

SUMMARY

Literary miscellany "The Monuments of Our Native Country" has been published by the All-Russia Society for the Protection of the Monuments of History and Culture beginning from 1980. Scientific and popular articles, essays and fiction, making the anthology, tell of Russian history, architecture and artistic heritage.

The issue offered for the readers consideration under the title "Monastery Daily Life" is devoted to the memory of an outstanding religious and political figure of St. Sergius of Radonezh, the 600th anniversary of whose death is being marked by decision of UNESCO. Russian saint Sergius of Radonezh (1319—1392) came down in history as the founder of the Trinity-Sergius Lavra near Moscow, one of the main spiritual centres of the Orthodoxy. He has also gone on record as the inspirer of Russian resistance against the Tatar-Mongol Yoke. His life became an example to follow for all Russian ascetics and for more than a hundred years served the moral education of the people and the progress of national enlightenment. Such was the opinion of the famous Russian historian Vassily Klyuchevsky, whose article opens the present anthology.

Russian religious philosophers of the late 19th—early 20th century can by right be regarded the spiritual successors of St. Sergius. Their writings reached their countrymen with great delay due to unfavourable historic situation in the country. The miscellany begins with a complete text of the article "The Trinity-Sergius Lavra and Russia" by priest Pavel Florensky, subjected to repression during the Stalin regime, while the section "Anthology" compiles articles and extracts from inaccessible up till recently books by such Russian thinkers dealing with the Russian Church and Russian religiosity as K. Leontyev, V. Solovyov, V. Rosanov, Ye. Trubetskoi, S. Bulgakov, L. Korsavin, G. Fedotov, N. Berdyayev and N. Ilyin.

St. Sergius referred to by the chroniclers as the Father-Superior of All Russia, nourished with his high spirituality several generations of monks and hermits. An article by a well-known religious writer Ignatius Bryanchaninov "On Monastic Feats", also appearing in the anthology and graphically explaining the meaning and purport of monkhood, will help to clearly understand the light emanating from the saint.

The pupils of St. Sergius have founded nearly 70 monasteries throughout Russia, still more hermitages appeared on the initiative of their followers. Stories about most famous Sergius's successors, introducing and propagating the Orthodoxy to various semi-pagan tribes inhabiting the northern and central reaches of Russia, make the section "From the root of St. Sergius". Such saints as Andronik and Theodore of Moscow, Sabbas Storozhevsky and Mefody Peshnoshsky, Dmitry Prilutsky, Paul Obnorsky, Kyrill of Belozersk and Ferapont of Mozhaisk promoted, in accordance with the teacher's behests, unification of separate tribes into a single Russian nation.

What is the life of a modern Orthodox monastery like today? Materials united in the section "Light from the Pechory" and originated from the same spiritual centre—the Pskovo-Pechersky Monastery—will exhaustively answer this question. Ideas of the canonical and artistic aspects of religious painting put forward by the leading icon painter of our time, Archimandrite Zenon will be extremely important for restoration of the early Russian traditions that were on the brink of disappearance some three centuries ago. Writer from Pskov Valentin Kurbatov will lead the readers, through his essay "The Heavenly Canvas", beyond the massive monastery walls to see and learn the daily life of monks. The same section offers a review of the collection of West-European painting collected at the monastery by its former Father-Superior, Archimandrite Alipiy.

Colourful louboks and engravings featuring well-known Russia's monasteries have adorned, in the past, almost every interior in this country. Brought home from pilgrimage they were carefully preserved like most precious relics. Now these pictures are stored at museum depositories. The material presented in the anthology gives a good idea of one of the similar collections, while the section "Lively Oils" acquaints the readers with artist Mikhail Nesterov and his canvasses, repeatedly depicting St. Sergius.

The "Archives" section combines the documents telling of the tragic period in the history of the Russian Church, which came as a result of reigning and militant atheistic ideology. We see here an essay by Vladimir Kozlov, based on original documents and narrating of how Bolsheviks opened the sepulchre with remains of the great Russian saint. The materials presented by the author include a protest by the Patriarch of Moscow Tikhon, addressed to Ulyanov-Lenin, Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars. Earlier unknown information is cited in the essay by Galina Zelinskaya, aiming to trace the destiny of the monks of the Moscow Monastery of St. Daniel, forced to leave their hermitage in 1930.

Over 150 Orthodox monasteries have been opened now that the interest in religious life have mounted in Russia. The section "Return", dealing with contemporary situation in the church life in this country, presents facts on the transfer of the remains of St. Seraphim of Sarov to the Diveyevo Convent near Arzamas, or on the restoration of unique ancient relics of the Boldin Monastery situated in the vicinity of Smolensk. The famous Optina Hermitage in the Kaluga Region, visited by the greats of Russian literature Nikolai Gogol, Leo Tolstoy and Feodor Dostoyevsky, deriving spiritual strength from there, is described as well.

Yevlogy, the Bishop of Vladimir and Suzdal and Chairman of the Holy Synod Commission on Monastery Affairs, granted an interview to our correspondent, in which he dwelt on the prospects of all-round restoration of Russian monasteries and monastic life there.