A Short History of the
Rossika Society
(1929 – 1968)

By David M. Skipton

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Foreword

I joined Rossica in 1977 while stationed with the U.S. Army in Germany, and didn’t get to meet some of “the big guns” in the Society until my return to the States in 1979 – Norman Epstein, Boris Shishkin, Rimma Sklarevski, Constantine de Stackelberg, Gordon Torrey (all now deceased), Howard Weinert and Ken Wilson, to name just those in New York and the Washington, D.C. area. As a neophyte who had started out collecting Soviet CTOs in 1975, I was in awe of these people. Their names were plastered all over what few journals I had managed to acquire, and even in the German stamp shops this GI had haunted, the Rossica Society name was well known.

When Gordon asked me to serve as acting librarian in 1980, it was with a great amount of trepidation that I accepted. There was not a single Russian within hailing distance of my family tree, yet I had just become a junior officer in a society that only a short while before had been of, by and for White Russians. The library was moved from New York down to Maryland, and the trepidation increased as I read through the old journals in Russian, the ones from Yugoslavia, Latvia, Estonia and China. There was an awful lot of history and tradition in there, and the sense of Rossica as something more than just another “stamp-collecting society” began to grow. The Old Orthography, the quaint phraseology, the subject matter, all had a distinctly White Russian – tsarist Russian – flavor. And it was plain to see that the people to whom I looked up were themselves standing on the shoulders of others.

There were so few of those White Russians left. Rossica was (and still is) a link with an era that had begun to die in 1918, an era that had seen a great exodus and Diaspora of refugees fleeing the communists. Some of those first-wave refugees had taught me Russian, and their stories of how they escaped the Soviets were hair-raising. Their straits (and those of the early Rossika members) in exile had been dire. For many, the military or social status they had enjoyed in Russia was vastly greater than their new station in émigré life. Reading of this, the comparison between my footwear and theirs was inevitably forced. If I had been in their shoes, had fought against an alien ideology that hounded me from my country and chased me to some foreign land with little but the clothes on my back, would I have given to philately so much as a second thought or cared a tinker’s damn about it? Doubtful. These people, though, landed on their feet, made the best of a terrible situation, and a few of them even managed to start a worldwide organization for collectors. It wasn’t just the collecting instinct that compelled them, although that undoubtedly played a role; no, it was more than that. For them it was a means of preserving some part, however small, of Old Russia, and of preserving their own Russian-ness in emigration. (Read D. Leus’ comment below, and you’ll get some idea of what I mean.)

For me, there is a palpable sense of Rossica as something unique and worth preserving. True, we’re not a society of émigrés Russians any more, although there are some in our ranks. Most of us don’t even speak or read Russian, nor do we have to worry about where our next meal is coming from. We are not nearly as scattered a society as once we
were, and today, were they still alive, the old members would probably have difficulty recognizing their society. Still, there’s this THING about Rossica, even today. How many other philatelic societies can claim that they were born in exile, grew up always on the move in the Great Depression, fell into a fitful coma in World War II, awoke out of the DP camps, underwent a profound change in the composition of their memberships, published a first-rate journal in five countries on three continents (often in two languages, and with a third threatened), and are still around today? There are not many, and they look rather different today, too.

I’ve learned a lot from this Society, and not just about philately, either. That and the desire to impart to other members a sense of Rossica as something special are what motivated me to write this history. Since many of our members today have little or no command of Russian, much of that initial period prior to WWII has been closed to them, and if the information in the Rossica Archives isn’t published, it may well disappear forever. We’re very fortunate to have the library we do, but there’s no guarantee that fire, flood, or some other disaster won’t rob us of it.

This work is part history project, part archival inventory recording, part dusty old membership list and part family scrap album, and there are plenty of places where other members might add this or correct that. As more information comes to light, perhaps some of the cherished notions it contains will have to be altered or heaved overboard.

As for the title, I chose “A Short History of the Rossica Society” for several reasons. First, because even at 200+ pages, it is just that, and far too short, in fact, because among the Society’s members were many more fascinating stories that ought to have been recounted, if only they had been found or heard.

Second, it is a respectful nod to our sister society the BSRP, with which we have shared much, especially during the 1950s and ’60s. John Barry wrote “A Short History of the BSRP” in 1959, back when there weren’t that many years to tell about. This “response,” as it were, comes 47 years later. The dialogue is slow, but if this publication serves as an inducement to our British brethren to keep the conversation going and produce a second “[Not So] Short History of the BSRP,” the philatelic world can only be enriched thereby.

Third, the title alludes to the 1937 “A Short Course in the History of the USSR,” edited by Shestakov but produced at Stalin’s behest. I made this allusion because our Society would not have existed were it not for that other history, a history not short enough by 73 long years. Had there been no coup in October 1917, no Bolsheviks, no Mensheviks, no Lenin or Stalin, Rossika’s members would most likely have been part of a thriving national philatelic society instead.

This history isn’t complete by any means. Too many of the people I’d like to have interviewed are gone. In too many places, only the fossil record in the journals and bulletins is left. But if you, the Rossica member, enjoy reading this history just half as

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1 The Ukrainian Philatelic and Numismatic Society is one such. See Chapter Three.
much as I enjoyed researching and writing it, it will be an unqualified success. It will be an even greater success if it encourages others to add to it. And perhaps, just perhaps, if we as a society survive the onslaught of the virtual, digital world, if we remember that to be a society means more than an aggregate of individuals pursuing similar philatelic material, that it also entails the camaraderie of a shared interest and a shared knowledge, and especially the company of good friends, then we may look forward to a future that will look back on us and our works, and write our history.

David M. Skipton
Greenbelt, Maryland
May 2006

Acknowledgements

Much of A Short History of the Rossica Society would have been difficult if not impossible to write without the input of Rostislav Polchaninoff (now one of our oldest members), Norman Epstein, and Gordon Torrey. I only wish the last two were here to accept my thanks for their help. Gordey Denisenko and Mikhail Skvortsov also rendered invaluable assistance for their research on Eugene Arkhangesky and the Russian academies at Bela Crkva. My thanks to Steve Alushin, for prodding me to finish this undertaking, and then for doing a first-rate proofreading job on the initial draft. I am indebted to Leon Finik, who donated old Rossika material to our library, shared his knowledge about some of the people who figured so prominently in our Society’s history, and arranged a taped interview with Jacques Marcovitch, Emile’s son. He was also relentless in tracking down Rossika leads in the New York area. Thanks to him, some holes were plugged in our understanding of early Rossika and its American reincarnation. Arnold Levin graciously supplied a critical lead on early Rossika membership lists, one that brought us to a place I would never have thought to look – the Popov Museum of Communications. Arnold then arranged with the museum’s Director, Lyudmilla Nikolayevna Bakayutova, for photocopies to be sent. Natalia Izyumova very kindly took the time to write a short biography of I.N. Rubakh, and came up with two remarkable exhibition awards given to Rubakh in 1937. A resounding “Bol’shoye spasibo!” to all three for their important help. To Peter Ashford, Dr. Raymond Casey, Gary Combs, Don Heller, Jacques Marcovitch, Michael McKenzie, Jack Moyes, Bill Nickle, Jeff Radcliffe, Nick Sorokin, Sandy von Stackelberg, Denys Voaden, Steve Volis and George Werbizky, my deep appreciation and thanks for their input and contributions, and especially to my wife Cathy, for yet more proof-reading and her invaluable moral support and patience as The History Hole swallowed up her husband.
To those upon whose works we build...
CHAPTER ONE

The Society in Europe

“Our aim is to unite Russian philatelists and provide them with a decent, learned, Russian philatelic journal, which is why we have taken upon ourselves this back-breaking task.”

“Nashe obshchestvo, nash zhurnal”

Our society was born on 14 April 1929 at Igalo, Yugoslavia, but it didn’t begin as the “Rossica Society of Russian Philately;” rather, it was called “Rossika – The Russian Society of Philatelists in Yugoslavia (ROFRYu).” It was not an auspicious year to start a society, philatelic or otherwise. The Crash of ’29 in the U.S. heralded the coming of the Great Depression, the effects of which would be felt strongly around the world. Social and economic convulsions were wracking the Soviet Union; 1929 was the year Stalin consolidated his power over the CPSU, and his “cult of personality” began to grow. Forced collectivization in initiated in June of that year brought disaster to the peasants as millions of them were rounded up and herded onto state farms, and millions more died in the resulting artificially-produced famine that stretched into 1933. Ration cards appeared for the first time since the New Economic Policy (NEP) was declared, and peasant riots and demonstrations became commonplace. In 1929 a second general purge was declared, one that cut through the country’s bureaucracy like a scythe. Religion came under intensified attack, as Article 13 of the Soviet constitution, the one that had guaranteed the freedom of religion, was amended. “Propagation of religion now became a crime against the state. Priests and their families were deprived of civil rights,” and churches were destroyed by the hundreds. Stalin bulldozed what remained of Russian art and literature under a pile of conformity to the state.

Soviet philately also began to suffer in 1929, and its slide into isolation began in earnest in 1930, when membership in foreign societies was forbidden. For Russian émigrés watching their homeland lurch from one contrived disaster to another, it was a time of great melancholy. Dmitriy Leus, one of the early members, expressed the sentiments he and other Russians felt so deeply: “The stamp collections we have formed with such great

1 Arkhangelsky, Rossika No. 1, p. 2.  
2 Much of Europe was already suffering from an economic crisis before 1929. France, for instance, was hit in 1927. Coincidentally, that was the year that the Russian Society of Philatelists, Numismatists and Collectors of Scripophilhy was formed in Paris, so Rossika was not alone in its unfortunate timing.  
3 Courtois et al., The Black Book of Communism, pp. 145-146.  
4 Heller and Nekrich, Utopia in Power, pp. 223-224.
difficulty are the only consolation we have in our gloomy exile.”⁵ There was yet another consolation – the journal itself: “This is not a journal but a little encyclopedia. Whenever I am sad, and I want to remember my birthplace, Russia, I shall open the pages of the journal, read it, and again feel a bit better.”⁶

Russian exiles had washed up on many shores during the first great wave of the Diaspora, with large concentrations forming in Paris, Berlin, the Baltic States, New York and San Francisco, Harbin and Shanghai. Even Bela Crkva in Yugoslavia attracted many Russian refugees, as there were two sizable Russian schools there; one for girls and the other a military school for boys aged 10-18. But to forge a philatelic society out of so widely scattered a “clientele” and then hold it together required a frequent, regular journal that would address their collecting interests. And not long after the society was founded, the first journal appeared. More about that later.

“Rossika” was not the first attempt at a Russian philatelic journal among the émigrés. That honor fell to “Filateliya,” the first number of which appeared in Prague in 1929. Judging by V.N. Agapeyev’s remarks, however, the honor was for the effort and not the quality. “...One cannot seriously consider the dull and illiterate little journal ‘Filateliya,’ started ...by a certain Yudenkov, as a true Russian journal. To everyone’s delight, it died an unlamented death after [only] two issues.”⁷ Rossika came second, but it met with far greater success.

Nor was Rossika the first Russian philatelic organization in exile. Although Arkhangelsky had given thought to forming a society as early as 1924,⁸ it took him five years to realize his dream. Meanwhile, before Rossika there was a “Russian Society of Philatelists, Numismatists and Collectors of Scripophily,” formed in Paris in 1927 under the leadership of Vladimir Ivanovich Medvedev (d. 1943).⁹ It boasted several hundred members in France and abroad, a number it would take Rossika almost a decade to equal. Even as of 1929 it could count 135 members and two “sections” outside of Paris, one in Nice and the other in Shanghai.¹⁰ Some of them would add to Rossika’s ranks.

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⁵ D. Leus, Rossika No. 1, p. 9.
⁶ “Mr. K.,” from an excerpt of a letter to Chebotkevich, reprinted in Rossika No. 45, p. 1.
⁷ Agapeyev, [Peredovaya], in Rossika No. 3, October 1930, p. 1.
⁸ Salisbury, Eugene M. Archangelsky, in Rossika No. 44, p. 12.
⁹ Medvedev was a mining engineer and a zemstvo stamp dealer in Paris during the 1920s. (Information from the 1929 Exposition de la societe Russe des philatelist..., p. 10, a phone conversation with Leon Finik on 15 February 1999, & Rossika Bulletin No. 1, 15 October 1952, p. 1. Strangely enough, although this was a well-established international organization with the same stated goals as Rossika, it failed to survive, perhaps due to the lack of a regular journal and, among other not so insignificant things, Germany’s 1940 invasion of France.
The emphasis in this Rossika Society venture was on Russian. The Society would be run by Russians, the journal was to be written in Russian, mostly by Russians, for Russians. It was to be “nashe obschestvo” (our society) and “nash zhurnal” (our journal), and the sense of ours was keenly felt.

Non-Russians were free to join, of course, but they would find it tough sledding without a working knowledge of the language. Russian numismatists and scripophilists were officially welcomed to the Journal in #3, and the first of many articles on these allied collecting fields saw print in #4. In later years, Erinophilia (non-postal stamps) would be added to the mix.

It was a journal for Russian philatelists more than it was a journal for those interested in Russian philately. The early issues contained a lot of information on non-Russian areas; Yugoslavian stamps figured prominently, as did many of the Balkan and Eastern European issues.

“The Philatelist’s Friend,” published by V.N. Agapeyev (a Rossika member) in 1929.
Even Norway’s stamps received considerable attention. Regardless of its content, though, the Rossika Journal was the only Russian-language philatelic publication printed outside of the USSR, and its members were proud of it. (Indeed, for a number of years it was the only Russian-language philatelic journal in the world.)

This part of our history, from 1929 to 1968, is the story of how the Rossika of yesterday turned into the Rossica of today. Perhaps, without the upheavals of the Great Depression and WWII, Rossika could have retained its distinctive Russian flavor for a while longer, but those two blows only hastened its demise as a Russian organization. Rossika’s evolution into “Rossica” had begun well before WWII. Rossika in the beginning was a national society in exile, in the sense that almost all of its members were from the territory of a single empire, but because they were scattered around the globe, Rossika was forced to be an international Russian philatelic organization, too. Since its homeland was closed to it, the Society was cut off from its natural base, Russia. That is where successive crops of new Russian philatelists would normally have been recruited, but those were not normal times, so its pool of potential “native” members was necessarily far smaller, and that pool would inevitably shrink. During the Russian Diaspora, the large concentrations of émigrés in various cities and countries were fertile grounds for Rossika branches, sections and clubs to start, but each one of them would have to contend with the “pull” of that particular nation on the cohesion of the Society. So long as the membership in those groups was predominantly Russian, the pull of the nation could be resisted. But when many of those concentrations were cut off, drastically reduced or eliminated by war, their much-lessened numbers became unable to serve as a counterweight to that pull. As events chased the Society’s publication, its center of gravity, from one end of the world to the other, as more and more “foreign” collectors joined its ranks and its Russian members died off, the more diluted its Russian membership became.

The first harbinger of the impending trend came in 1934, a mere five years after the Society’s founding, when Russian collectors in China formed the Russian Philatelic Society in China (RPSC). It attracted many members – not just Russians, but Chinese, Germans, Englishmen and others, too.

The second portent followed close on its heels, half a world away. Arkhangelsky had remarked on the increasing interest in Russian philately among non-Russians, especially in London, where in 1936 the “Study Circle for Russian Stamps” was formed under the presidency of Dr. Alfred Wortman and the secretaryship of Vivian Pickering,11 himself a Rossika member.

11 Alas, no photo of Pickering appears to have survived in the Rossica or BSRP archives. He served in the Royal Engineers in WWII, suffered a wound to his leg from a mine explosion in Italy, but survived and returned to Great Britain. Although he corresponded with Wortman about philately after the war, he never attended another BSRP meeting. He passed away in 1948 at the age of 43. Wortman was not a member of Rossika at the time the Study Circle was founded, but he joined in later years. (The British Journal of Russian Philately, No. 1, December 1946, p. 2 and No. 3, June 1949, p. 28. I am indebted to Dr. Raymond Casey for obtaining this information.)
Then came WWII. Some of Rossika’s problems at that point were hardly unique to it; no philatelic society, especially any nationally-based organization in Europe, was immune to the effects of this global conflagration. The young Study Circle, tightly concentrated in the British Isles, is a case in point. Britain was being bombed and threatened with invasion, neither circumstance of which was particularly conducive to philatelic pursuits, and the Circle was forced to hunker down and wait. “The Russian Study Circle (as we call our Society)... went along rather slowly and modestly at first. We have never had a printed Journal but issued typescript notes. Pickering has been serving in the forces and I agreed to take on the Secretaryship for the duration. I have not had time to do more than keep the research Packet going around, but we hope to do better now.”¹² Not long after that, the “Circle” became the British Society of Russian Philately, and its journal would be the first strictly English-language publication devoted to that field.

The BSRP, though, owed its rapid recovery after the war to the fact that it was a national society within a single country. What was left of its forces was concentrated in a small geographic area. Rossika’s membership, on the other hand, was dead, imprisoned, interned, on the run or attempting to adjust to a new country, a new refuge. Its forces were scattered over a vast geographic area. Regrouping and recovering would take longer, and in that process is to be found the reason why it is Rossica-with-a-“c” today.

¹² Letter from Wortman to Sklarevski, dated 14 September 1945. (Rossica Archives.) The BSRP had somewhat fewer founders at its inception than did Rossika. After Pickering’s 3 May 1936 letter to the Stamp Collectors Fortnightly requesting the interested to gather, and after an informal meeting on 4 June 1936, the first formal meeting took place on 31 October 1936 with seven co-founding members: Wortman, Pickering, L. Bassingthwaite, W.H.H. Huddy, A.W. Greaves, Charles Stibbe and W.E. Hughes. (H.L. Lindquist, British Society of Russian Philately Celebrates Silver Jubilee, in Stamps, 29 July 1961.) Pickering was the only one of the seven who was a Rossika member, but most of the others joined later.

Leaving aside WWII and the Great Depression, though, even Rossika’s birthplace was problematic and a hindrance in its own right. It wasn’t some stamp-collecting hotbed like Berlin, London, Paris or New York; instead, it was, relatively speaking, a philatelic backwater – Igalo and Bela Crkva – in a country – Yugoslavia – not known at that time for its endless legions of big-name philatelists. A difficult birth and a traumatic childhood were Rossika’s inheritance from its father.

**The founder, Yevgeniy Mikhaylovich Arkhangel’skiv (Eugene Arkhangelsky).**

Rossika’s founder entered this world in Radzivilov, Volhynia Province, on 27 October 1881. His family moved to Plotsk in 1883, and there he began to collect stamps at the tender age of 7. By the time Arkhangelsky went off to Warsaw University, he was already a serious collector with some rarities in his albums, but illness forced him to withdraw from his studies. At 21 (1902) he joined the Army and became an officer, serving as a correspondent from 1910 to 1919 for two military journals. (This version is according to the article Greg Salisbury wrote in the English edition of the journal in 1954. However, A.I. Maslov’s obituary for Arkhangelsky states that he had commanded a battalion as a colonel, suffered a serious wound, and received numerous decorations. Perhaps he became unfit for combat after the wound, and took up this other assignment.)

At right: An early Rossika constitution, 2nd edition, 1933. Produced in Bela Crkva. (Reduced to 70%. Rossica Archives.)

Arkhangelsky (EMA) saw the Civil War at first hand – he was among the fortunate who escaped Bolshevik Russia during Wrangel’s great evacuation from Sevastopol’ in November 1920. Not everything got away from the Crimea, though. A good collection he had bought in Kerch’ was pilfered during the Whites’ evacuation by sea, so the only things he escaped with were his life and an illness from the war wounds.

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14 Salisbury, Eugene M. Archangelsky, in Rossika No. 44, p. 12.
15 Maslov, Konchina Yevgeniya Mikhaylovicha Arkhangel’skogo, in Rossika No. 48 (Russian version), 1956, p. 30.
From Sevastopol he went first to the camps near Constantinople, then to Bulgaria, and finally settled in Yugoslavia a year later. He re-married after his first wife died, but I don’t know when those events occurred.

While he started another collection, his training as a correspondent and his interest in philately compelled him to write articles for a number of journals in Yugoslavia, England, and France. Ironically, some of his material even appeared in “Sovetskiy filatelist” in the latter half of the 1920s, when that magazine was published together with “Sovetskiy kolleksioner” and “Radio de Filintern” under one cover. It was somewhat odd – an ex-officer of the Imperial and White armies, driven from his country by the Reds, nevertheless submitting articles for publication in the major organs of Soviet philately. One article on stamp defects saw print in German in “Radio de Filintern,” the propaganda arm of the “Philatelic International.”

Others followed on Yugoslavian stamps. (In fairness to Arkhangelsky, other great names in Russian philately wrote for Soviet publications, too: Karl Schmidt (who was an Honorary Member of the VOF’s Northwestern Oblast’ Branch and traveled to Leningrad), V.A. Rachmanov, and N.I. Kardakov also contributed to those journals in the 1920s, but then they weren’t ex-Imperial Russian Army officers.) Even in late 1929, after he had already established Rossika, Arkhangelsky was writing to Sovetskiy kolleksioner to suggest that they publish pictures of the editorial staff and the facilities where it was published, and to complain that SK wasn’t doing enough to publicize new Soviet stamp issues. He was a prolific writer, penning hundreds of articles and editing or contributing to the Rossika journal from 1930 to 1940, and he enjoyed considerable respect for his knowledge of the airmail field in particular. In fact, EMA had a hand in the creation of the Sanabria airmail catalog.

His early efforts went not just to the journal but to keeping up with Society matters in general. He was Founder, president, treasurer, librarian, secretary and chief editor all rolled into one. He ran a stamp-booklet circuit and even a lottery in an attempt to attract more money for Rossika, all while staying at the Home for Invalids in Igalo. Maslov states that EMA was an “Invalid 1st Class,” meaning he had severe disabilities.

Much of EMA’s life revolved around philately at this point, due in part to the fact that one of his war wounds had been in the spine. He was unable so much as to bend over and tie his own shoes – his wife had to help him do that. So, he had a lot of time to devote to the hobby, which he turned into a vocation through stamp sales and writing. He may have had a teaching connection with the local Russian school for boys in Bela Crkva (its full title was the “First Russian Cadet Corps of Grand Duke Konstantin Konstantinovich”).

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16  Sovetskiy filatelist Nos. 3-4, March & April 1927, and Radio de Filintern No. 6, June 1927.
17  Gleyzer, Biblioteka filatelista, pp. 41-42.
18  Gleyzer, Istoriya filatelii v Peterburge-Petrograde-Leningrade, p. 34.
19  Gleyzer, Biblioteka filatelista, p. 38.
20  Arkhangelsky, Nuzhno li eto? in Sovetskiy kolleksioner Nos. 10-12, 1929, p. 64.
21  Salisbury, Eugene M. Archangelsky, in Rossika No. 44, p. 12. His suggestion and criticism were both rejected. Despite his contribution of articles over the years, Rossika’s appearance in 1929 was ignored by the Soviet philatelic press.
Arkhangelsky (second from right) with Chebotkevich (left).  
(This picture, taken in 1934, is the only one of Arkhangelsky to be published. 
The other two men are unidentified.)

It must have been very painful for him to watch the Society he had founded be
dismembered from 1939 to 1942. Journal publication was forced out of Europe.
Yugoslavia itself became a battlefield for Nazis and partisans of every stripe, and in 1944
Arkhangelsky found himself in a concentration camp. His stamp collections, philatelic
library, and all his possessions had been tossed into a bonfire by the Reds when Tito’s
partisans came crashing into the area. The First Russian Cadet Corps students had been
evacuated to Germany on 10 September 1944, but Arkhangelsky and most of the school’s
officers remained behind. Serb partisans shot some of them as German sympathizers or
at the behest of the NKVD as White officers. Somehow he avoided execution, but his
days as a driving force in Rossika were over. He was released from the camp in 1946,
destitute and in poor health, but he survived another decade, thanks in great part to the
efforts of Emile Marcovitch and a few other early Rossika members such as
Chebotkevich who sent him food, clothing, syringes and medicines for his heart.
Marcovitch and Arkhangelsky had never met, but they had established a friendship
through a lengthy correspondence, and it was this that saved EMA. (In fact,
Chebotkevich made appeals in the Journal for members to send in donations for the
colonel and his wife, as they were in dire financial straits.) Marcovitch made significant
contributions, sending money in addition to the medicine.

Despite living in penury, his extensive and important collections gone, EMA launched an
effort to revive Rossika. In a letter to Emile Marcovitch, EMA urged him to bring the

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22 Rossika, Nos. 49-50, Society Page (Russian version).
23 Phone conversation with Gordey Denisenko on 18 July 1992. There is another version of the story about
Arkhangelsky’s collection. This has it that the albums were not burned, but forcibly confiscated by the
 Reds along with his philatelic library. (Salisbury, Eugene M. Archangelsky, in Rossika No. 44 (English
version), p. 12.)
24 Interview with Jacques Marcovitch, 6 September 1999.
Society back, even though Marcovitch was in Venezuela at the time. Marcovitch aided the effort, but Venezuela didn’t have the necessary concentrations of Russian émigrés.\footnote{Marcovitch’s father Isidor had been a zemstvo doctor for a time, but Emile’s interest in zemstvo stamps developed later. Collecting everything during his youth, he became a member of the Moscow Philatelic Society before 1917, and became fascinated by revenue stamps and erinnophilia. Emile, an archaeologist, married a singer in the Moscow Opera (1920), and soon thereafter found himself on the run from the secret police. A fellow philatelist who worked for the OGPU warned Emile in a midnight meeting that he was to be arrested soon. Emile’s brother was an engineer and the manager of a nearby plant, so Marcovitch hid there, then took a train to Minsk, where he had family members who would conceal him. From Minsk he arranged his escape through a third party, who promised to get Marcovitch’s small suitcase full of stamps to him once he got out of the RSFSR. He escaped by horse, carriage and then on foot through a forest, but the third party failed to deliver his suitcase as promised. Mrs. Marcovitch confronted this individual in Moscow, demanding that he return the stamps, but was badly beaten for her troubles. Her threats of retaliation were convincing enough that she finally got the stamps back, and they were spirited out through the Lithuanian Embassy. The Marcovitches came to France, where Emile served in the French Army in WWII. After the German victory, he made it from Northern France to the south (Vichy France) on foot. After VE day, Marcovitch moved to Paris, but archaeology couldn’t put food on the table, so being good at chemistry, he invented a new process in photography, taking pictures of many famous Russians in exile and supporting his family as a photographer. (Interview with Jacques Marcovitch, 5 September 1999.) He lived for 10 years in Venezuela before moving to the New York area. Marcovitch died in January 1981 at the age of 88. (Interview with Jacques Marcovitch, 6 September 1999 and \textit{Obituaries: Emil’ Isidorovich Marcovitch}, in \textit{The Post Rider} No. 7, Dec. 1980, p. 59.)}

The New York-Philadelphia area did, though, and Arkhangelsky conferred his blessings on the efforts of A.A. Chebotkevich and A.N. Lavrov in their revival of the Society. By that time there was little more he could do than write articles for the Bulletin and lend the Society his prestige.

\begin{center}
\textbf{Emile Isidorovich Marcovitch}

(Rossica Representative in Venezuela, Honored Member, member of the Editorial Board.)
\end{center}
So, Arkhangelsky lived to see his “baby” reborn. *Rossika* had come back, but this time in the New York area; EMA was now the “Honored Founder,” while Chebotkevich assumed EMA’s old title – the “*Rukovoditel’*,” or “Executive Officer.”

Arkhangelsky’s *Rossika* stationery, posted from Bela Crkva to the U.S. in December 1935. (Reduced to 60%. Rossica Archives)

A registered cover from Arkhangelsky to the U.S., posted on 13 September 1939. It bears his handstamp at upper left, and 10 cents’ worth of U.S. postage due stamps on the reverse. (Reduced to 65%. Rossica Archives.)
By 1953 Arkhangelsky was feeling his age (73) and his wounds from WWI. Bedridden much of the time, he was also suffering from heart disease and edema. He died in Yugoslavia on 13 February 1956, and was buried with his second wife in Bela Crkva. Rossika members continued to provide financial support to his widow.26

The resting place of Col. Arkhangelsky and his wife at Bela Crkva. (Photo courtesy of Gordey Denisenko.)

The Society’s Infancy.

From its modest beginnings, the Society grew rapidly. From the ten founding members who met at Igalo in 192927 it became 170 by 1 July 1931. Rossika joined the

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26 Rossika, Nos. 49-50 (Russian version), 1956, p. 40.
27 Chebotkevich, XXX Anniversary of Rossica, in Rossika No. 56, 1959, p. 3 & Chudoba, The 50th Anniversary of “Rossica” Society, in Rossica No. 93, 1978, p. 7. I have no reason to doubt the word of Chebotkevich and Chudoba that there were 10 at the inception, but materials in the Rossica Archives create some doubt and confusion. For instance, if the first 10 that he claims correspond to the first 10 member numbers, as logic would dictate, then D.V. von Al’tfater (#5, the representative for Germany) and V.A. Rachmanov (#6, the representative for Poland) would have had to be visiting Arkhangelsky at that time. Arkhangelsky, Chebotkevich, Balabanenko, Mel’nikov, Marinović, Rukavina and Poščić account for six more of the first 10 in the list. To muddy the waters further, #10 was left blank in the very first membership list the Society published. Then there is the claim made by I.N. Rubakh that “[he] was a member of Rossika from the day it was founded...” (Letter to Lavrov dated 23 December 1961. Rossica Archives.) Rubakh is listed as member #356 in the Yugoslavian incarnation of Rossika and in the American – #96, so I’m not certain how much weight his statement should be given. Member #11, S.S. Smolyaninov, was in the U.S. at the time, so he is not a candidate for the blank spot at #10, assuming that that number was never assigned. One possible explanation is that Arkhangelsky had broached the idea of forming a society to von Al’tfater, Rachmanov and Smolyaninov in his correspondence, and they had agreed in writing. If all 10 members in attendance at Igalo were resident in Yugoslavia, then Arkhangelsky might have assigned those three men lower member numbers because they had responded before the meeting. Nikola Rukavina, by the way, was the author of a now-very-rare catalog entitled Na Se Marke, Biljezi i Cjeline (Our Postage Stamps, Revenue Stamps and Postal Stationery, issued in 1929 at Sarajevo. (Polchaninoff, Jugoslav Post in Siberia, in Rossika No. 63, p. 55.)
Yugoslavian Philatelic Union (which was in turn a part of the FIP) in December 1933, and quickly picked up adherents outside of Yugoslavia. Although nothing had been announced in the Journal upon the formation of several “chapters,” Arkhangelsky’s admonition for them to report showed that there were already groups in Riga, Narva, Dvinsk, Aluksna, Wolmar, Nemme, The Hague, Sao Paulo and Harbin. Those were in addition to the first branch of Rossika, which was established in Rezhitsa (present-day Rezekne) on 25 January 1931. Formed by G.K. Bolman, it consisted of 11 members, a healthy start. The Revel’ group was apparently the second branch, which included Nemme. It started life on 1 April 1931 with 10 members, and by December it had grown to 24. Under the energetic leadership of A.V. Sokolov, it had doubled to 48 by the end of 1933.

At left: Rossika Membership List #3, February 1935. It extended to #504, and the six supplements issued later that year and in the next brought the total number of members who had cycled through the Society to 620. The individuals were listed in alphabetical order according to country, with each member’s name, address, catalogs used and impending membership expiration date spelled out. Their collecting interests were provided according to an alphanumeric code.

At right: The first inside page of the membership list shows the bronze medal won by the Journal at WIPA 1933. It most likely went to Arkhangelsky and suffered the same fate as his collection. (Rossica Archives.)
Приятная при семь членский взнос, прошу принять меня в число действительных членов Общества „Россика“. Давая о себе извещений сведения, обязано выполнять все правила О-на, поддерживать О-во морально, немедленно производить всево денежные расчеты, аккуратно отсылать круговые посылки, не задерживать отписки О-му и его членам и т. п.

1. Фамилия

2. Имя и отчество

3. Место и дата рождения

4. Профессия

5. Точный адрес

6. Собирало: A. — воздушные марки; b. прочие (все); б. обращал; с. мешки; d. обсыпки; e. подыскав.

7. Филателист: а. нумизмат; б. средний; в. переписной; г. — первичной специальности; д. торговец.

Имью коллекцию (на истребую); в. вложение; з. участвую колекцнированием.

8. Специализируюсь

9. Даю в обмен

10. Желаю покупать марки от О-ва: 1. пустем круговых писем; 2. по мануальному.

11. Желаю продавать свои марки

12. Состою членом филат. О-ва... и—свойственного филат. журналов.


14. Владлю языками: a. русский; б. английский; в. голландский; г. французский; д. — итальянский; е. немецкий; f. — норвежский; g. — венгерский; h. — определения; и — латышский; J. — англ.

15. Личным пожеланием

(Все пожелания вчерашнему)

Рекомендация

Поручите...

Подпись
The reverse of the application form shown above, giving a brief explanation of the Society’s aims and touting the Journal. (Both sides reproduced at 80%).
The Revel’ Group, 1931. A.V. Sokolov is at center, seated. These grainy, poor-quality pictures are all that are left of these groups.

The Sofia Branch was founded on 7 April 1932 under Yu.K. Plotnitsky, with seven members, and Belgrade’s branch followed on 9 May 1932, under the leadership of the well-known philatelist S.P. Mangeley. (In early Rossika parlance, what we would call chapters today were either groups (gruppy) or branches (otdely). A group was formed first, and if its membership increased sufficiently, it was formally upgraded to a branch. There were also clubs, on par with groups.)
The New York Branch started out as a “club” of Rossika on 4 April 1936, with seven members. It met weekly at the Russian Club on 56 E. 121st St., a pace at which any of today’s Rossica chapters can only marvel. Thirty-eight meetings in 1936, 50 in 1937! They moved their gatherings to the YMCA at 215 W. 23rd St. in October 1937, and club dues plus a 10-cent collection per member per meeting helped to pay the $50-per-year cost of the room. That meant each member could shell out approximately $7.50 a year just for the club, and that was in excess of the Rossika dues. In those days, $7.50 was serious money, especially for émigrés. Membership in the club climbed to 32 in 1938, but meetings “tapered off” to twice monthly. New York’s Rossika club was officially elevated to “branch” status on 1 June 1938, as was the Shanghai Group, which became the “Shanghai-China Branch.”

An early Rossika membership card, issued to the noted Russian postal historian Dr. Leonid Sergeyevich Snegirev on 24 April 1937, and signed by Arkhangelsky. When Rossika collapsed in 1941, membership cards would not be reintroduced until January 1964. (Reduced to 80%. Rossica Archives.)

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28 This branch was formally established at the same moment as the “Russian Society of Philatelists (Rossika) in America” was created. (Prigara, N’yuiorkskiy Klub R.O.F. “Rossika,” in Rossika No. 43, June 1941, p. 387.)
A “temporary certificate” issued by the Soviet military to Major L.S. Snegirev on 15 May 1945, stating that he was awarded the Order of the Great Patriotic War, 2nd Class. (Photostat, Rossica Archives.)

For a time there was another chapter in the U.S., the San Francisco group. It started in December 1930 under S.S. Smolyaninov, but folded in 1933 when Dr. Ye.V. Poznyakov declined to serve as its coordinator. It sputtered briefly to life again in May 1934 under the temporary guidance of V.Ye. Palchevsky.

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29 Dr. Snegirev served in the U.S. Army Medical Corps during WWII, but distinguished himself as an interpreter at high-level talks between the Allies as the war wound down. He is probably the only Rossica member ever to have received an award from the Soviet Union (for his services as an interpreter), nor did it stop there. He also received the Bronze Star, the Croix de Guerre of France and Belgium, and medals from The Netherlands and Italy. He worked at the Cancer Research Institute at the New England Deaconess Hospital in Boston. (Wortman, Obituary: Dr. Leonid S. Snegireff, in BJRP No. 33, p. 29) Much of our knowledge about the Russian postal system on Mt. Athos and the communications between it and the Empire is due to Snegirev; he traveled to the monasteries and obtained a considerable amount of correspondence prior to 1880 and information from the monks. He died at age 55 on 5 September 1963.

30 [Arkhangelsky], Zhizn’ obshchestva, in Rossika No. 5, February 1931, p. 18.
Little Latvia made especially great contributions to the Society, and that contribution was due largely to the efforts of one man, Konstantin Konstantinovich Vitkovsky of Riga. He was the *Rossika* Representative for Latvia and a tireless recruiter. By August 1930, he had become the “General Representative for Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Finland, Poland, and Czechoslovakia,” and on 1 October of that year he became the first “Honored Member.” Vitkovsky brought in so many members (30) that on 1 November Arkhangelsky promoted him again by appointing him as his Deputy. Thus, Vitkovsky was in effect *Rossika*’s first Vice President. As for other officer posts, the 1933 Constitution only stipulated a secretary, but I can find no one actually named as such until 15 February 1938, when the Chairman appointed V.I. Prokofiev to that post. Arkhangelsky had evidently been his own secretary up to that point.