

EXHIBITION OF THE PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE OF THE RUSSIAN DIASPORA

OCTOBER 2016

CULTURAL CENTRE MELINA MERKOURI

IN COLLABORATION WITH THE MUNICIPALITY OF ATHENS

THE PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE OF THE RUSSIAN DISPORA PROJECT

The geopolitical current of the Russian Diaspora came as a result of the October Revolution in Russia and led to the massive immigration of Russian intellectuals, artists but also simple people who made their way to the West. As a result of the intercultural dialogue that developed, Western Europe was enriched with aspects of the Russian cultural heritage while at the same time, immigrant Russians gained a new insight of their cultural and spiritual identity. The current that came to be known as Russian Diaspora is partly identified with aristocratic or otherwise distinguished families which arrived to Paris, London and Oxford through Crimea, Istanbul and Berlin. It also comprises simple people who lived in poverty and who became part of the Russian communities the immigrants set up in Paris. The liturgical communities brought to the West, the ritual, the liturgical tradition and the spirituality of Russia and triggered the interest of many Westerners towards Orthodox Christianity.

THE PROJECT OF THE PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE

The protagonists of the Russian Diaspora are known to us today through photographs that survive in family albums, archives of institutions, (like the St Sergius Institute in Paris or the Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius in Oxford). However, most of the photographic archive of the Russian Diaspora is scattered all over the place and kept in poor conditions. Moreover, most of the people depicted in these photographs are not identified while the ones who know who is who perish year after year. In many cases the younger members of the families are not interested in the past of the 20th century heritage and gradually this valuable historical material disappears. Since 1990, we have gathered more than

2350 photographs deriving from private collections which have already been digitized and catalogued. We also have a list of the photographs that need to be digitized and added to the core of the material always with a focus on the School of Paris and the Russian communities in London and Oxford.

The owners of the collections are happy to work with Veronique Magnes, who launched this project with the encouragement of Metropolitan Kallistos Ware and with the support of the late Nicolas Ossorguine, from the Saint Sergius Institute in Paris.

CURATORS OF THE ARCHIVE

The initiative of collecting and digitizing the Archive started in 1990 by Veronique Magnes in collaboration with the late Nicolas Ossorguine and the academic support of Dr Niki Tsironis. The Archive was first presented at the Patristic and Byzantine Society of the University of Oxford. Veronique Magnes, the curator of the Archive, has studied photography at the Academy of Limoges, theology at the Institute of Saint Sergius in Paris, and conservation and bookbinding at the London School of Printing. Since 1996 she lives and works in Athens for the production of photos, videos and as responsible of the Image Department of the Cultural Society AINOS and the Byzantine Museum of Athens. She is also General Secretary of the Athens Bureau of the Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius and co-founding member of the Cultural Society AINOS.

Dr Niki Tsironis is a byzantinist working at the Institute of Historical Research of the National Hellenic Research Foundation since 1998 and collaborating with the Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation (1996-2015). She is also Fellow of the Centre for Hellenic Studies of Harvard University since 2013. She is co-curator of the Photographic Archive of the Russian Diaspora, responsible for historical research, texts and captions.

AIM OF THE PROJECT

The main aim of the project is to save this precious historical material which is especially fragile due to its nature, but also due to the historical circumstances. In addition, the project is particularly valuable as it gives us the possibility to work with people of advanced age who are in a position to identify the people depicted in the photographs.

The various exhibitions and publications of the Photographic Archive will show the importance of intercultural dialogue as well as the value of the cultural and spiritual heritage of Russia for Europe today. They also illustrate the relevance of Orthodox thought in modern society.

2016-2017

In 2016 we organized a series of seminars at the Free University of the Society for the Promotion of Education and Learning, with the participation of distinguished thinkers and professors from Greece, France and England. Speakers included Metropolitan Kallistos of Diokleia, Evangelos Chrysos, Revd. Andrew Louth, Canon Malcolm Bradshaw, Christos Yannaras, Sotiris Gounelas, Andreas Andreopoulos, Stavros Yagazoglou, Stavros Zouboulakis, Vlasios Feidas, Petros Vasileiadis, Revd. Nikolaos Loudovikos, etc.

http://www.stoabibliou.gr/ep/ep28/pr_ros_diaspora.php

In March 2016 we launched a preview of part of the material of the Photographic Archive at the Art Auditorium of the Books' Arcade exclusively for the attendants of the seminars on the Russian Diaspora.

Next academic year we will present the exhibition in Athens, at the Cultural Centre Melina Merkouri and later in Thessaloniki, England and France.