

Yury Yevgenich Bichkov, **MONTENEGRO From the Past to Present**, 1st ed. 2004, 2nd ed. 2008, published by the Russian Academy of Sciences,, Moscow.

Angelus terrarium Montenegro, would say

the wise Latins. >>> Montenegro is the place to be!



In the annals of written history of nations usually the best volumes are produced by foreign observers. Such is the case of the current volume under review. A seasoned Russian diplomat, who was graduated from the University of Moscow (MGU) as a professional historian, cum-politician, the profiled diplomat, finally wrote for the wider public consumption a decent history of sovereign Montenegro; a millennial nation-state, among the oldest on the continent of Europe. Correctly this author notes that its roots go back to 397 AD, as city-state in the Balkans, which appeared on the map of Europe at the time as the Roman town of Doclea near present day Podgorica, the "City Under the Hill" as the Romans too learned to call the small settlement on the banks of the Moracha River, the capital of the future Roman province of Prevalis, which occupied a territory in size of present day Montenegro.

Perhaps not surprisingly, just a skip and a hop away from old Duklja ruins, Yuriy Bihckov, the appointed first Russian General Consul in this newly sovereign Montenegro, acquired a building across the river Moracha for the Russian Government which is now the seat of the official Russian Embassy. Moreover, Bichkov has played an important role in firming up the sovereign precepts of the reconfirmed independence of Montenegro, after 88 years of surreptitious loss of its statehood from 1918-2006, when by a popular Referendum Montenegro regained its well deserved status among the sovereign nations of Europe (May 21, 2006). As the founders of modern Europe at the 1878 Congress of Berlin Montenegro's was the 27th signature on that document, with immediately gained all legal rights of a Member of this New World Order, while some neighbors at the Congress had to await their full status by thereafter qualifying their nationhood to the new commonwealth of nations, now 131 years past...

We bring this up because several historical monuments of Russian origin mark the countryside including a plaque on a building in Kotor, where tsarist Russia opened its first Montenegrin consulate in 1804, a Pushkin monument in Podgorica, a statue of the Holy Virgin in Nikshich, monument by the Millennium Bridge in Podgorica to the Russian dissident poet, singer, theater and film actor the late Vladimir Vissotky, and a bust in front of the public school honoring his name, the tsarist academician, Pavel Rovinsky, who wrote a 4-volume unprecedented History of Montenegro, published by the Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg Russia (1894). All of which were sponsored from Moscow and emplaced during Bichkov's mandate as the Russian General Consul in Podgorica, 2002 – 2006, after 4.5 years of exemplary service; the author now a Senior Advisor in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Moscow.

Academic Rovinsky, who was sent to Montenegro by Tsar Alexander II (1855-1881) for six months to write a Report on the profiled mini nation-state (in many ways a Russian protectorate "from-afar" for almost five centuries), the academic remained in the country for 16 years studying the unique history of a country which decided very early on in its medieval nation-statehood "to be or not to be"! With the advancing Ottoman Empire conquering the Balkans the choice was to be free or die on the parapets of freedom, the mighty mountain chains encircling the original state of Montenegro's of which only four of

the thirteen counties then comprised the nation, creating an ethos of vigil, heroism and perennial battle for five centuries remaining as a free Christian principality on the map of Europe; even with a *putsch* against the conquering Fascist armies, (March 13, 1941), when all of Europe was smudged with black ink signifying Nazi Germany, a little red dot marked Montenegro then as it did more than five centuries ago in that cartography when continental Europe was under siege and conquest by the marauding Turks from Asia Minor.

Bichkov's history of Montenegro is only the second worthwhile effort to mark the sovereignty of this heroic nation, and he took the cues from his processor, the tsarist academician Rovinsky—to let the world know the real truth about this valiant race of men who survived the ages, history itself, now well on the way, holding its well-earned course to join the European Union, where mini-states of proven traditional *local functional autonomy* will make a difference.

Many times over the past decade this writer and the author have discussed various aspects of the so-called **Montenegro Imperative!**, which was footnoted in Bichkov's first ed. (ft. note – 321), published (by yours truly) in USA some years ago, exactly over the subject of "difference", i.e. what makes a nation-state, and which elements or precepts create the specific gravity of nationhood. Indeed, the Montenegrin character, mindset and physical stature which grew out of that heroic experience, the reach for the intellectual and vertical heights achieved in its literature (Njegosh, for example, in the *Mountain Wreath*) and performance of its multi-national, multi-racial and multi-religious plebiscite does create the "biogenic" glue which makes nations more than geographic territory, heralded over the centuries by writers and poets such as Tennyson in his sonnets, Lord Byron, Alexander Pushkin and Vladimir Vissotsky, to name just a few... It's the ethnic, ethic, heroic, and vertical ethos which projects the image and influences the course of history.

Bichkov and this writer in our many deliberations and discussions over the past decade have agreed: If a **Council of Elders** (old wise men with grey hair) was formed to guide a New World Order, as it's a germinating this very minute (even though we don't see it, for we're not supposed to by the adverse will of the 'powers that be') in a new commonwealth of worldwide smaller nations, earnestly practicing "self-government," surely a Montenegrin (male or a female) would be picked as a profiled permanent member of such a forum!

Of course, the author of this volume proficiently describes the entire spectrum of the rise and survival of a nation, and a "historical lesson to be learned" about democracy in theory and practice by much larger nations and super powers, especially in these times of worldwide financial troubles. This third edition of the ongoing valiant history of Montenegro is a must by readers everywhere, indeed, this exotic volume should soon see daylight in other major languages across the planetary meridians.

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