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Remembering Natalia Pirumova

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On April 8, ten years ago, Natalia Mikhailovna Pirumova (1923–1997), one of the best-known historians of the Russian anarchist and socialist movement, author of several books on Mikhail Bakunin, Piotr Kropotkin and Alexander Herzen, passed away.[1]

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I have first encountered Natalia Pirumova on the occasion of the memorial meeting devoted to Mikhail Bakunin at the Herzen Museum in Moscow (April 26, 1989). This was the first open celebration of the famous Russian rebel anarchist after several decades of oblivion in the USSR. Still a high school student then, but already an anarchist, I was thrilled to see such a number of people gathered to commemorate the dead Russian revolutionary – historians, philosophers, anarchists, members of the Bakunin family. I was familiar with the name of Pirumova even before this meeting, as her book on Bakunin from 1970 was on the list of recommended readings in my school anarchist group (which was established at the end of 1988, following the arrival of history students from the Moscow State Pedagogical Institute who were also activists of *Obschina*, Moscow's first openly anarchist organization since the 1920s).

It was impossible not to notice Pirumova – already an elderly woman, her hair starting to turn white, with dark, lively and intelligent eyes. She intrigued with her simple, but bold dress, a black vest adorned by a vivid red necklace. We, of course, interpreted this particular combination of colors in an anarchist sense, and, as our later acquaintance with her has proven, we were not mistaken.[2]

My diary of that time indicates that the speakers at the memorial meeting were, besides N.M., Vladimir Pustarnakov (editor of two collections of Bakunin's

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1 Biographical data about N.Pirumova was mainly taken from the following publications: "Pamjati M.A.Bakunina" (Moskva, Institut ekonomiki Rossijskoj Akademii nauk, 2000; further referred to as I, followed by page number); "Michail Aleksandrovich Bakunin. Lichnost' i tvorchestvo" (Moskva, Institut ekonomiki Rossijskoj Akademii nauk, 2005; referred to as II) and Vladimir Sysoyev, "Bakuniny" (Tver', Sozvezdije, 2000; (referred to as III). The former two volumes were published in limited circulation and are thus difficult to find in libraries.

2 She was known for her black dress already back in the 1950s. This, however, was due to a quite simple reason. As her long-time friend and fellow historian Eleonora Pavlyuchenko recalls, "the first meeting with her was unforgettable. A young, very beautiful woman, with straight dark black hair, worn as a bun on the crown of her head, in a very austere and tight black dress (an anarchist? a member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party?). Then, in obvious contrast to her almost ascetic looks: lively, curious eyes, with a kind expression, always ready to make contact. As for the black dress, it later turned out that it was all Natalia Mikhailovna had in terms of 'good clothes' – we were all very poor in those days. Regardless, the element of play in her behavior fascinated. . ." (I-205)

writings published in 1987 and 1989), Boris Itenberg (who presented a very official version of the Bakunin-Marx conflict), as well as some young historians: Dmitry Oleinikov, Andrey Isayev and Yury Borisenok, all, in one way or another, students of Pirumova.

I later met with Pirumova on quite a few occasions. First, because she lent me a helping hand in organizing other commemorative events for Bakunin and a lesser known Russian anarchist philosopher by the name of Alexey Borovoy (1875–1935). And secondly, because she was the driving force behind the large international conference on Piotr Kropotkin which was held in December 1992 in Moscow, St.Petersburg and Dmitrov. Besides that, we have met quite regularly on Kropotkin's birthday at his grave in the Novodevichye Cemetery in Moscow. It must have been during one of these meetings that Pirumova received her nickname of "grandmother of Russian anarchism". Despite of its obvious humorous overtones, the name conveyed only respect, since for many people the rediscovery of Russia's officially forbidden anarchism in the 1970s and 1980s had started with reading the sympathetic biographies of anarchists written by Pirumova.

Although I cannot claim to have been a close friend of Natalia Pirumova, we had cordial relations, and she invited me to visit her both at home and at the Institute of Russian History, where she worked. Now I can only regret that our relationship and cooperation were rather fragmentary – I was not a historian, and activism as well as everyday life distracted me at the time from paying proper attention to what essentially was our common interest, Mikhail Bakunin. Once I did, N.M. was already quite old and had suffered a stroke that had badly affected her memory. Nevertheless, she was still trying to do what she could. And while I regret the missed opportunities to know her better, I am consoled by the fact that we have commonly started a project that continues well after her passing.

It was largely thanks to her that we were able to get in touch with Georgy Tsyrg, a member of the Bakunin family, who was willing to sponsor our regular volunteer camps in Pryamukhino, the village where Bakunin was born. There we did some work on the conservation of the park and the remaining buildings. The restoration of the Bakunin family's house requires sizeable investments, which cannot be met to this day. However, little by little, different activities were able to restore the spirit of the "Pyramukhino harmony" and allowed the birthplace of the famous anarchist to breathe life again. A small museum was finally opened in 2003. Volunteer (and largely anarchist) camps took place in Pryamukhino from 1995 till 2001 and have since been replaced by annual Bakunin conferences.

I look at the photos from Pirumova's funeral and see a very old woman. However, this is not how I remember her at all – even when the years were taking their toll and her strength was on the decrease, her eyes were always lit with a

lively, youthful flame. And this is how we will remember our 'granny'. We can still recall her asking, standing by Kropotkin's grave: "Where is *our* flag?"

I was only able to discover the details of Pirumova's biography after she died, as reminiscences of her friends were published by the Kropotkin Commission (also established largely due to her efforts in the early 1990s). (See note 1)

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Natalia Prumova was born in the village of Smygalovka, in the Ryazan region, on August 20, 1923. Her family was trying to survive the hunger of the post-revolutionary years in the countryside.

Her mother, Olga Galitskaya, was from a noble Russian family, while her father, Mikhail Khachaturov, was Armenian and a member of the internationalist wing of the Socialist Revolutionary Party, which was opposed to Russia's participation in WWI. He was arrested the first time before the Revolution and sent into Siberian exile. After the Revolution, in 1924 or 1925, when Natalia was just about 2 years old, he was arrested again, this time by the Bolsheviks, and sentenced to 10 years of forced labor in the Northern camp of the Solovki islands. Khachaturov returned from captivity only for a short time in 1933, before he was arrested once more in August 1935. He was executed three years later.[3]

There appears to be a contradiction in the biographical notes on Pirumova as far as her patronymic is concerned – sometimes she is referred to as Natalia Iosifovna, sometimes (in later notes) as Natalia Mikhailovna. The difference is explained by the fact that in her passport she was named after her stepfather, Iosif Pirumov, while later she preferred to be called after her deceased father Mikhail Khachaturov, whose memory she cherished. "When asked why in some documents she is referred to as Mikhailovna, while in others as Iosifovna, she used to joke: 'Probably I'm an illegal daughter of Iosif Stalin.'" (II-273)

In the early 1930s, Pirumova's family moved to Moscow. But sometime before 1940, her mother was arrested and sent into exile in Kazakhstan. Natalia now lived with relatives. Her mother's noble origin and the fact that her parents were imprisoned deprived her of almost any possibility to enter university. However,

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[3] Natalia learnt about her father's prison years only later from Dmitry Likhachev, a famous Soviet literature professor, who was imprisoned in Solovki together with Khachaturov. Likhachev recalled that Khachaturov was first imprisoned in the 1920s on criminal charges – he had embezzled state money and had unsuccessfully tried to escape from Armenia to Turkey. Vasily Antonov, Natalia Pirumova's colleague and long-time friend, recalls that during one of the short thaws in Soviet history, Pirumova was allowed to read her father's case and discovered that he had been a secret correspondent of a liberal Russian newspaper, published by Pavel Milyukov in Paris from 1921 to 1940. (I-201)

when she evacuated to Uzbekistan during WWII, she somehow managed to enter the evening department of the Tashkent Pedagogical Institute. She finished her education in just two and a half years, taking external exams. While in Tashkent she was able to attend lectures of some of the best Soviet historians and philologists who also found themselves evacuated.

In 1946, Natalia managed to return to Moscow where she lived with her sister. She started working as a schoolteacher and later, in 1953, as an editor at Gospolitizdat (a political Soviet publishing house). However, she did not last long there. After one of her colleagues denounced her for telling "anti-Soviet anecdotes", she was dismissed.

With a little help from her friends, she ended up becoming an editor in a large publishing house, the Great Soviet Encyclopedia (BSE), where she worked for the history department and prepared the recent history volumes of the Soviet Historical Encyclopedia. As her friend Eleonora Pavlyuchenko recalls, "in those years this publishing house has given shelter to many well-qualified specialists from among the 'freethinkers', 'cosmopolitans' and other 'politically unreliable' groups who were kicked out of universities and other institutions. The relatively liberal conditions in the publishing house allowed for – although quite limited – alternative perspectives on certain events of Russian history, especially with regard to the period preceding the formation of the Soviet Union. And to a great extent it was N.M. Pirumova who made such perspectives the base of her work." (I-206)

In 1954, Natalia successfully completed her "Candidate of Sciences" degree in history with a thesis on "Herzen's Views on Russia's Historical Process". Two years later the dissertation was published as a book. It was Russian socialists and anarchists – Alexander Herzen, Mikhail Bakunin, Piotr Kropotkin, later also Leo Tolstoy – as well as the *zemstvo* system that became Pirumova's main interests, both academically and personally. Those who knew her well, recall that Pirumova chose "her 'heroes' not only based on research interests, but also because she felt connected to their ideas." (I-206)

In 1962, Natalia Pirumova started to work at the USSR History Institute and became an editor of the *Istoricheskiye Zapiski* journal. In the 1960s and 1970s, her name gained notoriety among the liberal-minded intelligentsia in the USSR because of her cooperation with the *Prometey* historical journal, in which she published several articles on Bakunin and Kropotkin.

In 1966, her first book on Bakunin was published, followed by a more extensive volume in 1970, which was printed in the popular "Life of Remarkable People" series. For her unorthodox treatment of Mikhail Bakunin, which in some ways contradicted official Soviet Marxism, she was subjected to "a negative ideological and political book review in the *Kommunist* magazine." (II-302) However, both

her book and the negative review in the official communist organ contributed to her growing popularity among the critically thinking intelligentsia. Her next book on Kropotkin (1972) also became a significant event in Soviet history and an esteemed study of an anarchist well-forgotten in his home country for many years.

In 1980, Pirumova wrote her doctoral dissertation at the Institute of USSR History entitled "The Liberal *Zemstvo* Movement, its Social Origins and Evolution" (the dissertation was based on a book and several articles she had published earlier). As Sergey Udartsev, one of her younger colleagues and students writes, "her doctorate thesis was not devoted to her main interest. She has studied the history of the *zemstvo* and liberalism with curiosity as the history of social activities of the intelligentsia, their service to justice and the social good. Yet, the study was not a voluntary one and it kept her from doing what she would have really wanted to do: researching the lives, activities and works of the famous theorists and practitioners of anarchism: M. Bakunin, P. Kropotkin, and L. Tolstoy (. . .). She used to say that she likes liberals, that liberals are nice people, but that studying them bored her and that she was much more attracted to the study of anarchism. This was her true vocation." (II-266)

We can probably agree with Udartsev when he writes that "an organic synthesis of anarchism (. . .) with liberalism, which tends to put sometimes 'sky-high' ideals of anarchism down to earth (. . .) was for her a natural (. . .) direction of thought." (II-308) However, in her letters she also expressed strong reservations towards liberalism. Writing in 1979 on the Soviet liberal intelligentsia that she was working with, she noted: "I live among liberals now. I can't say that their company is bad, but they lack the ability to fly." (II-325) Throughout her life, Pirumova was equally sympathetic to the prudent, rational Alexander Herzen who "possessed the talent to understand and sympathize with reality"[4] and the ardent, impatient, militant, and rebellious Mikhail Bakunin.

Pirumova started to present her studies of the liberal *zemstvo* movement to a wider audience during the *perestroika* when prospects of local self-management were increasingly debated in Russia. She spoke at conferences and wrote articles which discussed the historical experience of self-management in the country.

So far, we have mainly spoken about the official and known parts of Pirumova's biography. However, there is an 'unofficial' part as well. It includes a sort of literary *salon* that existed in N.M.'s house, where an informal group of scholars on Russia's liberal and socialist history met to discuss their works[5], as well as

[4] N.Pirumova. *Aleksandr Herzen — revoljucioner, myslitel', chelovek.* (Moskva, Mysl', 1989.) P. 6.

[5] Among its participants were some famous Soviet historians, including Yevgeny Plimak (an expert on Radischev and Chernyshevsky), writer and historian Natan Eidelman, Alexander Volodin (author of

her cooperation with the historical and literary group *Vozrozhdeniye* ("Revival" or "Renaissance")[6], and finally her friendship with political prisoners (including anarchists and socialists) who survived the Gulag.

Throughout the 1980s, Pirumova continued her research on famous Russian anarchists, tried to publish some works by Bakunin and Kropotkin (neither had been published in Russian since the 1920s and '30s, and their works were largely held in special library sections, inaccessible to the general public), made efforts to persuade the officials to re-open the Kropotkin museums in Moscow and Dmitrov, and greatly contributed to the establishment of a Bakunin museum in Pryamukhino (which finally opened in 2003).

It was also during the first half of the 1980s that she worked on two new books – on Bakunin and Herzen respectively – which remained unpublished for several years. In September 1986 she wrote in a letter to Udartsev: "'Bakunin' rests unpublished for the second year already and it will do so for many more years, I'm afraid. That's at Nauka [publishing house]. At Mysl [another publishing house] rests 'Herzen', for the first year so far." (II-354) It was only during the *perestroika* that the books finally came out. The one on Herzen was printed in 1989, the *Social Doctrine of Bakunin* in 1990. Just like her book on Bakunin from 1970, this latter study became one of the most significant contributions on Bakunin published in Russian. It focused on the origins of Bakunin's social and philosophical ideas and his influence on Russian thought and Russia's revolutionary movement. One has to bear in mind that this book, although published at the height of the *perestroika*, had already been written several years earlier, when the ideological pressures of the dominant communist ideology were very strong and certain bows before official Soviet Marxism unavoidable.

The disappearance of strong ideological restrictions and the democratization of social life during the *perestroika* finally created possibilities for the realization of Pirumova's projects.[7] In the late 1980s and early 1990s, she contributed extensively to different historical journals and newspapers, publishing articles on the history of the *zemstvo* system and her beloved anarchists.

"In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Natalia Mikhailovna had many projects and plans, and she worked in many different directions," Udartsev writes. "She was suddenly sought after by everybody (. . .). Different journals asked for her

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books on Herzen and Hegel's influence on Russian thought), and Pirumova's close friend Eleonora Pavlyuchenko (an expert on the Decembrists).

6 Vozrozhdeniye members collected and published memoirs of Gulag prisoners, first in secret (in the 1970s), later openly.

7 Udartsev recalls that "only at the peak of the perestroika she got a small TV in her living room which she often turned on." (II-274) It appears that Pirumova had been very skeptical of the official Soviet propaganda, preferring not to have a TV at the time.

articles. On the eve of the disintegration of the USSR and amidst the spread of chaos, the interest for anarchism and its theorists was growing everywhere. Natalia Mikhailovna could not respond to all the requests for contributions she received and passed some of them on to friends whom she thought could do the work well." (II-290, 293) However, the events of 1991 and Russia's financial collapse lead to the closure of many publishing houses and did not allow different projects to come about. Thus, for example, Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid* was never published.

Nonetheless, N.M. managed to see many of her plans through – with her active participation, the first conference devoted to Bakunin in Russia since the 1920s was held in Kalinin (now Tver') in 1989, and a large international conference on Kropotkin followed in 1992. Other projects were harder to realize, for example the Kropotkin museums. The new times turned out to be almost as unaccommodating to her heroes as the old ones were – even if for different reasons.

During this period, Pirumova also cooperated with *Memorial*, an NGO established to study and spread information about political repression in the USSR. Together with the group, she organized a conference on the history of resistance in the Gulag, and helped edit and publish several collections of memoirs of former Gulag prisoners. The restoration of historical truth and the memory of victims of political repression were of utter importance to her. This was directly linked to her own biography. Long before *glasnost*, she was brave enough to meet with people who had just returned from Gulag camps in order to learn from them the history that the ruling party tried to deny and hide. One of these people, a 93-year old woman, a member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party who would live long enough to attend Pirumova's funeral, recalled Natalia Pirumova as she had first met her in the mid-1950s, young and afraid of nothing, attending the gatherings of former prisoners: "[With people like her] we stopped thinking of ourselves as outcasts, forever excluded from society by Stalin." (I-217)

As Udartsev notes, "this issue was connected to her own biography and has never ceased to attract her attention. Her studies of the people involved in the Russian liberation movement of both liberal and anarchist tendencies and her later interest in the activities of *Memorial* had a common denominator – a critical and negative attitude towards the violent, punitive activity of the state, the prosecution of the freedom of thought, and the [violation] of human rights in order to pursue the interests of those in power (. . .). For her, the study of the history of the liberation movement and the struggle against the legacy of the Gulag were inseparable." (II-291)

She also assisted in the publication of some literary works which were previously banned in the USSR (namely the books of Mikhail Osorgin).

But the years were taking their toll. In 1997, N.M. died. On a cold and gloomy April day we came to the Mitinskoye Cemetery on the outskirts of Moscow to attend her funeral. Many people assembled there, those who had known and loved her, both old and young. Later we gathered at her house and started to share our memories – of her as a colleague, a brilliant historian, a wonderful person, 'granny' . . . In these recollections the grief over our loss was partially relieved.

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Her portrait would remain unfinished without a description of the type of person she was, even if many of her characteristics are already evident from her biography. Everybody who encountered her could not help noting her joyous character, her warmth and informality, her responsiveness and kindness, her readiness to help. "What was most attractive about her and what also commanded respect, was that her troubled biography had not made her bitter, but had, on the contrary, led to a determination to help the weaker, to share what she had with generosity," her friend Vasily Antonov wrote. (I-201) These personal qualities of her were directly linked to her innate sense of freedom.

One of her closest and oldest friends recalled that even back in the 1950s, Natalia "stood out among her colleagues because of her absolute lack of inhibition, her independence of judgment and the absence of any servility towards superiors, something which was striking during the times of Soviet intimidation." (I-206)[8]

At the same time, N.M. was known for her respectful attitude towards people, even those whose opinions she did not share, and for her tolerance, including a tolerance for others' weaknesses. Her colleagues noted her ability to combine both adherence to principles and the art of avoiding conflict. Antonov wrote: "Strange as it may seem, I cannot recall a single serious conflict between N.M. Pirumova and authors [whose works she edited for publication] – although some of them were distinguished and ambitious – or people who reviewed her works, or even the administration of the publishing house. Probably this was due to her scholarly distinction, her editorial skills and tact." (I-206)

Besides carrying out her own research, N.M. actively helped young historians. One of her prodigies later wrote that "many young people came to her. They

[8] These qualities – liveliness, activism and innate freedom – were also characteristics of her father. Professor Dmitry Likhachev, who knew him in Solovki, wrote: "We loved him for his *joie de vivre*. One could learn a lot from Mikhail Ivanovich in practical life, but the main thing was his ability not to lose self-respect. Watching him in his interaction with superiors, we could see that he was making fun of them, that he despised them." (See Dmitry Likhachev, *Vospominaniya*. Various editions.)

brought their dissertations, theses or articles. Many of them had their own academic tutors who worked very formally. But the young people wanted a real evaluation of their work, real advice and guidance. This is why they came to Natalia Mikhailovna, who never refused to help." (I-208-209) Apart from over 20 post-graduate students who she tutored before they successfully defended their theses, she helped dozens of other Soviet and foreign students and researchers by providing her professional advice.

"Not being the most gifted public speaker, she demonstrated such a grace, freedom and depth of mind, such humor and infectious love of life, such openness and benevolence, that she remains in people's memories not [only] as a scholar, but also as a friend of Alexander Herzen, Mikhail Bakunin, Mikhail Osorgin (whose literary works she adored) or the *zemstvo* activists." (I-216-217)

Sergey Udartsev also notes that Pirumova "was a very persuading person. This did not rely on the positions she occupied, and was not formal but factual. It was built on her morality, philosophy, and social skills." (II-308)

One of the places where her social skills flourished, was Pirumova's own house. "The hospitable house of Pirumova was always packed with people," a close friend recalled. "Colleagues, historians, philosophers, artists, doctors, former political prisoners and emigrants, truth-seekers from provincial towns, promising young people and lonely women . . . Many people sought consolation, support or help there. And they found it." (I-207)

"Usually the conversations began in her living room and were continued in the kitchen," writes Udartsev. "Sometimes they would later return to the living room, to the bookshelves and the manuscripts . . . At the [kitchen] table there was usually some liqueur, often made by Natalia Mikhailovna herself, and some small glasses. But I can't remember a single case when somebody drank too much. Drinking liqueur was a custom, it was done little by little . . . Often Natalia Mikhailovna would propose a toast, her favorite one being: 'For your and our freedom!'" (II-274-275)

One of her students wrote that in the 1990s, "N.M. was probably the last person in Moscow whom you could visit without a preceding telephone call, and the doors of her flat remained unlocked (sic!)." (I-211)

"What always impressed was that Natalia Mikhailova held on to her values in spite of the times. Cautiously, yet determined, she resurrected whole eras of Russian history from oblivion. Later, when the pressures of state ideology were lifted, she took a lot of pleasure in restoring these lost memories to the degree that her health and energy allowed . . ." (I-215)

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Pirumova's name is undoubtedly among those of the most revered historians who studied the life and legacy of Mikhail Bakunin and other anarchists and participants in the Russian liberation movement. If one thinks about the circumstances in which Pirumova worked, her scientific interests also take on a tint of personal moral and political choice.

Historians in the USSR had to work under dramatically different circumstances than their colleagues in the West, with their works subjected to censorship and the archives and books of anarchists and other opponents of the communist autocracy banned and hidden in secret library storerooms. Choosing "controversial" subjects for your research could in itself hinder your career as a Soviet scholar.

Pirumova, however, managed to write and publish honest books about her beloved heroes even under the pressure of censorship.

Indeed, her biography of Bakunin, published in 1970 during the period of the so-called "Brezhnevist stagnation", is still one of the best Russian books on the topic. With the exception of a few pages on the Marx-Bakunin conflict within the First International in which she had to pay lip-service to the Marxist doctrine, the book is a very comprehensive and sympathetic look at the controversial man that Mikhail Bakunin was. Pirumova even managed to criticize Marx (without specifically naming him) as the editor of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* for the unscrupulous story that suggested that Bakunin was an agent of the Russian tsar. Likewise, she did not shy away from questioning the ethics and methods of the allies of Marx and Engels who 'investigated' the Nechayev affair or the activities of the Alliance.[9] The book was later translated into different languages. [10]

When Pirumova worked on her books, there existed the unwritten Soviet rule that scholars who wanted to ensure the publication of their works had to make regular references to the Marxist canon and criticize "non-Marxist" ideas. But, as one of her colleagues writes, "she [N.M.] would rather not write something or avoid discussing a subject than write anything that would contradict her own beliefs. Of course she, too, was forced to make the occasional obligatory reference to the classics of Marxism-Leninism or tame her judgments of the deeds or

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[9] For Pirumova's own studies of the Nechayev affair, see, for example, "M. Bakunin ili S. Nechaev?" (*Prometej* – Vol. 5, 1968 — Pp. 168–182), her books on Bakunin (1970, 1990), her article (co-author S.V. Zhitomirskaja) "Ogarev, Bakunin i N.A. Herzen-doch' v 'Nechaevskoj istorii' (1879)" in *Literaturnoe nasledstvo.* Moskva, 1985 – Vol. 96: Herzen i Zapad – Pp.413–546), or her reviews of foreign publications: "Novoje o Bakunine na stranicah francuzskogo zhurnala" ["Cahiers du monde russe et sovietique"] // *Istorija SSSR* — № 4, 1968 — Pp. 186–198. 10. Pirumova's *Bakunin* was published in Japan (1973), Yugoslavia (1975), Hungary (1979). 11. Pirumova managed to publish this – a review of the IISG edition of Bakunin's works – only two years later. See "Arhiv Bakunina": Izdanie Mezhdunarodnogo instituta social'noj istorii // *Osvoboditel'noe dvizhenie v Rossii: Mezhvuzovskij nauchnyj sbornik* — Saratov — Vol. 8 — Pp.113–119. [co-author V.A.Chernyh].

thoughts of her heroes; but she did this thoughtfully and with measure, mostly by making them appear less critical within a complex presentation of their work." (II-272-273)

She passed this approach on to her students. On the one hand, she wrote to a younger colleague in 1983: "I don't advise you to walk on the razor's edge. The tone of your writing should be academic, reasonable and based on argumentation, and no refutations after each phrase of Kr[opotkin]! There is place for that in the preface, at the end of individual chapters or in the afterword." (II-277) At the same time, she taught younger scholars not to compromise their conscience for the academic and ideological authorities on whom the acceptance of their dissertations or the publications of their manuscripts relied: "Whether 'they' are afraid or not should not be your concern – your only concern should be to remain an honest scholar." (II-345)

Pirumova closely followed the work of her foreign colleagues, although even the most notable books sometimes traveled a long way before they reached the library collections in the USSR. She was watching the publications of A. Lehning, M. Confino, T. Bacounine, J. Catteau and others closely, and tried to inform the Soviet readers about relevant releases. But even a simple review of a foreign book published on Bakunin was not always possible to place in Soviet historical journals. "As for our hero," she wrote in one of her letters in 1976, the 100th anniversary of Bakunin's death, "there will be nothing in his remembrance in our press. Even my review of [his] 'Archive' – the one that I gave you to read – [will not be published]. [11] As for me, I'm writing an article requested by a Canadian-American journal and approved by my office." (II-314)

From 1981 on, Pirumova tried hard to publish various works by Bakunin in Russian, for example those published by Arthur Lehning, which were written at the time of his work on the *Knouto-Germanic Empire and the Social Revolution.*

In 1983, she and her colleagues handed in a written request for the publication of two volumes of Bakunin's works. The first response was negative. By the end of the year, however, the officials' attitude had changed: "And now our news. Unexpectedly it was decided at the very top to publish Bak[unin] – (. . .) 'for academic libraries' only. Also Krop[otkin] in two volumes (I had requested *Mutual Aid* and *Ethics*). Also Freud, Solovyev, Slavophiles and others. Bak[unin] will be published first. In July [1984] the text should be given to the editor. Pustarnakov is doing this. He aims to translate 'Consideration philosophique sur le phantome' and other appendices to the *Knouto-Germanic Empire* himself and do all the other work. (. . .) The print run of these books will only be 1.500 copies, they will hardly be sold in the bookstores at all." (II-345) The process proved long and complicated, though – only in 1987, Vladimir Pustarnakov finally managed to publish excerpts from some of Bakunin's works, and only the philosophical

pieces, with all references to politics and Marxism omitted. The publication of some major works by Bakunin became possible only in 1989, for the first time since the 1930s. Pustarnakov's thorough and sympathetic preface to the 1987 collection of philosophical writings – "M.A. Bakunin as a Philosopher" – was another significant contribution to the return of Bakunin to the Russian readership.

N.M. was also active (and successful) in retrieving historical documents and relics of the Bakunin family. The fact that – unfortunately after her death – the Bakunin Museum was opened in Pryamukhino in 2003 was due to her earlier efforts to find the remains of the Pryamukhino archive in the 1970s and '80s. After the revolution in 1917, the contents of the archive were spread out between Moscow, Leningrad and Tver' (then Kalinin), with some parts disappearing during the civil war. N.M. also found the remaining members of the Bakunin family, helped recover historical relics from them for the museum collection, and allowed the first Bakunin family exhibition to take place in 1987 in the Tver' State Museum.

Pirumova not only helped gather relics and documents, but also individuals willing to uncover forgotten pasts and help restore the memory of people who were dear to her. Vladimir Sysoyev, a scholar of the local history of the Tver' region and the Bakunin family, who first met Pirumova in 1978, recalls: "She was an amazing woman: Being a professor of history, she spoke to me, at the time a young scholar of local Tver' history, as an equal. She patiently explained to me, who lacked education in history, things that should have been well-known to any historian. She could talk very compellingly (. . .) about her search for historical relics of the Bakunin family which were scattered all over the world. Natalia Mikhailovna spent a lot of energy on getting Pryamukhino restored: she wrote articles, gave interviews, met with [local and regional] administration, and participated in all possible events." (III-419)

Among other things Pirumova also tried to find the lost archive of Yury Steklov, probably the most renowned Soviet historian who studied Bakunin. Yury Steklov (1873–1941) published four volumes of Bakunin's collected works and correspondence in 1934–35, but was later arrested. The other volumes might have been finished by that time, but his archive could never be located. In the course of trying to find it, N.M. was able to contact his son, Vladimir Yuryevich Steklov, who also was trying to recover his father's documents. Vladimir Steklov died in 1981. In one of Pirumova's letters we read: "On September 18 [V.Yu.] Steklov died. He was buried at the Kuntsevskoye Cemetery [in Moscow]. I spoke to [his widow] S.F. She tries to get by. She sorts out his papers, but I decided not to talk about them now. He was contacted by that institution [the KGB] about a week before his death. An officer came in person. He was rather nice. Said that no traces of Yu.M.'s archive could be found, but that the library had supposedly been donated

by Yu.M.'s wife to the Central Committee [of the Communist Party] in 1941. She herself died in [19]42. I will try to find this [library]. If what this man said is true, it can only be in the IMEL [Institute of Marx-Engels-Lenin, affiliated with the Central Committee of the CPSU]. So far, I could not find out anything about Turkos [Yury Steklov's colleague who attended to Bakunin's correspondence]. They didn't find her [personal] card in the department [of the IMEL] or didn't want to find it. So far, I haven't had time to go to the History Library. In the catalogue of the Lenin Library she is not mentioned." (II-329)[10]

Pirumova also tried hard to publish Kropotkin's works and to re-establish the Kropotkin museums in Moscow and Dmitrov.[11] In a letter dated February 1983 she wrote: "The [idea of] the Kropotkin Museum in Dmitrov received support, but at the last moment the [Moscow] Regional Committee [of the Communist Party] asked for the official decision of the Central Committee. A letter was sent there on February 8. Let's hope that by Women's Day the Geog[raphical] Soc[iety] will get some response. But I don't expect it to be positive." (II-340) The case was indeed moving very slowly – if at all: "What will happen with the museum is not clear. So far, the scientific department of the MC [Moscow City Communist Party Committee] has requested information on what we plan to exhibit in the museum. We have compiled references to literary and revolutionary activities [of Kropotkin] and expressed our desire to restore the interior of the London cabinet and some living rooms based on different funds (Revolution Museum and Literature Museum)." (II-342)[12] And later: "The efforts on behalf

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10 Pirumova published an article on Yury Steklov in 1974, following his 100th birthday. See [K stoletiju so dnja rozhdenija Ju.M. Steklova] // *Istorija SSSR* — № 2 — Pp.221–222. Her proposal to publish a biography of Steklov in 1989 was not accepted. Sergey Udartsev was to write the book, but the Politizdat publishing house (formerly Gospolitizidat) later decided not to pursue its publication. See II-364-365.

11 Following Kropotkin's death, the Kropotkin Museum in Moscow was established in 1921 in the house where he had been born. Until the late 1920s it served as a meeting point for anarchists who were not yet imprisoned by the communist regime. It was finally closed down in 1938 after Kropotkin's widow had "given" it to the Soviet government. The closure was officially due to "repairs" but the museum never re-opened. In Dmitrov, the house where Kropotkin lived for the last three years before his death was partly turned into an informal museum by his widow, Sofia Kropotkin. The museum existed de facto until 1941 when German Nazi troops reached the surroundings of Moscow. The remaining archives and relics were given to the local Dmitrov Museum. Sofia Kropotkin died shortly after. Pirumova tried to re-establish at least one of the museums – Moscow or Dmitrov – but to no effect.

12 The plan, as it was proposed by Pirumova in 1983, awaits realization to this very day. Neither for Kropotkin's 150th birthday in 1992 nor at any later date has it been possible to re-establish one of the Kropotkin museums. In Dmitrov his house was finally 'restored', but in a rather brutal fashion: it was destroyed and built anew. A Kropotkin monument has also been built. The museum, however, still awaits to be re-opened.

of the Commission for the Creative Legacy of Kropotkin moves forward with great difficulty. Two distinguished academics (Yanshin and Gilyarov) agreed to participate, but academics of the social sciences refuse. And various parts of the commission's ideology are not quite clear . . . " (II-344)

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Although Pirumova was a renowned specialist on Bakunin, Herzen and Kropotkin, it would be wrong to say that she was a specialist on the history of the Russian and international anarchist movement as such. The times and circumstances of her work prevented her from studying this history in detail. Nevertheless, she was one of the few biographers of her 'heroes', who was really able to understand both their psychological features and motives, and the historical circumstances in which they acted.

"Some of the episodes of Bakunin's biography or his comments on Marxism she had to avoid or delicately conceal, but as a whole, her book, for the first time after 40 years of oblivion, returned to the Russian readers the name of one of the most famous revolutionaries and philosophers, of the creator of anarchist theory and a dominant influence on several generations who fought for the freedom of the individual around the world," wrote Vladimir Sysoyev in his book on the Bakunin family in 2002. (III-418) This praise of her work, which comes from an author writing in the 21st century, is a good example of the many contributions she will be remembered for.

Mikhail Tsovma
Remembering Natalia Pirumova
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