**SOURCES, REMARKS, OBSERVATIONS, ANECDOTES, TRANSLATIONS, AND PERHAPS DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS OF "NEW"**

# SUPPLEMENTAL

# RUSSIAN

# MAZUR-MAZURKA

## SOURCES

**DANCE MATERIAL (EXCLUDING DANCE MANUALS) TO BE CONSIDERED AS AN ADDENDUM OR SUPPLEMENT TO PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED WORK (1984) OF**

**R. CWIĘKA - SKRZYNIARZ**

**A CONTINUING WORK IN PROGRESS NOT IN A CERTAIN TOPICAL OR THEMATIC ORDER BUT ONLY ARRANGED IN A CHRONLOGICAL ORDER — THERE ARE OVERLAPPING CATEGORIES**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Readers Note: Original material is in italics and surrounded by quotation marks. Side-by-side or immediately following is the translation for foreign language material if needed.

## 1783 POLISH INFLUENCE AT THE U KRARKOFF

> "*Count Severin Potocki was appointed Curator of the university of Kharkoff, which was the centre of a district the inhabitants of which were strongly desirous of obtaining the means of instruction. Count Severin, as a Pole, had been treated with great consideration by Alexander when he was Grand-Duke;. . .* [1]

## 1815 SAINT PETERSBURG, RUSSIA, PEOPLE

From the memoir of J. Zaluski we read that he was not a dancer but his Russian guests insisted that he dance the Mazur with Princess Trubiecka. Here is what he did:

> " *Nic to nie pomogło, a nawet urodziwa księżniczka Eliza zdawała się mnie prosić, żebym z nią tańcował . . . odpasałem więc szpadę i stanąłem do koła. Ledwie kapela zagrała, prosiłem głośno a z zadziwieniem współtancerzów, żeby grano żywiej! Całe, zgromadzenie obstąpiło koło nasze, a ci co na przodzie stać nie mogli, powstępowali na stołki. Gdym się puścił na środek z moją tanecznicą, a coraz wołałem, żeby grano żywiej, moja tanecznica się zmieszała i wszyscy się zadziwili, że ja po prostu po chłopsku tańcuję, a ja im na to: że taki jest nasz obyczaj, że mazur ii krakowiak są to tańce narodowe, chłopskie, że my je tańcujemy po chłopsku, wesoło, bez ceremonii, a że taniec nasz narodowy poważny – [to] jest taniec polski zwany, a którego w Europie zwą: 'polonaise.'. . . Dużo później przybył kolega Gutkowski, tancerz doskonały, ale nieurodziwy, jeszcze później Turkułł, tańcujący mazura lwowskiego czyli nowożytnego i doskonale, i bardzo przystojny, ale cóż, nie lubiący tańcować i nie chcący tańczyć, tylko z Polkami."* [2]
>
> Nothing availed me, even the beautiful Princess Eliza was given to ask me to dance with Her. . . [so] I removed my sword and stood in the circle [of dancers]. Hardly had the band began, than I ask them in a loud voice, surprising the other dancers, to play faster! the entire company surrounded our circle, a those who could see directly, stood upon chairs. When I came with my partner to the center of the circle, I called out again, that they should play faster. My partner became confused and everyone was stunned, that I was dancing like a peasant. But I told them that it was our custom to dance the Mazur and Krakowiak, our National Dances, in the peasant way. That we dance as the peasants do, happily, without ceremony and that our serious National Dance — this is also known, as is called in Europe: 'polonaise'.

---

[1] A. Gielgud, ed., *Memoirs of Prince Adam Czartoryski*, Vol. I, (New York: Arno Press: 1971), p.308.
[2] J. Zaluski, *Wspomnienia*, Vol. III, (Kraków: WLK, 1976), p. 327.

His all implies that what was expected in St. Petersburg was the Salon or quieter Ballroom version or upper-class version. After giving us a list of his follow Poles in St. Petersburg who were always asked by the Society Ladies to dance the Mazurka he made the following observation:

> "*Darują czytelnicy, że ich takim drobiazgowym szczegółem zajmuję, ale we dworze, gdzie imperatorowie i wielkie księżne zajmują się tańcami, w stolicy, gdzie bale są niemal codziennym zajęciem, wystąpienie oficerów młodych urzędników z Warszawy było więcej jak zwykle ściągające uwagę. Szczęściem, że ci, co nie umieli tańcować byli wyższego wykształcenia od tańcujących i że doznawali wzięcia u imperatora, a tak nie poszli w oczach dworzan do liczby pogardzanych, ale do szeregu tych, którym zazdroszczono i których nienawidzono.*" [3]
>
> Readers I have given you trifles, but in a Court, where the Emperors and Grand Princesses interest themselves in dances, where in the capital city Balls are an everyday occurrence, there the appearance Officers and young civil servants from Warszawa is particularly noticed. The luckiest, were those, who not knowing how to dance, but were of a higher level [of society] than those who danced and were favored by the Emperor and yet were not objects of jealousy and scorn by courtiers.

So we see that not everyone who came from Poland was an accomplished Mazur Dancer.

## RUSSIAN MILITARY CULTURE IN SAINT PETERSBURG

Throughout Europe in the 18th and 19th recent centuries there existed an open military presence and culture: more so, in the Imperial states of continental Europe. This culture stressed, ideally, among the officer-class: knightliness, honor, manliness, discipline, hierarchy, good behavior and conduct. (All ideals of the Mazur-Mazurka as well.) It was not a culture of savage, bloodthirsty war-making. It was a Social Militarism—a Social Aristocracy in the Military.

Saint Petersburg was foremost the most important military city of Russia. "Many of its prominent buildings are military monuments or commemorations of military triumphs." [4] The Tsars were intensely interested in the army and parades and march-bys and reviews.

The Russian army had over forty thousand officers. In the Social Hierarchy of the Empire they ranked directly after the Imperial Family. This gave them precedence over members of the Court and Government.

The city was teeming with military uniforms and fashionable regiments: most notably the Horse-Guards regiments. Formal evening dress of white-tie and tails were mostly worn by foreign diplomats—not by Russians—they were in military or court uniforms. After all, servants wore black and white.

---

[3] J. Zaluski, *Wspomnienia*, Vol. III, . . . , p.328.
[4] Murray Frame, *The Saint Petersburg imperial theaters*, (Jefferrson: McFarland, 2000), p. 27.

## 1817-1818 THE ENGLISHMAN CREEVEY IN FRANCE

In the wake of the final Allied Victory over Napoleon many of the leaders and personalities of the Allied Nations, were in France. From the various social events of the time comes one of the first references to the Mazurka Dance in Western Europe, in this case, France. This is from the Journal of Thomas Creevey, dated 1818.

> *"Here again Cossack saddle horses were provided by Count Woronzow for all the strangers. . . We had been all invited beforehand to dine with Count Woronzow, and just as the review was finishing, he rode up to every English carriage to say he was to have a ball in the evening. . . . After dinner, the ball opened, when my delight was to see the Mizurko* [Mazurka ] *danced by Madame Suwarrow and her brother the Prince Nariskin, Commander-in-chief of the Cossacks. Tthe Dutchess of Kent waltzes a little, and the Duke of Kent put his hand upon her cheek to feel if she was not too hot."* [5]

If only Mr. Creevey hade left us a fuller account of the dancing. However, perhaps we may infer that since no other persons were described as dancing the Mazurka, that this was therefore only danced by this couple and that as such would be closer to the Polish Mazur Form rather than the quadrillized Mazurka. They probably just promenaded around the ballroom.

## MARIE NARISHKIN

Marie Narishkin (1779-1854), daughter of Prince Anton Chetvertinsky, a Polish nobleman. When maid of honour to the Empress Catherine II in 1795 she married M. Dmitri Narishkin, one of the richest men in Russia. Her extraordinary beauty attracted the attention of the Tsar Alexander I, whose acknowledged mistress she became when he was still a Grand Duke. Alexander was deeply attached to her and she bore him several children. She was without political ambition and exercised no influence on affairs so that she would not help Napoleon revive Polish aspirations. She had a benevolent disposition. She retained her position throughout the whole of Alexander's reign. After his death, she traveled aboard and died in Munich.

We remember that Princess Narishkin was Tsar Alexander's mistress at the time of the above citation.

## 1820-1830s DANCE EDUCATION IN RUSSIA

[5] Thomas Creevey, *The Creevey Papers: Journal 1817-1818*, (London: 1903), p. 283.

He learned his Dance lessons well for in January of 1835 he as invited to participate at a children's masked Ball at the Winter Palace in Saint Petersburg:

> *"During the Ball my uncle Fedor Petrovich, whom I was so glad to met there, came and said he would like to introduce me to a young lady who would like to dance with me. I do not know whether he mentioned her name. At any rate I did not hear it. After bowing to the charming young lady, who was elegantly and richly dressed, I took her hand. She pointed to the places where we were supposed to stand. It was a quadrille with all the grand dukes and grand duchess participating. . . . I was so pleased with her that I asked her then and there if she wouldn't dance the next dance with me. She willingly accepted my invitation for one more quadrille and mazurka. Thus I danced with her practically the entire evening, . . .I was constantly called upon to take part in various steps, and always in the circle of the tsar's family."* [6]

Of course, much to his surprise he was dancing with the Grand Duke's daughter! And this was forbidden in Russia: this was widely known. However the Grand Duke, happily permitted it, in this case.

Note that the Mazurka was done more than once.

## 1826 MENTION OF DUKE OF DEVONSHIRE

In the wake of the failed December Revolt in Russia there were many occasions for the oppressed people of Russia to show obeisance to the rule of Tsardom. One instance occurred in 1826 at a Ball given by the Governor of Moscow:

> *"The dinner being finished, the governor gave the health of the Emperor, which was received with loud acclamations: it seemed an endeavour to make the loudest hurrah, and many of the noblemen who were then present, and who wished any thing else than the realization of the toast, roared most manfully. The whole company standing, all adorned with orders of more or less brilliancy, the ladies in splendid dresses, the different costumes, the noise, and the place itself, contributed to render the scene exceedingly grand and interesting.*
>
> *In the evening a ball was given by the governor. In Russia the dance opened by a Polonaise, the most silly performance imaginable, in which old and young alike join. It is merely walking with a lady through the entire suite of apartments, to the great annoyance of the card-players and loiterers. After this nonsensical parade is finished, a Majoolka is generally commenced. This dance, which is voted very uninteresting by some travelers,* is certainly just the contrary to the performers, who have, during the dance, a better opportunity of showing a preference and whispering the tender tale than in any other in existence. In general the ladies have chairs placed in a circle, and the partner either stands by her side, or behind her: should he not have the object of his affection for his partner, he has only to whisper to one of his sisters, or friends in the dance, to lead him to his favourite, with whom he can then exhibit. As this continues sometimes two hours, the lover has an opportunity which is quite impossible in a quadrille, or countrydance. The ladies are likewise able to select their favourites; and often have I watched them passing a crowd of lookers on, to select the particular object. The music is in general*

[6] N. K. Giers, *The Education* . . ., p. 61-62.

> *very lively, and the Russians certainly prefer the Majoolka to any other dance. If balls are requisite to create marriages, this dance would be a grand acquisition in England: and the Duke of Devonshire, as he took lessons in Moscow, might begin the fashion. . . .Dancing commenced after supper again; quardrilles, waltzes, and gallopades were continued until about four o'clock, when the company retired. . . . The Russian ladies dress, walk, and dance very much in the manner of the French; they are generally speaking, lively, interesting, and, in a certain degree, accomplished; . . .At the ball above-mentioned, the straps of a young lady's stays were visible in spite of the dress, and I solemnly declare they were nearly as black as a boot. . . . the Russian women looked best at a distance, and that they never paid sufficient attention to their under-garments: this I can attest.* [7]

The original article contains more interesting observations about life in Russia during this time. Here our concern is with the Mazurka. "Majoolka" is the Mazurka. It seems for the Russians to be an exciting dance as well as providing more chances to engage members of the opposite sex more easily than in the other dances. Sitting in chairs in not the Polish Form: the Polish Form is more active, since, generally, the Poles were more practiced in the Dance. Did the Devonshire Duke learn the Dance only in Moscow? Of course, the coronation of the Tsar, Nicholas I, took place in Moscow, in June of 1826, but can we rule out Saint Petersburg?

The Duke of Devonshire had the title in Russia as the "Ambassador Extraordinary" of England to Russia. In this official position he did not receive any funds from England but paid for everything he did as a representative of England out of his own pocket! He was very popular in Russia: maybe because he gave the most splendid Balls in Moscow. He did this because he was a great friend of Nicholas I.

The person who saw the bland Polonaise was the Frenchman, Ancelot, in his article, "L'Hermite en Russie."

## 1826 DUKE OF DEVONSHIRE IN RUSSIA

From the personal diary of the 6th Duke of Devonshire we list his mentions of the Mazurka.

**IN RUSSIA** 1826 Nicholas I (Russian calendar dates) these quotes are from September to October in Russia.

> *" . . .after to the opera, and then Mne. Tolstoy's ball where I danced Masurka with great success, and stayed till 4."*
>
> *"I went to a dance at Mne. apraxin's, success and compliments at my mazurka."*
>
> *" . . . I danced Mazures and contre-dance, once with Mlle Natashkin a la taille.* [by the wiast] *Stanislas in his t---ing ------- for Mazure."*

[7] "Anecdotes of Russia," *New monthly magazine and literary Journal*, Vol. 26, (London: 1826), p. 416-417.

> *"Marmont's ball took place, it was very . . .as far as ball went, but the supper was in a great splendid room, very magnificent—too like Rarelegh or any public affair— I danced all night, Mazurka with the Empress."*
>
> *"My ball was charming, not withstanding the rain, the illumination answered completely, the ball room white and roses and no green leaves was lovely, the addition to it and Daves coronation picture of Nicolas much admired. The supper plentiful and good, 2 of them. I danced polonaise and contre-dance, and masured with the Empress, Helene stayed very late, it was the most perfect success I ever saw."* [8]

From these diary citations we can see and share in the absolute delight that the Duke experienced in his Mazurka dancing! He obviously had some skill. One might think that he is expressing the joy of youth, except that he was in 1826, already 36 years old. Could he have learned the Mazurka earlier? Maybe, in the time-period, 1815-1818. Perhaps he was in France with Wellington or Creeley and learned it then?
Alexander I, Tsar of Russia visited England in June of 1814. The Duke met him and feted him as did everyone in England. Alexander I was a graceful dancer and enjoyed Balls and dancing very much at this time in his life. This could have been the Duke's start; however, it is not through Alexander that he learned the Mazurka but through his friendship with Alexander's younger brother, the Grand Duke Nicholas.

He first met the future Tsar, Nicholas I, in November of 1816 when Nicholas traveled to England. He stayed for four months; thus, began their life-long friendship.

> *"The duke had the opportunity of staging one great dinner and one ball . . . although he accompanied him* [Nicholas] *to several balls at Almack's and elsewhere."* [9]

The Duke was in Russia for the wedding of Nicholas' wedding to Princess Charlotte of Prussia in the next year. Given the Duke's very keen interest in dancing this is then, most probably, when and where he learned the Mazurka.

The "Natashkin" previously referred to above is from the Narishkin family of Russia. Recall that one of the Narishkin males danced the Mazurka in France. Notice that the Duke of Devonshire took her by the waist in the couple turn. This implies an easy and friendly confidence between the two.

The phase "t---ing ------ for the Mazure," based upon other instances in his diary, probably is "tearing spirits" which means "with great enthusiasm." [10] The dancer of tearing spirits was the Pole, Stanislas Potocki, who was besides a friend of the Duke, also the Grand Master of Ceremonies at the Russian Court.

By 1827 the Duke was in England and the Mazurking continued. From June to September:

> *" . . . Stanislas Potocki and Lambton dined here today, a merry evening, and we danced mazourka."*

---

[8] William Spenser Cavendish, the 6th Duke of Devonshire, unpublished *Personal Diary for the year 1826*, (England: Devonshire Collections, Chatsworth Library).
[9] James Lee-Milne, *The Bachelor Duke*, London: J. Murray, 1991), p. 33.
[10] This research was done in 1991, by Mr. P. Day, who is the Keeper of Collections of the Devonshire Collections.

> *"Went to town for Madame de Liever's ball where I excited myself and danced all night. We got up a mazurka of the two ambassadresses Liever and Esterhazy."*
>
> *" . . . at cottage we had dancing, and did not go to bed till one. I was very well for the dancing and made them masurer."*

The next Mazurka Dance entries are only three from 1830:

> *"Dinner at Chiswick, Harret, Ly Lyndhmat and Charles. Lord Hetford's most perfect ball and fete. Mazurka."*
>
> *"Chatsworth . . .Mne. Potocki is beautiful and more delightful than ever. We danced Mazurka."*
>
> *"Chatsworth . . .horrid accident of the rail carriage going over Huskisson and his death. The evening went off as usual with some Mazurkas, but rather flat."* [11]

The Mazurka, which was "gotten up" for the Ambasssdresses of Russia, Liever, and Austria, Esterhazy, may imply that they knew the dance beforehand. However, a search through the life of Liever, shows nothing about the Mazurka Dance.

The Duke may have simply directed people to dance as they would for the Quadrille only to Mazurka music or timing.

## 1827 RUSSIAN EMPRESS AND POLES IN DRESDEN

Which Russian Empress danced the Mazurka? All? Perhaps. We can say for sure that the wife of Nicholas I of Russia did, as the following citation from a traveler shall attest to:

August 27, 1827

> *"Dined with the Prince* [Metternich] *at the Salle de Saxe, where the Poles, gave a ball on the evening."* [12]

As you will recall there was a large Polish colony in Dresden at this time so a Ball given by them, in this Saxon land, was not unusual. It is probable that the Polonaise Dance may have spread into Western Europe via Saxony.

By September, 1827 our traveler was in Bohemia with Royal Company:

> *"In the evening Z*ampa *was performed at the opera, and there was a ball at which the Empress of Russia, and the Empress of Austria danced in the quadrille; the former*

---

[11] William Spenser Cavendish, the 6th Duke of Devonshire, unpublished *Personal Diary for the year 1827, 1830.* (England: Devonshire Collections, Chatsworth Library).

[12] Philipp Von Neumann, *The Diary Of Philipp Von Neumann*, Vol. I, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1928), p.173.

> *afterwards dancing a Mazurka with infinite grace, indeed no one could possess more grace than she does, or a nobler and easier bearing."* [13]

We can tell that the wife of Nicholas I was not a snob since her grace, and nobleness are combined with an "easy bearing."

## 1828 GRANVILLE, A RUSSIA BALL

Here we have a complete description of a typical Grand Ball, of the time, in Saint Petersburg:

> *"Now I presume that a ball in Saint Petersburg must be something any where else, except that some other national Dance, besides those eternal* avant deux,et dos a dos, *is likely to be performed by the young people; and so it was in reality at the ball of General P—, which I found, on inquiry, to resemble* in toto, *the balls given by any other family of rank in the capital, and may therefore be taken as a specimen of the whole. My experience on this head is very limited. I think I attended another on a much larger scale, and in a mansion three times the size; but the performances were the same; the spirit, the dances, the good understanding between partners, one and the same thing. The first dance which I saw, I believe they told me, was called* la Promenade, *and a very convenient mode of opening a ball it is. It seems that any gentleman may propose to a lady to take a tour with him; and I found that the* chaperons *however grave and matronly, were included in this prelude. The promenade takes place first through all the suite of rooms in a sort of sauntering procession, and next around the ballroom; after which, the ladies take their seat, and there is an end of it. Waltzes began soon after, and here the affair was far otherwise animated. Ladies are invited without any previous introduction, and go round generally but once with the same cavalier, have no no sooner taken their seats, than another suitor presents himself for the same honour. This whirling of persons and brains round a large room must make the young ladies tolerably* giddy, *and lasts rather too long. French* contra-dances *were next introduced in divided sets, and much in the same way, I presume, as they are arranged and danced in King-street; and here the ladies had an opportunity of displaying their* savoir-faire *in the most* nonchalante *manner imaginable. But from my heart, I pitied the gentlemen: in my life, I never saw any thing so lack-a-daisical. True, it is the fashion for the cavalier not to lift himself a hair's-breadth from the ground as he struts through the mazes of the* chaine Anglaise, *and the* chussez, croisez*; but surely nothing can appear more pitiable than a well-bred gentleman striving to get through an* 'en avant seul,' *amid a square of tittering young damsels, and tight-laced exquisites. . . .*
> *I shall not attempt to describe the* Mazzurka, *a dance which followed next, and which acknowledges a Polish origin. It is both pretty and tiresome: marching, waltzing, and striking of the feet against the pavement, are its three leading features, and the wildness of the musical accompaniment is very singular.* [14]

---

[13] Philipp Von Neumann, *The Diary . . . ,* p. 35.
[14] A. B. Granville, *Saint Petersburg. A Journal Of Travels To And From That Capital; Through Flanders, The Rhenish Provinces, Prussia, Russia, Poland, etc.,* Vol. II, (London: 1828), p. 354-355.

The author of this volume was a well-known medical Doctor and as we can surmise, from his remarks, did not do much dancing in his life. However, in his two sentences about the Mazurka he has given us a passable account of the salient features of this Dance: it marches—a walking-run, it waltzes—does couple turnings in place, it foot-strikes—it hits the heel, or stamps on the floor. And the music is not ordinary.

Note the delicious variation of the Waltz. The Gentleman dances once around with a Lady, returns to her original place, whereupon he seeks other partner, and the action is repeated. Everyone gets a chance to dance.

## 1830s SIBERIA, PRISONERS

Siberia was the prison of the Russian government. Depending on their crimes some people could live "freely" until their sentence was finished. A Mr. Tyufyayev was the administrator with dictatorial control over his region:

> *" Tyufyayev dispatched a young Pole to Glazov because the ladies preferred dancing the mazurka with him to dancing it with His Excellency* [Tyufyayev]*."* [15]

## 1833-1834 NEW RUSSIAN NATIONALISTIC COURT DRESS

During the reign of Nicholas I there was a growing stress upon Russian nationalism. One facet if this was that Court dress was to hark back to old Russian styles. (Before this the Court faithfully followed European styles.) This new Russian style shared elements with the old Polish dress of the "Szlachta"—with the Kontusz! The gowns of the women had trains whose length was dependent upon their status at Court.

## 1836 GLINKA, POLONAISE AND MAZURKA IN RUSSIA

A recent wonderful article[16] has appeared which illuminates aspects of the inter relationships between Polish Dances, in particular, the Polonaise and the Mazurka, and their appropriation by Russia. In her article the authoress examined the musical works of Mikhail Glinka, concentrated on his 1836 opera, *A Life for the Tsar*. In this opera the Poles are identified with their dances. This is a highly nationalistic Russian opera and is directly anti-Polish. Yet Russian Society came to adopt, to assimilate these dances and viewed them as Russian Dances.

---

[15] Alexander Herzen, *My Past And Thoughts*, (New York: Knopf, 1973), p. 177.
[16] Halina Goldberg "Appropriating Poland: Glinka, Polish Dance, and Russian National Identity," in *Polish Encounters, Russian Identity*, ed. D. Ransel and B. Shallcross, (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press), pp. 74-88.

Here we reproduce some remarks from her article:

> *"The dance element as a signifier of Polishness in this opera is so pervasive that even amid the early euphoric reception, one critic asked: 'What kind of thinking is it that requires Poles to speak, think, and act to the accompaniment of the mazurka?' "* [17]

Goldberg points out that for Poles their dances come to symbolize their cultural autonomy and identity after the lost of their political state, whereas for Russia, the dances became disassociated from the political problem of Poland and Polishness as an enemy of Russia (a problem which the Russians made for themselves).

> *". . . the Polish dances from the opera, . . .immediately became everybody's favorites. The mazurka, along with some other excerpts, was published within days of the opera's premiere. . . . In addition to their social functions, Polish dances held still other meanings: the polonaise in its ceremonial splendor also denoted the honor and pride of Russia, and the mazurka as a genre was repeatedly used by Glinka as a token of his affection for Poles and Polishness."* [18]

The Polonaise had a long pre-Glinka, history in Russia, so much so, that there were angry reactions to seeing Poles dance the Polonaise in *A Life for the Tsar*. This was so because by this time, the 1830's, the Dance was the pre-eminent Russian Court Dance reflecting the Glory and Power of Russia.

**1836 DANCE LESSONS IN RUSSIA**

Poles living in Saint Petersburg took dance lessons. Here is one testimony of someone whose lessons were useful to her:

> . . .Saturday was a crazy day at our neighbor, the Suchozanetows. I danced there a Mazur with Uncle Mieczysław (Potocki), . . .

Three years later she along with many aristocrats was in Karlsbad in the summer of 1843 where the Mazurka was danced. While on this trip she stopped in rural Poland and witnessed folk celebrations of the Krakowiak and of the Obertas.

**1838 MORE DANCE LESSONS IN RUSSIA**

From the diary of the American ambassador to Russia.

December 27, 1838

[17] Halina Goldberg "Appropriating . . ., p.75.
[18] Halina Goldberg "Appropriating . . ., p.81

> *"A diplomatic soiree at Princess Hohenlohe's. The British and French ambassadors, Lieberrman, Schimmelpenninck, Villafranca, etc. A lesson given to the Marchioness Clanricarde in the measure and mazes of the mazourka, for which movement and figure she is wholly unfit."* [19]

Unfortunately he tells us nothing more: what was taught, who taught, was it a formal class, etc.? (In the wake of the failed Polish Uprising of 1831, over 30,000 Polish soldiers were transferred to the Russian Army: so there were potentially many Poles who could serve as models of Mazur-Mazurka dancing within Russia.)

## 1838 AMERICA'S REPRESENTATIVE TO RUSSIA

George Dallas was America's Minister to Russia at this time. From his diary we read about a Ball he attended on January 23, 1838:

> *"It was a grand and select ball to the Imperial family, and the early hour of meeting was designated to suit the health and medical advisers of the Empress. The two sovereigns, with their son the heir, and the Grand Duchess Marie, and the Grand Duke Michel, arrived at about eight, and when the company had, in expectation, collected in the dancing-room. They instantly on entering led off a polonaise, The Emperor with Countess Nesselrode, the Empress with the Austria Ambassador, and all who could procure walking partners joined the procession, which wound its way through the suite of apartments twice or thrice. I first led countess Schimmelpenninck and then Countess Laval. . . .She* [the Empress] *participated also in the frolic and waltzing of the mazurka at the end of the evening."* [20]

It is probably too bad for America that his time in Russia was so short. He might have taken the Polonaise and Mazurka to his heart and brought them more fully to America.

At a winter event on December 27, the diary states something rather important:

> *"A diplomatic* soiree *at Princess Hohenlohe's. The British and French Ambassadors, Lieberman, Schimmelpenninck, Villafranca, etc. A lesson given to the Marchioness Clanricarde in the measure and mazes of the mazourka, for which movement and figure she is wholly unfit."* [21]

Not a very nice comment. At this time in Europe, the Mazurka had a certain popularity so we understand the learning of the Dance in Russia at this time. We wonder about who taught it?

About two months later at a dance and musical event given by Princess Hohenlohe we can deduce that the Clanricarde's did not learn their lesson very well:

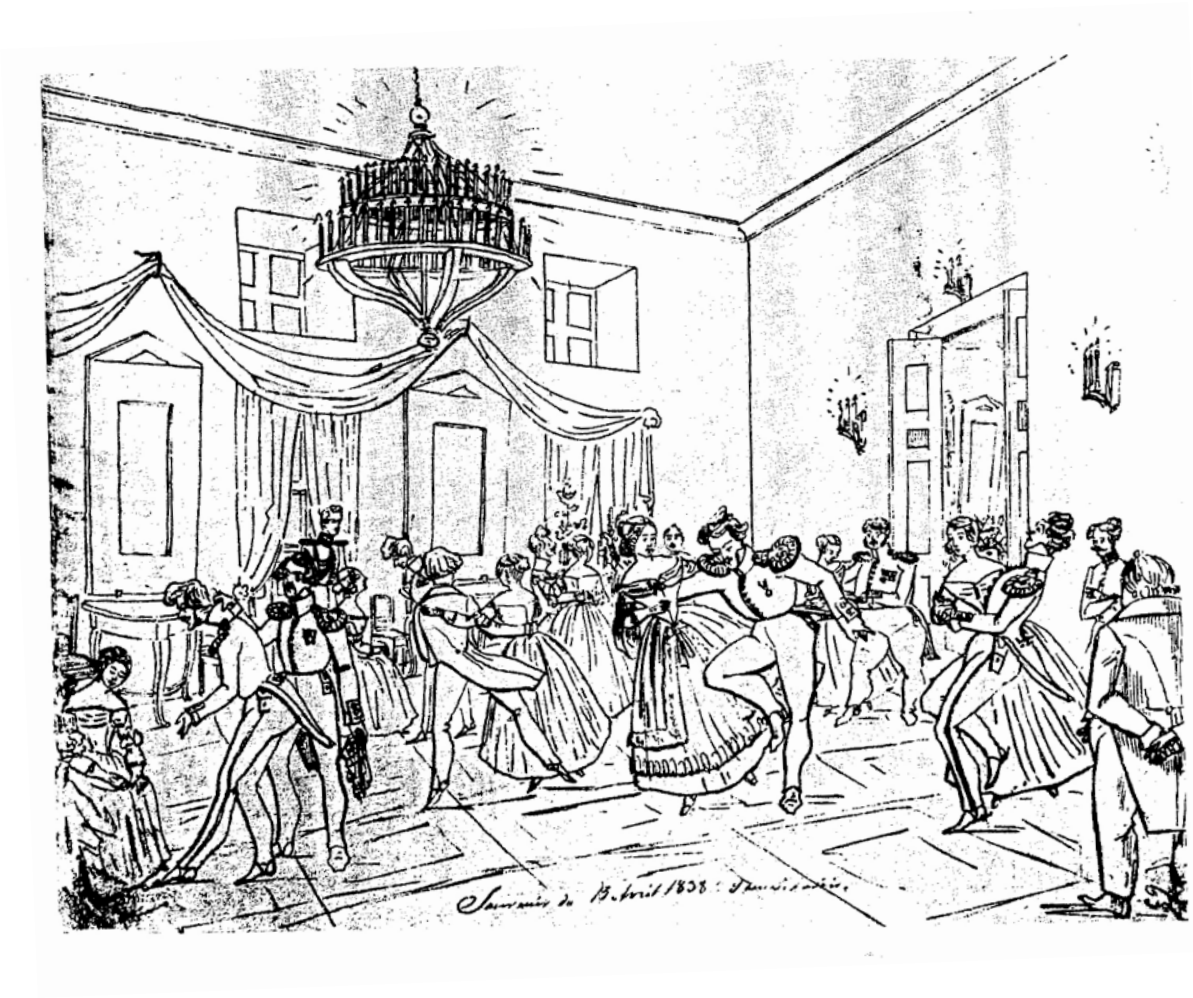
---

[19] *Diary Of George Mifflin Dallas*, ed. S. Dallas, (New York: Arno Press, 1970), p.153.
[20] George Dallas, *Diary Of George Dallas. U. S.Minister To Russia, 1837-1839*, (New York: Arno Press, 1970), p. 61.
[21] George Dallas, *Diary* . . . , p. 153.

> *"The mazourka degenerated into a romp under the auspices of Lord Clanricarde, who was quite overcome with laughter at the accidents encountered by his attaché, young Wombwell."* [22]

**1838s A RUSSIAN MAZURKA DRAWING**

While we have motion picture film of Mazurka dancing from 1912 or so, there is not much visual evidence of the Social Ballroom From of earlier times. There are a number of drawings of Mazur-Mazurka dancing taken from Operas and Ballets—from the Stage and for covers of musical scores.[23] However, we do have an important drawing done by Count V. P. de Balman, [24]which is a sketch of a provincial Ball, dated 1838, reproduced below.



man1 man2 man3 man4

No doubt about it! This is not just a Mazurka but it is more like a free-form Mazur in that this is just couples soloing—or maybe they are just practicing. We can see that the 1st, 2nd, and

[22] George Dallas, *Diary* . . . , p. 163.
[23] Of the Mazurka Quadrille.
[24] Priscillia Roosevelt, *Life on the Russian Country Estate*, (New Haven: Yale U. Press, 1995), p. 201.

3rd man are wearing dance slippers and not boots which the 4th man is. The 4rd man seems to be wearing spurs.

Note how the 1st man extends his leg, bowing, in asking the woman to dance.

Look and see how the 2nd and 3rd men are doing a sliding step although they are at different parts of the step. Note how high, upon the toe, the 2nd man is.

Maybe there is a doubt about this. They could be doing a Mazur variation, or Novelty Dance, Le Patineur, which is imitation of ice-skating, and very pleasurable! After all, it is still close to the Mazur.

## 1830s THE RUSSIAN BALTICS

From the travels of an English woman who was both an authoress and art critic in her own right we have a mention of Polish Dances in what was considered a province of Russia, namely, Estonia. This description is from a wedding celebration done most probably in the latter 1830s:

> *"Sweetmeats and wine were immediately served and ere five minutes of this new union had elapsed a Polonaise began, were neither age nor infirmities were spared, and were an old lady of eighty tripped it as lightly as the bride. . . .And now succeeded a regular ball—quadrilles, cotillons, mazurkas, where the bride and bridegroom were danced with, selected for the different tours, . . .*[25]

Perhaps these Polish Dances were part of the Baltic's cultural repertoire before they came under Russian influence. Although the ruling class was German and Protestant they lived socially as Polish Nobles did.

## 1841 RUSSIAN WORD CHANGE

After the partitions of Poland an expanding Polish colony grew in St. Petersburg. A Polish language periodical, *Tygodnik Petersburski*, existed for this colony. The winter of 1841 was especially cold. An article about this severe winter covered many facets of life in St. Petersburg. In spite of the cold Social Life went on. The writer of this periodical commented on a piece of Russian literature which mentioned dances:

> *". . . gdzie jedna balowa kompanija, z cały apparatem 'obligé' kontradansa, kotiljona, naszego mazura, (który, mimochodem mówiąc przemienił tu płeć i nazywa się 'mazurka', 'la masourke') . . .*[26]

. . . where at one Ball the company [of dancers] did all the obligatory dances, the Contradance, the Cotillon, our Mazur, (which, willy-nilly they changed its gender and named it 'Mazurka', [or] 'The Masourke'.) . . .

---

[25] Elizabeth Rigby, *Letters from the Shores Of The Baltic*, Vol.I, (New York; Arno Press, 1970), pp. 270-271.
[26] From the periodical, *Tygodnik Petersburski*, #35, ( St. Petersburg: 1841), p. 196.

## 1842 RUSSIA, OBSERVATIONS OF MOTLEY

From the observations of an English traveler to Russia made in January of 1842 when the temperature is always below freezing:

> *"Dine with Colonel Todd. In the evening go to the ball at Woronzow's. Observe for the first time the duke of Leuchtenberg, Josephine's grandson, who is son-in-law to the Czar—a tall, slender, common-place looking man, in a Hussar's uniform. The only members of the Imperial family present were the Grand Duke Michael, and the Heredity, ' the Perpetual Grand,' as Dick Swiveller would call him, for he is at all the parties perpetually dancing the Mazurka."* [27]

The citation does not make it clear why the Duke is called "the Perpetual Grand": is it due to dancing the Mazurka or to his constant attendance at all the parties? Could it be that he danced the Mazurka with a superior air? Is it simply that for most people who do not dance it or know it, that it is a difficult Dance and therefore anyone who does dance it with skill is "superior" or "Grand"? Or does the Duke's Grandness come from the Polish (and therefore by association the Russian) Aristocratic Nature of the Dance?

## 1844 A TSAR GOES TO ENGLAND

In any number of works on the Mazurka the year 1844 is cited as important in England. Why should this be so when the Mazurka does have a History in England before that? It has to do I suspect with Royalty.

In June of 1844 the then Tsar, Nicholas I of Russia, great friend of the Duke of Devonshire, made a secret political state visit to England. He was hosted by the Duke at his estate. Though we have no mention of the Mazurka during this visit can we image that it wasn't done or exhibited in honor of Russia? The Russian National Hymn, a Polonaise at this time, was played, so is it not possible that the Duke saw to it that the Mazurka was exhibited and therefore became associated with the year, 1844?

No! Because the English Court was in mourning for a family relative, no Ball as given. [28]

## 1850 SPURS AND GOWNS

---

[27] Motley, *Motley's Letters*, (London: 1889), p. 116.

[28] Serge Tatistcheff, "A Forgotten Chapter in Anglo-Russian Relations—Emperor Nicholas I in England," *The National Review*, June, 1902 (London), p. 565.

At the Ball and Dances for the past people did not generally wear street shoes. This is true even today (2006) among seriously-minded Dancers. Military men did come in uniform, which included boots and spurs. As has been noted, spurs can become an additional source of excitement in dancing the Mazur-Mazurka. But sometimes there are problems:

> *"At a court ball, after some time of dancing, our long, sweeping trains on the floor were a good deal damaged usually by the officers' spurs. The latter could not be left off, and we might not hold our trains up—etiquette forbid! I managed never to care if I was torn and ragged, because I was so keen about dancing. I loved the space, music, and order of these functions."* [29]

Lest we forget, in Russia and Poland, the winter weather was severe and it was precisely this season when so many Social Events were held.

The great wealth of the Tsar and the leading families of Russia allowed them to fill their Ballrooms and Dining rooms with masses of flowers and decoration during the cold winters. Foreigners to Russia were always amazed by this.

## 1851 POLISH MAZUR DANCERS IN RUSSIA

The Russians knew and appreciated, at least for the stage versions, the difference between the Polish and Russian dancers manner of performing the Mazur. We can illustrate this with citations from an article written by a Saint Petersburg's reporter in 1851, on the occasion of the engagement of Polish dancers in Saint Petersburg. [30]

First, let the reporter tell us what impressed him about the character of this performance of the Mazur:

> *"At the end of* Le Nozze di Figaro, *all of the singers retired behind the scenes and on stage rushed four nimble couples of dancers: the men in blue with silver embroidered greatcoats and caps, the women also in Polish national dress. The mazur started, passionate and full of enthusiasm, a fiery mazur adorned with all of its various figures and poetic poses, full of grace and ravishment, sometimes on the edge of true bravery and even debauchery. The skillful danseurs cleverly stamped their feet and the pretty ladies passed among them full of enthusiasm. Wonderful! Extremely beautiful! The effect was complete, the audience ecstatic. Shouts and applause were so loud that one could not hear the music. . . .this magnifcant mazur had been, as has already been said, a complete surprise—a very fine surprise!* [31]

Let us look at the adjectives used in his review: passionate, enthusiastic, fiery, grace, ravishment, bravery and debauchery. By "debauchery" he probably meant the erotic-sexual attraction of men and women—maybe, just natural playfulness or allurement.

---

[29] Princess Cantacuzine, *My Life, Here And There*, (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1921), p. 258.

[30] Janina Pudełek, "The Polish Dancers Visit St Petersburg, 1851: A Detective Story," *Dance Chronicle*, Vol. 19, Number 2, (New York: M. Dekker, 1996), pp. 171-189.

[31] Janina Pudełek, "The Polish . . . , p. 178. This Mazur, called the, Blue Mazur, was part of a Ballet and was its concluding Ball scene.

Now this was a theater performance, by the leading "character-dancers" of Warszawa, who were brought to Saint Petersburg by the invitation of Nicholas I as a present for his wife. [32]

Against what standard could this reporter and the theater-goers have measured the way this was danced? They only had, apparently the performances of Russian dancers and their own experiences with the social Ballroom Form of the Mazur: the Mazurka Quadrille. Members of the audience, who had received instruction in the Mazurka Quadrille, could participate in the Ballroom Form, but they then as now, could not approach the level of intensity and skill of execution that a professionally trained dancer achieves; this is especially so, when a dancer is recognized as being at the level of a "Mazurysta," as a number of the Polish dancers were or would become.

But what did Russian dancers have to say? Two Russian dancers, who latter wrote dance manuals which included instruction in Mazurka dancing, did dance with the Poles. Forty years after 1851 one of the Russians dancers, Timofei Stukolkin, wrote:

> "*In the beginning of 1851, the tsar Nikolai Pavlovitch wanted to please the tsarina Alexandra Feodororona with a surprise. Therefore he ordered give cavaliers and five ladies chosen from the best dancers in Warsaw to execute the so-called Blue Mazur, which got its name from the color of the costumes worn. They were Kwiatkowski, Popiel, Meunier, Majewski, and Gilbert. Of the ladies, I only remember the names of two: Kotlarewska [Koćmierowska] and Damse. During one of these performances, when they were playing some opera—I don't remember the title—the curtain went up during one of the intermissions to the astonishment of the audience(there having been no announcement on the posters) and our guests made their first appearance. They executed this national dance of theirs in a really masterful way. The blue mazur appealed to the tsar so much that he ordered it to be repeated in a particular way: four Polish chevaliers with Russian ladies and four Polish ladies with Russian chevaliers. The success of this mixed execution rose above all expectation. Our dancing of this delightfully beautiful and showy piece pleased and excited the audience so much that the applause could be heard backstage where we were already beginning to stamp our feet. The applause grew louder and louder until reaching its fortissimo as couple after couple ran out on the forestage. Among the Russian dancers who took part in this event with me I remember Alexander Piszo and Alexander Szamburgski."* [33]

But what about particulars of the Dance? Besides the "Blue Mazur" they also danced, among other things, in a second Polish Ballet "Wesele z Ojców." Although its story and dancing is set in the rural Kraków region of Poland it does contain folk-style like Mazur dancing.

The distinction between these forms of Mazurs was noted by some: Stukolkin in particular.

> "*The Poles showed us that the mazur in these two ballets must be executed in different ways.In the first with nobleness and grace, in lordly style; in the second with fire, stamping of feet, and throwing caps high in the air—in short, in folk style." . . .Alas! Now* [1895] *this distinction in executing the mazur is completely ignored by the majority of dancers [i.e., the Russians], even those who specialize in them."* [34]

---

[32] For the full story see Janina Pudełek's previously cited article.
[33] Janina Pudełek, "The Polish . . . , p. 180.
[34] Janina Pudełek, "The Polish . . . , p. 187.

Stukolkin refers here to the manner of dancing the Mazur on the stage, by professional dancers. What he probably means is that they mix the rural, gentry-peasant type, the "Obertas" with the upper-class Noble style or Aristocratic Ballroom style.

When it comes to dancing the Noble style we can point out that many of our dance teachers have warned students against this mixing: however, as in much of life, how one does something is more important than what one does! It has to do with elegance of movement, motion, and character—and not everyone has these qualities—unfortunately.

On the other hand, the rural or rougher Forms remind us of the origins of virility, of power of a lust for life and joy of Dance. All one needs to do is to maintain its spirit and élan for the other Forms of the Polish Mazur: Ballroom and Stage.

## 1850s SAINT PETERSBURG, BALL ATMOSPHERE, MAZURKA

Here is another memoir of a traveler to Russia:

> "*With the return of the Imperial family, Saint Petersburg may be said to cast off the last trammel of her summer trance, and to rise up from the inertness of inaction to all the rivalry, intrigue, and intoxicating gaiety of her winter life—a season of hilarity, when dull care, with all its longfaced, woe-begone attendants is banished, . . . and every patron deity of mirth, smile, and merry hearts reign supreme.*
>
> *In short, 'the season' has commenced, as every white-kid glove manufacturer, every ice and bonbon confectioner . . . , everybody looks happy, obliging and pleased.. . . .*
>
> *Now invitations come pouring in. There is a ball and private theatricals at Madame C—'s; the concert of young Wieneiffsky—a Polish musical star of the first magnitude— at General V—'s; a ball at the family doctor's . . . To get through this formidable list, extending at the farthest over three or four days—several falling on the same—required some little consideration of physical ability, as well as costume; as, for example, we take the concert of young Wieneiffsky, the German dinner-party, and the Polish doctor's ball on the same evening, and all situated widely apart.*
>
> *This was to be the order of things, not for a solitary evening, or even a week, but for the whole winter through, Sunday and all! . . .*
>
> *At four o'clock we received invitations for a fancy-dress impromptu ball, to commence at eight. . . .*" [35]

We see that the Winter Social Season was of great economic importance to all the supporting industries of Saint Petersburg. Actually this was and is true today, except that most of our entertainments are on a more vulgar level and the people are not as distinguished as they were in past times.

---

[35] Mary Anne Zellew Smith, S*ix Years' Travels In Russia,* Vol. I, (London: 1859), pp. 165-167.

The "Wieneiffsky" referred to above was actually Henryk Wieniawski who also concertized continually in Russia from 1860-1872. This was a masquerade Ball with many of the women dressed as famous Queens of History. The authoress of this citation has described the Ball and Carnival Season in great and interesting detail. We confine ourselves to the general atmosphere and dance information.

> "*After a succession of* contredanses *and fleeting tours of polka and valse, the ever-welcome mazurka struck up. This is the only dance performed here with any degree of grace. The Russians are passionately fond of dancing, and keep exquisite time; but this fascinating attribute of the dance is entirely thrust out by the prestissimo movements* en vogue, *and in this embellishments the noble is far outshone by the peasant serf. This national dance is the usual precursor of supper, and all the dancers join in it. The first preparation for this play-dance is numbers of chairs placed in a large circle round the* salon, *for the dancers to rest occasionally, as it is of longer duration than the other dances. With a skilful leader, the mazurka becomes at once amusing and artistic; and a peculiar mode of marking the time at short intervals, by the military dancers rapping their spurs loudly together, presents to the stranger a novelty of expression particularly pleasing. As this dance affords greater facility for conversation and flirting than any other, the beaux select partners accordingly. A good dancer, a pretty girl, or some well-dressed friend to whom politeness exacted a portion of their attention, may have been the ruling principle of choice during the previous part of the evening, but in choosing a partner for the mazurka, the affections are generally concerned. Here the bride and her* fiancé, *the coquette and her victim, the married pair—who may not have met since the previous evening at a similar* reunion—*and the tyro in love, sit side by side, or follow their avocations through the mazes of the dance. A mother notes with a keen eye her daughter's partner for the mazurka, and if, perchance, the same individual claims her several times during the season, busy match-makers augur a coming proposal.*
>
> *Our host was the leader, and never was leader more indefatigable in keeping up the spirit of the dance to the highest degree. . . .At this juncture, a truce was proclaimed between musician and dancer, and a brief respite allowed for rest, when cups of strong gravy-soup were handed. . . .*
>
> *From the mazurka the company paired off to the dining-room for supper, the ladies being seated, the gentlemen hovering about in the vicinity."* [36]

"Prestissimo movements" are very fast movements; hence, in this case, the authoress is remarking that the faster dancers are not keeping time to the music even though their fast dancing makes it an excitement. One of the excitements of the Mazur-Mazurka for the men is the beating of their heels together (especially so, if they are wearing spurs) as they pivot upon the balls of their feet. This is done in time to the music.

---

[36] Mary Anne Zellew Smith, S*ix Years's . . .*, Vol. I, pp. 173-174, 176.

Recall that this Ball was a Costume Ball. At such Balls people dressed as Historical Personages. Several of the men were dressed as women. This explains the following paragraph:

> *"The musicians having resumed their places, the ladies repaired to the* salon*—leaving the gentlemen to sup—and calling for the mazurka, threaded its mazes after a fashion of their own, considerably more* dégagé *than when dancing with partners of the other sex, but not less graceful; five out of seven queens taking part. The beaux, however, soon returned, and dancing, which recommenced with increased spirit, was kept up for an hour or two longer, it being near four o'clock before any one thought of taking leave.*
>
> *Such is an impromptu ball in the height of the season at this gayest of capitals, Imperial Saint Petersburg!"* [37]

To dance with degage is to dance freely. Note also that there were five men dancing as women so this was not a Quadrille-Mazurka.

The summer came and at the Peterhof Gardens an entertainment was held:

> *"This was the signal for dancing to begin. The Grand Duchess, conducted by the Prince of Saxe, took her stand at the head of the room. Her brother, the Grand Duke Nicholas, with his pretty partner, as their* vis-a-vis*, and the whole of the court circle, composed of the ladies in actual waiting on the Empress and the Grand Duchess, the foreign visitors, and the invited guests from the town, joining in the same quadrille.*
>
> *The quadrille terminated with a spirited succession of "grande ronde," promenade, "chaine des dames," &c., several times repeated, the Grand Duke calling out the changes, and keeping up the spirit of the dance with Scottish-like enthusiasm. His Imperial Highness appeared thoroughly to enjoy it, and to inspire his partisans with something of his own ardour.*
>
> *The Mazurka over, it is the custom in private families to pair off to the supper-room, but on the present occasion the Imperial family took leave, and the invited guests did the same, but a light supper was laid out in a tent in the garden for such as chose to remain."* [38]

Note here that there is some confusion: was there a Quadrille, followed by a Mazurka or was this just a Mazurka-Quadrille?

## 1860s RUSSIAN DANCE BALL CUSTOMS

Foreign observers often provide us with insights to our customs which we take for granted. The same is true for Dance:

---

[37] Mary Anne Zellew Smith, S*ix Years's . . .*, Vol. I, p. 182.
[38] [38] Mary Anne Zellew Smith, S*ix Years's . . .*, Vol. II, pp. 324-325.

> *"Dancing in Russia is very much like dancing in any other European country, except that in Russia the ball always ends with a mazurka, of which the rhythm and the step are known everywhere, but not the figures and general character. A kind of follow-my-leader aspect is given to the mazurka, by all the succeeding couples imitating the evolutions of the first. Another peculiarity of the dance consists in the ladies choosing their own partners, a process which is effected in a variety of ingenious ways more or less complimentary to the gentlemen selected. Sometimes as the men pass by in ignominious procession, the lady who wishes to make one of them her cavalier claps her hands as the fortunate individual passes. Or a lady holds a small looking-glass; the aspiring partners pass behind and look into the mirror, when the lady wipes off with her hand the image of him that pleaseth her not, and accepts the services of the agreeable one with a bow. The mazurka is a graceful dance, but it also demands energy and requires the time to be marked by vigorous applications of the boot-heel to the polished floor. It is known to be of Polish origin, and it has a rhythmical character, which distinguishes it agreeably from the sliding monotony of the quadrille. One other peculiarity of Russian balls may be mentioned: in the waltz or polka, a lady is never engaged for the entire dance, but only for one or at most two turns round the room."* [39]

So we see here the role of tapping the feet, for the man, against the floor, that is, the accenting of the music with the feet and heels adds to the Dance. This is naturally contrasted with the bland execution of the Quadrille.

When the author states that the Dance is known everywhere, does he mean inside Russia or throughout Europe at this time (1860s)? Or is he referring to England from where he came?

The custom of dancing the round couple dances once or twice around the room is delightful. It leads to a wider socialness.

## 1863-1864 RUSSIAN FOOD AND MAZURKA

Lord Redesdale of England traveled in the best of circles in Russia. He tells us about a Russian delicacy:

> *"By one o'clock in the afternoon we had to array ourselves in evening dress to go and eat blinni at one or another of our kind friend's hospitable houses. Blinni are a sort of scone, a cross between a pancake and a crumpet, eaten with fresh butter and caviare, a very tempting form of food. After feasting upon blinni comes dancing, generally a regular ball, with cotillion and mazurka complete. Then dressing for dinner, two or three parties and at least one ball."* [40]

## 1865 SAINT PETERSBURG SOCIETY

---

[39] H. Edwards, *The Russians At Home And The Russians Abroad*, Vol. I, (London: Allen, 1879), p.279.
[40] Lord Redesdale, *Memories*, Vol. I, (New York: Dutton, [n. d.]), p. 271-272.

What was it like to be in Saint Petersburg in the mid-19th century? We can get an idea from an advice guide for travelers to Russia for the 1860s. This is an updated version of the original 1849 guide. Here under the category "Society" are some excerpts:

> *"Winter is the season for gaieties in Russia. Travellers with letters of introduction will find the* salons *of Saint Petersburg as brilliant as those of Paris. Dinner parties, receptions, soirees, and balls, occur in such rapid succession, that the man of fashion will find the winter too short, rather than too long. There is no dancing during the forty days that precede Easter. Christmas and the Carnival are the gayest periods. Two or three court balls are then given, and 'distinguished strangers' who have been presented at home will sometimes receive invitations. Travellers wishing to be presented to H. I.. M. must apply for an audience through H. M.'s Embassy. Many provide themselves with letters of recommendation from the Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, which are playfully called 'tickets for soup' in the diplomatic Service.*
>
> *It is necessary to wear a uniform at court. French is the language spoken in society, but English is generally understood. Strangers are expected to make the first call, which is returned either in person or by card. In leaving cards on persons who are not at home, one of the edges of the card should be turned up. It is necessary to leave a card next day on any person to whom the stranger may have been introduced at a party. Those who are introduced to the stranger will observe the same politeness. Great punctuality is exacted at Saint Petersburg in the matter of leaving cards after entertainments and introductions. . . .the hours for calling are 3 to 5 P.M..; dinner parties are generally convened for 6 or 6:30 ; and reception commence at about 10 P. M., and last very late. Guests are expected to be punctual where members of the Imperial Family are invited. Ladies wishing to pass a 'season' at Saint Petersburg should recollect that Russian ladies dress very richly, though in great taste. . . At balls, the only dance in which the stranger will not at first be able to join is the Mazurka, a kind of cotillion imported from Poland. It is also necessary to observe that partners are not engaged for the whole of a waltz or polka, but only for a turn.*
>
> *Travellers should not forget that a Russian invariably takes his off his hat whenever he enters an apartment, however humble; . . . Top coats must always be removed on entering Russian houses, as a point of etiquette and politeness."* [41]

This is another instance of a citation about the couple turning dances, such as the Waltz, as uniquely done in Russia, namely, that the partners change after only going around once.

## 1875-1876 SAINT PETESBURG

From the memoirs of a German diplomat to Russia:

> *"Alvensleben, as my chief, stressed the importance of my going into Society. I danced a great deal. I soon learned the mazurka, the national dance of the*

[41] *Handbook For Travellers In Russia, Poland, and Finland,* (London: John Murray, 1865), p. 46-47.

> *Russians and Poles. After the minuet and the waltz, whose praise I have already sung (only barbarians could be insensitive to them) the Slav mazurka appears to me the most attractive of dances. The best mazurka dancer in Saint Petersburg was neither a Pole or Russian, but a German, Prince Ferdinand Wittgenstein. He was the son of Prince Augustus von Sayn-Wittgenstein . . .Very internationally-minded, like so many German aristocrats of those days, he placed both of his sons, Emil and Ferdinand, in the Russian service."* [42]

Do you, the reader, remember the tenuous connections with the Mazur, with Poland and Chopin, that both the names of Alvensleben and Sayn-Wittenstein have?

Von Bülow learned to dance the Mazurka in the German Duchy of Mecklenburg-Strelitz as a child around the year 1863. The heir to the Duchy took the same lessons.

## 1879 SAINT PETERSBURG

The wife of the English Ambassador's to Russia, the Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava, had her children with her in Russia. Here are some of her diary entry's from the winter months of1879 and 1880 spent in Saint Petersburg:

> *"I attended a dancing-lesson and took Victoria. Hermie did well, but Basil did not distinguish himself. . . .*
>
> *"D. and I went to a dancing-party. . . .This was, I may say, my first dance here, and I was interested in the arrangements and in looking at the people. I waited on and on to see the Mazurka, and after all only just saw it begun."*
>
> *"D. and I went to a dance, and were not home till 5:30; but we sat up "on business" to see how the thing was done. A great deal of time is wasted, as the windows are opened between each dance, and every creature had to leave the ballroom while it was being aired. Here the gentleman only gives "a turn" to a girl, and does not ask her for a whole waltz. I think it answers rather well, and makes a ball lively."*

February 7, 1880

> *"Captain Haig came, and at nine o'clock the "pupils" arrived for our Mazourka lesson. We have determined to learn that national dance! Our class consists of about ten men, and four ladies. Our teacher is a Pole, who dances the Mazourka in the ballets, and is grace itself. The ladies have only two steps to learn, the men about six. It is very pretty, and has a great deal of "go" about it."*

February 11, 1880

---

[42] Prince Von Bülow, *Memoirs Of Prince Von Bülow, 1849-1897*, Vol. IV, (Boston: Little, Brown Co.,1932), p. 378.

> *"People always arrive punctually for dinner at seven, and on this ocacasion our guests were English; we asked the rest of the "Colony" in the evening, and all the Diplomatic Corps, and we had a very nice dance. We had the Mazourka, and a cotillion and Sir Roger, and all the people who don't generally dance (myself included) did dance, and it was very lively. Dancing here is very hard work, as you do not give your partner a whole dance, but only a turn, so a fresh one appears the moment you stop, and you have to go on again. Certainly under this system there is no ball-room conversation or flirtation possible, and the quadrilles are even less restful than the fast dances."*

March 5, 1880

> *"I have been busy arranging our dinner for the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh. . . .I let the four younger children appear so that Victoria might present the Duchess with a bouquet, and they all made the most admirable curtseys and bows. . . .*
>
> *Everything went off very well, but the Duchess was not able to stay for the Mazourka lesson. It was very lively, and lasted till two. People seem to enjoy themselves here very much, and I am now being asked for invitations, which is terrible!"* [43]

These citations indicate just how "popular" or how de-rigueur the Mazurka was in Russian Society. Special classes were arranged just for its teaching and in particular, their Polish Dance teacher was undoubtedly, Mr. Kresiński himself! So we members of the English Aristocracy taking Mazurka lessons in Russia at a time when the Mazurka had faded from the Ballrooms of England.

Note that we have this anecdotal confirmation about the difference in the number of steps for men and women.

## 1888 A GUIDE BOOK TO SAINT PETERSBURG, NOT BAEDEKER

Under the heading of "Society" we read a few sentences about Saint Petersburg:

> *"Winter is the season for gaieties in Russia….There is no dancing during the forty days that precede Easter. Christmas and the Carnival are the gayest periods. Two or three court balls are them given and 'distinguished strangers' who have been presented at home will sometimes receive invitations after having been presented to H. I. M. through their own Embassy or Legation….At balls, the only dance in which the stranger will not at first be able to join is the Mazurka, a kind of cotillion imported from Poland. It is also necessary to observe that partners are not engaged for the whole of a waltz or polka, but only for a turn."* [44]

---

[43] Dowager Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava, *My Russian And Turkish Journals*, (New York: Scribner's, 1917), pp. 54, 57, 62-64.

[44] *Handbook For Travellers In Russia, Poland, And Finland*, 4th ed., (London: John Murray, 1888), p. 78.

Note again that in Russia at this time it was considered to be bad-form to dance continually, more than once, around the hall in couple dances.

## 1882 RUSSIAN COURT PROCEDURE

Here is the standard procedure for court ceremonials from a memoir. It occurred in January, 1882. Upon the arrival of the Emperor and the others:

> *"According to the etiquette it started with the polonaise, the Czar walking in the first pair with the wife of the heir apparent—a concession he had agreed to at the very last moment—and the Grand dukes following in the order of priority. . . .*
>
> *Our procession—for the polonaise was really not a dance in the modern meaning of the word—had to pass through all the halls, with six chamberlains in front of us announcing our approach. We circled the palace three times, after which the dancing began in every hall, quadrille, waltz and mazurka being the only dances approved by etiquette."* [45]

## 1883 A CURIOUS RUSSIAN MAZURKA

From the diary of the English ambassadors' wife we have a short description which points out some features of Russian Mazurka dancing:

> *"Well, Dear, our reception is over. It is ended early, as everything does here—and as I am wide awake I will write at once. . . .We had a great many people—all our colleaques in full force, but not so many Russians as we expected. . . .I had a talk with General Richter and one or two others, and then some of the younger members of the party suggested dancing—of course we had no music, as dancing had not been contemplated, but various amateurs offered their services, and they had about a half an hour of Waltzes. At the end they danced a little the Russian mazurka, which is very curious to see. It is quite different from our cotillion or the Sir Roger de Coverley. There are all sorts of steps and figures. The gentleman takes his partner by the hand, holding it rather high (as in the Polonaise). They hold themselves very straight, heads well back, as in a minuet, and do various figures. The women have a quick, sliding step when they change partners, which is very effective. I should think none but Russians would dance it well—one must be born to it."* [46]

We know now, that this Ballroom dance requires much practice and an Aristocratic demeanor: one need not to be born with this quality. Did the women really do the sliding step or merely run briskly in a gliding manner?

---

[45] Alexander, *Once A Grand Duke*, (New York: Garden City Publishing, n. d.), p. 56.
[46] Mary King Waddington, *Letters Of A Diplomat's Wife, 1883-1900*,(New York: Scribner's, 1903), p. 100-101.

Wasn't it unusual for an Ambassadress' social event not to have music or have dancing in Russia, at this time? Perhaps this person did not have a deep interest in dance, however, she did know the characteristics of the English folkdance.

## 1884 FELIX KRZESIŃSKI

In the Ballet, "Coppelia" there is a beautiful Mazurka. Do different dancers dance it differently? Yes. From the history of the Russian Ballet world we read of the incomparable Krzesiński dancing in 1884:

> *"After Petipa's dances in the first act, the excitement they had aroused would change into pure artistic delight at Zhukoya's wonderful gracefulness and the 'old' Kshessinsky's brilliant, characteristically Polish way dancing the Mazurka."* [47]

## 1889 THE YOUNG EMPRESS TO BE OF RUSSIA, ALEXANDRA II

So what was the Empress-to-be like when she was young? From an entry in her diary of January 29, 1889 when she was seventeen years old she wrote about Saint Petersburg:

> *"I skated and slid down the hills in the afternoon in the Anichkov garden. Supper at 7 ½. then Ella and I went to the Winter Palace where we dressed for the Ball (white diamonds, white flowers and sash).*
>
> *1. Quadrille with Paul*
> *2. Quadrille with Paul*
> *3. Quadrille with Paul*
> *Cotillon with Nicky*
> *Mazurka with Sergei*
>
> *Round dances with: Derfelden, Costi, Paul, Nicky, Toll, Gadon, Schilling, etc*
>
> *The Ball was quite delightful, and did not last very long."* [48]

We see that she enjoyed dancing when she was young. This was even truer for the future Emperor. On February 12: *"Went to Uncle Sergei's where we danced until we dropped and had a wonderful time. Danced the Mazurka with Alix."* It's a Dance for the young. [49] Then on the 21st of February he went to a Historical Masked Ball: *"At first they said that everyone had to wear masks, but when the ball began we took them off . . . Danced the mazurka with the lovely Vestphalen, . . ."* [50]

## 1891 NICHOLAS' II MOTHER

---

[47] A. Benois, *Reminiscences of the Russian Ballet,* (New York: DeCapo, 1977), p.66.
[48] A. Maylunas and S. Mironenko, *A lifelong passion: Nicholas and Alexandra: Their own story,* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), p. 15.
[49] As we have said many times the Mazur is a Dance for the physically fit.
[50] A. Maylunas and S. Mironenko, *A lifelong . . . ,* pp. 16,43.

The mother of Nicholas II was Maria Feodorovna. She was a happy person who enjoyed her role in life. On January 26, 1891 she performed her role of hostess for the visiting Franz Ferdinand of Austria. She wrote to her son about the occasion:

> *"I had to receive so many ladies that I hardly got into the ballroom and finally only saw the mazurka danced which lasted half an hour."* [51]

Her wanting to get into the ballroom emphasizes her social-nature. She was at odds with her daughter-in-law, the Tsarina of Russia, whose personality was just the opposite of hers.

## THE MOTHER-IN-LAW, MARIA FEODOROVNA

Marie was the wife of Alex III.

> "*Marie, born Princess Dagmar into the impoverished circumstances of Prince Christian's family, gloried in the magnificence of the Saint Petersburg court. . . .*
>
> *The dark-haired Empress delighted in parties and balls. 'I danced and danced. I let myself be carried away,' wrote Marie when she was forty-four. Her husband disliked dancing. . . .*
>
> *Marie delighted in gossip and human frailty. 'They danced the mazurka for half an hour,' she wrote in one letter. 'One poor lady lost her petticoat which remained at our feet until a general managed to hide it behind a pot of flowers.'* [52]

It was this friendly, human side of her, which helped to estrange her daughter-in-law, Alexandra, the wife of Nicholas II, from her. She, Marie Feodorovna, obviously enjoyed the Mazurka.

Just how much so we let the following citation speak:

> "*Marie Feodorovna was also an enthusiastic dancer, and excelled in the art to such a degree that, when see took the floor with a well-matched partner, other couples stood still to admire the grace of her movements. Her favourite was the Polish mazurka, an exceptionally dashing dance in which the cavalier leads the lady by the hand along the floor; he springs and side-steps and then wheels suddenly on his heels while the lady moves by his side gracefully with quick and sprightly steps. When he goes down on one knee, she runs around him with bird-like speed and elegance. Always, therefore, the balls given by the family and the aristocracy in honor of Marie Feodorovna began with the mazurka. The Empress and her cavalier led the columns of couples up and down the ballroom to the tune of the Polish national dance."* [53]

The Author of this secondary source did not list his sources so we cannot immediately determine if it was true that at family events, given in her honor, they started with a Mazurka.

---

[51] Maria Feodorovna, *The Secret Letters Of The Last Tsar*, (New York: Longmans, 1938), p. 44.
[52] *The Last Courts of Europe*, (New York: Vendome Press, 1981), p. 24.
[53] V. Poliakoff, *Mother Dear, The Empress Marie of Russia And Her Times*, (New York: Appleton, 1926), p.203.

This is sensible as the Polonaise was done as an opening celebratory-ritual promenade of a political nature and not as a source of pleasure in and of itself.

> *"With her gregarious nature and continuing close links to her own Danish kin and with the greater European royal family, she diluted the provincial German influence among Romanovs. Physically Minnie could not compete with her sister Alexandra, Queen of England, and yet the difference cast no shadow on their friendship. . . .When she was dancing in the winter Palace with diadem and necklace made of diamonds and turquoise, the only thing the critics could find to say against her was that she did not dance the mazurka very well."* [54]

Did not dance the Mazurka very well? As we may recall, she may have had lessons in Denmark but certainly not with the intensity of pupils in Russia. Or she may have learned it Russia in a cursory way: not as a Mazur-Mazurka Dance lover.

## 1899 RUSSIAN BALLET MAZUR DANCERS

From an article written in the Russian periodical *Priroda*, there appeared an evaluation of Russians who specialized in or had a reputation for dancing the Mazurka—these dancers are known as "Mazurzystas." Often these would by the leading Character Dancer of a Ballet Company, such as the Polish Dancer, Felix Krzezsiński. The Russia author of this article was one, Mr. Siewierc:

> *"Któż nie zna tych pełnych życia i gracyi, porywaiących tańców. Trzeba je widzieć wykonane przez Polaków, żeby pojąć cały ich i oryginalność, szczególnie mazura: nie-Polak, chociażby tańczł najpiękniej, nie wykona jak należy. Nasi 'mazurzyści', to nędzni naśladowcy tancerzy-Polaków".*[55]
>
> Whoever doesn't know this Dance, so full of grace and life, must see it danced by Poles in order to catch its entire originalness, this is especially so for the Mazur: non-Poles, although they dance beautifully, do not dance it as they should. Our 'Mazurzystas', are only poor imitators of Polish Dancers.

Mr. Siewierc may be basing his remarks on his observations of the many decades of dancing, in Russia, done by Felix Krzezsiński himself.

## 1900 SCHOOLS IN SAINT PETERSBURG

[54] J. Curtis, *The Flight Of the Romanovs*, (London: Perseus Books, 1999), p. 53.
[55] Z. Kłośnik, *O tańcach narodowych polskich*, (Lwów: 1907), p. 25.

There were over a hundred schools in Saint Petersburg. About a dozen of these schools were for the aristocracy. The most prestigious were the Corps des Pages and Lyceum for boys and the Catherine and Smolny Institute for girls. Dance was taught at these schools but in exactly to what extent and depth cannot be definitively known.

## 1900-1914 RUSSIAN MIDDLECLASS MAZUR

We know that the upper-class of Russia danced the Mazurka but what about the middle-classes? Fortunately, we have a description of the Russian town-class by tourist from England:

> *"Town life in Russia was quite as full of surprises as was the datcha life. Guests were always liable to appear and stay indefinitely. Midnight was the favourite hour, and if we did not burst in on the world, the world most certainly burst in on us for coffee or tea, music, a little dancing, or a game of cards. At balls to which everyone went, or at those held in the gymnasium for charity, the dancing was always most rigorous. . . .until the dancers returned to their old-time waltzes and gallant mazurkas and forgot the scandal."* [56]

So just as in Poland the Mazur-Mazurka was done by the middle-classes as Zorn also states. And folklores studies have documented that the peasant-class of Poland have their version of the Mazur.

## 1900 RUSSIAN DANCERS

An America diplomat serving in Russia at the turn of the 20th century compared the Russian and Italian Ballet Dancers: the Italians danced with "ease and abandon." The Russians:

> *"Where the Russian dancers excel the southerners is in their native dances, the mazurka, vingerka and dance movements founded upon them, sharp, decisively marked dances, which are remarkably fascinating and arouse all the patriotic ardor of the audience."* [57]

He also left us a description of the Court Ritual, as in 1900, at Saint Petersburg:

> *"And so for a third time, upon which a waltz starts up and the two Imperial persons start the circle of the diplomats. If there are any foreign ladies to Berlin presented the Marquise de Montebello, doyenne of the diplomatic corps, does it. Until the cercle was finished I couldn't escape from our corner to dance at all and then it was crowded and not much fun as one was too much in evidence before the royal circle. Before supper comes the Mazurka and after it the cotillion, both considerably like our cotillions with figures similar to ours."* [58]

---

[56] Denis Garstein, *Friendly Russia*, (London: Fisher, 1915), p. 152-153.
[57] H. Hagerman, *Letters of a Young Diplomat*, (Santa Fe: Rydal Press, 1937), p.135.
[58] H. Hagerman, *Letters* . . ., p. 146.

## 1900 A COMPARISON OF THE COURTS OF EUROPE

From a well-traveled we have his comparison of the Courts of Europe:

> *"Most of the great houses of London were open and showering a splendid, if sedate hospitality on all those who, properly accredited, had the right to climb their splendid staircases. Londonderry House, Staffford House, Devonshire House, Lansdowne House, Montagu House, Apsley House, Bath House, Dorchester house, Grosvenor House—vied with Buckingham Palace and Marlborough House themselves in the dignity and attractiveness of the entertainments. In Petersburg one could have found amore barbaric splendour; in Berlin more Court solemnity; in Budapest a more thrilling social environment; in Vienna an older, more artistic and more sophisticated aristocracy; in Paris a wittier and perhaps more polished social life deliberately and blissfully unaware of the existence of Jews and actresses; but only in London could you meet ' everyone in the world who was anyone' by the simple process of being present at a fashionable dinner party and 'going on afterwards,' as the English phrase it, to parties at one of the great, and one or two lesser, town houses. London was in name and in reality the capital of the world. Compared to her at this period Petersburg was childish, Berlin uncouth, Vienna languid, New York crude, Lisbon a village, Paris——spite of its brilliance—a little tawdry."* [59]

Alas, if only the Mazur-Mazurka were alive and well in England at this time! But, the Duke of Devonshire was dead and for the English Aristocracy the Mazur-Mazurka had passed out of fashion. The process of destruction of this English Social Life started with 1914.

## 1900 THE CHARACTER OF THE LAST EMPRESS OF RUSSIA

In sharp contrast to the usually dark assessments of the former Empress, Alexandra Feodorovna, there was a different view of the current Empress:

> *"The Czarina was very lovely, with a timid and yet proud carriage of her fine head and the roses of youth blossoming on her cheeks. She liked to dance, and the great court balls always surprised her into the tense expectation of a young girl.*
> *At one of the balls, in the midst of the sweeping chords of the mazurka, . . ."* [60]

But, on the other hand we have this observation:

> *"With her gregarious nature and continuing close links to her own Danish kin and with the greater European royal family, she diluted the provincial German influence among Romanovs. Physically Minnie could not compete with her sister Alexandra, Queen of England, and yet the difference cast no shadow on their*

[59] *Memoirs Of Prince Blücher*, ed. E. Blücher, (London:, J. Murray, 1932), p. 199.
[60] Baroness Leonie Souiny-Seydlitz, *Russia Of Yesterday And Tomorrow*, (New York: 1917), p. 107.

> *friendship. . . .When she was dancing in the winter Palace with diadem and necklace made of diamonds and turquoise, the only thing the critics could find to say against her was that she did not dance the mazurka very well."* [61]

Did not dance the Mazurka very well? Why? As we may recall, she may have had lessons in Denmark but certainly not with the intensity of pupils in Russia. Or she may have learned it Russia in a cursory way: not as a Mazur-Mazurka Dance lover.

This may have been true at the beginning of her reign but it certainly was not true at the end. We include the remark about the nature of the Mazur-Mazurka music to emphasize how different it is from Waltz music.

However as time passed, she and her husband became scapegoats for all the troubles of Russia. Naturally they were hated by the revolutionary radicals of Russia. Even the Nobles of Russia disliked them. The Empress' personality changed and she became more taciturn and less sociable. She disliked attending Court functions: she was only warm with her family.

How history might have been if the last Empress of Russia, Alexandra Feodorovna, had been able to partake in the joy of dancing and the Mazur-Mazurka! But she was:

> *" . . . awkward, disagreeable, impolite, taciturn, hated balls, abominably dressed. . . . and it even happened that at court balls she did not find any partners, owing probably to the fact that she danced indifferently."* [62]

This was in stark contrast to her mother-in-law, Marie Feodorovna, was the complete opposite of her daughter-in-law and was very popular. Marie Feodorovna liked people and their interests. She had a great deal of charm and was human-hearted. Alexandra lacked the appropriate social skills for the Russian Court and Society. She gave the impression that she was bored, showed disinterest and was generally ill-at-ease. She was nervous at Court functions and unsure of herself.

Here is a pensive photograph of the Empress which illustrates her severe side.

---

[61] J. Curtis, *The Flight Of the Romanovs*, (London: Perseus Books, 1999), p. 53.
[62] C. Radziwill, *The Intimate Life Of The Last Tzarina*, (New York: Dail Press, 1928), p. 5.

The Tsarina of all the Russias

## 1900 FELIX KRZESIŃSKI PHOTO

Here is a lovely photograph of Felix Krzesiński with his daughter, Mathilde [63]in a pose for a Stage Mazur Mazurka.

37. Mathilde Kchessinska and her father Felix Kchessinsky in a Mazurka

Mr. Krzesiński arrived in Russia in 1853, to be engaged at the Maryinsky Theater, from Poland where he was a principal character dancer. He was known to be a "Mazurysta" and had many children and a long dance career in Russia. His daughter, shown here was famous on the Ballet Stage of Russia as well. She was a mistress of the young Nicholas II. Perhaps this is where his interest in dancing and the Mazurka began?

[63] She had a sister, Julia, who was also a dancer at the Maryinsky Theater.

He danced and lived in Russia from 1853 to his death in 1905. He did not know the Russian language very well and there is no evidence that he wrote any books, etc. If only he had chosen to write a detailed Mazur–Mazurka manual.

## 1900 A COMPARISON OF RUSSIAN WOMEN

What were Russian women like before 1914? Let us read of the contrast between the closing years of the 19th century and that of the 20th:

> *"The women—that is to say the younger women—did little to recall the great ladies that I used to see in the old days. It was not that they were wiser, clever or more intelligent than the women of today; nor were they better wives or more faithful mistresses—but they were ladies. They knew how to talk and to make themselves agreeable, how to appear to listen when they were spoken to and to smile at the right moment, and how to win the respect of their menfolk, even of their lovers. The standard of women in society was, indeed, sadly lowered. Formerly they conversed, now they chattered; they used to know have to appreciate good books, now they read nothing but novels and scandalous memoirs. They used to go to the opera, and to see good plays at the theatre, now they preferred to admire the muscles of the wrestlers at the circus, or to go to the ballet to see their fathers', husbands', and brothers' mistresses. In the old days people gave amusing supper parties in their own houses, now they went and drank cheap champagne at cabarets.*
>
> *In Alexander II's time Saint Petersburg society still had the reputation of being one of the most exclusive centres of fashion in Europe. Now it was just like that to be met with at any smart casino, consisting of rather ill-bred women inadequately clothed by the well-known dressmakers and covered with diamonds, and ill-bred clean-shaven men in white ties."* [64]

Alexander II's time was up to 1881, so Baron Wrangel is making a comparison with the 1900s. The tone of society was more democratic, more industrial, more mercenary, in short, it was becoming more violent and ugly.

## 1900 SAINT PETERSBURG BALLS, ATMOSPHERE

Here is a second-hand account of the atmosphere of a court Saint Petersburg Ball told to a visitor to Saint Petersburg:

> *"In the white and silver salon, I recalled a description of a court ball which I once heard from the lips of a young attaché.*
>
> *The guests enter the palace by the great doors on the Neva, and ascend by the Ambassador's Stairway to the white ballroom. In the square outside the coachmen tramp to and fro in the snow and warm themselves at the charcoal fires*

[64] Baron Wrangel, *The Memoirs of Baron N. Wrangel*, (Philadelpia: Lippincott, 1927), p.164-165.

*lighted on these occasions under temporary sheds. Young beauties, doyennes, diplomats, officers; chiffons, jewels, court uniforms, gleaming helmets and swords, cartridge-cases and spurs form the enchanting picture within. Under the sparkling chandeliers, with a background of palms, over a glistening floor, the dancers move to the measure of mazurka and waltz, quadrille and promenade. A maid of honour, distinguished by the shoulder knot of blue caught with the diamond monogram of her Empress, dances with a Lancer in a crimson coat; a Grand Duchess honours a court chamberlain whose back bears an embroidered key; a Hussar, whose sable and gilt-trimmed coat hangs from his shoulders, responds with adoring eyes to the piquant glances of an ambassador's daughter; a ruffle catches upon a spur, and an aide-de-camp stoops at the feet of a Princess."* [65]

## 1901 ABOUT THE RUSSIAN MAZURKA

In a study of national dances at the turn of the 20th century we read a summary citation of one Mr. Sutherland Edward's description of dancing in Russia:

*"Dancing in Russian society is very much like that in other countries, except that in Russia the ball always ends with a Mazurka—of which the rhythm and step are known everywhere, but not the figures and general character. In Russia it is danced by an indefinite number of couples. A kind of follow-my-leader aspect is given to it by all imitating the evolutions of the first. Another peculiarity of this dance consists in the ladies choosing their partners, a process which is effected in a variety of ingenious ways, more or less complimentary to the gentlemen selected. . . .*

*The figures are gone through like those of our cotillion.*

*In a Russian ball–room a lady is never engaged for the entire Waltz or polka, but for one or at most two turns round the room."* [66]

When Mr. Edwards states that, the rhythm and step are known everywhere, he does seem to mean outside of Russia: in Europe. As we know already the follow-the-leader aspect in part and parcel of the Polish Mazur Dance.

Also we have another confirmation of the Russian custom of going once around the room for couple dances. This is a splendid custom—try it. This makes the group dances such as the Polonaise and Mazur-Mazurka , therefore, even more interesting.

## 1902 A SAINT PETERSBURG BALL, ATMOSHERE

At a first Ball, of the year, called the "Big Ball" in Saint Petersburg, held in the large Salle Nicholas room for three thousand people in 1902:

---

[65] Ruth Kedzie Wood, *Honeymooning In Russia*, (New York: Dodd Mead, 1911), p.41-42.
[66] Lilly Grove Frazer, *Dancing*, 2nd ed., (London: 1901), p. 240. First edition was in 1895.

> *"Imagine a Ball-room so long that, on coming into it at one end, one could not see as far as the other end. It was much larger than the Galerie des Glaces at Versailles, having a long gallery on the side divided from the ballroom throughout its whole length, by arcades. In this gallery stood tables loaded with fruit, sweets, delicacies, caviare and champagne. Here, in between the dances, we walked and had refreshments. Along the opposite side of the Salle Nicholas were the windows looking on the Neva. It is difficult to describe the magnificence of the setting; the beauty of the women with their dazzling jewels and the gorgeous uniforms of the men, all seen under the blazing lights of the lustres.*

Beisdes, the large Balls there were numerous smaller Balls held at Court as well as Balls given at private homes. And what about the Mazur-Mazurka? She wrote:

> *"It was customary at the Court Balls for one's supper partner to be one's partner for the Mazurka. After supper at the Hermitage came the Mazurka and Cotillion. During the Cotillion, quantities of coloured ribbons were collected by us from the men by whom we had been chosen as partners; the more popular the girl, the more ribbons she acquired. These ribbons which we wore over our shoulders, had tiny silver bells on the ends which rang as we danced the Mazurka. I sometimes wonder if girls of the present day could dance it with the same vigour and élan to which we were accustomed?"* [67]

This is the only instance in the written Mazurka record of this custom. We do know of it in the Krakowiak Dance. Though it does raise the moral question of comparing women. It is one thing to judge their graceful dancing of the Mazurka and another their "popularity." All the women should be be-ribboned.

> *"The young Grand Duke Michael was constantly my partner for the Mazurkas and suppers. . . .I once said jokingly to the Grand Duke Michael that I should soon be a complete wallflower, if he persisted in asking me at the last moment to dance the Mazurka and sup with him at every ball, thus obliging me to throw over the partner who had already booked me for supper . . . At our balls one never danced or supper with one's husband."* [68]

According to Nadine Wonlar-Larsky, after the political events of the period 1904-1905, large scale, costly entertaining was not done any more in Russia.

## 1905 A LITERARY DESCRIPTION OF A SAINT PETERSBURG BALL

One of the most encountered descriptions of a Ball at the Winter Palace is that of the French author, Théophile Gautier, contained in his book, entitled "Russia" and published in 1905. The opening paragraph about the Ball he writes:

---

[67] Nadine Wonlar-Larsky, *The Russia that I Loved*, (London: MacSwinney, 1937), p.78-81. The Wonlar-Larskys were a well-known and wealthy family of Polish ancestry.
[68] Nadine Wonlar-Larsky, *The Russia* . . ., p. 93.

> *"We are going to tell you about a fête where we were present without being there, where are body was absent though our eyes were invited,—a court ball."* [69]

This means that he was not at the Ball! Also from that subtitle of his book we see that this book is a synthesis of the observations and writings of others. This makes it more of a literary skilled work of impressions skillfully done by the author. So let us see these impressions:

> *"In Russia, court-balls are opened by a polonaise; it is not a dance, but a sort of procession, a march with torches, that is full of individuality. The participants stand in two rows, leaving a space in the middle of the ballroom. When everyone is in his place, the orchestra plays a slow, majestic air, and the promenade begins; it is led by the emperor, who has asked a princess or lady, whom he desires to honor, to dance . . . ..*

This was not the Dance, The Polonaise, done for its own sake but it was done as a presentation of the legitimacy of the political ruling elite—in this context, the Polonaise was a symbol of Russian power—completely divorced from its beauty as a Dance. It reinforces the status of individuals: it increases the regalness of the participants.

> *"The cortege is advancing all the while, gaining recruits at every step; a gentleman steps out from the row and extends his hand to a lady opposite him, and the couple join the others in the line, suiting their steps according to the gait of the head. It cannot be a very easy matter to walk thus, holding each daintily by the hand, under the fire of a thousand indifferent or sarcastic looks; the slightest awkwardness of gesture, the least misstep, the tiniest movement out-of-time, is sharply noticed. Military habits do much to help the men, but it must be difficult for the women! . . .They pass along lightly, under their features, their flowers, their diamonds, with modestly lowered eyes or else looking about them, with an air of perfect innocence, managing with an inflection of the body, or little movement of their heels, their sweeping trains of silk and lace, fanning themselves leisurely, as much at ease as if they were walking alone in an avenue or a park. To walk in a noble, graceful, simple manner, when people are staring at you, is what more than one great actress has never been able to accomplish.*
>
> *What gives originality to the court of Russia is that from time to time a young Circassian prince with wasp-like waist and broad shoulders joins the cortege, or a chief of the Lesghine guard, or a Mongol officer, whose soldiers are even now armed with the bow, the quiver and the buckler. . . .But no one, apparently, thinks it remarkable; and indeed what is more natural than that a Mongolian or Mohammedan prince should walk through the polonaise with a* grande dame *of Greek orthodox St. Petersburg! Are they not both subjects of the emperor of all the Russias?*
>
> *The uniforms and gala habits of the men are so brilliant, so rich, so varied, so covered with embroidery, with gold and decorations, that the women, with their modern elegance and the light grace of the fashions of the day, find it difficult to hold their own against this massive éclat; but since they cannot be richer, they are more beautiful; their bare shoulders are worth all the orders in the world. To vie with this*

[69] Theophile Gautier, *Russia And By Other Distinguished French Travelers And Writers Of Note*, (Philadelphia: John C.Winston, 1905), reprint ed., 1970, Arno Press, p. 207.

> *splendor, like the Byzantine madonnas they must have robes of gold and silver brocade, necklaces and ornaments of precious stones and radiant crowns of diamonds; but fancy dancing with a shrine of jewelry on one's body. . . .*
>
> *When the Polonaise has traversed the salon and gallery, the ball begins. The dances are not remarkable—quadrilles, waltzes, redowas, as in Paris, or London, or Madrid, or Vienna, or anywhere else in the* grand monde*—except of course the mazourka, which is danced at Saint Petersburg with a perfection and elegance unknown elsewhere. . . .*

As we know this is patently false. It was danced better among Poles and best within the boundaries of old Poland (1794). (Cellarius' Paris was an exception, according to him.) The various authors were certainly influenced by the power and outward, lavish displays of wealth of the Russian Court.

> *"For the rest, the* coup de'oeil *is charming; the dances form exquisite figures in the midst of the splendid crowd, which has drawn aside to give ample space to the dancers; like the skirts of the spinning dervishes, and amid the rapid evolution, knots of diamonds, blades of gold; dance and silver flash like lightning, and little gloved hands placed on the shoulders of the waltzers look like white camellias in massive gold vases."* [70]

## 1905 A PRINCESS OF SPAIN

The Imperial Court of Russia had connection with most of the world. It had many visitors one of whom was the Infanta Eulalia of Spain. She was in Saint Petersburg in the first decade of the 20th century. She knew the Royal Family and found them to be warm and friendly in their personal relations:

> *"His love of simplicity does not, however, prevent the Emperor from enjoying Society. Like most Russians, he is fond of it, and his animation and vivacity at Court balls were delightful and, moreover, genuine. I liked to watch him dance the mazurka, that rushing, almost violent, dance that they say only a Slav can dance to perfection. It was so obvious that he enjoyed it."* [71]

It was not a Dance to be "walked" through.

## 1911 SWEDEN AND RUSSIA, IN KONTUSZ FOR A MAZURKA

One of the Grand Duchess of Russia, Maria was married to William of the Swedish Court. Below is a photograph of this couple in the Polish Kontusz-Like garment for a fancy dress Ball in 1911—undoubtedly in Russia.

---

[70] Theophile Gautier, *Russia And By . . .*, pp. 210-215.
[71] Infanta Eulalia, *The Tsar And His People*, (New York: Dodd, 1915), p.168.

THE GRAND DUCHESS MARIE AND PRINCE WILLIAM
*Dressed for a ball in Polish costume, 1911*

There is some evidence for the Mazur-Mazurka in the Scandinavian countries. In our case the Grand Duchess Maria left her mark in 1910:

> "*I ask the King* [of Sweden] *to give a costume ball for me, and to add to the gaiety of the occasion I organized a quadrille of young women and men. Eight pairs of us danced a minuet and a gavotte; then with my husband I danced a mazurka, a quick dance, demanding great abandon and vitality. We wore beautiful Polish costumes. The spurs on my little green boots flashed and jingled to the gay music and we pirouetted so madly that I scattered the emeralds sewn to my dress."* [72]

We see that the Mazurka was danced, apparently, by this couple alone: as a demonstration or performance Dance. The pirouette is the Hołubiec turn, which in this case, was spiritedly, done.

**1900-1902, 1911 THE RUSSIAN COURT**

[72] Grand Duchess Maria, *Education Of A Princess: A Memoir,* trans. R. Lord, (New York: Viking Press, 1931), p. 112-113.

There were many foreigners in Russia in the 19th and 20th centuries. It was a tourist destination for adventurous travelers, business people and the socially well-connected elites of the world: including Americans.

President Grant's granddaughter, Julia, married a Russian officer of the Chevalier-Gardes and thereby was ennobled as the Princess Cantacuzene. She lived in Saint Petersburg and was the most popular American woman in the elegant circle of Saint Petersburg's Society. In her memoir she describes her delight at the life in those times and circles:

> "*Micheal* [the same Mazurka lover, the Emperor's Nicholas II, brother] *asked me for them mazurka and supper when dancing began the evening. He liked my treating him simply, it turned out, and always after we were frequent partners—in fact , at the court balls I was invariably his partner, either for the mazurka or for supper, or both. My husband and I were generally invited to his table, and were also included in any fête given for him.*
>
> *Saint Petersburg was probably, during those years, the most brilliant capital in Europe. Besides the embassies, there were a lot of aristocrats, rich, lavish, highly cultured, who were fond of entertaining. Good taste and money had created ideal frames for diners, theatricals, dances, suppers, and music. Our women were handsome and well gowned, and both men and women were most unpretentious, cultivated, and clever. I liked them thoroughly, and I felt immensely at home among them; also, I liked their occupations and amusements. Every one had serious duties, fulfilled with great success, but they also possessed a rare faculty of putting aside their work and plunging into any pleasure with a zest no other race can boast, I think. It is a rare quality, especially as their unfeigned enthusiasm led to no excess. In all the years I was in Russia I never met in society any man who had more to drink than was good for him, nor did any act or word ever go beyond good form and good taste. It was all instinctive breeding, as was the invariable kindness shown a young stranger who had dropped into their midst."* [73]

She was very lucky to had known such a life—if only we could be so lucky. However, it is against the laws of nature that we can all persons of good taste and manners.
Her remarks about the visit of the Crown Prince, Wilhelm of Germany, to Saint Petersburg in 1911, presents us with a potential Mazurka puzzle. First, let us turn to the Crown Prince.

As we know where ever his father Wilhelm II, the Kaiser of Germany, went there was always trouble, either with him personally or with German customs and character. The same was true of this Crown Prince. Below we illustrate the difference in customs between Berlin and Saint Petersburg as well as the general atmosphere of Balls at Saint Petersburg. .According to Princess Cantacuzene, the following took place at one of the Balls given for the Germans by the old Grand Duke Michael:

> "*Courtly and handsome, with his tall, well-proportioned figure, the host stood at the head of his staircase alone to receive his guests, of whom just enough to fill his rooms without crowding were invited. As each one of us came up and curtseyed, his air and words as well as his graceful bow and cordial hand-shake gave a sensation*

[73] Princess Cantacuzene, *My Life, Here And There*, (New York: Scribner's, 1921), p.247.

*of sincere welcome. For some of us the Grand Duke even found pretty compliments to pay on our gowns. Every woman was glad to have worn her best for such a smart little function.*

*The Empress-Mother came to her uncle's party, the Emperor and his wife also—a rare honor, for during the fourteen years between my marriage and the Great War I do not think they graced parties given in the capital more than five or six times. All the Grand Dukes and Grand Duchess came, of course. Beyond the members of the imperial family and their courts in attendance, there was no guest who was not of the gay,[74] ultra-smart set of young, married dancers, with the best of the crack guard regiment's bachelor officers added for extra partners. . . .*

*As I came into the great ballroom there was loud talk . . . and I turned toward the commotion with curiosity, leaving Prince Obolensky, who had just been reminding me of our engagement to dance the mazurka . . . Countess Lüttwitz turned around and said to men in English: 'We are just arranging the women, so we can take them up and present them to our Crown Prince when he arrives with Their Majesties. Won't you come too? You are one of the best dancers, and I am sure would like to be presented to His Imperial Highness.'*

*I promptly replied that if he* [the Crown Prince of Germany] *danced well, I should like very much to have the Crown Prince presented to me, but I did not expect to be presented to him. 'I've never been presented to any man. Our Czarevitch is always introduced to ladies like any other gentleman.'*

*'But it is not the German court etiquette; and the Crown Prince would be surprised to have things otherwise. He will not dance with you if you are not properly presented to him by Countess Alvensleben,' insisted the little Countess, beginning to look hot . . . and with a laugh I replied: 'My dear Countess, this isn't Berlin, this is Saint Petersburg, and our etiquette says the gentlemen of Russia ask to be presented to us. I am told by my husband that your Crown Prince is most polite; I fancy, therefore, he will follow our customs during his visit. If not, and if in order to dance with him I have to wait in a line and be presented to him, I am quite sure I shall be content to enjoy this ball with my Russian partners. So please don't have me on your mind at all.'*

*A number of other women joined me and we stood as far from the entrance-door as possible. We were still there, when the music struck up, and in the doorway appeared all the royalties; among them the Emperor's brother Michael, who was one of my favorite partners always, and a prefect dancer. He came across the room, and took me out for the opening waltz. When we finished it he invited me to be his partner for the mazurka; then he said: 'I'm going to bring our cousin* [the Crown Prince of Germany] *and introduce him to you. You will like him, and he dances awfully well.'*

*He went and fetched Wilhelm from the crowd at the door and brought him straight to our side of the ballroom, introduced him quite informally to me and then to all the other women who had followed me over there. The Crown Prince showed no sign of shock at this breach of etiquette, and being, for the first time since his arrival, in young, gay company, he proved his enthusiasm and his admirable qualities as a dancer at once. He ask me to waltz and I accepted, feeling a wicked joy as we passed the corner where the ladies of Germany stood looking with stoney expressions at my excellent partner and me. We circled several times in their neighborhood. Naturally they were cross, especially as Wilhelm, having also asked me to be his partner for the mazurka, and hearing I was already engaged to the*

[74] The word, "gay" means to be merry, carefree, bright, happy, etc. It does not mean, homosexaul.

> *Grand Duke Michael, went off and arranged for the latter to waive his rights in the guest's favor, since this was to be the Crown Prince's single ball in Russia".*[75]

Now what is the Mazurka puzzle? How, when and where did the Crown Prince learn to dance and in particular, the Mazurka? We raise this question because of the Kaiser's strict prohibition against "modern dancing" in the Berlin Court. (Now we know that the Mazurka does not fit into this category.) Not only that, but any dance movement which could cause a fall or mishap was forbidden.

So there still may be a puzzle. It has to do with the highly polished and very slippery dance floor of the Ballroom at the Court of Berlin. One had to be very careful even when waltzing on this floor. Too slippery a floor is a danger to the dancing of the Mazurka. So how could the Crown Prince have learned the Mazurka? He took lessons elsewhere? Under what circumstances?

However, when all is said and done, Russia and Germany went to war with each other?

## 1905 ALEXANDRA DANCES A MAZURKA

> *"The big Court ball, for which two thousand invitations were issued, was held in January. The great "Nicholas" Hall and all those leading up to it were thronged by the whole of Petersburg society. there was a wonderful display of jewellery, most of which is now broken up, or scattered over Europe in antique shops. All the debutantes wore white. There was a mass of Court officials in gold-laced and white trousers; officers of the Chevaliers-gardes and the Gardes-a-cheval, the two crack guards regiments, in the scarlet tunics which they wore only at Court balls: the Emperor's own Hussars in scarlet dolmans, with the white fur-trimmed mentik slung over their shoulders; cuirassiers in white uniform; and the Cossacks in red, wide-skirted coats. . . .*
>
> *The young Empress looked regal in a golden gown and her marvelous jewels. Generally Her Majesty did not look her best in evening parties, for she suffered from a bad circulation, and in the over-heated ballroom she as a rule became very flushed. During the mazurka she danced only one round with one of the Grand Dukes, conscious that she would never be able to manage to get the Slav swing of the dance. . . .*
>
> *Though little over thirty, the Emperor did not dance, and had not done so since his accession. Instead, he went about the room talking to his guests."* [76]

As we know, before he married Nicholas, was an enthusiastic dancer. And we know that his wife was very self-conscious in public and was generally unpopular with the Russian elites as time when on.

## 1911-12 DID THE GRAND DUCHESSES DANCE?

---

[75] Princess Cantacuzene, *My Life, . . . ,* p.234-236.
[76] Baroness Sophie Buxhoevden, *Before The Storm*, (London: Macmillan, 1938), p. 201, 209, 211.

The puzzle—did the, soon to be most foully murdered, four Grand Duchesses ever attend a Ball and dance? You, the reader of this work, do know that they received instruction in dancing and this included Mazurka dancing!

But when? And did they dance the Mazurka at a formal Ball? What do we know about their young lives? A great deal, now-a-days. Here are some observations:

> *"I believe I am the only commoner of my generation who has ever waltzed with Nicholas II. His daughters with some officers from the royal yacht and myself were rehearsing once for a dance in the Livadia Palace."* [77]

As for the daughters of that most unfortunate family were they rehearsing or taking or having a dance class?

> *"The four girls grew up surrounded by a large number of servants, but, in spite of their mother's supervision, they were left a great deal to themselves. Not one of them ever had a real girl friend of her own age.*
>
> *The seven children of Grand Duchess Xenia were the only ones who came to see the Grand Duchesses without ceremony; . . The children of the Grand Dukes George and Constantine, aged ten, twelve, and twenty, were never present at these intimate meetings. Countess Emma, the daughter of Count Freedericksz, and a few of the officers of the yacht* Standard *had been were the only persons not related to the Romanovs who joined the Tsar's daughters at play now and then.*
>
> *To the best of my belief, there was one solitary ball organized for the two eldest of the Grand Duchesses, at Livadia in 1911 or 1912. The Marshal of the Court had been put in charge of the arrangements for this ball, and the officers of the* Standard *had been invited to come to the dancing, together with some other lieutenants from the Crimean cavalry division. The children long regarded this ball as one of the greastest events in their lives."* [78]

Maybe this was their first and only Ball. As we shall learn this yacht has played its part in the History of the Russian Mazurka.

## 1912 THE MOTION PICTURE FILM OF THE GRAND DUCHESSES DANCING THE MAZURKA

How we wish that we could have a filmed record of people dancing the **Social Ballroom Form** of the **Polish Mazur** or **Mazurka** with details of what the steps were and how the step movements were done. (Figures are not any kind of problem.) This would be a dancers or dance scholars dream!

**But** we do have a film record! Fortunately the last Tsar was a photography enthusiast. Besides still photography there exists motion picture film of his family circle—in particular, of his daughters dancing the Mazurka! What a potentially exciting discovery this! Let us turn now to this film. [79]

---

[77] Baroness Sophie Buxhoevden, *Before The Storm*, . . . , p. 201, 209, 211.
[78] A. A. Mossolov, *At The Court Of The Last Tsar*, trans. E. Dickes, (London: Methuen Co., 1935), p. 61.
[79] The film is from and used here with the permission of the Herman Axelbank Film Collection of the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution And Peace of Stanford University, California.

Probable date of film July 22, 1912.

On July 23, 1912 a name-day celebration was held on the Tsar's private yacht, the *Standard* in honor of his daughter Marie. The Tsar's mother, also a Marie, was there with her youngest daughter, Olga Alexandrovna. She was an aunt to Tsar's daughter, the Grand Duchess Olga. The Grand Duchess Olga was then 17 years old and her aunt 24 years old. This is important because there are actually more than four couples dancing at one time or another in this short film sequence. From the still photographs below, which have been excerpted from the film, it certainly looks like the girls were arranged according to their heights and therefore their ages. Starting from the left we have Anastasia, Marie, Tatiana, and most probably Grand Duchess Olga on the left, with the large sun-hat or that may be the Olga Alexandrovna.

**THERE IS NO DOUBT ABOUT WHICH DANCE IT IS—THIS IS A MAZURKA.**

As you can see this figure-action is the general promenading of couples.

All the series of photographic stills which are to follow are in their correct real-time sequence.

The following two stills again show us the Grand Duchess'. How many men are dancing? It isn't absolutely possible to determine. But there are at least four young Ladies dancing so there must be at least Gentlemen dancing.

Notice in the above that it looks as though there is a fifth man on the extreme right. Comparing this with the still below we see that he has disappeared, so we know that he is in motion.

Now we can see that there is a fifth couple next to the ship's guard rail. (They are mostly blocked by he rightmost Gentleman with his back to us.) so it looks as though there are five dancing couples.

We can further substantiate this by examining the next still. The Lady in the center has an over-sized hat as does the Lady who is dancing next to the ship's railing. This and their corresponding adult heights mark these two individuals as being Grand Duchess Olga and her cousin Olga Alexandrovna.

Let us now try to examine the steps used. There is only one which is clearly discernible—the basic running step. We see it displayed by Anastasia, Marie and Tatiana on the left side of the stills numbered 1 through 11.

1

There is no closing of the feet on count three—this is not the Pas de Basque of Cellarius.'

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

So what step is this? It is the Bieg or the Basic Running step as described by a long line of Polish dance teachers starting with Hłasko, Staczyński (remember his Pas Simple?), Mestenhauser, etc. But even earlier than the Poles was Michel Saint Léon's 1830 description.

Now we examine the following set of stills, 1 through 10, for the turning of the couple. The partially shown Gentleman on the extreme left of the first still is about to lead his partner into the couple turn.

1

2

Note, in still 2 above, how far apart the partners are. The Gentleman swings his Lady outward from himself, in a counter-clockwise direction. He also is turning on his axis in the same direction.

3

The Gentleman is now bringing her in closer to himself. Also note that this couple is doing the couple turn independently of the other couples who are promenading.

4

5

They continue. The Gentleman in not doing any special footwork.

6

7

In stills 5-7, they are approaching the commonly-known “couple Waltz-like” position.

8

9

10

Here they are in a modified Waltz position—except that the Gentleman has his left hand at the Lady's waist. She does not have her right hand on his left shoulder. From here they would rotate as a couple, then open-out to the usual Promenade position.

Should the Gentlemen have their hands on the hips? The following set of five stills clearly shows that they do not. Why should this be so?

1

The Gentleman is to lead his partner to and fro, around, back and forth, etc. Some of these motions can be directed with the free arm and hand of the Gentleman. Also in the “higher-form” of Mazur-Mazurka dancing the Gentleman can give a more animated expression to his dancing with movements of his free arm.

2

3

4

5

Do you see that three is a Lady in this sequence without a hat and she seems to have short hair? At this time short hair was not in vogue for the Grand Duchess.' Who is this?

But sometimes Gentlemen do place their hands on their hips: usually when they become relatively stationary, say, as in taking a kneeling position.

1

Do you see the wide distance between Anastasia and her partner? A little too wide here.

2

In the above two stills we can see the un-winding of the couple turn.
In summary what can we say about this historic Mazurka film document? That we are fortunate that it exists—that the fall of the Monarchy in Russia was a death blow to the Mazurka in **Russia.**

The dancing of the Mazurka in this film is a good reminder of how ordinary people, after a series of dance instructions, can be expected to do the Mazurka. Here it is not sharply or elegantly done—but, this does not mean that it was not vivacious, that it was not pleasurable.

Now where is the Mazurka done elegantly, sharply done? Why among people who have had a great deal of dance training or among people who know its spirit. Let us bring to mind the descriptions of the partner of Joseph Poniatowski at the turn of the 19th century. How "she rested her hear on his shoulders" during the couple turn for instance. Remember the fleet-footedness of Joanna Grudzińska—no jumping or hoping in the running.

Still and all it was thrilling for me to see this all too short film. It is also a poignant reminder of how fleeting the lives of the Grand Duchess' were; how fleeting all our lives are.

## 1913 THE GRAND DUCHESS OLGA DANCES AT HER FIRST BALL

The "First Ball": every young woman's and young man's dream. At least it should be. How splendid it is that we have visual proof that at least one of the Grand Duchess' attended a Ball as a participating adult. Nineteen thirteen was the three hundred year of the Romanov dynasty rule over Russia. This was celebrated with numerous events. One such was the Ball at the Assembly Hall of the Nobility in Saint Petersburg on February 23, 1913. This was not in the Winter Palace as the Empress did not want to act as the Hostess. She and the Emperor had withdrawn from Society and the Court by this time. This kind of attitude and behavior on the part of herself and her husband further alienated the Imperial Family from Society.

But let us turn to happier events—this Ball. Look at this wonderful painting. It was done by D. Kardovsky, in 1915.

Grand Duchess Olga is in the center in the usual waltz position. Both partners are looking directly at us. However, this not the only depiction of this Ball and Olga; from her father's own diary we read:

> *"Saturday 23rd February. At nine o' clock we got ready and took Olga with us to the ball at the Assembly Hall of the Nobility. Saltykov brought us the bread and salt in the Great Hall; then they played a new cantata. After that we danced the Polka and*

> *then the dancing began. Olga danced a lot. Alix was the first to go, then Mama left, and finally Olga and I at 11.40. A splendid gathering and a beautiful ball."* [80]

"Alix" was how the Empress was referred to within the family circle. By this time in her life the Empress was physically frail and often in a highly nervous state—she was ill.

There is one unusual item about this Ball. In one secondary source it is stated that the opening Polonaise was done to the music of a Chopin Polonaise.[81] As we know the usual Polonaise was from the opera, *A Life For The Tsar*. From this secondary source we read:

> *"As Nicholas and Alexandra watched, their eldest daughter, Grand Duchess Olga Nikolaievna, walked onto the dance floor, attired in a light pink satin gown decorated with garlands of roses, her hair bound with a silver ribbon and a single string of pearls adorning her neck. It was her first formal appearance in Saint Petersburg society, and she blushed with pleasure as all eyes turned on her and her partner, Prince Saltykov, as he led her through a waltz."* [82]

**MORE ON OLGA'S FIRST BALL**

The daughter of the English Ambassador to Russia wrote about this very same Ball:

> *"The next night a big ball was given in the Assembly Hall of the Nobles, and, according to custom, this was opened by the Emperor and Empress in a solemn polonaise, that most beautiful and most stately of all dances. Heading the long procession of Grand Dukes and the Nobles the Emperor and his wife went slowly round the great hall, keeping step to the wonderful measure of Chopin's music and changing partners at the end of each round. The Empress was a beautiful and stately figure in a sweeping dress of white of white and silver, a magnificent diamond tiara crowning her fair hair, and cascades of diamonds rippling over her shoulders, but here again her face remained grave and unsmiling and here again she retired before the end of the evening, leaving the Emperor behind with the Grand Duchess Olga, who on this occasion made her first public appearance in society. Dressed in a simple pale-pink chiffon frock, her fair hair shining like burnished gold, her blue eyes very bright, her cheeks softly flushed, she danced every dance, enjoying herself as simply and wholeheartedly as any girl at her first ball. I have a vivid memory of her standing on the steps leading down from the gallery to the floor of the ball–room, trying gaily to settle a dispute between three young Grand Dukes who all protested that they had been promised the next dance. Watching her I wondered what the future was going to hold for her, and which of the many possible suitors who had been mentioned from time to time she would eventually marry, but certainly on that night of music and laughter no thought of the coming terror and grim and frightful tragedy ever came into my mind."* [83]

---

[80] Nicholas II, *Diaries of Nicholas II*, (Moscow: 1995), pp. 384,385.
[81] G. King, *The Court Of The Last Tsar*, (Hoboken: Wiley & Sons, 2006), p. 396.
[82] G. King, *The Court . . .*, pp. 396,397.
[83] Meriel Buchanan, *The Dissolution Of An Empire*, (London: J. Murray, 1932), pp. 37-38.

So we had substantiated that this was her first appearance at an official Ball. She did also danced at smaller unofficial social occasions in Lavidia.

## 1913 THE GRAND DUCHESSES

As we now know the daughter's of the last Tsar did have some dance lessons and did dance the Mazurka in private circumstances. But did they ever dance it at a Ball?

The two eldest daughters, Olga and Tatiana, did attend what was probably their first and only Saint Petersburg's Ball in 1913. The Ball was given by their grandmother at the Anichkow Palace. But there is no mention of what they danced.

## 1892,1914 BAEDEKER GUIDE BOOK AND RUSSIA

For those of who reading this is future centuries will not even have learned how horrible was the Earth's History of the 20th Century—of our devastating World Wars.

But just before the First World War started we have a citation about Russia in a then and now (2006) very well-known travel-guide book, the Baedeker. It reads:

> *" The Russian National Dances . . .have a markedly dramatic stamp. . . Polish Dances, such as the* Mazurka (Мазурка) *and the* Cracovienne (Krakoviak)*, are also very popular."* [84]

That the Mazurka was done by the upper-class of Russia is well known. As for the Krakowiak it was known as a spectator dance, through Russian Operas and Ballets.

In the 1892 version of the Baedeker, the Krakowiak is not mentioned.

## 1914 POLES DANCING IN SAINT PETERSBURG

Poles, whether willing or not, were subjects of the Russian Empire. Some served in Russia proper and were even part of the government. This included social occasions. Here from a memoir of early 1914 by the wife of a Russian minister:

> *"And there was the gay, dynamic mazurka in which our Polish partners were most brilliant. Though wearing Russian uniforms, their hearts beat to Polish rhythms."* [85]

---

[84] K. Baedeker, *Russia*, (Leipzig: 1914), p. 30.
[85] Helene Isvolsky, *No time To Grieve*, (Philadelphia: 1985), p. 75.

## SOMETIME BEFORE 1914, A MAZURKA DANCE LESSON IN RUSSIA

Here is a splendid photograph of young women learning to dance the Mazurka in Russia. How do we know that they are learning the Mazurka and not the Polonaise? Because the

photographer [86]entitled this photograph as "Mazurka." However the date of this photograph is unknown. Notice several things: they are being taught by women, that their free hand holds their skirt, that they have a nice wide open couple position and that their heads are nicely inclined. Actually, this could be a Polonaise class as well. Or it may have been just practice of a good body position.

This is probably the Ballroom in the Smolny Institute for Noblewomen. This was the most prestigious school for girls. The cosmopolitan nature of Saint Petersburg was reflected in the languages taught at Smolny: all were required to only speak German on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, French on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, Russian on Sundays, and English between classes.

## 1914 RUSSIAN ARISTOCRACY: THEIR CHARACTER

> *" 'Petersburg,' remarked Andre de Fouquieres . . . 'Petersburg has, I consider, the most highly civilized society in the world. . . .*

[86] The photographer was K. K. Bulla. From the collection of, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles. K. K. Bulla, before 1917, Gelatin silver, 7 ¼ x 10 31/32 in.

> *'Look at all the people here,' he went on. 'How charming they are; how nicely adjusted in their sense of values. How they appreciate culture, art, all the refinements of life, yet never lose sight of the cultivated simplicity is the highest form of perfection. They are not insular like through English, nor bourgeois-minded like the French. They have all the riches and luxury of American society, without any of its vulgar ostentation. They have developed the art of living beautifully.' "* [87]

**USSR**

Lenin was married to Krupskaya. Her father was a Soviet bureaucrat working in Poland. He was accused of crimes against the USSR. One of the charges laid against him was:

> *". . . it was alleged that he 'danced the mazurka' and that his daughter spoke Polish."* [88]

This was probably true as her mother knew Polish, published a book Polish, and she had a local nurse-maid who was probably Polish. The symbolism is obvious: Mazurka equals Poland equals anti-Russia-USSR.

[87] Countess Nostitz, *Romance And Revolutions*, (London: Hutchinson, 1937), p. 131.

[88] R. McNeal, *Bride of the Revolution*, (Ann Arbor: U Michigan Press, 1972), p.8.