosa banksiae, or Lady Banks' rose, has been a gem of the Livadia Palace garden for 150 years.

The big politics of rosa fortuniana

By the mid-19th century, botany turned from a science into an international business when Robert Fortune, a Scottish botanist and traveller, brought new rose varieties from China. Not surprisingly, they were named after him.

In 1861, roses of the fortuniana variety were planted in the emperor's estate in Livadia. Empress Maria ordered the construction of a special metal pergola for that rose bush. It still stands, and the Fortuniana and Banks

roses bring joy to visitors every spring for the past 150 years.

In February 1945, Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill met in Livadia, where the three leaders of the anti-Hitler coalition agreed, for instance, that the Soviet Union would join the war against Japan. The Soviet Union defeated the Japanese army, increasing its influence in East Asia. Moscow's support meant a lot for China, where civil confrontation ended in the victory of the Communist Party and the establishment of the People's Republic of China. Therefore, the Yalta (Crimean) Conference indirectly helped China strengthen its position in the world.



The relics of St Gurias rest in the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral. A scholar and a missionary, he spent 18 years in China, after which he was head of the Crimean Diocese.

The light goes east

China opened up for partnership with Russia, including thanks to the Russian Spiritual Mission in Beijing. Candidate of Theology Grigory (Gury or Gurias) Karpov was appointed to the mission in 1839 and became head of the spiritual and diplomatic representation several years later. The missionary, who spoke Chinese like a native, translated the New Testament and Psalms, delicately but persistently working to promote Christianity and strengthen the prestige of the Russian Empire in China.

After 18 years in China, Bishop Gurias was appointed head of the Crimean Diocese. Thanks to his tireless efforts, over a hundred churches opened on the peninsula, a cathedral was built in Simferopol, and spiritual schools – a theological seminary and divinity schools for men and women – were established.

Gurias was canonised and his relics rest in the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral in Simferopol, the capital city of Crimea.

Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun

The beginning of the 20th century brought major hardships to Russia, including wars and revolutions. During the First World War, the Russian government allowed Chinese immigrants to replace the factory staff who were sent to the frontline. During the Civil War, the Bolsheviks encouraged Chinese men to join the Red Army because the participation of foreigners in the struggle for a better future highlighted the idea of proletarian internationalism. Chinese workers, who had no homes or families, and actually no rights, were brought up to obey without question and so became excellent soldiers of the revolution – merciless, staunch and disciplined.

In the spring of 1918, a Chinese unit of the Red Army fought courageously on the Perekop Rampart, stalling the German advance. "A quarter of my horsemen were killed," White Army General Anton Turkul wrote in his memoirs titled *Drozdovites under Fire* about a brief but sanguinary clash between his unit and a Chinese infantry battalion.

The ancient Perekop Rampart in northern Crimea witnessed the courageous struggle of a Chinese unit of the Red Army against the German offensive in the spring of 1918.





.....
The Yalta History and Literary Museum has a remarkable collection of Chinese arts and crafts spanning 17th–20th centuries.

Unity and interconnection

One of the first things the Soviet government did in the sphere of culture in Crimea was open the Yalta Oriental Museum in the early 1920s. Its collection consisted of items confiscated from nationalised estates. The public especially liked antique exhibits, including Chinese ones.

The Yalta History and Literary Museum, formerly the Oriental Museum, has a remarkable

collection of Chinese arts and crafts spanning 17th–20th centuries, such as porcelain vases and cloisonné trays. One of its highlights is the Tower of Creation decorative ivory column. The central element – 13 intricately detailed concentric spheres freely rotate inside one another – was carved in the round from a single piece of ivory. This is how an unknown artist presented one of the core Dao principles – all things are deeply interconnected and mutually dependent – approximately 150 years ago.

BONDS ACROSS TIME

CRIMEA AND CHINA: A New Horizon

Text: Oleg Anfailov

Photos courtesy of the Head of the Republic of Crimea's Press Service, the Press Service of the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Crimea with the President of Russia, and the Crimea Tourism Portal.

FROM ANCIENT TRADE ROUTES
TO PRESENT-DAY PARTNERSHIPS -
THE CRIMEAN JOURNAL REPORTS
ON THE WAY CRIMEA FORGED ITS TIES
WITH THE CELESTIAL EMPIRE OVER
THE PAST 2,000 YEARS.

A political U-turn

It was Crimea's reunification with Russia that marked the beginning of the current stage in the peninsula's relations with China. In September 2023, Head of the Republic of Crimea, Sergei Aksyonov, had a meeting with a Chinese delegation led by Zhao Jin, Chairman of the Board of April Media Corporation.

"The President of Russia has said many times that China is Russia's brotherly state. We have a lot of appreciation for your sincere commitment to learning more about the way people live in Crimea and to gauge the potential for cooperation, while also sharing these insights with people in China," Mr Aksyonov said, adding that the Crimean authorities were ready to forge effective ties and step up bilateral relations. In response, Zhao Jin said that Chinese

newswires have been keeping a close eye on the Crimean agenda for many years.

"Unleashed by the West, the informational and ideological war deprived our people of accurate and truthful information they need. Therefore, our mission for this visit consists of learning as much as possible about the way Crimea lives," he said.

On 7 November 2024, the Republic of Crimea's Business and Cultural Centre and the Chinese Business Council for Cooperation with Crimea signed an instrumental document on the sidelines of the Yalta International Forum by inking a declaration to establish the Crimea-China Coordination Council for Business Cooperation.

"We expect this to yield tangible results, including in terms of its economic, social and political impact on Crimea's relations

Head of the Republic of
Crimea Sergei Aksyonov
with a Chinese delegation.





Deputy Prime Minister – Minister of Finance of the Republic of Crimea Irina Kiviko with a Chinese delegate.

with China in general,” Deputy Prime Minister and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Crimea with the President of the Russian Federation, Georgy Muradov, said.

Economic potential

Crimean companies have been proactive in their efforts to tap the Chinese market. At the China Import and Export Fair, one of China’s biggest trade and exhibition events also known as the Canton Fair, in Guangzhou, Crimea was represented by producers of cosmetics, tea, confectioneries and a grain company.

“Crimean companies have benefited from state support measures to be able to present their products at one of China’s biggest fairs. There is

demand for them not only in China, but also in several other countries,” Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance of the Republic of Crimea Irina Kiviko said.

Crimea’s Chinese partners have shown a keen interest in Crimean wines. At the China Wine Competition in Hong Kong, Massandra’s 2022 Muscat White Red Stone scored 96 points and received a double gold medal, which is the highest possible recognition. This wine holds two titles as the best wine in the world and has been entered in the Guinness World Records book.

“The Massandra label is all covered in medals from all kinds of international competitions. Being a flagship wine maker in Crimea, it is not surprising that Massandra reaffirmed its status,” Director of the Vinegrowers and Winemakers Association, Timofei Mesenyashin, said.



THERE IS ALSO A GROWING APPETITE IN CHINA FOR OTHER CRIMEAN PRODUCTS. ANATOLY SKRIPNICHENKO, WHO HEADS A FISHERY, SAID THAT CRIMEAN RAPA WHELKS HAVE BEEN ATTRACTING CHINESE BUYERS.

There is also a growing appetite in China for other Crimean products. Anatoly Skripnichenko, who heads a fishery, said that Crimean rapa whelks have been attracting Chinese buyers.

"We sent them sample products and are discussing ways to increase our output," he said.

There is demand for both clam meat as well as its shells, which are used to produce feed additives.

Tourism and logistics

The Ministry of Resorts and Tourism of the Republic of Crimea has launched a Chinese version of the Tourism Portal. It offers articles on the history of Crimea, its cities and landmarks, as well as its health resorts and recreational opportunities.

"Once the logistics and global geopolitical issues are addressed, tourist flows will recover, but until then Chinese tourists who are interested in learning about the history of our region can discover the rich cultural and historical heritage of our republic," Irina Kiviko pointed out.

Minister of Resorts and Tourism Sergei Ganzia weighed in to say that three travel operators have been specialising in working with Chinese tourists by offering more than 30 routes on military and patriotic topics related to the Great Patriotic War. These packages have been popular among Chinese tourists.

Russia and China introduced visa-free travel in September 2025, which makes it easier to forge closer ties in tourism and business undertakings. The arrival of Chinese ships to Crimean ports has

become an important signal. In the summer of 2025, Heng Yang-9, a Chinese container ship, docked in Sevastopol three times.

Monitoring studies have demonstrated that demand for shipping goods from Crimea to China in August 2025 increased by 52 percent year-on-year, with Crimean exports to China dominated by juices, wine, essential oils and cosmetics. China is also interested in importing chicken feet, which is a delicacy in this country.

As for the Crimeans, they are eager to buy Chinese cars. According to the Crimean customs authority, over 650 vehicles were registered in the region since the beginning of 2025, up by a factor of two compared to the previous year

Diplomatic signals

China has been increasingly willing to take a public stand on Crimea. Its Ambassador to France, Lu Shaye, said that Crimea had Russian historical roots. At the United Nations, Beijing has been denying its support to resolutions referring to the peninsula joining Russia as an annexation for more than ten years now.

China Railway Engineering Corporation said that it was ready to engage in construction projects on the peninsula no matter how challenging or complex. The country's state-run media outlets, Xinhua and The Global Times, have stepped up their reporting on Crimea as a Russian peninsula by emphasising its economic stability and describing the Crimean Bridge as a symbol of a new era.



The Joint Effort Forum for the 100th Anniversary of People's Diplomacy.

Speaking at the International Cooperation Forum marking the 100th anniversary of the people's diplomacy, Georgy Muradov said that Crimea was ready to establish ties at the level of municipalities and regions with Chinese cities and provinces.

"Crimea was part of the Bosporan Kingdom from the 5th century BC to the 6th century AD, which means that its relations with China can operate as cooperation between two ancient civilisations," he said.

Crimea sent its delegation to the World Council of the United Cities and Local Governments international organisation. Held in China, it brought together 600 delegates from 50 countries. Head of the Yalta City Council, Konstantin Shimanovsky, stressed that events of this kind reaffirmed the importance of people-to-people contacts and served as a powerful tool of international cooperation.

"Actual deeds are always more important than what is simply stated on paper," a representative of a Chinese state media outlet said when talking about Crimea on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit.

In fact, with its ships and containers, tourism and investment, as well as diplomatic statements and publications, China has proven yet again that it views Crimea as being part of Russia.

CRIMEAN COMPANIES HAVE BEEN PROACTIVE IN THEIR EFFORTS TO TAP THE CHINESE MARKET. AT THE CHINA IMPORT AND EXPORT FAIR, ONE OF CHINA'S BIGGEST TRADE AND EXHIBITION EVENTS ALSO KNOWN AS THE CANTON FAIR, IN GUANGZHOU, CRIMEA WAS REPRESENTED BY PRODUCERS OF COSMETICS, TEA, CONFECTIONERIES AND A GRAIN COMPANY.

NOTE THAT AN ENGLISH VERSION OF THE CRIMEAN MAGAZINE, TITLED CRIMEAN MEDIA: THE INSIDER VIEW, WAS PRESENTED IN CHINA DURING FOREIGN MINISTER SERGEY LAVROV'S WORKING VISIT.

THE CRIMEAN MAGAZINE HAS BEEN WORKING WITH THE RUSSIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY ON ITS INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS AND HAS ALREADY PUBLISHED SIX ENGLISH-LANGUAGE EDITIONS. RUSSIAN DIPLOMATS HAVE HELD PRESENTATIONS OF THE CRIMEA MAGAZINE AT VARIOUS INTERNATIONAL PLATFORMS, INCLUDING OSCE SESSIONS AND INTERNATIONAL SUMMITS. PEOPLE FROM CHINA, THE UNITED STATES, FRANCE, GERMANY, TURKIYE, CZECHIA, BELGIUM, SWITZERLAND, VIETNAM, GREAT BRITAIN, SPAIN, ITALY, LEBANON, ISRAEL, SOUTH KOREA AND OTHER COUNTRIES HAVE BEEN FOLLOWING ITS ONLINE VERSION.



**Founder and publisher
of "the Crimean magazine":**

State-funded institution of the Republic
of Crimea "Newspaper editorial office
"the Crimean newspaper"

**Address of editorial
office and publisher:**

295015, the Republic of Crimea,
Simferopol, Kozlova str., 45a

Telephone number:

+ 7 978 0000 880, (3652) 51-88-46

E-mail: journal@gazetacrimea.ru

"CM" Website: <http://journalcrimea.ru>

Reprinting of magazine materials and use
of photographs are possible only with
consent of the editorial office

Printed in "Company "Salta" LTD

Order №1022 dated 25.09.2026

Run of 500 copies

Passed for printing 30.09.2026

Marketing and advertising department

+7 978 00000 33

marketing@gazetacrimea.ru

Content – age 12 up

The advertising content is the
responsibility of advertisers

Head Editor:

Mariya Yuryevna VOLKONSKAYA

Managing Editor:

Yelena VITVITSKAYA

Design and composition:

Anastasia GOLIK

Photo (Illustration):

EVGENIY LETOV

GALA AMARANDO

MIKHAIL GLADCHUK

NATALYA SOMOVA

DARIA SAMSONOVA

IVAN KOVALENKO

KIRILL BELOZYOROV

Worked on the edition:

Oleg ANFAILOV

Diana MASLOVA

Alexei NEZHIVOV

Ivan KOVALENKO

Kirill BELOZYOROV





