

THE DYNAMIC AND PASSIONATE CATHERINE II - THE GREAT, BORN GERMAN, A CONTROVERSIAL FIGURE ON THE RUSSIAN IMPERIAL THRONE. HER REFLECTION ON ART AND CULTURE

FRANTIŠEK HEISER¹

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¹ Catholic University in Ružomberok, Faculty of Education, Ružomberok (SK)

Contact: Assoc. Prof. PaedDr. Mgr. František Heiser, PhD. - frantisek.heiser@ku.sk

Abstract:

In the current atmosphere of the extraordinary fifth inauguration of Russian President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, the question naturally arises, among other things, of the longest reigning potentates of Old Russia, the Russian principalities, Tsarist Russia, the Russian State, the Russian Empire/ until 1917/ and, now, the Russian Federation. In this sense, there are interesting parallels between the reign of Ivan IV - Vasilyevich the Terrible, the Great Priest and first Russian Tsar, who ruled for 51 years /1533-1584/, and the reign of Empress Catherine II. the Great. She was in power for 34 years /1762-1796/. Each of the 75 rulers of Ancient Rus and Russia, from the earliest forms of rule dating back to the 9th and 11th centuries, respectively, stamped their original stamp on their nation, and at the same time ploughed a deep furrow in connection with the formation of the Russian commonwealth, statehood, Russian national and state consciousness, Russian spirit, patriotism and national pride.

In this context, one prominent personality of Russian imperial history - Catherine II - the Great currently comes to mind, whose 295th anniversary of birth we commemorate these days. What was the contribution of this German princess to the formation and development of the Russian Empire in the 18th century? What place does she have in the context of the great Russian and international historical contexts? What was her real reflection

on Russian and European culture and art will be the subject of the present study. Understandably, the international-political aspect of her rule will permeate all her activities.

Keywords: The Russian Empire of the 18th century, the Russian monarchy, Russia's position of power, Enlightenment absolutism, nobility and serfdom, Yemelyan Pugachev, the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences, the Hermitage, architecture, painting, European political and philosophical writings, film, music.

Catherine II.

The Great, originally German, proper name Sophie Augusta Frederika of Anhalt-Zerbst, after she adopted Orthodoxy Catherine Alekseyevna, contributed enormously to Russia becoming one of the great and respected European powers in the 18th century. Her name is linked to the renaissance of culture and science, which led to the founding of top and important educational and cultural institutions, universities and theatres.

Sofia Augusta, later the aforementioned Catherine Alekseyevna, came from a Lutheran family. From an early age, she was exceptionally goal-oriented and ambitious. In adulthood, she also became interested in philosophical literature, which was not at all typical of provincial German princesses. She did not come from a particularly wealthy family, which is why her marriage to Peter III Fyodorovich was an incredibly important and prestigious step in her life /when she married she was 16 years old!/. Life at the Court of Empress Elizabeth Petrovna /1709-1761/, who was the aunt of her later husband Peter III. changed her social status from the ground up. For the sake of orientation in genealogical issues, we remind you that Elizabeth Petrovna /Elizaveta/ was the daughter of the first Russian Emperor Peter I. the Great and Catherine I. Peter I. reigned from 1682 to 1725, and Catherine I. Alekseyevna reigned from 1741-1761. And now we return to Peter III's wife, Catherine II, later the Great, who at the court of Elizabeth Petrovna was surrounded by incredible luxury, wealth, opulence, splendour, and the attentions of the highest social elite, which was in stark contrast to the conditions in which she grew up.

To illustrate the picture of family relations, we recall that Catherine I., the wife of Peter I., proper name Marta Samuilovna Skavronskaya, was the second wife of Peter the Great of the Romanov dynasty. She also did not come from high Russian noble circles, but, on the contrary, from peasant-settler conditions. There are different versions of her origins. One states her Latvian peasant origin,

the other, Belarusian, also peasant. Remarkable is the fact that in 1725 Catherine I. Alekseyevna was crowned Empress and sole ruler of the entire Russian Empire. From that moment on, a new epoch of Russian history began to be written, when female emperors Anna Ioannovna /1693-1740/, Elizabeth Petrovna /1709-1761/, and Catherine II. - Alekseyevna /1729-1796/ also began to sit on the imperial throne.

The name of Elizabeth Petrovna is associated with important events of the time: the end of the Russo-Swedish War in 1743, the wedding of Peter Fyodorovich III and Catherine Alekseyevna (formerly Sophie Augusta) two years later, the opening of Moscow University in 1755, the opening of the first Russian theatre in St. Petersburg in 1756, and the grand opening of the Academy of Arts in 1757. The period of her reign was also associated with the abolition of the Cabinet of Ministers, the restoration of the Senate, Russia's entry into the Seven Years' War /1756-1763/ against Prussia alongside Austria, which is also considered the first global conflict in history for world domination between Great Britain and France, and many other decrees.

Unfortunately, the heir to the throne did not arrive, which was suspicious, to say the least, even for the current ruler. It was only after ten years that Catherine Alekseyevna gave birth to a boy, Pavel Petrovich, who was said to have been in fact the work of her lover Count Saltykov, who was subsequently "diplomatically directed on business" to Sweden and later to Hamburg. Pavel was convinced, however, that his father, also based on resemblance, was Peter III. It should be stated unequivocally that, despite the different versions of their intimate life, Catherine Alekseyevna and her husband Peter III. represented a united political force, but one that seemed to be in opposition to the currently reigning Empress, who had decisively changed the pro-English position of the Russian Empire to a pro-French one, and declared war on England's ally, Prussia. Catherine II. and Peter III. were understandably on Prussia's side, although Catherine also maintained friendly relations with the English ambassador /supposedly Catherine received money from the English side/. It was here that a sharp break occurred between the official line of Elizabeth Petrovna and the potential heir to the throne. It was de facto high treason on Catherine II's part.

After the death of Empress Elizabeth, Peter III Fyodorovich ascended the Russian throne. /1728-1762, his original name was Charles Peter Ulrich of Schleswig-Holstein-Gottorp/. Serious conflicts and mutual accusations of infidelity, etc. arise between him and Catherine. He was on the throne for practically only six months. He embarked very vigorously on serious reforms, loosened the hands of the nobility, and secularized the lands belonging to the monasteries, which basically liquidated the economic independence of the

Russian Church. Was the cause of the split in relations between the new Emperor Peter III and his wife Peter's sympathy for the King of Prussia? Or did it have a different background? Why did he despise the Orthodox faith? Catherine, on the contrary, acted devotedly in her relations with her subject people - she loved Russianness, the Russian language, and Orthodoxy, and admired Russian national traditions and folklore. She knew very well the role played by the Guard in palace coups, so she supported it in every possible way. Her relationship with the Guard captain Grigory Orlov only confirms this.

In June 1762, Peter III. Fyodorovich was dethroned from the Russian throne and physically liquidated a week later. There are a million versions of his demise, but we will probably not be far from the truth if we repeat, according to the available sources, that neither personally nor the future Empress Catherine and "all the estates of the tsarist circles" particularly reacted to this tragic event.

Catherine II, who confidently considered herself the only real successor to the grandiose work of Peter I, had a plan to reform imperial Tsarist Russia from the ground up. And everything pointed to the fact that with her accession to the Russian throne, a new, golden era of Enlightenment absolutism was beginning. In addition to international and domestic politics, she interacted heavily with the leading philosophers, publicists, and thinkers of her time, giving her rule incredible weight and prestige. For example, let us mention the French philosopher and Enlightenment writer Voltaire, the French philosopher Ch.de Montesquieu, another Frenchman D. Diderot, the philosopher, writer and aesthetician, and the German linguist, literary scholar and educator W.C. Zimmermann, and many others. Unfortunately, her real internal politics were different - serfdom persisted, accompanied by heavy exploitation; the absolute power of the monarch was ruthlessly asserted.

The year was 1767, and the beginning and main focus of Catherine II's reforms was to be a specially created commission composed of all estates of Russian society, since until that time the Russian Empire had formally functioned based on the Council Code and other regulations of 1649. Later, the Manifesto of 1762 came into being, which dealt with the freedom of the nobility, the prohibition of physical punishment for the higher estates, the abolition of compulsory military or civil service, etc. The questions of the abolition of serfdom were to be given legal contours. However, one thing was declared by the Manifesto, and another was the harsh reality - serfdom in Russia was abolished practically only after a hundred years, i.e. in 1861.

The dream of peasants' liberation, unfortunately, remained only on paper. Bureaucratic Tsarist Russia was unable to address the pressing issues of the huge

mass of peasants, their census, their recruitment, the issues of taxation, and the functioning of the courts were not addressed. Overall, the system of state management did not work. There were neither the administrative, financial, nor political preconditions for such a huge reform of Russia's governance.

In this incredibly complicated situation, the preconditions for the peasant armed rebellion were born, a huge uprising in Tsarist Russia, led by the heroic Yemelyan Pugachev /1742-1775/, whose 250th anniversary of birth we commemorated in 2023. The Pugachev Uprising, in its ideas, strength, explosiveness and urgency, was reminiscent of the peasant uprising in Russia in the 1770s, when it was led by the famous Don Cossack ataman Stepan Timofeyevich Razin /1630-1671/, who took part in the campaigns against the Ottoman Empire and the Crimean Tatars.

The rebellion of J. Pugachev during the reign of Catherine II. was suppressed in blood, Pugachev was beheaded and then his body was dismembered as a warning. His wife and children were also executed, as were his parents. Pugachev's native village of Zimovaya was razed to the ground /today the village of Pugachevskaya in the Volgograd region/. It was categorically forbidden to speak or write about the huge Pugachev Uprising, neither in Russia nor abroad. Catherine II. began to gradually rebuild the ossified bureaucratic system in tsarist Russia, to which the Pugachev Uprising was an urgent response. She started with the reform of self-government by creating governorates, gubernias /50/, provinces, uyezds /something in the manner of our districts/, established the functions of governors-general, etc. This system worked until 1917.

Catherine II's name is automatically associated with her incredible expansionist policies. Already in 1768, the Ottoman Empire started the First Russo-Turkish War (1768-1774), the outbreak of which was conditioned by the sacking of several Turkish towns by the Zaporozhian Cossacks. Interestingly, Russia had the upper hand and planned to take control of the greater part of the Christian territories of the Ottoman Empire, trying to further establish a network of vassal states between it and Russia, even the Russian Empire wanted to reestablish the Byzantine Empire with its seat in Constantinople. Greece originally planned to declare independence under the patronage of Russia. This plan was not implemented at the time. A naval expedition was then commanded by Alexei Orlov, who even annexed several islands in the Aegean Sea to the Russian Empire.

The cause of the Second Russo-Turkish War /1787-1792/ was the Ottoman Crimea, which was annexed to the Russian Empire by Grigory Potemkin essentially without much resistance. At that time, the territories of Catholic Poland were also annexed to Russia, which gave birth to the idea, in addition to the preference for an Orthodox alliance, of creating a so-called unified Slavic

world, although Catherine II. herself was relatively cold to this, shall we say, plan.

In the context of the wars and major conflicts between the Russian Empire and the Ottoman Empire, it should be highlighted that there were a total of ten wars in the 17th-20th centuries. The last conflict was in 1914-1918 as part of the First World War. In total, the period of major conflicts and wars up to 1918 represents 350 years /1568-1918/. During this entire period, Russia and Turkey were in a state of war for a full 43 years, which can be considered one of the longest military conflicts ever in European history.

Let us briefly summarize how the vast Russian Empire asserted itself militarily and diplomatically and expanded: it annexed the Crimean Khanate, colonized, with the help of Great Britain, the territory of Novorossiia on the shores of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, and divided the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the west, the largest part of which was acquired by the Russian empire. In the east, the Russians colonized Alaska and founded Russian America. New cities such as Kherson, Nikolayev, Sevastopol, and Yekaterinoslav began to emerge. Under the 1774 peace treaty with Turkey, Russia was granted the cities of Azov, Kerch, Tagantog, and others. By the way, does this not remind us of something in connection with today's senseless war to the east of the Slovak state borders?

And now we come to the core of our study. How and by what means did the famous Russian Empress Catherine II. the Great influenced the sphere of art, enlightenment and education, culture, literature, painting, architecture and other spheres of the life of the Russian Empire?

Catherine II. changed the life of the Stoic aristocracy from the ground up. The ruling Russian nobility was under immediate European influence, and collecting rare paintings, objects and collections of various kinds became fashionable. Private libraries began to be established, where, in addition to domestic authors, a prominent place belonged to foreign creators, especially French ones. The Russian Empress also laid the foundations of Russian journalism, which was to serve primarily to spread the Enlightenment in Russia.

Catherine the Great was a passionate admirer of painting, which she kept in the resting places, the so-called hermitages, which she had specially set up in the Winter Palace. Later, the Hermitages also housed other masterpieces of world art and history. Understandably, additional wings of the original palace had to be added, which was also the impetus for the building of the magnificent St. Petersburg Hermitage.

What are we supposed to imagine after saying the word - Hermitage, in the former, but also today's Russian St. Petersburg? The Hermitage is one of

the largest and oldest galleries in the world. It is a grandiose treasury of top European, Russian and world art of absolutely incalculable historical and artistic value, which contains the jewels of human civilization, from antiquity to the present day. Thus, there are ancient and early medieval cultures, Greek, Roman and Oriental cultures, the world's greatest works of painting and sculpture and many other exhibits, such as drawings, prints, and decorative and utilitarian arts.

Catherine II. The Great, in addition to her important state and international priorities, was a passionate lover of art. She had business acumen, unique artistic foresight and organizational skills, and therefore developed a large business in works of incalculable value. She began buying paintings by world masters. The first major purchase she made was from the German dealer Johann Ernst Gotzkowsky, which was originally prepared for Frederick II. the Great. The collection contained 225 paintings by grand masters of the art of painting: 13 paintings were by Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn /1606-1669/, an important Dutch painter and printmaker of world-class stature and an original representative of the European Baroque; 11 paintings were by Peter Paul Rubens /1577-1640/, an outstanding Flemish painter of the 17th century, and 5 paintings by the outstanding Flemish Baroque painter and printmaker Anthonis van Dyck /1599-1641/. The collection also included two paintings by Raphael / Raffaello Santi/ /1483-1520/, a great Italian Renaissance painter and architect of the Florentine school, two paintings by Hans Holbein the Younger, a German Renaissance painter and printmaker, and two paintings by Jan Van Eyck /1390-1441/, an unforgettable Flemish Renaissance painter who, among other things, was one of the first to popularize oil painting.

When Catherine II. found out that somewhere there was an artistically valuable collection for sale, she bought it in a flash. All of it. And so she ended up with over 4,000 Old Master paintings, 10,000 drawings, 38,000 books, 16,000 coins and thousands more historical and artistic objects and sculptures.

The history of the Hermitage and its priceless jewels, from its origins to the present day, is so endlessly rich and inspiring that, due to space constraints, only some of the more exciting information associated with this precious art-historical institution will be presented in this study.

There are over 1000 rooms in the six buildings of the Winter Palace- Hermitage. If you wanted to visit them, to walk through them /understandably not in one day/, you would have to walk 22 km. If you wanted to spend even one minute looking at the works of art, you would need 11 long years to do it. Let's not forget that this 'Chapel of World Art', the room of Rembrandt van Rijn's paintings, was attacked by a rabid madman on 15 June 1985, pouring acid, stabbing and knifing

his work 'Danaé'. The restoration of this artistic jewel took a full 12 years.

And now very briefly about the Hermitage today: there are valuable collections with over 6000 paintings and masterpieces, mainly of Western European art. These collections are among the largest and most valuable in the world. The French school of painting of the 15th-20th centuries dominates here / let us mention at least the Impressionists: Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Edgar Degas, Paul Cézanne, Eugène Henri Paul Gauguin, and Henri Matisse. The second most numerous representation is Italian art from the 13th-18th centuries. These include Fra Angelico, Sandro Botticelli, Pietro Perugino, Leonardo da Vinci, Titian, Raphael, Caravaggio, Giovanni Castiglione and many others. Peter Paul Rubens, Rembrandt, van Dyck, Jacob van Ruisdael, Jan van Goyen and more than 1,500 works of Flemish and Dutch painting. Spanish art is also represented in the Hermitage, mentioning such greats as El Greco, Diego Velázquez, Pablo Picasso, and Bartolomé Esteban Murillo. The collection of German and English paintings are more poorly represented.

In painting of the second half of the 18th century, two genres prevailed - celebratory, triumphal portraiture and the historical scene. The portrait of Catherine II. by the painter Dmitry Levitsky entitled "Legislator in the Temple of the Goddess of Justice" is unmistakable, giving the impression of grandiosity. There are also canvases by other outstanding Russian painters of the time, such as F.S. Rokotov, V.L. Borovikovsky, S.F. Shchedrin, G.I. Ugryumov, M. Shibanov and others, were exhibited together with the top works of world painting.

It was the Academy of Arts, founded by Catherine II. that was intended to raise the professional prestige of not only Western European but also domestic, Russian painting.

We note in passing that St Petersburg is also home to the famous State Russian Museum (1895), which focuses exclusively on Russian and former Soviet art: painting, sculpture, graphic, utilitarian and folk art. In the museum, the development from the 10th century to the present day is fixed. Here you can get acquainted with the old Russian art /Kyiv Rus'- the first state formation of the Eastern Slavs/, art of the 17th-19th centuries. Among others, there is a painting by Dmitry Grigorievich Levitsky: "Catherine II - Legislator", paintings of K.P. Brjulov and his famous painting: "The Last Day of Pompeii", paintings of the famous I. K. Ayvazovsky and his painting The Ninth Wave, I.N. Kramskoi, V.G. Perov, I.I. Shishkin, V.D. Polenov, I.J. Repin and his famous work: "Barge Haulers on the Volga", K.S. Malevich: "The Boulevard", V.M. Vasnetsov: "The Three Bogatyrs", K.S. Petrov-Vodkin, B.M. Kustodiev and many, many others.

A large space in the Russian Museum is also devoted to 20th-century art, folk

art, as well as decorative and utilitarian art.

How did Russian literature of the time react to the spectacular and at the same time very contradictory reign of Catherine II. Great? In this section, we will mention some of the prominent figures who praised or gave a realistic assessment of the reigning empress, one who had her admirers as well as her harsh critics. Here we rank the exceptional personalities of the time, among whom are M.V. Lomonosov /1711-1765/, A.P. Sumarokov /1717-1777/, M.M. Kheraskov / 1733-1807/, A.N. Radishchev / 1749-1802/, M.N. Karamzin / 1766-1826/, D.I. Fonvizin / 1744-1792/, G.R. Derzhavin /1743-1816/, A.S. Griboyedov /1795-1829/, D.I. Dolgorukov /1797-1867/. Among these outstanding personalities, we also include the jewel of Russian and world literature - A.S. Pushkin, who was born 3 years after the death of Empress Catherine II, but in his works, he reacts very insistently to her role in the great Russian and European history /June 6 is an official holiday in Russia - Pushkin Day of Russia, and at the same time the United Nations in New York annually commemorates the Day of the Russian Language/.

Mikhail Lomonosov, the famous Russian naturalist, chemist, painter, philosopher and writer, founder of the University of Moscow in 1755, eulogized Catherine II immediately after she acceded to the Russian imperial throne. Lomonosov was strongly supported by one of Catherine II's favourites, Grigory G. Orlov, who organized a personal six-hour meeting of M.V. Lomonosov with Empress Catherine II. The Great at his house on June 7, 1764! As a farewell, he presented her with these verses:

Блаженства новаго и дней златых (of new bliss and golden days)

Причина – (The reason)

Великому Петру вослед Екатерина (Catherine followed in the footsteps of Great Peter)

Величеством своим снисходим до Наук. (By our majesty we condescend to the sciences.)

И славы праведной усугублят (And the glories of righteousness will be compounded)

Звук...(Sound)

М.В. Ломоносов (M.V. Lomonosov)

Alexander Sumarokov, the outstanding Enlightenment poet, playwright and literary critic, characterized his relationship to Catherine in this way: 'From Peter, we have being, existence, from Catherine - soul'. This is confirmed by his "Ode to the Empress-Empress Catherine II for the Conquest of Moldavia's Chotin" (Ода государыне императрице Екатерине Второй на взятие Хотина и покорение Молдавии). Just to illustrate the situation: Chotin is a town on the right bank of the Dniester River in Bessarabia/Moldova/. During the Russo-Turkish War /1735-1739/. Russian troops defeated the Turks in today's Chernivtsi region of Ukraine, and based on the Belgrade Peace of 29.9.1739 Azov /today often mentioned/ came under the jurisdiction of the Russian Empire, i.e. 285 years ago.

Aleksandr Radishchev, the eminent Russian writer and philosopher, could not but respond to the reign of Catherine II. He is the author of the book "Wandering from Petersburg to Moscow" /Puteshestviye iz Peterburga v Moskvu/, where he gave an incredibly critical and fearless assessment of Catherine II's actions regarding serfdom in Tsarist Russia. Catherine read the book thoroughly and called Radishchev a daring seditionist, which resulted in his exile to Siberia /originally threatened with the death penalty/. The Empress feared a similar revolt, a nationwide uprising led by Emelyan Pugachev. Pugachev was given the death penalty by dismemberment as a warning. In 2023 we marked the 250th anniversary of that nationwide revolt, uprising, and war.

In exile, Radishchev also wrote "Notes from a Journey to Siberia" /Zapiski putešestvija v Sibiř/, as well as the work "On Man, His Mortality and Immortality" /O čeloveke, jego smertnosti i bessmertii/.

Another of the contemporaries of the Catherine Age was Nikolai Karamzin, who became famous for a huge, 12-volume work /though it was not completed during his lifetime/ entitled "History of the Russian State" /Istorija gosudarstva rossijskogo/. He was an ardent supporter of the Enlightenment monarchy. Karamzin was a prestigious historian, publicist, as well as a linguistic reformer; he even wrote various short stories and novels with a sentimental touch. It must be frankly said that he often idealized human nature and characters /it was the so-called social idyllism/. Some of his works are Eugene and Julia /Jevgenij i Julija/, Letters of a Russian Traveller /Pis'ma russkogo putešestvennika/, The Unhappy Liza /Bednaja Liza/, Natalia, Daughter of a Boyar /Natalija, bopjarskaja doč/, The Island of Bornholm /Ostrov Borngolm/, and others.

Denis Fonvizin, the man of the Catherine epoch, the father of Russian comedy, the northern Moliere, whose 280th birth anniversary we commemorated in

April 2024, and who incredibly enriched Russian culture, Russian classical and translated literature, and what should be especially emphasized - prestigious Russian diplomacy. Fonvizin together with N.I. Panin /Head of the College for International Affairs/ hated Katarína's 'favouritism' and believed that proper enlightenment would help make life easier for the poor peasants. However, he preferred the Enlightenment monarchy as a form of government. Let's mention at least some of his works that significantly influenced the direction of Russian theatre: the comedy "Brigadier" /Brigadir/, which he read to Empress Catherine II. in Peterhof Palace. It was the first Russian original comedy based on morality, manners, condemning imitation of everything foreign, herdism, rudeness, blatant ignorance and immoral adultery.

In Fonvizin's next comedy "The Minor" /Nedorosl/, the decay and decadent morals of the provincial nobility are depicted in a satirical form. He harshly criticizes her lack of education and feudal limitations, despite the extensive enlightenment-educational current, the direction of which came from the highest Russian tsarist circles, which we unconditionally associate with Catherine II.

A prominent literary and diplomatic figure of the 19th century in particular, responding to the Catherine Age, was the renowned Russian poet and playwright Aleksandr Griboyedov, whose 195th anniversary of death is being culturally commemorated in 2024. His immortal comedy 'Woe from Wit' /Gore ot uma/ represents one of the highlights of Russian and world dramatic creation. His merciless and cruel satire was directed at the morally devastated and subverted Russian society of the time, without a stable intra-social attitude and conviction. Griboyedov mercilessly criticizes unbridled bribery, bureaucracy and ignorance, phoniness, sycophancy, cronyism, and soullessness. Well, what do you say, gentlemen, is Master Griboyedov still relevant in the 21st century? And to conclude this section, let us mention some more of his works: "The Year 1812" /1812 god/, "A Georgian Night" /Gruzinskaya noč/, "Feigned Infidelity" /Pritvornaya nevernost/, "Own Family or Married Bride" /Svoja semja ili Zamuzhnaya nevesta/, "Dmitry Drjanskoy" /Dmitrij Drjanskoy/, and others.

A passionate admirer, supporter, and critic of Catherine II. was Gavriil Romanovich Derzhavin, a Russian Enlightenment writer and poet. He was a member of the Russian Academy. He also held high state and diplomatic posts - he was minister of justice. He celebrated the Enlightenment monarchy, which he embodied with the reign of Catherine II. Many of his poetic works are philosophical in nature, dominated primarily by man as an inimitable, unique being. His verses are incredibly emotional and passionate, which essentially corresponds to the manifestations of the character-temperamental qualities of Empress Ekaterina Alekseyevna.

Derzhavin is the author of wonderful odes whose motif is unambiguous - Catherine and the Catherine epoch with its golden highs and lows. The themes and the manner of his work did not stem from any precise and strict linguistic or stylistic rules, but quite the opposite. Enthusiasm, emotional saturation combined with intellectuality add lightness, immediacy, airiness and dignity to his poetry. G.R. Derzhavin was an honest man, and he reflected this attitude to life in his works. To mention a few: "God" /Bog/, "The Great Man" /Velmozha/, "Waterfall" /Vodopad/, "Praise to Peasant Life" /Pochvala selyskoi zhizni/, "See Mirza" /Videniye Murzy/, "About lira" /K lire/, "Autumn at the Time of the Siege of Ochakov" /Oseñ v vremja osady Ochakov/, "Let the Thunder Rumble in the Viteazne" /Grom pobedy, razdavajsja/. The devotion to the Enlightenment monarchy and Catherine II in particular is reflected in the valuable ode "Felitsa" /Felica/, which was written in 1782.

Interesting verses to conclude this part of the present study:

Ne umel ja pritvorjaťsja, Не умел я притворяться, (I couldn't pretend)

Na svjatogo pochodit', На святого походить, (To look like a saint)

Važnym sanom naduvaťsja, Важным саном надуваться, (An important ministry to puff up)

I filosofo brať vid... И философа брать вид, (And to take the philosopher's view)..

Padal ja, vstavaj v moj vek. ...Падал я, вставал в мой век. (I fell down, I got up in my age)

Bros', mudrec! Na grob moj kameň, Брось, мудрец! На гроб мой камень, (Come on, wise man! On my coffin)

Esli ty ne človek. Если ты не человек. (If you're not human.)

How does the brilliant Alexander Pushkin react to the epoch of Catherine II. Great? / Pushkin met Derzhavin only once - Pushkin, then only 15 years old, was taking his final exams at Tsarskoe Selo when the famous A.S. Pushkin recited his poem "Memories of Tsarskoe Selo" /Vospominanija v Tsarskom Sele/. Just read his historical novel "The Captain's Daughter" and we will understand all the contradictions, ups and downs of the Catherine epoch. It is dominated not only by the huge national uprising in the 1870s, under the command of Yemelyan Pugachev, but on the other hand, the questions of patriotism, love and loyalty, honour, the dignity of man, and the serious issues of human existence are strongly raised in it. In one of the episodes of "The Captain's Daughter", which may be called Masha Mironova's meeting with Catherine II, Pushkin laconically

and at the same time powerfully and convincingly describes Catherine not only from the outside but also notices her behaviour, character traits, style and the way she communicates. In artistic form, he also points out the ambiguity of her demeanour and response to the burning issues of her time: she can be incredibly cold, stern, and explosive when it comes to issues related to her enemies; on the other hand, A. Pushkin portrays her as gracious, kind, fair, and in special cases 'responsive'. Helping wherever necessary /the empress helped an orphan, the daughter of a certain commander from a distant fortress/.

In the image of Catherine II., the brilliant Russian writer managed to portray the essence of human relationships /Imperator, Petrusha Grinov, Masha Mironova/. Catherine II. in the work does not appear only as an empress, but first of all, as a human being, which saves the hero of this work. As historians confirm, Catherine was a distinct personality - intelligent, perceptive, insightful and sufficiently educated. She studied with interest the history of Russia, its customs, traditions, and culture. And, what is especially emphasized, she consistently learned the Russian language, in French she thoroughly studied the works of French philosophers, Enlightenment scholars, historians, lawyers and economists. Her thought is interesting: 'act in such a way that good people will like you. Make the bad people fear you and make everyone respect you'.

That's how A.S. Pushkin saw Catherine II. in *The Captain's Daughter*. On the other hand, he could not but touch on her missteps during her 34-year reign. Too much Europeanization, but also considerable German influences in Russian society at that time dealt a blow to the traditional, centuries-tested Russian way of life, where adherence to centuries-old traditions, customs and habits was of great importance. There were also unhealthy processes in the clergy and the Orthodox faith. Religion became a part of state policy, representing something between the autocrat-deputy of God on earth, and the common people. This led to a schism in the Christian faith. In many villages, there were no priests. It was here that contempt for priests and indifference to one's Orthodox faith was born in the nation. Catherine also humbled the spirit of the Russian nobility. Pushkin was also very critical of her favourites, who held high and unusually highly paid positions in the hierarchy of the Russian monarchy. She also knew about their frauds and thievery, but she kept silent.

It was A.S. Pushkin, who expressed without hesitation that the end of the reign of Catherine II. was disgusting and humiliating for the monarchy. In this study, we do not touch on the intimate issues of the reign of a successful Russian ruler with German roots, but we lightly recall that in this regard A.S. Pushkin openly called the empress a 'courtesan' on the Russian imperial throne.

In 1796, Emperor Pavel I Petrovich ascended the Russian throne at the age of 42. He was on the imperial throne for a relatively short time, i.e. until 1801. It is with his name that military and peasant reform is associated, he was credited with forging an alliance with England and Austria against France. Twice a conspiracy was organized against him.

In the next part of this paper, we will dwell, albeit marginally, on the Russian architecture of the Catherine Age, which is extremely rich and varied, at the same time the art, skill, genius and originality of artists of renowned names /French, Italian, Russian and others/ are cumulated.

The Academy of Arts was built in St. Petersburg /1764-1788/, the architects were Alexander Kokorinov and Frenchman Jean-Baptiste Vallinn de la Monthe. In 1768-1785 the Marble Palace was built in St. Petersburg, the architect of which was Italian Antonio Rinaldi. This Italian architect was also the author of the famous Chinese Palace /Kitajskij dvorec/, built in 1762-1768. Similarly, the Moscow Imperial Educational House was built in Moscow in 1764-1781, the architect of which was also A. Rinaldi. In Moscow, the Senate building in the Moscow Kremlin was built in 1776-1787. The architect was Matvey Kazakov. In 1776-1780, the Petrovsky Travellers Palace was built, whose architect was also Kazakov. In Tsarskoye Selo in 1792-1796 grew Aleksandrovsky Palace, the architect of which was Giacomo Quarenghi.

In 1769, the architect Andrei Kvasov drew up a master plan for the further building of Sankt Petersburg in the 18th century. It was argued that the city should no longer expand in width, but that the qualitative indicators of the capital's architecture should be decisive /1712-1918/. The main buildings in the centre of Petersburg were not to be lower than 21 metres. Great emphasis was also placed on the culture of the creation of new parks, where, in addition to the well-established French style, an English-landscaped, artificial style began to prevail. There were created various hills, rivulets, rare trees were planted, and from a distance you could see small pavilions that stood picturesquely as if on the edge of the forest. However, this style of park planting did not dominate.

How did Catherine II. Great influence on the art of film? The Empress was a unique, unrepeatable subject, a source and an invaluable motif for the world's film companies. Several films by Russian directors, as well as Anglo-American, Canadian, French and Italian film companies, have appeared. Quite simply, the greatness and originality, the international reach, and the 34-year spectacular reign of Empress Catherine II. in absolutist Russia marked a major turning point not only in the internal or international political and power chessboard of the 18th century. In the 20th century, the period of Catherine II's reign was a most

rewarding subject for the world's filmmakers.

From a huge plethora of films, we select the most valuable ones. In 1924, the lightly comedic American silent film "Forbidden Paradise" /Zapretnyj raj/ by Ernst Lubitsch appeared, where the Russian Tsarina was played by the superstar Paola Negri. A year later, the American silent drama "The Eagle" /Orjol/ by Clarence Brown is made. In 1930, the French historical drama "Tarakanova" by Raymond Bernard was filmed. In 1934, a British historical film by Paul Czinner about the rise of Catherine the Great was released under the title "The Rise of Catherine the Great" /Vozvyšeniye Ekateriny Velikoj/. In the same year, another American historical film drama with the famous Marlene Dietrich and John Lodge, entitled "The Scarlet Empress" /Rasputnaja imperatrica/, also deals with the subject of Catherine II. In 1938 came the Italian film drama "The Princess Tarakanova" /Kňjagiňa Tarakanova/, La principessa Tarakanova.

In 1940, a Russian historical-military and biographical film was made under the title "Suvorov". The directors were Vsevolod Pudovkin and Mikhail Doller. In the same year, the film "Katharina I. von Russland" directed by Carl Froelich /based on Katharina II./ was born in the German Empire. In 1945, the American comedy-drama "A Royal Scandal" /Korolevskii scandal/, directed by Ernst Lubitsch, was made. In 1948, the Italian historical-adventure film The Mysterious Cavalier /Tainstvennyj rycar'/, directed by Riccardo Freda, was released. In the same year, the comedy "Catherine the Great" /Velikaya Ekaterina/ by the American Film Company was made.

In the British-Italian co-production in 1950 came the drama "Shadow of the Eagle" /Teň orla/. In 1958, the British made the comedy film Great Catherine, directed by Barry Morse, and the Italians in the same year made The Tempest /Burja/ La tempesta, directed by Alberto Lattuada. In 1961, the Soviet film "The Night Before Christmas" /Večera na chutore bliz Decanka/, directed by Aleksandr Rou, with music composed by Arkady Filippenko, was made. In 1963, we welcome a new film, an Italian biographical drama about the Russian Empress called "Catherine of Russia" /Katerina iz Rossii/, Caterina di Russia, directed by Umberto Lenzi, starring Hildegard Knef. In 1968, a British comedy film directed by Gordon Flemyng - "Great Catharine" /Ekaterina Velikaya/, hits the screens.

In 1991, we're immersed in the adventurous Soviet TV movie "Vivat Sea Cadets! /Vivat, gardemaryn/ about the Russian Gardes-Marines of the 18th century, directed by Svetlana Sergeyevna Druzhinina. In 1994, the English film "I was Catharine the Great's Stable Boy" was made. In 1999 we registered the short Finnish multi-film "Xenia of St. Petersburg" /Ksenija Peterburgskaja/, Ksenia Pietarilainen. In 2006, America came with a new documentary "Empress

of Ambition” by Don Campbell.

In 2014, a twelve-part series titled “Ekaterina” /Ekaterina/ appears. It is a historical-biographical film about the Russian Empress Catherine II. The Great.

Then in 2015 comes a Russian historical TV series about the fate of the German princess, Russian Empress Catherine II. The director of this film was Igor Zaitsev. In 2019, there is the Empress again, in a film adaptation by director Dmitry Iosifov. The title of the film is “Impostors” /Ekaterina. Samozvancy/. A 30-part series about Catherine the Great was screened in America in 2020. Some parts of it were also filmed in Great Britain and Italy.

And now let us touch at least peripherally on the questions of the musical culture of the epoch dominated by Her Imperial Majesty Catherine II. Great.

The last third of the 18th century also marked a significant revival and growth of Russian national culture and education in Russia. It can be said that there was a certain democratisation and so-called ‘musicalisation’ of social life: theatres were founded, their activities developed rapidly, paid concerts were organised, and emphasis was placed on raising the level of musical education. Most importantly, it was also during this period that the foundations of the famous Russian classical music were being formed. Musical composers had all the conditions created for their creation and professional growth. Initially, collections of plain-national, folk songs began to appear. The author of the first such four-volume collection was M.D. Chulkov. The collection was later supplemented by two parts of N.I. Novikov. However, V.F. Trutovsky was the first Russian musician-collector, the author of the Collection, where, in addition to the words of the songs, the sheet music was also recorded /Sobranije russkich prostych pesen s notami/. Later, the Collection of Russian Folk Songs also appeared, but with the voices already recorded. The credit for this was primarily due to N.A. Lvov, an outstanding representative of Russian culture of the late 18th century, a poet, scientist, architect, and an excellent connoisseur and lover of folk song, who at the same time pointed out the inimitability of Russian folk choral polyphony.

What were the songs about? They were mainly drawn-out songs with family-lyric themes, songs connected with everyday life, but also songs that praised the heroes of the rebellion commanded by Yemelyan Pugachev, or those that also praised Stepan Razin /1630-1671/, the leader of a similar peasant uprising in the 17th century. There is a great wealth of Byliny /Heroic songs/, historical songs, wedding songs, festive songs, choral songs, and also so-called Malorussian and Ukrainian songs.

The creation of a secular school of music composers had a great influence

on the professional adoption of Russian folklore in the second half of the 18th century. Its creation represented the culmination of the Russian Enlightenment. The school was founded in St. Petersburg. Its prominent representatives, as well as the founders of Russian opera, were V.A. Pashkevich /his well-known operas are: "Misfortune from Owning a Coach" /Neschastye ot karety/, "The Miser" /Skupoy/, "Saint-Petersburg's Bazaar" /Sankt Peterburgskiy gostinyj dvor/, Y.I. Fomin /his comic opera "The Coachmen at the Relay Station" /Jamshchiki na podstave/, and the masters of instrumental music I.Y. Khandoshkin. M.S. Berezovsky and D.S. Bortnyansky were outstanding exponents of the classical sacred concerto. The creators of the Russian chamber song were O.A. Kozlovsky and F.M. Dubjansky.

Russian comic opera is also developing. Its origins are linked to musical comedy, which was based on literary comedy. Melodicity was the most important factor in the formation of musical theatre. The most popular Russian opera of the 18th century was the opera by composer M.M. Sokolovsky on the text of the writer A.O. Ablesimov, entitled "The Miller, Sorcerer, Impostor, and Matchmaker" /Meľnik-koldun, obmanščik i svat/.

What to say at the end of this paper, which in modesty has been dedicated to an unmissable personality of the great Russian, European and world history - the Russian Empress Catherine II. The Great? Much has been written, said and speculated about her, about the historical epoch she embodied, about her triumphant ups and downs. However, the facts do not let go, and it would therefore be appropriate, even today, in the context of the 295th anniversary of her birth, to soberly assess the triumphant 34 years of Catherine II. Alekseevna the Great on the Russian imperial throne.

Certainly, the elaborated issues should be appropriately used also in the current Slovak higher education of Russian studies, as it is rich especially from the historical, international-political, spiritual, artistic-aesthetic, philosophical, linguistic, and last but not least from the religious-sacral point of view as well.

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