

UNCLE KRASNOV – THE UNKNOWN ARCHITECT

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Quarenghi, Rastrelli, Stakensneider – these are great names in the annals of Imperial architecture, and we've all heard of them. And Cameron – so well know that there is even a book about him ("The Empress and the Architect" by Dimitri Shvidkovksy). But haven't we forgotten someone? Haven't we forgotten some of the major palaces used by our favourite Romanovs? We certainly have – the Crimean summer palaces designed by Nikolai Petrovich Krasnov. "Who?" you might ask. That's certainly what I asked when I first came across him, on Charlotte Zeepvat's tour to the Crimea two years ago. "Who?" was a question I kept coming up against whenever I spoke to a librarian or e-mailed a research centre in my quest for information. Krasnov appears to be a bit of an enigma, a forgotten character – mentioned in a few Romanov books for his speech impediment rather than his service to the family. But eventually persistence paid off, and the archives did reveal some secrets.

Krasnov was born on 23rd November 1864, in the southern Moscow suburb of Kolomensk. He was of peasant origin but somehow worked his way into the Moscow College of Art by the age of twelve. All architectural students had to stay there for a full ten years (artists escaped after eight) of study with additional courses in civil engineering, theory of art and Russian culture. The college had a very creative and egalitarian atmosphere in which Krasnov thrived. In 1883, he was awarded the College's 3rd class silver medal for his first solo project – a design for a theatre seating 1500 people. Two years later, he won the 1st class medal with one of two designs he'd submitted for the award. Ironically, his design that won was for a new college building. His design that didn't win was for a Grand Ducal Palace! Krasnov was now making a name for himself. His award meant that his official title was "3rd Degree Artist" and he became something of an honoured citizen. I feel this was probably equivalent to our title "Master of Arts". The form of address used later by the Court for him was certainly very respectful (something like Excellency) and way above what one would expect for a peasant's son. [***]

Krasnov's years of study had to be completed by two years of military training, so he did not graduate from the Moscow College of Art until 1887, and then he set off immediately for Yalta. I think he must have been one of those fortunate individuals who have a job to go to right after the end of their college course, because Krasnov started work as the Yalta City Architect on 7th June 1887, for the small salary of 900



roubles a year. As another piece of irony, the previous holder of this post was called Stakensneider – not, of course the famous one as he was working earlier in the 19th century, but maybe his son or grandson?

Nikolai Krasnov

The work of a city architect is not all government buildings and city parks, it is very utilitarian. Krasnov was responsible for designing a slaughter house, public toilets, a fruit market, a women's college, a Catholic church, a canteen for the port workers, the Crimean and Caucasus Mountain Club, a hospital and a sewerage system. He seems to have tackled these un-glamorous jobs with some enthusiasm since he was nominated for the order of St Stanislav, 3rd class, by the major of Yalta in 1893. I cannot find any record of Krasnov actually receiving the award. But I think the quality of his work cannot be doubted as his social conscience was well in evidence during this time. He became a leading public figure in Yalta, and helped organise the census of December 1892, which was needed by the city government to plan further improvements to the area. He also sat on a board with other leading Yalta citizens to redesign and rebuild the city centre and seafront area.



Vladimir Cathedral, Yalta town, an early Krasnov project

This must have been about the time that Krasnov started coming to the attention of the Imperial family. A lot of the above projects had been instigated by Alexander III, who loved his holidays in the Crimea. He had wanted Yalta to become the most important Black Sea port of the area, with a large harbour, quays, pier and embankment – perfect for welcoming visiting foreign dignitaries. In 1888, Krasnov also became involved in a project “which was responsible for the modest Livadia Palace reconstruction” [1]. By this time, the Grand and Maly Palaces had been built at Livadia, so this must have been connected to the purchase, by Alexander III, of two neighbouring estates to Livadia – Massandra and Ai-Danil. Massandra was especially important, as it was here that Sasha imagined his son and heir, Nicholas, would settle into a summer home. Of course, this never actually happened due to Sasha's early death, but renovation work began on a palace that had already been partially

constructed on this land (see Coryne Hall's Massandra article in this issue for more details). Alexander III also had wine cellars built to capitalise on the flourishing wine industry of the Crimea. He saw these as a way to provide further employment opportunities in the area – surely an idea that would appeal to Krasnov's social conscience. These cellars still exist today and can be viewed by tourists, whilst Massandra wine is still much sought after.

Another worthy project that Krasnov undertook was the reconstruction of the 16th century palace of Bakhshiserai, which had belonged to the Muslim Tartar Khans. The architecture of this building is very Moorish – minarets, fountains, courtyards, highly decorated areas of tiling, rich carpets and heaps of cushions. To this day it is very atmospheric, and also significant culturally as it inspired Pushkin's poem "Fountain of Tears". This style of architecture became quite an influence in the later buildings that Krasnov worked on. In fact, the Moorish style may well have been a favourite of Krasnov's as he worked on Bakhshiserai entirely voluntarily. And there are still in existence, five albums composed by him of photos, drawings and watercolours of the palace, as well as other old local houses in that style. The palace is still standing, and is another tourist attraction.

In 1889, Krasnov started to branch out of civic architecture and took on his first private commission – the design of a small house for a gentleman named A.I. Erlanger. This was done in a renaissance style, which was quite unusual for Yalta. He moved on to build houses for the composer A.A. Spendiarov, and the military engineer A.L. Bertje-Delaguarde. [2] The Imperial court then started to beckon and his first big client was Princess Bariatinsky. She asked him to create two homes for her in Yalta – a town house on Autkinskaya Street (now renamed Kirova Street) and a country residence. He was next approached by Prince Dolgoruky and Prince Kotchoubey who ordered country houses. Krasnov was particular in making them beautiful and stately – worthy of the new Yalta area that he had been so instrumental in designing. And, of course, he designed his own home soon after he arrived in Yalta, which is still standing, albeit in a rather rundown condition, in Pushkin Street. It is set in an acre of land on the top of a hill, and is built of white stone blocks. The exterior features Italianate and beaux-arts decoration, with a balcony above the main door. The most stunning feature of the interior of the house is a 7-sided spherical living room overlooking the Black sea. Four sides of this room have huge windows, whilst another side is totally window from floor to ceiling topped by a trellis that Krasnov trained wisteria and ivy to grow around. He did a similar thing with wrought iron grills on the windows of the lower floors facing the street. The dining room was decorated in a light wood and opened out to a loggia with Tuscan columns. The fact that the house was built on a hill led to a few unusual staircases that wound around pillars or were housed in towers between the different floor levels. One room was known as "The Golden Room" though it has been impossible to find out why. The gardens are now overgrown but Krasnov's statuary and urns remain. The garden featured typical local trees such as lemon and magnolia, as well as a grove of black bamboo around a pool. Local residents have been renovating both house and garden, and you can see pictures of their achievements on the web at www.opinion.kiev.ua/attractivizm/galery/index.html

And now, at the age of only thirty-three, Krasnov was chosen by Grand Duke Peter Nikolavich to build his new Crimean palace - Djulber. Djulber is Turkish for

“beautiful”, and I have to say that it certainly is a stunning building. It is painted a bright white, with blue stucco around the windows, doorways and rooftop, and is a concoction of domes, high walls and Arabic decoration. And here the Moorish influences that Krasnov had learnt at Bakhshiserai really came into their own. Peter and his wife Militsa had very strong ideas on what they wanted their home to look like. They had travelled widely especially in Egypt, and had come back with a lot of ideas involving Arabic and art nouveau designs. Peter was especially artistic and had even drawn up his own plans. When Krasnov saw these plans he was not really sure he could cope with the project and asked Peter for time to think. Peter was impressed with this reticence and thoughtfulness, and somehow soon, work began.

In his memoirs, Prince Roman described the finished Djulber; “The castle was surrounded by a marvellous park full of all kinds of flowering plants and evergreens as well as tall Cypress trees. In the middle of the main facade, on the west side of the main courtyard, there was a portal, which was decorated with one of the Djulber domes. The portal had a recess, which was the main entrance, and leading away from either side were two transepts of different styles and heights. The outer walls of the castle were also different from each other in height and architectural style. If you faced the main facade, from the main courtyard, you could see that it joined a tower, decorated with a beautiful dome, at its' right hand edge. The castle's southern outer



wall, which faced the sea, joined onto this tower. Large balconies, attached to niches in the upper stories of this wall, provided marvellous views of the beach and open sea. The castle was lower than the large main courtyard and so there were some stone steps along side the right hand tower. The eastern part of the castle [the highest with three stories] was bordered by a mountain stream and had a partial view of the sea... The northern part of the castle was on the same level as the main courtyard”. [3]

Djulber

Inside the palace, Krasnov employed many of the carpenters he'd worked with at Bakhshiserai to make Moorish door and window frames in filigree patterns. And he found local craftsmen to make copies of Egyptian ornaments collected by Militsa. He was worried about the palace looking too similar to a mosque, and protested when Peter wanted Muslim half moon decorations put on the top of each of the four domes. Peter got his way.



The interior

The palace was built on what my mum would have called “the never never” school of finance. There is no record of how much Krasnov was paid for his work (or even if he was) but he must have enjoyed this project as he returned annually to help Peter with decorative garden buildings. He provided a surprise for his patrons in the gardens – a plaque in Arabic containing their names, and those of their 2 eldest children, plus details of their taking possession of the property, all above an ornamental fountain. And he remained firm friends with the family, being invited to dinner regularly, and even having Peter finish his sentences for him when his stutter became too bad. In fact, Krasnov’s stutter made Nadejda “quite embarrassed and she sometimes sat throughout an entire meal staring at her plate, blushing constantly”. [4]

When I was visiting this palace, our guide made a very important point. This palace is still standing over 100 years later even though it is built on cliffs overlooking the sea, in an area prone to earthquakes. I think this says a lot about the solid building techniques of the architect. It also stood up to the Soviet occupation of the Crimea. There is a well-known tale of the Imperial family teasing Peter for surrounding his new palace with 10-foot high walls. But they were very grateful for these walls in 1918, hiding behind them and even manning them with guns in extremis. Djulber is now an expensive hotel that was used by the Soviet hierarchy for holidays. On our tour, we were only able to see one room of the 100 rooms inside but the interior is as exotic as the exterior. We sat in a room containing light fittings in

the shape of giant lanterns with different coloured glass. Over the main entrance door is the legend in Arabic “Allah bless everyone coming into this house”.

Krasnov’s success with Djulber led him straight onto another Eastern commission, this time for the Yusupov family. The palace was called Kokos, meaning “Blue Eye” in Tartar. Krasnov explained that it was “Made in the style of Bakhshiserai palace” using the tartar style of said palace “and some private houses in Bakhshiserai” [5]. Princess Zenaide chose the site, in a village called Sokolinskoe, inland from the other palaces, tearing down an old house that had originally stood there. She had planned just a small hunting lodge originally but got carried away. It is amply described by Zenaide’s son, Felix, in his memoirs: “It was white, with a roof of old glazed tiles which time had turned to soft shades of green. An orchard surrounded the house, a little stream ran by the gate; one could fish trout from a balcony. Inside, the furniture painted red, blue and bright green had been copied from old Tartar furniture. Oriental fabrics covered the divans and walls. The light in the large dining room filtered through Persian stained-glass windows built just below the ceiling ... The ‘blue eye’ was everywhere in evidence: in the stained glass of the windows, upon the fountain in the cypress grove, in the oriental pattern of the dinner service”. [6] The palace was visited by Nicholas and Alexandra and their children, and the Emir of Bokhara. Felix presented some of the grounds and an outhouse to Irina at the time of their engagement, in the presence of the Dowager Empress, Grand Duchess Xenia, his parents and Krasnov. Sadly, it has not survived as well as some of Krasnov’s other creations. It still stands, painted a sandy yellow colour, and is a home for problem children, having spent a good few years in the hands of the local Soviet. There is a picture in Felix’s “Lost Splendour” of the magnificent dining room. This has now been divided horizontally, and the top of the room is a dormitory for the children to sleep in.

Krasnov was now getting so many private commissions, that he resigned as city architect of Yalta. It is not clear whether he did this before or after designing a spectacular new Orthodox cathedral dedicated to St Alexander Nevsky. The only date I have for this is “turn of the century”, [7] although we do know that Nicholas and Alexandra were present at its consecration in 1902. [8] Krasnov worked with a colleague called L. Shapovalov on the building, and, though it looks traditionally Orthodox, it’s domes are a grey colour instead of the usual bright blues and greens. The cathedral itself is built of a dull orange stone with green tiling providing an effective contrast.

The next recorded date for a Krasnov commission that I have is 1904. As there is a bit of a gap between that and his resignation as city architect, I can only conclude that Krasnov was working on Chair during this period. Chair, which is Turkish for “a neglected garden” [9] was the home of Militsa’s sister, the Duchess of Leuchtenberg who became the wife of Nicholas Nicholaevich Jnr. It’s a bit of mystery really – we were not allowed to tour it when we were in the Crimea as it apparently belongs to the local KGB, our guide told us. Another guide said it was a sanatorium. It does not feature in any of the packs of postcards of palaces that we bought. We were able to look down on it from a viewing point. It is not dissimilar to Djulber – the same spectacular white exterior. But it has just a flattish roof and much less Oriental decoration. Krasnov also designed the grounds.

Nikolai Krasnov's name is also associated with other Moorish residences, that of Korobin in Simiez and the Emir of Bukhara in Yalta but I have not been able to find further information on these buildings.

Which brings us back to 1904 and Harax - the home of Grand Duke George Michailovich and his wife, Princess Marie of Greece. Poor George, in an effort to please, had purchased the ground Harax was built on, as a present for Marie. She was not smitten – on first seeing it, she burst into tears. Well, she was probably right as it was rather rocky and not the ideal place for building. But, as she said herself, “We had got hold of a rather clever and gifted architect” [10] Krasnov had to start by laying water pipes to the area. To do this he purchased a nearby spring, a “Hachamaliar”, from some local Tartars. And then he had to please Marie who wanted “an English cottage”. [11] To my eye, what he built was a rather humdrum middle-class English house, of “a blue-grey granite” with a red tile roof, [12] “which wouldn't be out of place in Surbiton”, as Charlotte Zeepvat put it. I'm glad to say that the rest of the Imperial family agreed with us. Surprisingly, Krasnov did not. He saw it as one of his major achievements and compared it to William Morris's Red House [13] George, Marie and their children loved it as well. They had Krasnov also design a church, a chapel, staff quarters, a greenhouse, stables, a kitchen, garages, a farm and a warehouse, all using the stones from the grounds. The building was completed in 1908.

The house still stands and is now a sanatorium. It is known for its lovely grounds, which Krasnov also designed. Letters are still in existence between him and the Grand Duke about which plants he was putting where, and what they would look like when they flowered. The church and chapel still stand as well, right next to each other. The church is in Byzantine style with some local influences. The interior mosaics were done by Viennese craftsmen. And rather amazingly, in the grounds of the sanatorium, there is a museum about the history of Harax, which contains some photos taken by Krasnov of his progress when building the property. Apparently, he always made a collection of photos of his projects but this is the only known one in existence.

Next on the list was Koreis in 1907/8 for Prince Felix Yusupov (the elder), Count Sumarakov-Elston. This was a bit of a respite for Krasnov – it was only alterations and not a new palace from scratch. Well, that was the plan, but it turned into a fairly major project as he built a larger house around the original smaller one. He chose the New Romantic style for this, using grey Crimean limestone. Felix (the younger) called it “a rather ugly grey stone house which would have looked better in a town than at the seaside. However, it was friendly and comfortable. Pavilions reserved for guests were scattered throughout the park... The gardens and vineyards stretched terrace upon terrace down to the seashore”. [14] I think Felix was being a bit harsh, as the house is rather pretty and the grey is relieved by white stonework around the windows and doors. Just for once, the grounds were not Krasnov's work – they were designed by Karl Kebach. Please see Coryne Hall's article in this issue for more information on this much overlooked Crimean palace. Krasnov's biggest challenge in building this house was his employer – he had to humour Prince Felix who had some rather eccentric ideas and a difficult personality. Grand Duchess Xenia described Krasnov as “very amusing” [15] so his talents as an architect were combined with a personality that could effectively deal with such powerful members of society.



Koreis

Which is just as well as his next commission was the biggest of his life – Livadia. Nicholas and Alexandra had been noticing the new homes built for their relatives. In fact, in his diary Nicholas comments on Harax: “At 2 _ went to see Georgy and Minny. Took a look at their house, garden, small church, rooms for the retinue. Everything looks pretty, simple, with good taste”. [16] Krasnov was approached by Prince Kotchoubey, Head of the Imperial Property Department, on behalf of Nicholas, to reconstruct the old palace buildings and rebuild the Grand Palace. On 27th October 1909, Krasnov met the Tsar for the first time. During November and December 1909, he spent much time with both Nicholas and Alexandra pouring over the plans. On 12th December, just four days before the Imperial family had to head back to St Petersburg, Krasnov’s plans were approved. He had to design and build not just the new palace, but also a new building for the court retinue to live in, a smaller palace for Baron Fredericks, a kitchen, part of the park surrounding the palace, and a new road. He was also in charge of ordering materials, finding labourers and keeping to the set budget. He employed a fellow architect, G.P. Pushkin, to build a power station, garage and further staff quarters. To complicate matters Krasnov had to work around the Maly Palace, which had not been altered since the death there of Alexander III. And incorporate the Krestovozdvizhenskaya palace church (Church of the Exaltation of the Cross), where Alix had converted to Orthodoxy, which had been built by an earlier Crimean architect, Monighetti.

Bit of a tall order. But worse, it all had to be done in just 17 months by order of Nicholas, during an unusually severe winter. On 21st January 1910 the old palace was demolished. On 23rd April 1910, Alix’s name day, a priest blessed the land and work began. [16] Krasnov himself said, “It was designed and fulfilled in the style of the Italian Renaissance, of common white limestone, all the decorative parts cut out of the same material”. [17] It was the first time Krasnov had worked with this Inkerman limestone. For more decorative features he used marble. There are 116 rooms, the inner Italian courtyard, and 3 smaller courtyards.

The Italian courtyard, Livadia



It has a very airy, sunny feel to it – there are large windows overlooking the sea, terraces, and balconies – lots of places to just relax in and laze about in the sun. Nicholas was very pleased with the building, as he told his mother: “We cannot find words to express our joy and pleasure at having such a house, built exactly as we wished. The architect, Krasnov, is a real stalwart – just think that in 17 months he has built the palace ... What is more, he has wonderfully laid out and decorated the garden all around the new buildings together with our excellent gardener ... The sights from every point are so nice, especially of Yalta and the sea. The rooms have a lot of light, and you remember how dark it was in the old house”. [18]

His contemporaries also appreciated Krasnov. An article in a 1913 issue of “The Architect” magazine said, “The palace is made in the Italian Renaissance style of XV-XVI century. The creator based his work on the buildings of Florence. But at the same time the palace has all the signs of a country palace, and the modern comfort. A majestic look harmonizes with the peace of the country house. Most of the rooms are open to the sun and air, and the roofs are used for terraces, balconies and towers”. [19]



Servants' house, Livadia

When I visited the palace, however, I was not so impressed by the interior. I could not help feeling that Nicholas and Alexandra had had a real say here over what they wanted. Nicholas’s study was very like his study in the Winter Palace, the Alexander Palace, and the Alexandria Dacha – all dark wooden panelling and leather. “I am in raptures over my study” [20] Nicholas wrote. The rooms used by Alexandra feature maple furnishings and chintz upholstery that had a very English rather than Italian feel. One source claims these interiors “are of great artistic value” [21] but I have my doubts. Krasnov was certainly responsible for the interior decoration and tried to find a common theme to run through the rooms. But he broke into his usual Moorish decoration in one courtyard with a flurry of majolica tiles, and also tried to incorporate wrought iron, natural stone, and some stained glass.

Livadia: Alexandra's library featuring typical mail-order furniture from Maples of Tottenham Court Road, London



As we toured Livadia, I was pleased to come across the schoolroom of Olga and Tatiana. Krasnov was also employed as their drawing teacher (is there no end to this man's talents?), and some of their watercolours hang in this room, along with two by the architect.

Livadia was and is still Krasnov's most famous achievement. Pictures of it have appeared all over the world, but sadly in connection with the famous Yalta conference held there, without mentioning the building at all. Fortunately, Krasnov was duly rewarded in his lifetime for his work. On 5th October 1911, he was appointed Architect to the Imperial Court. On 6th December of the same year, he became a member of the Imperial Property Department responsible for the maintenance of all palaces and parks. He was selected for membership of the St Petersburg Academy of Art with the title "Academician of Architecture". And he received the order of St Vladimir 4th class.

There was just one more Imperial palace that Krasnov worked on – Ai-Todor. This was the home of Grand Duchess Xenia and Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich. It was an older house, inherited by the Grand Duke. Krasnov was involved in the construction of some of the later buildings, including the Children's House and Sosnovaya Roscha (Pine Woods) – a home, though never lived in, for Felix and Irina Yusupov on the estate. Krasnov "wants to build a little house rather like a bungalow. We chose a place near to us, leaving the previously cleared site for a large house in the future", Xenia wrote in her diary on 3rd October 1913. [22] Felix, as we know, was a rather exotic character and he had a quite a few unusual ideas for this property involving staircases, miniature rooms, and different floor levels. Krasnov had to bring all his tact to the fore to deal with Felix's eccentric ideas. On 9th October, Xenia wrote, "...we went with Irina and Felix to see Krasnov. He showed us the plans for the little house on Irina's plot. Rather in the Italian style. He stuttered in the most impossible way". [23] But he must have made a good

impression on Xenia as she was consulting Krasnov about electric lighting at Ai-Todor in January, 1914. [24]

Sosnovaya Roscha was the last Imperial building that Krasnov worked on. At the same time he was also working on a bank building in Simferopol, a country house called “Victoria” in Feodosia, another called “Olga” in Yalta, and a further building in Simiez. The last commission he received in the Crimea was from the Empress, characteristically for a hospital, to be built at Kuchuk-Lambat in 1916. It was never completed because sadly, Krasnov had to leave his reputation and achievements in the Crimea when the revolution took place.

He left the Ukraine in 1919 and, according to Prince Roman, “lived in impoverished surroundings in Belgrade until my cousin, King Alexander of Yugoslavia, gave him commissions for royal and government buildings”. [25] The first recorded date of him working in Belgrade is in 1922. At least he had picked the right place at the right time. Belgrade had just been through a war, a vast number of its buildings had suffered the consequences, and a lot of its talented workers had perished. It had gone from being the capital of a small country (Serbia) to the capital of a large country (which became Yugoslavia). It needed new hospitals, schools, government buildings, churches, theatres, banks etc etc. And because it was now such an important city, it’s ruling classes, led by King Alexander, wanted the city to look monumental and impressive.

Krasnov was the most well known but by no means the only member of the émigré building trade in Belgrade. Many Russians had flocked to their fellow Slav neighbours to escape the revolution. Two societies were formed at this time, “The Association of Russian Architects” and the “Union of Russian Engineers”. Krasnov was a fellow of the former, and the latter had as many as 347 members. They contributed to what became known as the “Russian Taste” in Belgrade, as they worked on rebuilding the city in a “monumental” style, parts of which resembled a mini St Petersburg or Moscow.

Krasnov’s work in Belgrade began when he was made an Inspector in the Ministry of Construction in 1922. He had an office and studio on the second floor of a building overlooking Masarikova Street. Many documents that he worked on at the time still exist – notes, plans, sketches, and watercolour drawings. He had large, clear handwriting and had mastered fluent Serbo-Croat. The documents show a diligent man of education and taste who had a “well-developed sense of form” [26]. He was a considerate and kindhearted man who was loved and respected by his colleagues, and was known as “Uncle Krasnov”. He had become a highly paid civil servant, living a comfortable life. For the first time, there is a record of his family. He was married to a lady called Anna (presumably in the Crimea), who died on 27th July 1930. He had a daughter called Olga and a grandson called Vladimir. They all lived together in Belgrade in a house at number 13 King Ferdinand Street. The house is no longer there and the street has since been renamed Prince Milos Street.

The first actual building he worked on in Yugoslavia was the mausoleum of the poet, Negosha, which had to be recreated after its destruction during the war. He then moved onto his most well known building in Belgrade – the Ministry of Finance in the centre of the city. He had to work with plans originally drawn up by two St

Petersburgian architects in 1908, but he developed a blueprint for these grand Ministerial buildings – a strictly symmetrical rectangular building, completely enclosed, with internal courtyards, embellished with classical and Renaissance decorations. This building was situated on a corner, marked by a cupola on the roof, on which stood a statue of a woman embodying Yugoslavia, designed by a Slovenian architect. The building was completed in 1928, added to in 1938, and extensively damaged by NATO bombs in 1999.

Over the next few years, Krasnov took on lots of other projects – a complex for the State Archives at the university, the façade of the State Council building, a memorial fountain, a Serb military cemetery in Salonika, reconstruction of a theatre, several more Ministries and even some high rise apartments. His attention to detail was so thorough that he was even responsible for the fence encircling the park of his National Assembly building.

In 1924, royalty summoned him again when Krasnov was asked by King Alexander to redecorate the interior of his official residence, the Old Palace in Belgrade. Like much else, the 1882 Renaissance building had been damaged during the war, though the gilded Royal Crowns atop domes on the roof had survived. Pictures show the interior to be classical in style. The building still stands but has been damaged again over the years, and is now used by the City Assembly.

King Alexander then asked Krasnov to complete the Royal Mausoleum in Oplenca. The building had been started long ago in 1910 but money and war had delayed its completion. It is a five-domed white marble church containing an amazing series of frescoes. It is impossible to tell what it was that Krasnov actually worked on, but I feel it must have been these frescoes as their design and completion were the mostly costly item in the church, and needed a great deal of work to create an overall harmony from the large number of different artists involved. The mausoleum was finished in 1930, and the Karadjordjevic dynasty is buried in the crypt, except for the head of the house and King Peter I whose sarcophagi are in the body of the church. [27]

Krasnov's last ever royal commission was the summer palace of Dedinje for King Alexander. He worked with another architect, Zivojin Nikolic on this white stone, Byzantine villa. He spent much time on the palace chapel dedicated to St Andrew, and on the interior decoration. "The Formal Hall is paved with stone and decorated with copies of medieval frescoes ... The Golden Drawing Room and Dining Room area in the style of the Renaissance, with impressive wood carved ceilings and bronze chandeliers ... The Basement is decorated in the style of the Moscow Terem Palace, vaults and walls painted with the themes of the Firebird legend, as well as motives from Serbian National Epics". [28] And there was a cinema too. Once again, Krasnov turned his hand to the grounds creating terraces, pergolas, and a swimming pool. The palace is still there, next to a smaller building, called the White Palace that was the home of Slobodan Milosevic. The whole area has been overcrowded with villas owned by Milosevic's followers. But since his fall, it has been hoped that Crown Prince Alexander and his family could return to Belgrade and take up residence again in their properties. In fact, a report in *The Times* for July 10th stated that the Serbian Prime Minister has told Crown Prince Alexander "that the way was

clear for his ‘family to return and live in their home’”. I am sure such an event would have pleased “uncle Krasnov”.

Belgrade was now a complete city with lots of monumental buildings. Krasnov was running out of work. Then in 1934, his patron, King Alexander, was assassinated. It was time for him to slow down and coast toward retirement. He designed some church interiors, built a bridge over the Sava River dedicated to the King, and gave lessons to a new generation of architects. He died in Belgrade on 8th December 1939, and is buried in the Russian section of Belgrade New Cemetery.

So, why is it that this prolific and leading architect seems so forgotten? Charlotte Zeepvat has suggested that in Russia, he was almost completely ignored, as he was so closely associated with the Tsarist regime and “Bloody Nicholas” in particular. I certainly believe that is true. But I also think that he was a skilful and inspired architect but no innovator. Like all those of us interested in history, he tended to look backwards rather than forwards. He built in Classical, Moorish and Byzantine styles. He would never have built anything that the Prince of Wales could call a “monstrous carbuncle”. It is a great shame that Krasnov is forgotten, but his buildings and his designs live on to tell the tale.

Notes:

- [1] Arkhitektura SSSR magazine, no. 4, 1990, July/August
- [2] Tourist leaflet purchased in and called “Livadia”, probably issued by the Yalta tourist board
- [3] Am Hof des Letzen Zaren, by Prince Roman Romanov (Piper, Zurich, 1995) translated by Helen Lee
- [4] Ibid
- [5] Arkhitektura SSSR magazine, no. 4, 1990, July/August
- [6] Lost Splendour by Prince Felix Yusupov (G.P. Putnam’s Sons, New York, 1954)
- [7] Back of a Crimean postcard
- [8] Information supplied by Charlotte Zeepvat
- [9] The Romanovs in the Crimea
- [10] A Romanov Diary by Grand Duchess George (Atlantic, New York, 1988)
- [11] Ibid
- [12] Ibid
- [13] Information supplied by Charlotte Zeepvat
- [14] Lost Splendour by Prince Felix Yusupov (G.P. Putnam’s Sons, New York, 1954)
- [15] Lifelong Passion by Andrei Maylunas & Sergei Mironenko (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1996)
- [16] The Romanovs and the Crimea by Marina Zemlyanichenko & Nikolai Kalinin (Kruk, Moscow, 1993)
- [17] Quoted in Tourist leaflet purchased in and called “Livadia”, probably issued by the Yalta tourist board
- [18] Ibid

- [19] Quoted in Arkhitektura SSSR magazine, no. 4, 1990, July/August
- [20] Quoted in the tourist leaflet purchased in and called “Livadia”, probably issued by the Yalta tourist board
- [21] Ibid
- [22] Lifelong Passion by Andrei Maylunas & Sergei Mironenko (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1996)
- [23] Ibid
- [24] Ibid
- [25] Am Hof des Letzen Zaren, by Prince Roman Romanov (Piper, Zurich, 1995) translated by Helen Lee
- [26] Arkhitektura SSSR magazine, no. 4, 1990, July/August
- [27] Guide book to Oplenac published in 1972 Now confirmed by video about Oplenac that I have a copy of which Ove Mogensen bought in Belgrade which has a vo saying Krasnov’s name and the word mosaic in one sentence
- [28] From HRH Crown Prince Alexander’s website at www.royalfamily.org/exhibits/royalpalace

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*** “In Russia every man has military rank. The little Grand Duchess Olga’s tutors were supposed to be generals, and were called ‘Your Excellency’. They wore the uniform of generals, but had a little button in front of the cap, placed in a different position from that of the real live military generals”. From “Six Years at the Russian Court” by M. Eager, published by Hurst and Blackett in London, 1906

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[Any comments or questions?](#)