



Berdyaev's Moscow: A Philosophical Investigation of Local History

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Berdyaev's Moscow: A Philosophical Investigation of Local History

Based on considerable factual material, the author establishes Berdyaev's Moscow addresses and shows how Berdyaev's Moscow environment related to different stages of his philosophical work and public life.

On Nikolai Berdyaev's 140th anniversary (1874–1948), Moscow's philosophers and local historians once again noted that Berdyaev, who was born in Kiev and died in Clamart, near Paris, was in large part a “Muscovite.”¹ Moscow's intellectual environment played a unique role in his life, especially the final years before Berdyaev's expulsion from Russia by the Bolsheviks.

However, Moscow has yet to dedicate a single memorial to Berdyaev (monuments exist in his native Kiev as well as in Zhitomir and Sudak), and his Moscow addresses are still confused, even in academic publishing. His jubilee year should serve as an occasion to clarify substantial fragments of Berdyaev's Moscow life; this should be done by professional historians of Moscow in collaboration with historians of Russian philosophy.

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Translated by Peter Golub.

Berdyaev first settled in Moscow in the autumn of 1908 after leaving St. Petersburg (where he gained experience working for the journals *Voprosy zhizni* [*Questions of Life*] and *Novy put'* [*The New Path*]) and began working for *Moskovskii ezhenedel'nik*,—published by Margarita Morozova and Evgeny Trubetskoy.² Then Berdyaev, with his second wife Lydia Yudifovna* (maiden name, Trushev and Rapp by her first marriage) moved into Timofeeva's furnished apartment on the corner of Armianskii Lane and Krivokolennyi Lane in central Moscow.³

In most publications it is erroneously stated that they lived at Armianskii Lane 1,[†] but the entrance to the two-room apartment was on the side of Krivokolennyi Lane 8. It is a little-known fact that one of the most famous Moscow tenements—the “Mikini House” (or the “ship house” as it popularly known)—is two separate buildings, designed by two different architects. Although both were built in the Art Nouveau style between 1901 and 1905, the house on the Armianskii side was designed by Vladimir Vlastov for owner M.M. Lerner, while the house on the Krivokolennyi side was designed by Pyotr Mikini for his brother Lieutenant Colonel Vladimir Mikini. During 1908–11, all the letters sent by Berdyaev from this address are clearly marked Krivokolennyi Lane, Mikini House, and this is where his correspondence was sent.

The house where the Berdyaevs lived has its own history. In 1797, a Lutheran family, the Pestels, rented an apartment from Count Alexander Santi (a Sardinian aristocrat who distinguished himself in the Russian service). The family consisted of the Moscow postmaster Ivan Pestel and his wife Elizabeth Ivanovna Pestel (née Krok), and their three young sons; that year their first-born son, Pavel (the future Decembrist), was four years old. In 1831, Santi's heirs sold the property to Ekaterina L'vovna Tyutcheva,[‡] mother of Fyodor Tyutchev (Berdyaev's favorite poet), and lived there until 1840. In 1856, after going through a number of owners, the house became the property of Mikhail Nikiforovich Katkov—professor of philosophy, publicist, and well-known Moscow publisher. Here, at Krivokolennyi Lane 8, Katkov, together with his friend and associate Pavel Leont'ev, published *Russkii vestnik* [*The Russian Messenger*] and *Moskovskie vedomosti*.

There are few accounts remaining of the time Berdyaev spent in the small apartment on Krivokolennyi Lane. Evgeniia Gertsyuk notes: “There

*Patronymics are used extensively in this article.

†Addresses are given as street name, house number, apartment number.

‡Female Russian last names often end with an “a.” Consider, Anna Arkadevna *Karenina* who is the wife of Alexei Alexandrovich *Karenin*.—Trans.

was always the acute lack of money, but the penury of the situation never overshadowed his innate lordliness. He was always proudly poised, with lush black hair, in an elegant, well-cut suit, submerged in the thin smoke of his cigar. His beautiful wife, Lydiia Yudifovna, dressed in crushed velvet, would greet guests with a desultory gesture. And at the tea table, the host's scintillating conversation could be heard."⁴ While living in Mikini House, Berdyaev sometimes rented furnished apartments at Kniazhnii Dvor, on the city estate of Prince Golitsyn at the corner of Volkhonka St. and Malii Znamenskii Lane. The out-of-town participants of the Moscow Religious-Philosophical Society in memory of Vladimir Solovyev (of which Berdyaev was an organizer) usually stayed there. In those years, he often frequented the Moscow mansions of Margarita Morozova (a generous patron of the Society), which included the mansion on Smolenskii Blvd.; on Znamenka St. 11 (which for a time housed the publishing house *Put'*), and Morozova's new mansion on Mertvii Lane (now Prechistenskii Lane) 9. Today this is the site of the Danish Embassy.⁵ Berdyaev visited the Khrushchev-Kotliarev mansion on Prechistenskii Blvd. (now Gogol Blvd.) 31, the residence of the leading Russian Symbolist, Andrei Bely (from 1910 to 1916), and which for a time was the location of the Musaget publishing house.⁶

From 1909, Berdyaev lectured at the Alphonse Shaniavskii Moscow University, first located on the city estate of the Golitsyns (where there was a separate entrance from Volkhonka St.), and then in the new building on Musskaia Square.

Around the same years, Berdyaev became interested in theological disputes, which usually took place on Sundays in a number of Moscow public houses colorfully called "the Pits."⁷ There is good evidence that Berdyaev visited one of these Pits—the Chuev Pub on the corner of Rozhdestvenka St. and Sofiika Lane.⁸ This ordinary establishment was transformed into a kind of club by two friends, the famous Moscow bookseller Afanasii Astapov and historian Nikolai Bocharov (author of *Moscow and Muscovites* [*Moskva i moskvichi*]). At that time, Astapov had a bookshop near the Holy Trinity in the Fields Church, located at the gates of Kitaigorod (later this became the site of a monument to the first printer, Ivan Fedorov). On Sundays, Bocharov went to Astapov's bookshop to purchase rare books. While the clerks rummaged through Astapov's extensive stock looking for the books Bocharov had ordered, the friends went to Rozhdestvenka St., where some three hundred meters away was Chuev Pub. One account notes: "The friends made the Pit their residence, and were always surrounded by a friendly, talkative crowd. Conversation moved easily from books and Russian antiquities to the subject of God. It is in the pub that the average Russian likes

most to discuss the divine. The bibliophiles were followed into the pub by the God-seekers.”⁹ It is said that in the last years of his life the great Vladimir Solovyev liked to take tea at Chev Pub. And in the early 1910s, Nikolai Berdyaev and Sergei Bulgakov became regular participants of the theological discussions at the Pit on Rozhdestvenka St.¹⁰

Several time, Evgeniia Gertsyk accompanied Berdyaev to the Pit. She described the atmosphere of the religious discussions as follows:

... there were sectarians of various persuasions, there were Tolstoyans, there were debates ... around a table with a pot-bellied kettle; the listeners were mostly commoners, but there were also curious intellectuals: religion had become fashionable. There were disputes about hell: whether it was real or in the soul ... There were mystics who believed in neither death nor sin ... It seems there were as many faiths as there were people. These uneducated pub regulars’ passion for the game of thought is the same as that of the philosophers debating in the roundshalls of the university, perhaps even more authentic. Sometimes, after all the strangers had left and only the most dedicated remained, the tables were moved and Berdyaev would provoke them with sharp questions, outline their thoughts, and then in his polemical, fiery style begin to talk about the church, about universality.¹¹

The months (in 1913–14) Berdyaev spent in the mansion of his friends the Grineviches, located on Savelovskii Lane (now Pozharskii Lane), constitute a special period of his Moscow life. Some biographers, based on references to “life on Ostozhenka,” erroneously place the house on Ostozhenka St. (and cannot pinpoint its location precisely), because they confuse the street with the eponymous Moscow district. In fact, the Grinevich residence was located on Savelovskii Lane 10, very close to Ostozhenka St.

Vera Stepanovna Grinevich, (née Romanova), whose father was the commandant of the Sudak Fortress, was well acquainted with the Berdyaevs through the Gertsyk sisters Evgeniia and Adelaide. A well-educated woman of means (her husband, Pavel Ivanovich, was a rich Poltava landowner), she was interested in humanitarian-educational projects and the latest methods of child pedagogy. During 1907–08, she established a publishing house in St. Petersburg; and after moving to Moscow, she planned to open a girls’ school with a theological-philosophical curriculum in memory of Vladimir Solovyev.

Grinevich suggested that the Berdyaevs stay with her, since at that time they had no Moscow residence. However, as she had no spare rooms, she initially settled them in the large guest hall, which for some time served as her guests’ office, dining room, and bedroom. In February 1913 Evgeniia

Gertsyk wrote to Vyacheslav Ivanov in St. Petersburg: “I now live in Vera Stepanovna’s grammar school, which is fantastic and still being put together, and here we also settled the Berdyaevs. For the time being we live as nomads.”¹²

Unfortunately, Grinevich’s humanitarian project never came to fruition. The chapter of Evgeniia Gertsyk’s memoirs, “Vera,” notes: “She was captivated by the idea of creating a school permeated with the evangelical spirit of love and brotherhood, folk truth.... The old mansion on Ostozhenka. The amenity of old nobility. The school dedicated to Vladimir Solovyev. The ideology attracted the Slavophile epigones, memorable figures of Muscovite nobility. Children were, however, the least noticeable.... Lessons were continually interrupted.... The school on Ostozhenka was a chimera, as was much of what occurred in those doomed years. (This was 1913).”¹³

The significance of the Grinevich mansion is clearly underestimated by Berdyaev’s biographers, many of whom believe that the building has not been preserved. In fact, the mansion of the second half of the nineteenth century was rebuilt by the architect Boris Kozhevnikov in 1907, with the current address Pozharskii Lane 6. (House numbers in the last century have shifted, which is the cause of the confusion.) This is the “old noble mansion” where Berdyaev lived from 1913 to 1914, corroborated by photographs from the famous Aemilius Got-Dufaye Collection. Among these, there are at least two with views of Savelovskii Lane from Nizhnii Lesnoi Lane (now Kursovoi Lane) in the direction of Ostozhenka St., dated 1913.¹⁴ The opulent Grinevich mansion is clearly visible, and there are no other “noble mansions with a garden” on this (even-numbered) side of the street. It seems that the restorations carried out during the 1970s–80s, and then in the 1990s, were made according to the original plans.¹⁵

This fact is significant, because the Grinevich mansion on Savelovskii Lane is where the Berdyaevs marked the 1914 new year—this celebration is often cited as extremely important in memoirs of their contemporaries.

In the summer of 1913, Lydiia Ivanova (daughter of Vyacheslav Ivanov) traveled from Rome and arrived in Moscow to attend a conservatory. (In the autumn, she was joined by her father, his new wife Vera Shvarsalon, and her young son Dmitry). She recalls: “During the winter season of 1913–14 Moscow was unusually ebullient and joyful. Was this a subconscious presentiment that this would be the last radiant, untroubled year? Or was it as if everyone’s eyes had been blindfolded? The people’s revelry was insatiable, and the city was full of plays, concerts, and most of all balls: everyone wanted to dance.”¹⁶ Ivanova particularly remembered the “Berdyaev’s ball,” which she attended in one of Vera Shvarsalon’s tailored

costumes as an Italian flower girl: “Berdyayev—Nikolai Aleksandrovich, his wife Lydia Yudifovna, and her sister Evgeniia Yudifovna Rapp—lived at the center of the city, in a small street between Arbat and Ostozhenka, in an old noble mansion. They had a fabulous, large two-tiered hall of windows of beautiful architecture. From time to time they would invite a substantial group of their friends and facetiously called these evenings ‘balls.’ But come Christmastide 1913–14, they invited their friends to an authentic ball, with costumes and everything. It was awfully charming, and we danced.”¹⁷ However, Lydiia Ivanova remembered that “ball” not only because of the revelry:

At one point, a cloud passed over everything, which was, however, not noticed by everyone. That year there appeared in Moscow, God knows from where, some sort of mystic, a tall old Swede. He was oddly dressed and had a heavy beard and long hair. He had been received by many of our friends. And that night he appeared at the Berdyayev’s ball. I was too busy dancing to hear him, but Lydia Yudifovna told me what he said: “Behold, you are happy, celebrating the New Year. But you are blind! A terrible time is upon us. The bloody year of 1914 will open a cataclysm, the whole world is collapsing” and so on in that vein.¹⁸

To these memoirs can be added the impressions of Berdyayev himself, who wrote in *Self-Knowledge: An Essay in Autobiography* [Samopoznanie: opyt filosofskoi avtobiografii] that the “mysterious Swede” stayed in his house for a few days before the Christmas ball:

I particularly remember one fascinating individual. We were having breakfast and a mysterious man appeared in the dining room. Everyone felt the strangeness of his appearance. He was a *nordischer Mensch*, reminiscent of a Viking: enormous height, very handsome, middle-aged, with long curls falling around his shoulders, and dressed in a cloak. He walked the streets without a hat. When we walked with him around Moscow, everyone looked at him He turned out to be Swedish doctor named Lübeck. He had been sent to me specifically and filled me with great sympathy. Lübeck’s insight was uncanny, almost clairvoyant He celebrated New Year’s with us. It was the eve of the 1914 There were a lot of people, everyone making predictions for the next year. Nobody thought of war. Lübeck made this prediction: In the coming year there will begin a terrible world war, Russia will be defeated and lose territory, and then there will be a revolution.¹⁹

Subsequently another of Dr. Lübeck’s predictions came true—that Berdyayev would soon become a professor at Moscow University. At that time this too was unthinkable, because not only did Berdyayev lack a

doctoral degree—he didn't even have a master's. However, in 1920 he became a professor.

Up to the 1960s, there existed another Berdyaev Moscow address—the house of Adelaide Gertsyk and her husband Dmitry Zhukovsky, located on Krechetnikovskii Lane.²⁰ Berdyaev stopped by several times in the first winter of the war (1914–15), during his visits to Moscow from the Babaki estate near Kharkov, in search of a stable writing or teaching job. In January 1915, he visited the house with Lydia Yudifovna, planning to stay for just a few days. Evgeniia Gertsyk, who also lived in the house on Krechetnikovskii Lane, wrote about the visit:

The apartment was in a side street near Novinskii Blvd. and there were snowdrifts in the yard. We lived quietly, stunned by what had occurred. With the arrival of the Berdyaevs more people began to visit and arguments flared. During one of the first days, Nikolai Aleksandrovich, returning from some meeting, slipped and broke his leg. When he was carried into the house, he continued to argue with an acquaintance about some philosophical issue. Then the leg was iced, put in splints, and took quite a while to heal. He was laid up for two months. Friends and acquaintances came to visit. There were phone calls, arrivals, departures, and escalating disputes between him and Sergei Bulgakov and Vyacheslav Ivanov, who had succumbed to chauvinist sentiments. There were visitors from St. Petersburg and from the front.²¹

Evgeniia Gertsyk noticed how in those weeks Berdyaev's Polish roots and sympathies were expressed; many close to him learned for the first time that his godmother was Countess Elizabeth Krasinskia (née Branickaia), the wife of the famous Polish poet Zygmunt Krasinski, the heir of Adam Mickiewicz's poetic style and political beliefs.

There were new Polish refugees pouring in from Warsaw, and some of them made contact with Berdyaev. Their conversation switched to French and to questions of Polish messianism. Szymanowski played on our long-silent piano. He was a talented composer and innovator. . . . Nikolai Aleksandrovich deeply sympathized with the tragic fate of the Polish nation. And in general, it was during this time that his interest in the issues of nationality intensified. Unlike the Slavophiles and their followers, who had a one-sided obsession with nationality, he perceptively delved into the particularities of each nation. . . . But he hated pacifism as much as chauvinism—the shirking of one's duty to the homeland was anathema to him. Love for Russia went to his head like wine.²²

We now come to the last and longest period of time Berdyaev spent in Moscow—when he lived on Bolshoi Vlasevskii Lane in a house now

famous for that reason. This final address became the subject of a peculiar mix-up that is a discredit to some biographers.²³

There is considerable evidence (including Berdyaev's own correspondence) that at the end of September 1915, the Berdyaevs moved to Bolshoi Vlasevskii Lane 14, 3. The move was preceded by an extensive search for a suitable apartment as the place had to accommodate not only Nikolai Aleksandrovich (and his overgrown archive and library), Lydia Yudifovna, and Evgeniia Yudifovna but also Berdyaev's sick father, Alexander Mikhailovich, who after the death of his eldest son Sergei (in 1914) was left alone in Kiev. A fitting apartment was finally found, consisting of three bedrooms, an office (where at night Berdyaev slept on the couch), a living room, and a dining room. Several windows faced the street; the others, including those in Berdyaev's office, looked out onto the courtyard, across which stood (and still stands) another house with its own remarkable history.

In the literature on Berdyaev, it is often said that before his exile he lived in "the former home of Alexander Ivanovich Herzen" (the details vary). However, the house connected with the Herzen family is located in the courtyard of the "Berdyaev House" (which is today one story higher and appears under the address Bolshoi Vlasevskii Lane 14, 2). Alexander Ivanovich Herzen was born in 1812, in the house of his uncle on Tverskoi Blvd. In 1824, Ivan Alekseevich Yakovlev (Alexander Herzen's father) finally acquired his own home in a vast courtyard between two Vlasevskii lanes.

Here Alexander Herzen lived with his parents for almost ten years, until in 1833 his father bought a mansion from the Countess Ekaterina Petrovna Rostopchina—the "big house," located on Sivtsev Vrazhek Lane.

Multiple memoirs confirm that the Berdyaev House and the Herzen House should not be confused. For instance, consider the recollections of the writer Boris Zaitsev, who frequently visited Berdyaev's apartment in the postrevolutionary years, and was well acquainted with the Berdyaev circle:

I was once struck by Berdyaev's negative attitude toward Herzen. It was like this. The window of Nikolai Aleksandrovich's office (on Vlasevskii Lane) looked out onto the courtyard interior. There was a house. It was a hospital during the European war. Then its occupants were unknown. The house was sacked, there seems to have been a fire, and then it began to collapse—it stood without windows and doors. At one point in time this was the house where Herzen had lived. Although, it should not to be confused with the house where Herzen was born, on Tverskoi Blvd. We were all standing at the office window, and Berdyaev said looking out

at the remains of the building: “that is the fruit of Herzen’s views—an apropos example of that toward which Herzen and his ilk led Russia.” Bukshin (?) and Griftsov sympathetically picked up Berdyaev’s words.²⁴

The Berdyaev House on Bolshoi Vlasevskii was located close to the Church of the Holy Hieromartyr Blaise of Sebaste. Berdyaev was an active member of the parish council. In the summer of 1918, Lydia Yudifovna took Catholic vows and became a parishioner of the Greek Catholic community under the guidance of Fr. Vladimir Abrikosov.²⁵

Between the Berdyaev House and the wall of St. Blaise grew a magnificent old oak grove; the hundred-year-old trees each had a name and no doubt were around during the time of the young Herzen.²⁶ I believe it is highly likely that these oaks (and perhaps one in particular) inspired Berdyaev to write one of his most famous texts from those years.

One of the first pieces Berdyaev wrote while living in the Bolshoi Vlasevskii apartment, was the article “Dukh i mashina” [The Spirit and the Machine], originally published in the newspaper *Birzhevie vedomosti* (October 12, 1915) and later included as the final chapter of Berdyaev’s famous book *Sud’ba Rossii* [Russia’s Fate].²⁷

The article is directed against the neo-Slavophilia that was popular in the early months of World War I and the claim that the “Russian spirit” was superior to the “German machine.” Berdyaev begins with the article with these words:

Never before has the relation of spirit and machine been so radically opposed as it is today. The world war has brought this subject into sharp relief. Our debates about Germanism revolve around the theme of the spirit and the machine. It is undeniable that Germany was full of spirit, and that Germany developed the most perfect examples of mechanization. It is as if the German machine were cast from the depths of the German spirit. It is at the forefront, having once set the tone of peaceful life, it now sets the tone of war But can we say that the spirit dies in this materialization, that the machine expels it from life . . . ? I think this view is too superficial. The meaning of the appearance of the machine and its conquering movement is not what it seems at first glance. Its meaning is spiritual, not material. The machine itself is a manifestation of the spirit, a moment in its path.²⁸

Later, Berdyaev unfolds an entire chain of reasoning whose metaphorical core is the image of an oak in bloom, undoubtedly inspired by the oak grove outside his window:

The oak in bloom is beautiful and the machine is ugly—it offends the eye, ear and nose; it pleases not. We love the oak and would like for it to inherit eternity and for us to sit under its wide flowering branches forever. But we cannot love the machine and do not wish eternity upon it; at best we recognize only its usefulness. It is tempting to stop that fateful process of life, leading from the flowering oak to the ugly and pestilential machine.²⁹

However, Berdyaev departs from these simple juxtapositions and postulates:

... the transition from organic wood, from redolent vegetation to mechanical machine, to lifeless artificiality, must be experienced and lived through religiously.... Resurrection requires death, a passage through sacrifice. And the transition from the organic and integrated to the mechanical and fragmented is the painful, sacrificial way of the spirit. This sacrifice must be consciously accepted. Only through this is the freedom of spirit achieved. The machine is the crucifixion of the flesh of the world, the ascension of fragrant flowers and singing birds to the cross. This is the Golgotha of nature. In the inexorable process of the artificial mechanization of nature, the sin of internal constraint and hostility is expiated.³⁰

In the essay, Berdyaev calls his opponents, the neo-Slavophiles “reactionary romantics, in anguish and fear holding onto the passing, old and decomposing organic life; they are scared in the face of the inevitable process of life.... How little these people actually believe in the spirit, in its immortality and indestructibility, in its imperviousness to dark forces.”³¹

The image of the oak continues to be central to in the essay:

What was eternally present in the oak ... will transform and continue in spirit, and will retain its timeless form, having been freed from its material weight and constraint.... True Life is the constant process of creation; it is not what we apparently see today, not the elementary organic, the animal and plant life of nature and society.³²

Berdyaev concludes the essay with the following words:

There is no returning to the old paradise under the old oak tree.... If Russia wants to be a great empire and play a role in history, it must take the path of material and technical development without which it will reach an impasse. This is the only path to freeing the spirit of Russia and realizing its inner depths.³³

In her memoirs, Evgeniia Gertsyk described the atmosphere of the Berdyaev apartment as follows:

Evening. We walk the familiar Arbat streets to the Berdyaevs. A square room with mahogany furniture. A mirror in an antique oval frame hangs over the sofa. Two women sit in twilight: beautiful and friendly—Berdyaev's wife and her sister. He is not home, but as usual I go into his office. Sit behind the large desk: there is no creative disorder, everything is put away in the table, only stacks of books to the left and right. How many are there: the closer ones are being read and marked; further on are future reads. There is some variety: Kabbalah, Husserl and Cohen, Symeon the New Theologian, works on physics, and at some distance, to be read at night, a novel—something exquisite from the second-hand bookshop: *Melmoth the Wanderer*. I walk around the room: over the wide sofa, where he makes his bed for the night, is a crucifix of ebony and ivory, which we bought together in Rome. There is a watercolor on the wall—the reverent brushstrokes depict the cell of an elder monk. It was painted by Berdyaev's grandmother: Kiev gentility. At a young age, she fell under the influence Parfeny the Hermit.³⁴

The writer Boris Zaitsev left an account of the social scene that gathered at the apartment in the final years before Berdyaev's exile:

Berdyaev's circle was always very interesting. He valued people according to their preponderance, not their proximity to his own views. It can be said that although his regular visitors made a diverse group they all had something in common. They shared many sympathies and antipathies, and at times it seemed as if they had conspired in advance. Of the geniuses of Russian culture, Berdyaev's circle most appreciated Fyodor Dostoevsky and Vladimir Solovyev.³⁵

There are, of course, other Moscow addresses associated with Berdyaev. For instance, the Church of St. Nicholas in Klenniki at the head of Maroseika St., where Berdyaev's confessor—the elder Aleksei Mechev—served liturgy. In 1922, the priest blessed Berdyaev before his exile: "You must leave. The West must hear your words."

Another important site is the apartment of the composer Alexander Scriabin, which was often visited by Berdyaev. Today, the apartment (Nikolopeskovskii Lane 11) is the Alexander Scriabin Memorial Museum and has preserved the setting from those years.

Two Moscow addresses, Leontievskii Lane 16 and Bolshaia Nikitskaia St. 24 (both extant) are associated with Berdyaev's work (1918–22) in the so-called "Writers' Shop," a bookselling cooperative, where he worked in collaboration with Mikhail Osorgin, Boris Zaitsev, Boris Gritsov, and others.

Old Moscow will always remember the distinctive figure of Nikolai Alexandrovich Berdyaev. In Andrei Bely's description: "Tall, highbrowed,

and straight nosed, with a neat black beard and a wild mane of wavy dark hair nearly touching his shoulders, and blue, trusting eyes . . . dressed in a light-gray coat, a hat the color of milky coffee, with matching gloves and cane.”³⁶

Today, Moscow will forever be indebted to this brilliant, remarkable thinker and citizen.

Notes

1. Berdyaev repeatedly—before and after his exile—wrote that “the intellectual richness of Moscow life” was closer to him in spirit than the life of St. Petersburg, Berlin, or Paris. The methodology of “philosophical local-historiography” was first undertaken by the author of this article to explore the life and work of Boris Zaitsev. See Aleksei Kara-Murza, “Dante i Pushkin (Florentiisko-moskovskie razmyshleniia B.K. Zaitseva),” in *Rossiiia, istoriia, politika. K 80-letiiu I.K. Pantina* (Moscow, 2010), pp. 133–54.

2. In his extensive (and often contradictory) memoirs Andrei Bely claimed that Berdyaev “appeared in Moscow during 1905–06,” but it is either an obvious error of memory, or an instance of negligence, quite common for the memoirist. The most authoritative evidence in this case seems to me the recollections of the always accurate Evgeniia Kazimirovna Gertsyk, who recounts that Berdyaev moved to Moscow in the autumn of 1908: “He was homeless, having just quarreled with the St. Petersburg circle of modernists . . . Homeless, the feverish quarrel behind him, he was suddenly younger, rejuvenated, full of seething creativity—and how much I needed him then, in the spring of ‘09. *Since autumn* (my italics—A.K.), he and his wife were settled in a modest Moscow rooming house . . .” (Evgeniia Gertsyk, *Vospominaniia* (Paris, 1973), p. 120).

3. In early 1903, while serving his sentence of internal exile in Zhitomir, Berdyaev married the daughter of a provincial postmaster, V.A. Semenov—Elena Vasilevna Semenova. They had a daughter who unfortunately died soon after birth and was buried in one of the Zhitomir cemeteries. As it is well known, Berdyaev’s second marriage was a common-law marriage.

4. Gertsyk, *Vospominaniia*, p. 120

5. In this house (converted by Margarita Morozova for meetings of the Moscow Religious-Philosophical Society) a meeting was held on May 26, 1917 in memory of the recently deceased Vladimir Erne. Berdyaev was one of the main speakers.

6. For example, on January 26, 1911, after the lecture of Ellis L. Kobylynsky, it was here that the famous debate took place between Berdyaev and Fyodor Stepun about the relationship of Catholicism and Symbolism.

7. There were a few “Pits” in Moscow. In *Self-Knowledge* Berdyaev himself recalls one near the Miasnitskaia police station, by the Church of St. Flor and Lavr. See Nikolai Berdyaev, *Samopoznanie: opyt filiosofskoi avtobiografii* (Moscow, 1990), p. 180.

8. Many Muscovites are familiar with this place. During 1970s and 1980s, in the basement of the building on the corner of Rozhdestvenka St. (then Zhdanov St.), and Pushkinskaia St. was a popular café, Sardinka, which, according to several

memoirs, played a significant role in the formation of the rock band Mashina Vremeni. (I lived some two hundred meters away.)

9. Aleksei Pankratov, *Ishchushchie Boga: Ocherk sovremennikh iskanii i nastroenii* (Moscow, 1911). Quoted in Alexei Ermichev (ed.), *Nikolai Berdyaev: pro et contra*. (St. Petersburg, 1994), vol. 1, pp. 35–36.

10. Ibid.

11. Gertsyk, *Vospominaniia*, p. 122

12. Gertsyk sisters. *Letters* (St. Petersburg, 2002), p. 606.

13. Gertsyk, *Vospominaniia*, p. 125

14. In the collection of Emil Vladimirovich Gauthier-Dyufaye (member of the Imperial Moscow Archeological Society) these photographs appear under the numbers 2329/52 and 2485/16.

15. In 1999, by the Decree of the Government of Moscow, signed by Mayor Yuri Luzhkov, the mansion complex was transferred, on a long-term lease, to the company Sol-TH Ltd.

16. Lydiia Ivanova, *Vospominaniia. Kniga ob otse* (Moscow, 1992), p. 54.

17. The seventeen-year-old Lydiia Ivanova, having arrived in Moscow only half a year ago, sometimes confuses Moscow topography. The “Berdyaev Ball” was undoubtedly held at the Grinevich Mansion on Savelovskii Lane. That is, not “between Arbat and Ostozhenka,” but Ostozhenka and the Moscow River. The “fabulous, large two-tiered hall of windows” is the room where the Berdyaevs first settled when they moved into the Grinevtich Mansion.

18. Ivanova, *Vospominaniia*, p. 54.

19. Nikolai Berdyaev, *Samopoznanie*, pp. 183–84. Dr. Edward William Lübeck, a renowned psychiatrist, with a clinic-sanatorium in Finland for the treatment of psychiatric illness, committed suicide in June 1919.

20. The house at Krechetnikovskii Ln. 13 lasted until the early 1960s and was demolished (as well as all the surrounding block) when Novyi Arbat was laid down.

21. Gertsyk, *Vospominaniia*, pp. 132–33.

22. Ibid., p. 133.

23. In Ol’ga Volkogonova’s overall excellent book on Berdyaev, there is a series of photos called “The Lives of Famous People” (an insert that, the author claims, was made without her permission), which includes a photograph with the erroneous caption: “Vlasevskii Ln. in Moscow. Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin on Mogiltsy. The Berdyaevs lived nearby, in house 4.” In fact Berdyaev lived in house number 14 on the Bolshoi Vlasevskii Ln. next to the church of St. Blaise (very far from the one shown in the photo). This confusion with Berdyaev’s addresses can also be found in *Khronika zhizni i tvorchestva N.A. Berdyaeva* and in the recently published volume on Berdyaev, included in the series: *Filosofia Rossii pervoi poloviny XX veka*. For some reason the author of *Khronika zhizni i tvorchestva N.A. Berdiaeva* writes that in 1916 Berdyaev “moved to Moscow, into an apartment on Malyi Vlasevskii Ln. 14, apt. 3” (see: *Nikolai Aleksandrovich Berdiaev* (Moscow, 2013), p. 508). In just this one line there are two errors: Berdyaev moved to *Bolshoi Vlasyevskii Ln.* at the *end of September 1915*. To put an end to this matter once and for all, it is enough to reference Berdyaev’s arrest and interrogation records from 1920 and 1922. Here the same official address plainly states: *Bolshoi Vlasevskii Ln. 14*.

24. See Aleksei Ermichev (ed.), *Nikolai Berdyaev: pro et contra*. (St. Petersburg, 1994), vol. 1, p. 64. Also, it should be noted that Zaitsev’s “Bukshтин”

is likely Yakov Mikhailovich Bukshpan—economist, a contributor (along with Berdyaev) to the famous 1921 collection of essays, *Oswald Spengler and the Decline of the West*. He was executed in 1939.

25. In September 1922 Vladimir Abrikosov was expelled from Russia on the same “philosophers’ ship” as Berdyaev.

26. One of these oaks became an attraction of old Moscow and grows in the courtyard of the Berdyaev House to this day. It is named Philemon and is over 200 years old, as certified by its plaque. The tree became a figure of Moscow folklore, which the poet Ilya Falikov recounted in his poem: “The oak named Philemon surrounded by nameless flora//Surrounded by nameless fauna the oak named Philemon.//It alone stood watch as the harlequins, lechers, and thieves,//The financiers and the hypnotists crowed in from all sides.//Native, natal, neither *limitchik* nor invader//No cache of lucky larceny, no investment and no sale.//No fake family or spurious documents pulled from a chemical bath//Doesn’t feign another’s circular years on its saw cut . . .” (*Novy mir*, 2012, no. 12).

27. See Nikolai Berdyaev, “Dukh i mashina,” *Sud’ba Rossii: Opyti po psikhologii voini i natsional’nosti* (Moscow, 1918), pp. 233–40.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 233.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 236.

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 236–37.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 237.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 239.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 240.

34. Gertsyk, *Vospominaniia*, p. 117. The mother of Berdyaev’s father was born Countess Bakhmetieva, and while her husband, General Mikhail Berdyaev, was still alive, took monastic vows.

35. *Nikolai Berdyaev: pro et contra*. p. 64.

36. Andrei Bely, *Mezhdu dvukh revoliutsii* (Moscow, 1990), p. 333.