

Education and Aristocratic Childhood in Late Imperial Russia

ZBYNĚK VYDRA

ABSTRACT: The article focuses on the education and upbringing of aristocrats in late imperial Russia (1855 - 1917). It draws mainly from sources of a personal nature (non-published and published memoirs and diaries). Their analysis shows the main elements, continuity and discontinuity in the education of boys and girls from aristocratic families during their childhood, i.e. from the age of six to twelve/thirteen. In the vast majority of cases, aristocrats' childhood memories were positive. The children's world was filled with studying and games, often in the idyllic setting of a country estate (usaďba). The study deals with educational priorities and an educational strategy concerning the future careers of Russian aristocrats. Besides other things, the author comments on the importance of education in the aristocratic value system. The article emphasizes the absolute predominance of the home education of aristocratic children, which lasted from the first half of the 19th century until the First World War and the Revolution. More significant changes in education became evident only in adolescence, which was more influenced by state educational reforms, growing civic awareness, and various ideas about the best preparation for future life and a career. Aristocratic families chose from among elite aristocratic schools, private lyceums, or state gymnasiums and the education of adolescent boys and girls was much more dynamic. The characteristic features of the educational process were a cosmopolitan orientation, an emphasis on versatility, and knowledge of foreign languages. Religion and the moral authority of parents played an important role in education, too. Over the centuries, parental involvement in child-rearing increased.

Keywords: Imperial Russia, aristocracy, education, everyday life, history of childhood

Introduction

Nowadays, more and more historians are turning their attention to the history of the Russian nobility. Above all, it is an issue of Russian historiography; beyond Russia's borders, the interest is not so strong.¹ Within this very broad area of research

¹ In the Western historiography, the most relevant, influential and inspirational works on the late imperial Russian nobility as a social group are twenty or more years old. See BECKER, Seymour. *Nobility and Privilege in Late Imperial Russia*. DeKalb, Illinois : Northern Illinois University Press, 1985; LIEVEN, Dominic. *The Aristocracy in Europe, 1815 - 1914*. New York : Columbia University Press, 1993; ROOSEVELT, Priscilla. *Life on the Russian Country Estate. A Social and Cultural History*. New Haven; London : Yale University Press, 1995. For the Baltic German nobility, an autonomous part of the broader Russian nobility, see WHELAN, Heide W. *Adapting to Modernity. Family, Caste, and Capitalism among the Baltic Germany Nobility*. Köln; Weimar; Wien : Böhlau Verlag, 1999. Two major and more recent contributions to the social history of the nobility/aristocracy in the last years of the Russian Empire are: RENDLE, Matthew. *Defenders of the Motherland. The Tsarist Elite in the Revolutionary Russia*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2010; SMITH, Douglas. *Former People. The Last Days of Russian Aristocracy*. London : Pan Books, 2013. Several important books were published on the pre-emancipation nobility.

there is a wide range of topics, such as childhood, upbringing, and education in aristocratic families. In recent years, a large amount of literature on these issues has been published in Russia; however, publications on the upbringing and education of the nobility in the first half of the 19th century still predominate.²

Yet, in the late imperial period (1855 – 1917), the life of the nobility underwent fundamental economic and social transformations connected with the abolition of serfdom and the gradual transformation of the society of estates into a civic one, and a loosening of the identity of the estate of the nobility. Since the late 1850s, the educated and publicly active part of society, which included the nobility, was wondering what role the nobility should assume in the new conditions. They even raised the question whether, after the abolition of serfdom, it made sense to maintain the existence of the nobility as a separate estate.³ This uncertainty about the future of the nobility was part of social discourse until the First World War.⁴

At the same time, the Russian education system was changing significantly as well. The 1860s brought the reform of secondary schools, the expansion of university autonomy, the development of girls' education, and the establishment of private gymnasiums (i.e. grammar schools). Therefore, it is important to ask whether and

See TOVROV, Jessica. *The Russian Noble Family. Structure and Change*. New York; London : Garland Publishing, 1987; MARRESE, Michelle Lamarche. *A Woman's Kingdom: Noblewomen and the Control of Property in Russia, 1700 – 1861*. Ithaca; London : Cornell University Press, 2002; CAVENDER, Mary. *Nests of the Gentry. Family, Estate, and Local Loyalties in Provincial Russia*. Newark : University of Delaware Press, 2007; O'MEARA, Patrick. *The Russian Nobility in the Age of Alexander I*. London : Bloomsbury Academic, 2019; PICKERING ANTONOVA, Katherine. *An Ordinary Marriage. The World of a Gentry Family in Provincial Russia*. New York : Oxford University Press, 2012. Biographies of aristocrats are very rare. For one major exception, see LINDENMEYER, Adele. *Citizen Countess. Sofia Panina and the Fate of Revolutionary Russia*. Madison : University of Wisconsin Press, 2019.

² KOROTKOVA, Marina Vladimirovna. *Sem'ia, detstvo i obrazovanie v povsednevnoi kulture dvorianstva v XVIII – pervoi polovine XIX vv.* Moskva : APKIPPRO, 2009; MURAV'JEVA, Olga Sergeevna. *Kak vospityvali russkogo dvorianina*. Moskva : Linka-Press, 1995; SHOKAREVA, Alina. *Dvorianskaia sem'ia: kultura obshcheniia*. Russkoe stolichnoe dvorianstvo pervoi poloviny XIX veka. Moskva : Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2017. In a case of literature on the second half of the 19th century, there are mostly books and articles of authors from provincial universities. See BARINOVA, Ekaterina Petrovna. *Dvorianstvo Rossii vtoroi poloviny XIX – nachala XX veka: sovremennaia istoriografiia*. In *Izvestiia Samarskogo nauchnogo centra Rossiiskoi akademii nauk*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2014, pp. 548 – 557; BOGDANOV, S. V. *Vospitanie elity: fenomen privilegirovannogo obrazovaniia v Rossiiskoi imperii kontsa XIX – nachala XX veka*. In *Vestnik Permskogo Universiteta*, Vol. 3, No. 30, 2015, pp. 7 – 14; CHUWARDIN, German Sergeevich. *Pazheskii korpus kak elitoobrazuiushchaia struktura Rossiiskoi imperii v period pravleniia imperatorov Aleksandra III i Nikolaiia II*. In *Nauchnyi dialog*, 4, 2012, pp. 39 – 58. Valentina Veremenko's book on childhood in noble families is more focused on the provincial nobility. See VEREMENKO, Valentina A. *Deti v dvorianskikh sem'iakh Rossii (vtoraia polovina XIX – nachalo XX v.)*. Sankt Peterburg : Leningradskii gosudarstvennyi universitet A. S. Pushkina, 2015.

³ KHRISTOFOROV, Igor Anatolievich. *"Aristokraticheskaia" oppozitsiia Velikim reformam. Konec 1850 – seredina 1870-kh gg.* Moskva : Russkoe Slovo, 2002, pp. 138 – 149.

⁴ Some representative examples of a discussion, see: ELISHEV, Aleksei Ivanovich. *Dvorianskoe delo. Sbornik statei*. Moskva : b. v., 1898; EVREINOV, Grigorii Aleksandrovich. *Proshloe i nastoiashchee znachenie russkogo dvorianstva*. Sankt Peterburg : b. v., 1898; IARMONKIN, Valentin Vasilievich. *Zadacha dvorianstva*. Sankt Peterburg : b. v., 1895; PAZUKHIN, Aleksei Dmitrievich. *Sovremennoie sostoiianie Rossii i soslovnyi vopros*. Moskva : b. v., 1886; PLANSON, Anton Antonovich. *O dvorianstve v Rossii. Sovremennoe polozhenie voprosa*. Sankt Peterburg : b. v., 1897; ROMER, F. E. *Padenie dvorianstva*. In *Russkii vestnik*, vol. 2, 1900, pp. 733 – 734; SEMENOV, Nikolai Petrovich. *Nashe dvorianstvo*. Sankt Peterburg : b. v., 1898.

to what extent these processes and the resulting challenges were reflected in the system of aristocratic upbringing and education. Was children's education already influenced by changing trends in education? Was children's education a part of a coherent educational strategy, or was it a completely autonomous period in the educational process not subjected to external influences?

The following study focuses on these main issues without claiming to answer them completely. Partly, because the research on the topic, as we have stated, is not very developed and there is a lack of secondary literature to refer to; and partly because it is not possible to address all the aspects of aristocratic education in the scope of one study. Primarily, we have decided to limit ourselves to education and upbringing in childhood, which corresponds to the age of six/seven to twelve/thirteen. Adolescence is left aside for practical reasons. Unlike their childhood, adolescent aristocrats entered the public space and attended various types of educational institutions: some of the nobles were still educated at home, but most of them studied at gymnasiums (state or private), military schools, or specialized institutions intended exclusively for nobility (The Imperial School of Jurisprudence, The Imperial Alexander Lyceum, The Page Corps). Because of this, the topic of education becomes more complex, more complicated, and goes beyond one study. Therefore, upbringing and education in adolescence will be the subject of another separate study.

It is also impossible to deal with the nobility as a whole. The simple reason being that the hereditary nobility in Russia was very heterogeneous and numerous. At the end of the 19th century, there were about 1.2 million people, i.e. around 200,000 families.⁵ Within one estate (*soslovie*) it stretched from close proximity to the imperial throne, the world of the St. Petersburg and Moscow palaces, through the bureaucratic nobility in sleepy provincial towns, to impoverished nobles eking out a living at the level of wealthier peasants in the remote countryside. We are mainly interested in the part of the nobility situated at the highest level – the aristocracy.

We adhere to the definition of aristocracy offered by Dominic Lieven years ago: the aristocracy consisted of titled (princes, counts, barons) and untitled families, interconnected by family and property ties, close to the imperial family and court, and with extensive land property.⁶ About 830 titled families lived in Russia at the beginning of the 20th century.⁷ Furthermore, another observation by Lieven is true: "To construct a table which would illustrate all the relationships and connections running through Petersburg's social and political élite is impossible."⁸ When the

⁵ KORELIN, Avenir Pavlovich. *Dvorianstvo v poreformennoi Rossii, 1861 - 1904 gg. Sostav, chislennost', korporativnaia organizatsiia*. Moskva : Nauka, 1979, p. 42.

⁶ Dominic LIEVEN, Elites. In *Cambridge History of Russia*, vol. 2, 1689 - 1917, Cambridge 2006, pp. 227, 232 - 234. Lieven's conception, see more: LIEVEN, Aristocracy in Europe. Russian historiography rarely uses the term aristocracy, and if so, it is more often in contemporary works. Cf. YUDIN, Evgenii Evgenievich. *Kniazia Yusupovy. Aristokraticheskaia sem'ia v pozdneimperskoi Rossii 1890 - 1914*. Moskva : Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi gumanitarnyi universitet, 2012, pp. 49 - 76; KHRISTOFOROV, "Aristokraticheskaia" oppozitsiia.

⁷ KORELIN, *Dvorianstvo*, p. 31.

⁸ LIEVEN, Dominic. *Russia's Rulers under the Old Regime*. New Haven; London : Yale University Press, 1990, p. 57.

terms aristocracy and nobility are used alternately in the text, they always refer to – unless explicitly stated otherwise – the higher layer of nobility: the aristocracy.

The following pages, therefore, have no ambition to provide an exhaustive explanation of the issue of aristocratic education. The aim is to point out the basic elements in the education and upbringing of the aristocracy during the reign of the last three emperors (1855 – 1917), with necessary references to an earlier period. These draw on the above-mentioned literature focused on the first half of the 19th century, as well as some aristocratic sources.

Sources and Methods

We primarily use ego-documents: diaries and memoirs. One of the main sources is the child and youth diary of Count Aleksei Aleksandrovich Bobrinskii (1852 – 1927) from the 1860s.⁹ Bobrinskii belonged to one of the richest Russian aristocratic families; he was the eldest son of Count Aleksandr Alekseevich Bobrinskii (1823 – 1902) and Countess Sof'ia A. Bobrinskaia (1829 – 1912), née Shuvalova. The diary notes on which our article is substantially based can be found in the extensive personal collection of A. A. Bobrinskii deposited in the Russian State Archive of Old Acts (RGADA) in Moscow. There are more than forty diary notebooks. The diaries have not been published yet, except for notebooks from 1910 – 1911¹⁰ and a separate diary from February 1917¹¹. They remain relatively unknown to researchers and, above all, almost no one has systematically worked with children's and youth diaries.¹² From the extensive collection of diaries, the most relevant to us are the children's diaries from 1862 – 1866¹³ and youth diaries from 1867 – 1870¹⁴. The most detailed information about Aleksei's education is contained in notebooks Nos. 2 to 7, dated from 31 March 1863, to 8 September 1865. Notebooks Nos. 2, 3, and 4 were written in Russia. In the small notebook No. 4, the last summer days spent at the country estate of Smila, where the family regularly went, are described. Notebooks Nos. 5 and 6 were written abroad (France, Switzerland, Germany, Austria).¹⁵

⁹ Only recently have historians have started to be more interested in Aleksei Bobrinskii. Cf. KABYTOV, Petr Serafimovich – BARINOVA, Ekaterina Petrovna. Gosudarstvennaia i obshchestvennaia deiatel'nost' grafa Alekseia Aleksandrovicha Bobrinskogo. In *Severo-Zapad v agrarnoi istorii Rossii*, 25, 2019, pp. 169 – 182; BARYSHNIKOV, Mikhail Nikolaevich. Graf A. A. Bobrinskii v promyshlennoi zhizni Rossiiskoi imperii. In *Izvestiia Rossiiskogo gosudarstvennogo pedagogicheskogo universiteta im. A. I. Gercena*, 2015, nr. 175, pp. 71 – 79; SMIRNOV, Aleksandr Sergeevich. Graf Aleksei Aleksandrovich Bobrinskii i novaia vlast. In *Problemy istorii, filologii, kultury*, 2015, nr. 2, pp. 300 – 308; TIKHONOV, Igor Lvovich. Poslednii predsedatel' Imperatorskoi arkhologicheskoi komissii graf A. A. Bobrinskoi. In *Nevskii arkhologo-istoriograficheskii sbornik: k 75-letiiu kanadida istoricheskikh nauk A. A. Formozova*, Sankt-Peterburg 2003, pp. 95 – 117.

¹⁰ Dnevnik A. A. Bobrinskogo. In *Krasnyi arkhiv*, 1928, vol. 1 (26), pp. 125 – 150.

¹¹ VYDRA, Zbyněk. Únorová revoluce v Petrohradě v deníku hraběte Alexeje Bobrinského. In *Slovanský přehled*, 2015, nr. 2, pp. 387 – 414.

¹² Cf. VYDRA, Zbyněk. Vospitanie i povsednevnaia zhizn' v aristokraticeskoi sem'e epokhi Aleksandra II: graf Aleksei Aleksandrovich Bobrinskii i ego dnevnik. In *Aleksandr II i ego vremia. K 200-letiiu so dnia rozhdeniia*. Sankt-Peterburg: Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi pedagogicheskii universitet im. A. I. Gercena, 2019, pp. 115 – 129.

¹³ Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv drevnikh aktov (RGADA), f. 1412, op. 8, ed. khr. 268 – 269.

¹⁴ RGADA, f. 1412, op. 8, ed. khr. 270 – 272.

¹⁵ RGADA, f. 1412, op. 8, ed. khr. 268, l. 67 – 79, 81 – 106.

Aleksei's younger brother Vladimir (1853 – 1877) also kept a diary, and his childhood and youth notes supplement and extend Aleksei's records. However, Vladimir's notes are not so extensive and do not cover such a long period.¹⁶ Nevertheless, it is evident that the diaries were created with the awareness of their parents. If little noblemen and noblewomen started keeping diaries at a tender age, their first records would be written by their parents. Aleksandr A. Polovtsov was five and a half years old when he set up a diary, and since he was not yet able to write properly, his mother made the notes for him.¹⁷ Notably, child authors believed that their diaries would be read by someone else. In one case, Vladimir Bobrinskii refrained from describing in detail the "naval game" that Father had devised for them and only wrote down: "*details can be found in Aleksei's diary*".¹⁸

The second key type of source is memoirs. They occur in two basic types: clerical-political and memoirs written in the style of a family chronicle. Both types often, depending on the author's intellectual background and literary abilities, grew into a comprehensive observation of society and time. For us, the most beneficial memoirs are those written in the style of family chronicles, in which the authors followed the conventional scheme and devoted part of their memoirs to their childhood, upbringing, and studies. The first type of memoirs, into which military memoirs can be included too, is not relevant to our topic if the authors focused on a description of their public career or military service in adulthood, and did not remember the years of their childhood and adolescence.

About twenty sources of a personal nature, most of which have been published, were used for this study. In several cases, these are memoirs/diaries dating back to the first half of the 19th century, which allows us to observe the development in diary-keeping from this earlier time. Most of the sources were created after 1860 and they evenly cover the entire period until the First World War. The authors can be divided into three generational groups. The first one is the generation from the period 1850s – 1870s, growing up at the turn of the era, in the period of Aleksandr II's reforms. The second generation from the period 1880s – 1890s was educated at the end of the reign of Aleksandr III, but mainly under Nicholas II. Finally, the third generation of noblemen, born in the first decade of the 20th century, completed their childhood education shortly before the First World War, or, in the case of the youngest, their home education was interrupted by the revolution. In our story, the youngest nobleman leaving his memories of the pre-revolutionary period is Prince Sergei Mikhailovich Golitsyn (1909 – 1989).

The methods we have chosen are standard; the author is a historian – a traditionalist using a narrative approach. The study is based on content analysis and comparison of sources. It concentrates on the reconstruction of everyday life, particularly the educational process. When we talk about ego-documents, we are naturally aware of their subjectivity and heterogeneous reliability. This is especially true

¹⁶ RGADA, f. 1412, op. 7, ed. khr. 68 Dnevnik (detskie) Bobrinskogo Vladimira Aleksandrovicha, 1865 – 1866; ed. khr. 69, Iunosheskie dnevnik Bobrinskogo Vladimira Aleksandrovicha, 1867 – 1868.

¹⁷ MAMONOV Andrei V., *Detskii dnevnik A. A. Polovtsova*, Rossiiskaia istoriia, 2015, 3, p. 171.

¹⁸ RGADA, f. 1412, op. 7, ed. khr. 68, tetrad' 4, l. 10. Cf. MAMONOV, *Detskii dnevnik Polovtsova*, p. 177.

of memoir literature. However, in the case of the Russian aristocracy, one of its distinct specifics must be taken into account. Most memoirs were written after the revolution, in exile, with a clear motivation to leave descendants and heirs information about the writer's and the family's past, about the past that had gone forever. That is why the memoirists sought to make a narrative as detailed and accurate as possible. Naturally, this does not mean that we should believe everything they wrote in their memoirs. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that the childhood memories, including upbringing and education, were much less affected by auto-censorship than recollections of the events of adult life; especially if in adulthood the authors of memoirs achieved an important public position and through the memoirs, they tried to explain and defend their actions.

Memoirs can be approached in two ways. Firstly, we can consider them a source providing factual information about phenomena and events. Secondly, we can treat them as a source revealing the author's subjectivity, social psychology, and mentality. We have used both of the modes; however, regarding our topic, we prefer the first one. Naturally, we are aware of the fact that individual remembering was co-formed by the collective memory, exposed to various external influences. When discussing memory, our theoretical starting point is the classical works of memory studies, beginning with Maurice Halbwachs, who described the nobility as a unique social group and the main representative of collective memory.¹⁹ Although in his works Halbwachs did not mention the Russian nobility, his approach is applicable in the Russian context, too.

In aristocratic memoirs, childhood was usually described idyllically, especially in connection with the stay at the countryside family mansions (usad'by). This refers to the depictions popularised by fiction, e. g., the novel *Childhood* by Leo Tolstoy.²⁰ Therefore, as the next step, from our point of view, it is necessary and useful to compare memoirs with diaries. Can diaries change the image of a fairy-tale idyll? Even with diaries, we do not assume absolute openness and the absence of self-censorship. If the little writers wanted to hide something, they did not write it. On the other hand, the children's world was more sincere, more artless, and more naive than the world of adolescents. During his adolescence, Alexei Bobrinskii entrusted the most intimate feelings and experiences to the diary pages, hoping that the diary "will not fall into inappropriate hands".²¹

A day in the life of an aristocratic child: to learn, to learn, and ... to play!

Aleksei Bobrinskii's diary suggests that tuition with necessary breaks filled a child's whole day. Lessons were varied, with relatively short 15-minute breaks. The

¹⁹ HALBWACHS, Maurice. *On Collective Memory*. Chicago; London : The University of Chicago Press, 1992, p. 128.

²⁰ TOLSTOY, Lev Nikolaevich. *Detstvo*. In *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, V. G. Chertkov (ed.), vol. 1, Moscow : Khudozhestvennaia literatura 1935, p. 6. The image of a happy childhood from the pre-revolutionary period became a social norm, which was reflected in all autobiographical texts written between 1860 and 1916. WACHTEL, Andrew Baruch. *The Battle for Childhood. Creation of a Russian Myth*. Stanford : Stanford University Press, 1990, p. 83.

²¹ RGADA, f. 1412, op. 8, ed. khr. 271, l. 62.

breaks could involve a walk or a game, in which case the pause would be longer, up to an hour. For example, on 4 February 1864, Aleksei Bobrinskii wrote: "At 3 o'clock Mr. Pomerantsev (drawing), at 4 o'clock free time. From a quarter past 4 to half-past 5, a Russian lesson with Mr. Filipov, until 7 o'clock Peter's lesson (i.e. fencing)."²²

There was nothing exceptional about such systematic and thorough tuition in childhood. For Aleksei and other noble children of his and future generations, home education was typical:

*"Parents believed that the family environment had a beneficial effect on education. Teaching children at home took into account the individuality of the child. Furthermore, home tuition enabled the teachers not only to follow the gymnasium curriculum but also to devote much more time and attention to foreign languages."*²³

From about the age of seven, when systematic education began, Russian nannies were replaced by governesses or tutors. The arrival of new teachers was not always joyfully accepted by children. Princess Irina D. Golitsyna (1900 – 1983) recalled that when her parents hired an English teacher for her, she did not like her because the teacher deprived her of a carefree time of games and entertainment. "Sad times came to me very quickly... I hated everything the governess did." After a brief period of defiance, Irina came to like Miss Reese.²⁴ Sometimes a tense relationship between a child and an educator even escalated into conflict. Twelve-year-old Count Pavel Grabbe (1902 – 1999) genuinely hated his Irish teacher, Mr. Boyle. He considered him a "sadist" and one day rejected his "hardening methods" consisting of an evening bath in ice-cold water. The clash between the defiant child and the teacher resulted in Paul's taking Father's service revolver, aiming it at Boyle, and shouting: "You'll touch me, and I'll kill you." After this incident, his parents, especially mother, decided to finish Paul's home education and send him to a military school.²⁵

Children's education mostly proceeded without the use of weapons. The programme was versatile, with an emphasis on humanities, literature, world and Russian history, and geography. Physical education, including dance classes, played an important role, too. Both male and female students learned to ride a horse; in addition, boys had fencing lessons, while girls were given greater attention in music education. A central part of education was learning foreign languages. Knowledge of two or rather three foreign languages was more or less the standard in an aristocratic environment. Aleksei and Vladimir Bobrinskii learned French, German, and English in the 1860s.²⁶ Besides French and German, the daughters of Prince Nikolai B. Yusupov, Zinaida (1861 – 1939) and Tafiiana (1866 – 1888), learned Italian because their father was a fan of Italian musical culture.²⁷ Teaching Latin, especially to boys, for whom further studies at a classical gymnasium were planned, became a tradi-

²² RGADA, f. 1412, op. 8, ed. khr. 268, l. 47.

²³ BARINOVA, Ekaterina Petrovna. *Rossiiskoe dvorianstvo v nachale XX veka: ekonomicheskii status i sotsiokulturnyi oblik*. Moskva : ROSSPEN, 2008, p. 69.

²⁴ GOLITSYNA, Irina Dmitrievna. *Vospominaniia o Rossii (1900 - 1932)*. Moskva : Airis Press, 2005, p. 27.

²⁵ GRABBE, Paul. *Windows on the River Neva*. New York : Pomerica Press Limited, 1977, pp. 72 - 75, 81 - 82.

²⁶ RGADA, f. 1412, op. 8, ed. khr. 268, l. 53, 108.

²⁷ Zinaida later learned English, in which she communicated at a very good level. She corresponded with tsarina Aleksandra Fedorovna mostly in English. YUDIN, Yusupov, p. 238.

tion. Being a child, Aleksei Bobrinskii got acquainted with the works of Virgil, Horatio, and other classics. However, from his diaries, it is evident that most intensively he learned French, which he also mastered best.

Language teachers were usually foreigners: French, Swiss, Germans, English. Aleksei Bobrinskii mentioned his English teacher “Miss Mary” and “Prussian educator” Johannsen.²⁸ The post of language teacher was very often associated with the position of governess or educator. This pattern lasted throughout the 19th century. Elizaveta Alekseevna Naryshkina (1838 – 1928) grew up in Paris. At the age of four, she could read and write in French and Russian; at the age of five, she learned English. Nevertheless, until she was fifteen and returned permanently to Russia, Russian was just a “well-learned foreign language” for her. Her first language, in which she spoke to her parents, was French and the second, in which she spoke to her English governess, Miss Hunter, was English.²⁹ English women as educators were in great demand in the Russian aristocracy. Princess Lidiia Leonidovna Vasil’chikova (1886 – 1948) had an English nanny in the 1880s and the 1890s and then an English governess, which seems to have affected the rest of her life: “*Perhaps some of my habits and tastes remained English, which explains why I always understood the English and felt at home in England.*”³⁰ When she later studied for one semester at Oxford, the locals were very surprised by her superior knowledge of English.³¹

Prince Aleksandr Dmitrievich Golitsyn (1874 – 1957) had a French and English governess. When the family stayed in the countryside in summer, teachers from the local primary school taught him Russian, and in winter, when they lived in Kharkov, teachers from the gymnasium came to the house.³² Prince Dmitrii Aleksandrovich Obolenskii (1882 – 1964) recalled a strict Scottish governess who taught him and his brother excellent English and “effectively supervised our physical and mental development. Every morning she made us bathe in ice-cold water and eat a great plate of porridge for breakfast, which we hated.”³³ The shift from French to English was relatively widespread at the end of the 19th century as the Russian aristocracy took on the lifestyle of the English nobility. Also for Irina Golitsyna, English was the first foreign language she began to learn at the age of seven, and her first two governesses were English. French followed at the age of nine, and when she started learning it, Irina got a new governess – a Frenchwoman.³⁴ And at the same time, in the youngest generation of aristocrats, growing up in the early 20th century, some expressed displeasure with French as a language of communication; for example, brothers Nikolai and Feliks Yusupov:

²⁸ RGADA, f. 1412, op. 8, ed. khr. 268, l. 53, 108. J. I. Johannsen (1826 – 1904), later the head of St. Petersburg conservatory (1891 – 1897).

²⁹ NARYSHKINA, Elizaveta Alekseevna. *Moi vospominaniia. Pod vlast’iu trech tsarei*. Moskva : Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2014, pp. 45, 56.

³⁰ VASILCHIKOVA, Lidiia Leonidovna. *Ischeznuvshaia Rossiia. Vospominaniia kniagini Lidii Leonidovny Vasil’chikovoï 1886 – 1919*. Sankt-Peterburg : Peterburgskie sezony, 1995, p. 22.

³¹ VASILCHIKOVA, Ischeznuvshaia Rossiia, p. 152.

³² GOLITSYN, Vospominaniia, p. 21.

³³ OBOLENSKY, Dimitri. *Bread of Exile. A Russian Family*. London : Harvill Press, 1999, p. 4.

³⁴ GOLITSYNA, Vospominaniia o Rossii, pp. 27, 29, 34.

“Almost all of Mother’s acquaintances on purpose spoke French, but distorted Russian. It made me and my brother angry, and we answered the old snobs only in Russian. And the old women said that we were rude and clumsy.”

However, at the end of the 19th century, the predominance of Russian in communication between parents and children was evident.³⁵

What did the day of a little aristocrat look like? Aleksei Bobrinskii’s diaries, written in different places, show several diverse situations. The family alternately lived in St. Petersburg, where they dwelled in a palace in Galernaia Street, and at the country estate of Smila near Kiev. They also often travelled abroad. A popular place for their long-term stays abroad was Switzerland. This is where the very first notebook of Aleksei’s diaries, dated 31 June 1862, begins. The summer was culminating and Aleksei was spending most of the time with his parents, brothers Vladimir and Aleksandr, and other relatives.³⁶ In the first half of August, the family moved between Lucerne and Bern, and the surrounding area. In the second half of August, they stayed on the northern side of Lake Geneva (Vevey, Montreux). In those days, Aleksei’s daily pastime was walking: in the circle of the whole family, sometimes only with his father, other times, less often, with his mother. They also went out into the countryside, visiting monuments such as Chillon Castle on the shores of Lake Geneva. It was not until the end of August when Bobrinskii mentioned learning for the first time, specifically languages – French and English: *“(23 August) In the morning, we went to Lausanne. Then we had French and English lessons. (26 August) We went for a walk in the morning. After lunch we had the first French lesson with Mr. Ginier, then we went for a walk.”*³⁷

It seems that more regular teaching started at that time, although Aleksei did not describe it in more detail. On Monday, 1 September, he wrote that he and his brother Vladimir had taken part in the first lesson of physical education.³⁸ Physical education was introduced into Russian schools more slowly than abroad and began to appear more often in children’s education only in the 1860s. The teachers of physical education were mostly English, who, in line with the English educational system, placed considerable emphasis on sports activities. Dmitrii Obolenskii became a very good runner and boxer thanks to Stafford Talbot, who first came to Russia as a student at Cambridge: *“In the boxing ring I sometimes made his nose bleed and I could run 2 or 3 versts with ease.”*³⁹

There was no fundamental difference between studying at home, in Russia, or abroad. Consider, for example, the record by Aleksei Bobrinskii from the 15 September 1864, when he stayed in the countryside in Smila. Servant Arsenii woke him and his brother Vladimir at half-past six in the morning. Aleksei read part of the New Testament (the Second Epistle of John) and then wrote a diary entry about the previous day. At 7.30 a Latin lesson began. Aleksei shared most of the lessons with

³⁵ YUSUPOV, Feliks Feliksovich. *Memuary v dvuch knigach. Do izgnaniia. 1887 – 1919. V izgnanii*. Moskva: b. v., 1998 – 2004, p. 56; YUDIN, Kniazia Yusupovy, p. 244.

³⁶ RGADA, f. 1412, op. 8, ed. khr. 268, l. 7.

³⁷ RGADA, f. 1412, op. 8, ed. khr. 268, l. 7 – 8.

³⁸ RGADA, f. 1412, op. 8, ed. khr. 268, l. 7 – 8.

³⁹ BOLENSKY, Bread of Exile, p. 14.

his brother Vladimir, who was fifteen months younger. At 8.30 they went to drink coffee. From 9 to 10 o'clock they played croquet, after which their father examined them in Latin. From 11.30 to 12.00 the brothers played the piano. From 12.00 to 13.00 they had an English and calligraphy lesson. After lunch, at 2 o'clock, they went riding horses in the woods and walking in the park, and at 5 o'clock they returned home. A Russian history lesson followed (on Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi). After dinner, the brothers drank tea and had a costume rehearsal for a theatrical performance. Finally, Aleksei talked to his grandmother and went to bed at half-past nine.⁴⁰

When the Bobrinskiis spent the winter of 1865 in Nice, teaching was the same as in Russia. On February the 9th, 1865, servant Petr woke up both the brothers at 6.15 a.m. Aleksei and his brother Vladimir dressed, read a chapter from the New Testament (from the Gospel of John), and learned Latin from seven to half-past eight. From 8.30 to 9.30 they drank tea, and between 9.30 and 10.30 they had a French geography lesson. A dentist (Mr. Evans) came to them that day; his visit lasted one hour (10.30 – 11.30 a.m.). A lesson of arithmetic and algebra followed. Lunch was served between 12 and 1.30 p.m. After the gymnastics lesson (13.30 – 14.30) there was a short break, at 3 p.m. they had a music lesson and then a world history lesson (Attila). Between 5 p.m. and 5.30 p.m., they were dressing for dinner, which was between 5.30 p.m. and 6 p.m. After dinner, Aleksei played for three-quarters of an hour, after which he did his homework (music, geography) and learned verses. From eight to half-past eight, the young count drank tea. The last activity of the day was writing the diary, from half-past eight to nine, and then he went to bed.⁴¹

Only small changes in the rhythm of children's education are shown in the third example, the diary entry from the 6 December 1865. Then Aleksei Bobrinskii was in St. Petersburg. In this case, we give a full quote (with our additions in square brackets):

"At 6.30, Johann (our valet since October) woke me up. I got up and got dressed, read the 11th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, then together with V. [Vladimir] went to the classroom and up to 8 o'clock was preparing for Russian geography. COFFEE. From 8.30 to 10 we had a Latin lesson and from 10.15 to 11.30 [music teacher] was supposed to come, but he didn't, and I was preparing for music (myself), and Mr. Puston's lesson (Russian) with Vladimir. Lunch from 11.30 to 12. From 12 to 2 we were supposed to be walking, but I had a cold, so I was writing the diary at that time. From 2 to 3 there was Mr. Johannsen's German lesson.⁴² From 3 to 4.15, Mrs. Shvalbe (music). From 4.30 to 5.30, we were finishing our preparation for Russian. The dance teacher should have come from 5 – 6 but came later in the evening. DINNER. 5.30 – 6.15. From 6.15 to 8 o'clock – dancing lesson (my leg hurt and I didn't dance with Serezha Pisarev⁴³ too much (Mrs. Stukominova). At 8 I went downstairs, there was a prince (Viktor), a princess (Lina) and a young princess (Soŕ'ia) Gagarins. I went to bed at 9.30."⁴⁴

⁴⁰ RGADA, f. 1412, op. 8, ed. khr. 268, l. 64 – 65.

⁴¹ RGADA, f. 1412, op. 8, ed. khr. 268, l. 69.

⁴² A note in the diary: "Mr. Johannson: our Prussian educator".

⁴³ In a different place of the diary, there is a note: "Sergei Alekseevich Pisarev". RGADA, f. 1412, op. 8, ed. khr. 268, l. 70.

⁴⁴ RGADA, f. 1412, op. 8, ed. khr. 268, l. 108 – 109.

Thus, the records in Aleksei's diary clearly show intensive and systematic daily learning. Many years later (24 April 1907), he remembered his childhood almost as an idyll: "*What a beautiful time! How lovely, how calm everything was! What thoughts! [...] To learn and that's all!*"⁴⁵

This pattern was relatively stable. Children's home education continued from the first half of the 19th century to the revolution and its course did not change significantly. The subjects taught to Aleksei at the age of eleven or twelve were practically identical with the subjects studied by Prince Aleksandr Alekseevich Shcherbatov (1829 - 1892) or Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Polovtsov (1832 - 1909).⁴⁶ Shcherbatov spent his childhood and adolescence first in St. Petersburg and then in Moscow. He was taught by university lecturers or gymnasium teachers, and also by his sisters' governess who gave him French, English, German, and music lessons. Other subjects that filled Shcherbatov's day from nine in the morning to three in the afternoon, and then again in the evening, were catechism, Latin, Greek, Russian, mathematics, history, Italian, and even Persian for two winters. At the age of 14, when he was already preparing to enter university, Aleksandr was "buried in books" until eleven in the evening, and sometimes studied for up to 14 hours a day.⁴⁷ Growing up in Paris in the 1840s, Elizaveta Naryhskina recalled learning almost continuously, regardless of the place of stay:

*"Our lessons did not stop wherever we were. We never had a vacation, but in summer we studied only until breakfast, i.e. until one o'clock. We didn't know stress, hasty preparations for an exam, and long idleness during the rest of the time. We were always busy and never tired. Besides Sundays and the Twelve Great Feasts, the only days when we did not study were: the second day of Easter, the 6 December, the Emperor's name day, the birthdays and name days of our parents, and each of us celebrated their name days and birthdays."*⁴⁸

Not much changed in the generation of the 1860s - 1870s. Prince Mikhail Vladimirovich Golitsyn's (1873 - 1943) memories were practically identical. The first foreign language in the family was French. As a rule, Mikhail's mother spoke to her mother-in-law and brother-in-law in French. In the 1860s and 1870s, it was similar in the Yusupov family, where the children and the parents exchanged letters written in French.⁴⁹ The Golitsyns' children mastered French excellently thanks to the "otherwise completely mundane" Swiss governesses. At the age of ten, Mikhail got a Swiss preceptor, Mr. Golay, and German was added to his French lessons. Golay stayed in the family for only one year and was replaced by another Swiss, Mr. Sandy, who taught Mikhail for another seven years: "*With him, our French lessons went like butter and I have the best memories of them.*"⁵⁰ Mikhail's sisters

⁴⁵ RGADA, f. 1412, op. 8, ed. khr. 268, l. 19.

⁴⁶ MAMONOV, Detskii dnevnik Polovtsova, p. 177.

⁴⁷ SHCHERBATOV, Aleksandr Alekseevich. *Na sluzhbe Moskve i otechestvu*. Moskva : Russkii mir, 2008, pp. 77 - 79, 82.

⁴⁸ NARYSHKINA, *Moi vospominaniia*, p. 55.

⁴⁹ YUDIN, Yusupovy, p. 238.

⁵⁰ GOLITSYN, Mikhail Vladimirovich. *Moi vospominaniia (1873 - 1917)*. Moskva : Russkii mir: Zhizn' i mysl', 2007, pp. 28 - 29; University College of London. School of Slavonic and European Studies

had a Scottish governess, Miss MacDonald, who taught English to Mikhail as well. Mikhail's mother, and also his uncle Prince Aleksandr Mikhailovich Golitsyn taught him the basics of Russian; later a Russian teacher came. At the age of ten, classical language teachers were introduced so that Mikhail could prepare well for gymnasium studies. Days were entirely scheduled: Mikhail and his brother got up at eight in the morning and were studying from nine to twelve. After breakfast (the first meal of the day was usually at noon), they and their educator went for a walk. Classes continued from three to five. Besides languages, mathematics, history, and religion, the boys took dance, drawing, and physical education lessons. While they enjoyed physical education and it seemed to have been useful to them, they did not have the slightest talent for drawing.⁵¹

Mikhail's son Sergei described his school day in Moscow during the First World War in a very similar way. Aunt Sasha, Princess L'vova by marriage, watched over him. Lessons began after breakfast, which consisted only of coffee (Sergei drank acorn coffee, his aunt real coffee). At the age of six, he could read but hated writing. He was left-handed, and his aunt forcibly taught him to write with his right hand. Foreign language teaching was still a central part of the curriculum. Nevertheless, he learned French not so much thanks to the teachers, but to his grandmother, who read sentimental stories to the children.⁵²

Although learning several world languages was a constant of aristocratic education, it did not always go smoothly. Some small and young aristocrats really struggled with foreign languages. Prince Vladimir Andreevich Drutskoi-Sokolinskii (1881 - 1943) had major problems with French while still studying at Lycée. Later, at the Imperial School of Jurisprudence, he failed an exam and had to take remedial lessons before resitting.⁵³

However, children not only studied but also relaxed. A regular part of everyday life, if health and weather permitted, were walks – most often to the park when in the city, and in nature while staying in the countryside. Rides or walks in nature were often associated with other activities (swimming, fishing, picking mushrooms, etc.). In her early years, Countess Sofia Panina (1871 - 1956) spent a lot of time in the countryside where she felt as if in a "fairy-tale". She "climbed the trees like a squirrel and performed head-spinning gymnastics".⁵⁴ Of course, the children played various games. Nearly every day, Aleksei Bobrinskii noted down that he had spent some time playing. Usually, he would note "I was playing" without any specification. He often played croquet with his brother Vladimir, various friends, and relatives. Following the example of England, tennis became a new popular game. At the end of

Library. Lieven Collection. LIEVEN, Paul, *Dela minuvshikh let*, pp. 24 - 25.

⁵¹ GOLITSYN, Moi vospominaniia, pp. 31 - 35.

⁵² GOLITSYN, Sergei Mikhailovich. Zapiski utselevshego. In *Nashe nasledie*, 2001, No. 57, pp. 96 - 97.

⁵³ DRUTSKOI-SOKOLINSKII, Vladimir Andreevich. *Da blagoslovenna pamiat'. Zapiski russkogo dvorianina (1880 - 1914 gg.)*. Orel : Variant B, 1996, pp. 89 - 91.

⁵⁴ Bakhmeteff Archive (BAR), Columbia University, New York, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Panina Papers, box 6, PANINA, Sofia V. *Moi gorod*, pp. 1 - 2; LINDENMEYER, Citizen Countess, p. 16.

the 19th century, even emperor Nicholas II became an avid tennis player, and tennis became a popular pastime with the young generation of aristocrats.⁵⁵

The boys' common game was military games.⁵⁶ Aleksei wrote that his uncle, Count P. A. Shuvalov, had bought him "two boxes of toy soldiers".⁵⁷ It is not certain whether he often played with them. In the diary, he mentioned such a game with his brother Vladimir only once – on the 5 June 1865.⁵⁸ The military game was obviously not important for Aleksei to write about in the diary. However, he undoubtedly played various military games, as the diary of his brother Vladimir proves. Vladimir was much more attracted to military affairs: between the 22 March and the 9 April 1864, he mentioned military games, which he played with his brother and in which their father also participated, seven times.⁵⁹

The army, soldiers, and everything connected with military culture traditionally played a significant role in the aristocratic environment. Nevertheless, Aleksei Bobrinskii was not affected too much by that. He never considered a military career, and military topics did not take up much space in his diary, in comparison with his brother's notes or, for example, with A. A. Polovtsov's children's notes from the late 1830s.⁶⁰ Aleksei Bobrinskii was interested in history, literature (he wrote verses, short stories, and novels), and the beauties of nature. Such interests were due to family trips abroad. Sightseeing and trips to nature in Italy, Switzerland, and France strongly impressed Aleksei. At the age of thirteen, he was thrilled and enchanted by the splendour of the Côte d'Azur.⁶¹ At the same time, however, his heart belonged to Russia: "I was thinking about death. When I die, I wish to be buried in the big orchard in Smila." He wrote these melancholic words on the 28 February 1867.⁶²

It is very likely that the humanistic and classically oriented home education, combined with stays in the beloved Smila, led Aleksei to pursue his main hobby: archaeology. There were ancient burial mound hills (kurgany) around Smila, and Aleksei made excavations there. He published the results of the research in several publications in the Province of Kyiv. Thanks to his knowledge and research, Bobrinskii was the Chairman of the Imperial Archaeological Commission for many years (1886 – 1917).⁶³ Although intellectual and scientific interests of this type were

⁵⁵ YUSUPOV, *Memuary*, pp. 44 – 45; YUDIN, *Yusupovy*, p. 247.

⁵⁶ Prince Sergei Golitsyn had his first toy soldiers at the age of four. Emmanuil Bennigsen also collected tin soldiers. GOLITSYN, Sergei Mikhailovich. *Zapiski utselevshego* In *Nashe nasledie*, 2000, No. 55, pp. 99 – 115; 2001, No. 57, pp. 106; BENNIGSEN, Emmanuil Pavlovich. *Zapiski (1875 – 1917)*. Moskva : Izdatel'stvo im. Sabashnikovykh, 2018, p. 77. Further, cf. SHOKAREVA, Dvorianskaia sem'ia, p. 188; *Podslushannye vzdokhi o detstve... Deti v fotografiakh i memuarakh kontsa XIX – nachala XX veka*. Sankt Peterburg : Liki Rossii, 2014, pp. 64 – 67.

⁵⁷ RGADA, f. 1412, op. 8, ed. khr. 268, l. 7.

⁵⁸ RGADA, f. 1412, op. 8, ed. khr. 268, l. 81.

⁵⁹ Perhaps this was later reflected by his entry into the army. He served in the Hussar Regiment of the Imperial Guard and fell at the rank of lieutenant in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877. RGADA, f. 1412, op. 7, ed. khr. 68, l. 23, 25, 26, 28, 29, 41, 43, 44.

⁶⁰ MAMONOV, *Detskii dnevnik Polovtsova*, pp. 174 – 175.

⁶¹ RGADA, f. 1412, op. 8, ed. khr. 268, l. 74 – 78.

⁶² RGADA, f. 1412, op. 8, ed. khr. 270, l. 13.

⁶³ Bobrinskii's main scientific work was a three-volume book *Kurgany i sluchainnye arkheologicheskie nakhodki bliz mestechka Smely*. Sankt-Peterburg : Tipografiia M. M. Stasiulevicha, 1887 – 1901. He

not entirely common in the aristocracy, they were not a complete exception. Count Ivan Ivanovich Tolstoy (1858 – 1916) also dealt with archaeology and, in particular, numismatics.⁶⁴ Prince Sergei Mikhailovich Volkonskii (1860 – 1937) closely connected his life with the world of theatre and music. He had been cultivating his love for art in the family circle since his childhood and fully devoted himself to it during his studies at the gymnasium in St. Petersburg.⁶⁵

God and Parents

In diaries and memoirs, there are several constants. Besides the above-mentioned descriptions of children's games, religion was reflected as a strong presence in their lives. It was a formal aspect of education consisting in both boys and girls reading the Bible or taking exams in catechism. Belief in God was something intrinsic and completely unquestionable for all the generations discussed. Aleksandr Shcherbatov recalled: "*Our parents were deep believers (...); the faith was the cornerstone of their lives and wished us to perceive it in the same way. I remember my mother telling me, 'I certainly love you, and yet I would rather see you dead than find out that you were an infidel.'*"⁶⁶ Such strong faith stemmed from the influence of parents and also from the deeply religious environment of the Russian countryside. Many children spent a substantial part of their childhood at a country estate, and their nannies were mostly devout Russian villagers.⁶⁷ In his childhood, Aleksandr Golitsyn gained a formative religious experience connected with the countryside and the mystery of Easter.⁶⁸

During their childhood, the nobles did not question the place of religion in their upbringing, but with hindsight – especially those born at the end of the 19th century – had certain reservations about it. Aleksandr Vasil'evich Davydov (1881 – 1955) described the system of children's education as "education in the fear of God", which was to teach children two basic things: "religious piety and ethics based exclusively on this piety". Part of these ethics was diligence in studying and absolute subordination to the will of parents, whose orders had to be carried out to the last letter. According to Davydov, this method of "education in the fear of God" led to the unification of education regardless of the individual dispositions of children, their character and talents, and completely prevented a psychological approach to a child.⁶⁹

published many studies in *Otchety Imperatorskoi arkheologicheskoi komissii* and *Izvestiia Imperatorskoi arkheologicheskoi komissii*. See TIKHONOV, *Poslednii predsedatel*.

⁶⁴ He became a respected authority in this field and wrote many professional books, the first at the age of twenty-four. TOLSTOY, Ivan I. *Drevneishiia russkii monety Velikago kniazhestva Kievskago*. Sankt Peterburg : b. v., 1882.

⁶⁵ VOLKONSKII, Sergei Mikhailovich. *Moi vospominaniia*, vol. 2, *Rodina*. Moskva : Isskustvo, 1992.

⁶⁶ "Certainement que je t'aime et pourtant je préférerais te voir mort, que de te savoir sans religion." SHCHERBATOV, Na sluzhbe, p. 76; DAVYDOV, Aleksandr. *Russian Sketches. Memoirs*. Tenafly, New Jersey : Hermitage, 1984, pp. 99 – 100; MAMONOV, Detskii dnevnik Polovtsova, pp. 173, 178.

⁶⁷ Aleksei Bobrinskii mentioned the nanny A. I. Torbunova, nicknamed "Duda", in the diary several times. RGADA, f. 1412, op. 8, ed. khr. 268, l. 6, 7, 81. Further, cf. LVOV, Grigorii Evgenievich. *Vospominaniia*. Moskva : Russkii put', 2002, pp. 20, 25.

⁶⁸ GOLITSYN, *Moi vospominaniia*, pp. 22 – 26.

⁶⁹ DAVYDOV, *Russian Sketches*, pp. 99 – 100.

The image of parents and the emotional attachment to them is the second constant of aristocratic memories of childhood. The attachment to parents was traditionally strong and could be further strengthened by the loss of one of them. Prince Pavel Pavlovich Lieven (1875 - 1963) lost his father at the age of six, which connected him even more with his mother Natal'ia Fedorovna, née Countess Pahlen, a deeply pious woman, constantly worried about her son's health.⁷⁰ In some cases, maternal love could develop into dictatorship over children and provoke an emotional conflict. Aleksandr Davydov remembered his mother Ol'ga Aleksandrovna, née Princess Lieven (1856 - 1923), as a loving and, at the same time, despotic being, foisting her idea of education on her sons and breaking, with an iron will, any children's independence or signs of resistance:

"These traits of my mother aggravated the unpleasant side of our education. Many times she inflicted corporal punishments on me and the last time when I was 8 years old (...) Neither of my elder brothers possessed great will power and my mother's iron hand destroyed in them all trace of the little that existed (...)."

This eventually led to a conflict, intensified by Aleksandr's emotional instability in his pubescence, from which Aleksandr emerged as a winner:

"For me, things were very different. I can characterise my education by saying that it was a fight that went on for several years between two wills, one of which fought for its authority and the other for its independence. From the age of 13 until my adulthood I lived in a permanent state of revolt against my mother until I finally emerged the sole winner. I realised now that this opposition was not directed so much against my mother, whom I could not help but love, as against the system of education she subjected to me."⁷¹

It should be added that such a critical view rarely appears in memoirs, and joyful memories of parents clearly prevail. Their authority, both fathers' and mothers', is usually strong and natural. An apt characteristic is provided in the memoirs of Prince Georgii Evgen'evich L'vov (1861 - 1925):

"All our childhood passed in Popovka, in a friendly and kind atmosphere. My father considered it a thorough and main condition of our upbringing. He himself created it by his life, his attitude towards people. I don't remember him being angry with anyone. He was amiable and kind to everyone (...) I don't remember a single quarrel in the house or at the country estate. The tone was such that everyone was afraid of our father out of respect for him, and he treated everyone with equal respect, without distinction in position, it was felt that he respected not the position, but the person."⁷²

Similarly, in Feliks Yusupov's memoirs, the central character was mother Zinaida, depicted as almost supernatural. On the other hand, the relationship with his father was reserved.⁷³

Although the image of the relationship between children and parents depicted in light, bright colours may seem like a literary cliché, one thing is certain. The era

⁷⁰ LIEVEN, *Dela davno minuvshikh let*, pp. 3, 6 - 7.

⁷¹ DAVYDOV, *Russian Sketches*, pp. 102, 127 - 128.

⁷² LVOV, *Vospominaniia*, pp. 27, 54 - 55. For similar view, see VASIL'CHIKOVA, *Ischeznuvshaia Rossiia*, p. 32.

⁷³ YUSUPOV, *Memuary*, pp. 31 - 32.

of late-Imperial Russia was a time when the relationship of parents to children changed significantly. It was a long process starting as early as in the first half of the 19th century. As M. V. Korotkova writes: “*Parents often became friends, advisers, and wise guides through children’s lives.*”⁷⁴ The idea of a proper upbringing was influenced by the views of J. J. Rousseau and Nikolai Karamzin, who emphasised the importance of maternal love and care for children from an early age.⁷⁵ In the 1840s, Sofiia Stepanovna Shcherbatova (née Countess Apraksina) very carefully organised classes for her son Aleksandr. After several unsuccessful attempts, she resigned from hiring another educator, drew up the curriculum for her sons herself, chose particular teachers, and even supervised the lessons throughout the day.⁷⁶

Princess Mariia Petrovna Volkonskaia (1816 – 1856) strictly supervised the education of her daughters Sof’ia (1841 – 1875) and Ekaterina Dmitrievna (1846 – 1896). Although she hired an English governess for them, she very carefully ensured that the teacher strictly adhered to the curriculum and rules created by her.⁷⁷ Elizaveta Naryshkina’s first teacher was also her mother – Princess Iuliia F. Kurakina, née Golitsyna (1814 – 1881). Elizaveta gained her first knowledge of religion and the basics of arithmetic from her. Princess Iuliia supervised the children (Elizaveta and her younger brother Boris) with love and strictness, and after many years, Elizaveta appreciated her approach, as, due to this way, her upbringing gained a solid moral framework:

*“Mother’s rule was that girls should be so busy that they don’t have time to think (...) Most of all, our mother hated idleness and indiscipline, and especially any kind of pretence and lies (...) I think that the established system helps us to absorb, gradually and without leaps, what we were taught. Our education was just one of the aspects of general upbringing, which taught us external and moral discipline and a sense of responsibility, i.e. the development of conscience.”*⁷⁸

The involvement of parents in children’s educational process is evidenced by some entries from the brothers Bobrinskii’s diaries as well. Their father was interested in his sons’ education; he asked them what they had learned, and tested them himself. Aleksei noted that Father had examined them in Latin, and Vladimir mentioned Father’s participation in a physics lesson.⁷⁹ Aleksandr Bobrinskii played with the boys, too – not only did he participate in their military games, but he also devised games for them (e.g. a naval game about a round-the-world tour).⁸⁰ Gradually, relationships between parents and children became more immediate. Zinaida and Tat’iana Yusupov had a much more informal, closer and warmer relationship with their parents, Nikolai (1827 – 1891) and Tatiana (1828 – 1879), than Nikolai had with his father Boris (1794 – 1849) in the 1830s. This was also reflected in Zi-

⁷⁴ KOROTKOVA, Sem’ia, p. 43.

⁷⁵ VEREMENKO, Deti, p. 87; TOVROV, The Russian Noble Family, pp. 354 – 355.

⁷⁶ SHCHERBATOV, Na sluzhbe, pp. 75 – 76, 80.

⁷⁷ Mariia Petrovna Volkonskaia. In *Stolitsa i usad’ba*, 15. 2. 1917, nr. 75, p. 8.

⁷⁸ NARYSHKINA, Moi vospominaniia, p. 55, 59.

⁷⁹ RGADA, f. 1412, op. 8, ed. khr. 268, l. 64 – 65; op. 7, ed. khr. 69, l. 27.

⁸⁰ RGADA, f. 1412, op. 7, ed. khr. 68, tetrad’ nr. 1, l. 28 – 29, tetrad’ nr. 2, l. 43, 44; ed. khr. 69, tetrad’ nr. 4, l. 10.

naida's relationship with her sons Nikolai and Feliks, with whom she had a strong emotional relationship and for whom she was a key person of their childhood and adolescence, too.⁸¹

In general, mothers played a more important role in the educational process. They more often set the rules and organised the upbringing of their children. However, it cannot be responsibly stated that parents entered into their children's education on a daily and systematic basis. It depended on the particular situation in the family, how much the parents, especially the father, were busy with public activities. The place where the family was staying at the time also played a role. If they were at the country estate or on a foreign trip, the parents had more time. However, if the family lived permanently in the countryside and the father was involved in the local government or aristocratic assembly, he did not have much time for children. Aleksei D. Golitsyn spent most of his childhood at the country estate of Dolzhik near Kharkiv, and his father Dmitrii Fedorovich Golitsyn was engaged in his upbringing to a very limited extent because he was very busy. He passed this responsibility onto his wife; however, she did not usually get up until three or four o'clock in the afternoon, so nannies, governesses, and home teachers looked after Aleksei and the other children most of the day. The only thing the mother was involved in was the religious upbringing of the children.⁸² It was similar and different at the same time for Vladimir Andreevich Obolenskii (1869 – 1950). His father died when he was six years old. Mother Aleksandra loved her son, but she did not have much time for him, as she did her best to run the girls' gymnasium she had founded in St. Petersburg in 1870. The gymnasium's affairs constantly affected their family life, so Vladimir's childhood was closely connected with them. His mother kept in touch and was friends with scholars, intellectuals, and writers who came to their home. Vladimir knew almost all the students of the gymnasium; he knew about the fights that his mother had led with the Ministry of Enlightenment, and Minister Tolstoy became the "main enemy" in the boy's imagination. Vladimir was taught by gymnasium teachers, and already as a child, he had gotten to know different worlds: the imperial court and the aristocratic and conservative world of the Obolenskii family, as well as the environment of liberal and radical educators and revolutionary-oriented students.⁸³

Conclusion

If aristocratic memoirs mostly unanimously depicted the image of childhood and upbringing as a fairy-tale idyll, diaries more or less confirm it. Only in the case of tragic family events (loss of parents, death of relatives), was this idea significantly disrupted. In children's minds, political upheavals were not perceived as dramatically as personal and family events, and in memoirs, they acquired a fateful meaning only in retrospect. At the age of eleven, for Sofia Panina, separation from her

⁸¹ YUDIN, Yusupovy, pp. 240-241.

⁸² GOLITSYN, A. D., *Vospominaniia*, p. 21.

⁸³ OBOLENSKII, Vladimir Andreevich. *Moia zhizn' i moi sovremenniki. 1869 – 1920*. Vol. 1. Moskva : Kuchkovo pole, 2018, pp. 42 – 43, 46, 53, 55.

mother and placement in a boarding school for noble girls played a crucial role, and for seven-year-old Sergei Golitsyn, an appendectomy was much more important than the ongoing February revolution.⁸⁴

At the age of thirteen or fourteen, childhood turned into adolescence. The process of upbringing and educating aristocratic scions began changing; especially for sons, for whom the educational strategy began to be shaped with respect to their envisaged careers. Not all adolescent aristocrats had a clear idea of their future from childhood. In this respect, undoubtedly, the family and the positive example of the father or elder, successful siblings played a very important role. But even though the children perceived these examples, they did not necessarily have to form their particular goals according to them. Little Aleksei Bobrinskii considered many options but did not commit much detail to his diary.

The diaries of Aleksei A. Bobrinskii and the memoirs of many other aristocrats prove the general continuity in the aristocratic education of the second half of the 19th century. Education was not only a necessary condition for a future successful service career, but it occupied an important place in the system of social values of the Russian aristocracy. The model of raising aristocratic children employed in the first half of the 19th century continued.⁸⁵ From the age of six or seven, education was systematic, cosmopolitan and based on the model of home education. Intensive teaching of several foreign languages was a standard. Mastering foreign languages was facilitated by frequent and long-term stays abroad. This phenomenon was common to several generations of aristocratic children too. Over the years, the personal involvement of parents in the education process strengthened as parents and children were closer to each other than in previous generations. This was one of the main changes in children's upbringing and education that, in other respects, showed more continuity than discontinuity. More significant changes in education became evident only in adolescence which was more influenced by state educational reforms, growing civic awareness, and various ideas about the best preparation for a future life and career. Aristocratic families chose from among elite aristocratic schools, private lyceums, or state gymnasiums (i.e. grammar schools), and the education of adolescent boys and girls was much more dynamic.

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⁸⁴ BAR, Panina Papers, Box 6, PANINA, *Moi gorod*, p. 2 - 3, 5; GOLITSYN, S. M., *Zapiski utselevshego*, p. 107.

⁸⁵ KOROTKOVA, Sem'ia, pp. 96 - 97; VEREMENKO, *Deti*, p. 87.

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SUMMARY

Education and Aristocratic Childhood in Late Imperial Russia

The article focuses on the education and upbringing of aristocrats in late imperial Russia (1855 - 1917). It draws mainly from sources of a personal nature (non-published and published memoirs and diaries). Their analysis shows the main elements, continuity and discontinuity in the education of boys and girls from aristocratic families during their childhood, i.e. from the age of six to twelve/thirteen. The study deals with educational priorities and an edu-

cational strategy concerning the future careers of Russian aristocrats. Besides other things, the author comments on the importance of education in the aristocratic value system. The diaries of Count Aleksei A. Bobrinskii and the memoirs of many other aristocrats prove the general continuity in the aristocratic education of the second half of the 19th century. Education was not only a necessary condition for a future successful service career, but it occupied an important place in the system of social values of the Russian aristocracy. The model of raising aristocratic children employed in the first half of the 19th century continued. From the age of six or seven, education was systematic, cosmopolitan and based on the model of home education. Intensive teaching of several foreign languages was a standard. Boys and girls usually had foreign tutors and governesses (mainly from Great Britain, Switzerland, France and Germany). Mastering foreign languages was facilitated by frequent and long-term stays abroad. This phenomenon was common to several generations of aristocratic children too. More significant changes in education became evident only in adolescence, which was more influenced by state educational reforms, growing civic awareness, and various ideas about the best preparation for a future life and career. Aristocratic families chose from among elite aristocratic schools, private lyceums, or state gymnasiums (i.e. grammar schools), and the education of adolescent boys and girls was much more dynamic.

In the vast majority of cases, aristocrats' childhood memories were positive. In them, the children's world was filled with studying and games, often in the idyllic setting of a country estate. Besides the above-mentioned descriptions of children's games, religion was reflected as a strong presence in their lives. It was a formal aspect of education consisting of both boys and girls reading the Bible or taking exams in catechism. Belief in God was something intrinsic and completely unquestionable for all the generations discussed. During their childhood, the nobles did not question the place of religion in their upbringing, but with hindsight - especially those born at the end of the 19th century - had certain reservations about it. Aleksandr V. Davydov (1881 - 1955) described the system of children's education as "education in the fear of God", which was to teach children two basic things: "religious piety and ethics based exclusively on this piety". Part of these ethics was diligence in studying and absolute subordination to the will of parents, whose orders had to be carried out to the last letter. This method of "education in the fear of God" led to the unification of education regardless of the individual dispositions of children, their character and talents, and completely prevented a psychological approach to a child.

The image of parents and the emotional attachment to them is the second constant of aristocratic memories of childhood. Parents, primarily as a moral authority, played an irreplaceable role in the educational process. However, some memoirs show that, in individual cases, excessive care, especially maternal care, could also act as a stressful factor. It is obvious that parents, especially mothers, were involved *in* their children's *education* as early as in the first half of the 19th century when the pedagogical theories of J. J. Rousseau and Nikolai Karamzin, who emphasised the importance of maternal love and care for children from an early age, became popular. Over the years, the personal involvement of parents in the education process strengthened as parents and children were closer to each other than in previous generations. Finding out this fact, together with the demonstrable continuity of the formal form and content of the educational process, is one of the main contributions of the study.

Mgr. Zbyněk Vydra, Ph.D.; University Pardubice in Pardubice
Faculty of Arts and Philosophy; Department of Historical Sciences
CZ-532 10 Pardubice; Studentská 84
e-mail: <zbynek.vydra@upce.cz>