

# CONVIVIUM

Exchanges and Interactions in the Arts of Medieval  
Europe, Byzantium, and the Mediterranean  
*Seminarium Kondakovianum, Series Nova*



UNIVERSITÉ DE LAUSANNE  
• ACADEMY OF SCIENCES OF  
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## CONVIVIUM SUPPLEMENTUM 2020

**Exchanges and Interactions in the Arts of Medieval  
Europe, Byzantium, and the Mediterranean**

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**Transformed by Emigration**  
Welcoming Russian Intellectuals,  
Scientists and Artists (1917–1945)

edited by **Ivan Foletti, Karolina Foletti**  
& **Adrien Palladino**

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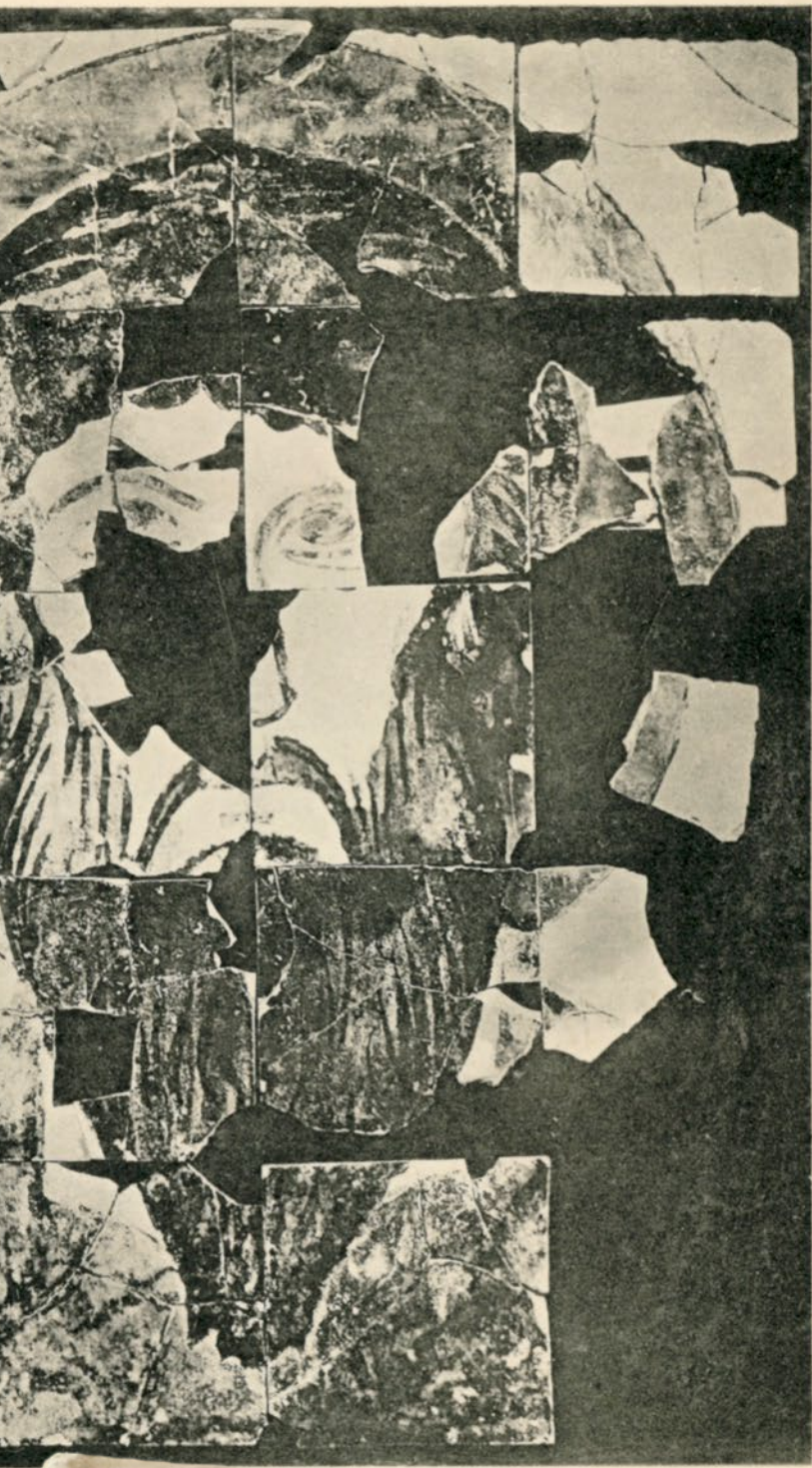
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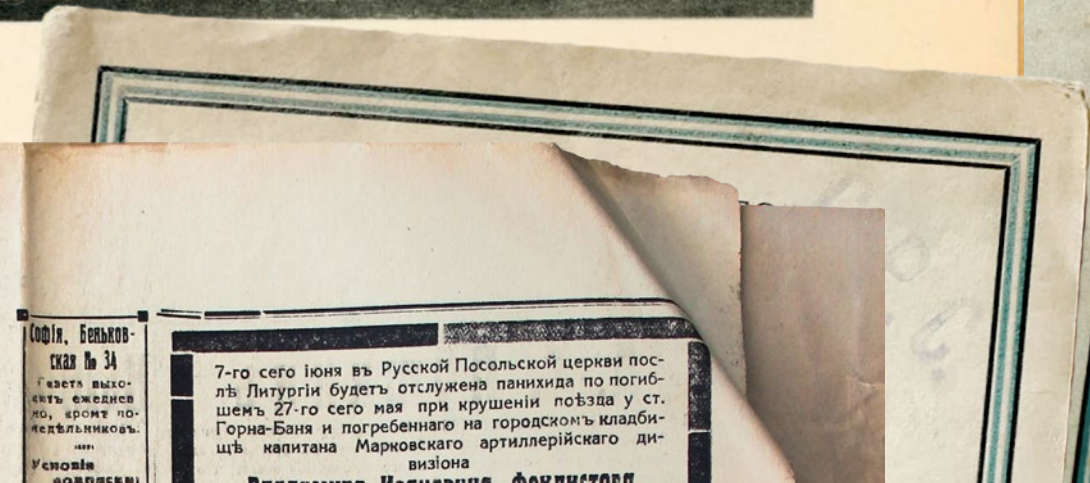
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## О УМЕНИ



София, Бельков-

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Газета выхо-  
дитъ ежедне-  
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7-го сего июня въ Русской Посольской церкви послѣ Литургии будетъ отслужена панихида по погибшемъ 27-го сего мая при крушеніи поѣзда у ст. Горна-Баня и погребеннаго на городскомъ кладбищѣ капитана Марковского артиллерійскаго дивизиона

Владимиръ Ивановичъ ФОРМИСТОВЪ



# After Kondakov

## The Heritage of Russian Emigration in the Czech Lands

Ivan Foletti

Readers of *Convivium* – a journal devoted mainly to the Mediterranean space in the Middle Ages – may be surprised to hold in their hands a volume devoted to Russian emigration in the first half of the twentieth century. Even more unexpected might be the framework of the following articles, crossing through the history of art history and literature, as well as of visual arts and philosophy. In reality, this is anything but surprising when we consider the unique history of our journal, which took up the legacy of one of the most important endeavors of Russian interwar émigré culture. I addressed this aspect in the first editorial of *Convivium* in 2014. We do believe that one of the missions of our journal is to pursue this path as well. It is a very fertile ground for understanding our present

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\* This article was carried out as part of the project “The Heritage of Nikodim Pavlovič Kondakov in the Experiences of André Grabar and the *Seminarium Kondakovianum*” (Czech Science Foundation, Reg. No 18–20666S).

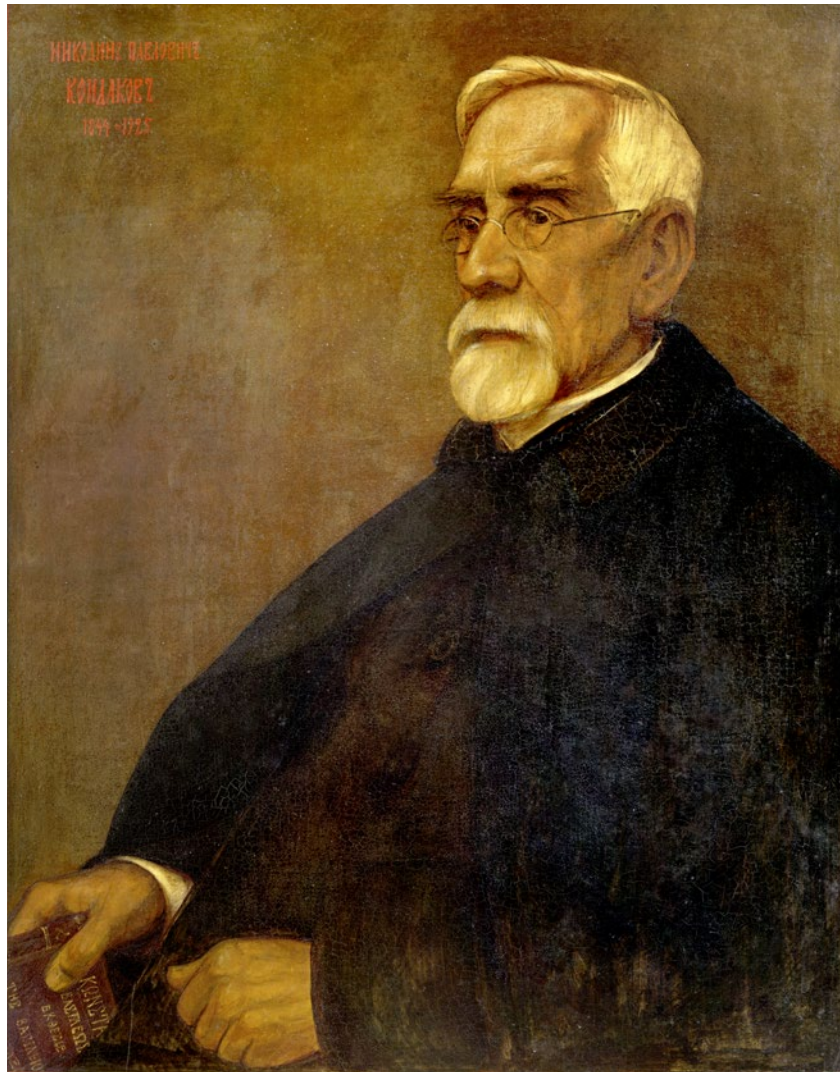
research, but more in general, the history of ideas. What is an unexpected topic for an art historical periodical devoted to medieval visual cultures is thus a way of analyzing the roots of our tradition and our field as well. More importantly, we firmly believe in what is generally called “transdisciplinarity”. It seems absolutely fundamental to us to understand the milieu that produced the ancestor of our journal from this perspective.

It is not by chance that this supplementary issue is also the result of a conference which discussed the way Russian scholars, artists, and thinkers were transformed by their emigration – an emigration caused by the dramatic events following the collapse of the Russian Empire, the October Revolution, and the Civil War. The diverse authors gathered in this volume – all belonging to different scholarly traditions – focused first on the narration of personal destinies: some émigrés ended up at the ends of the Earth, others stayed in Europe. Some immediately found a new place to call “home”, while others wandered for decades. Many had a decisive impact on the societies that took them in, while others – probably much more numerous – disappeared into anonymity. Taken together, they constituted a political and cultural phenomenon without precedent (but which, unfortunately, was a precursor to many similar catastrophes over the course of the twentieth century): the mass departure, within a short period of time, of much of a country’s elite. Their emigration radically transformed the world around them. They transformed the country they left – Russia, the many places they landed, as well as themselves, their own thinking, their scientific research, and their art.

My intent is not to repeat here the findings of the articles which follow this introductory essay. The reader is kindly invited to discover them one by one. I would only like to emphasize that the editors’ aim – which we believe has been fulfilled – was to collect examples from very different fields. The result is a fascinating mosaic: philosophers, artists, art historians, and writers meet in an ideal space, each contributing his or her part to a dialogue of love and hate for their homeland and their adoptive countries.

The diaspora of Russian emigrants was a worldwide phenomenon – an international and extensive network of refugees. Across the continents, men and women of Russian origin formed a true “global” community. Their mass emigration can find close parallels in the present day. There are certainly many differences, but a phenomenon like the “Russian Action”, promoted by Czechoslovakia, demonstrates a remarkable ethos and maturity in dealing with global problems, even if the world at that time was much “smaller”. I would also like to mention those who received the Russian refugees: the encounter was not always easy and we should not succumb to idealizing the coexistence of émigré and host society. However, there were, without a doubt, many moments when hosts revealed the best of their humanity. The arrival of these emigrants meant not only progress in the arts and sciences, but afforded those who took them in the opportunity to be transformed by their own humanity. Even while still recovering from their own experiences of war, Czechs, Slovaks, French, Britons, Germans, Americans, Brazilians and many others were able to show true generosity to these new arrivals. The early 1920s demonstrate that a “migrant crisis” can be approached ethically and generously – perhaps an interesting lesson for times like our own.

Naturally, this narration will start with the prehistory of our journal: the first years after Nikodim Kondakov had arrived in Prague, and, later, after his death, when a small group of pupils and scholars started the glorious tradition of the *Seminarium Kondakovianum*, of which *Convivium. Seminarium Kondakovianum Series Nova* is a proud heir.



1/ Natalia Grigorevna Jashvil, Nikodim Kondakov, Prague, 1925

### Transformed by emigration?

February of 1925 saw the death, in Prague, of Nikodim Kondakov (1844–1925), widely considered the father of modern art history in Russia [Fig. 1]<sup>1</sup>. As a medievalist with a great interest in Byzantine and medieval Russian art, Kondakov was, for many, the epitome

1 For historical biographies of Kondakov see: Jegor K. Redin, “Professor Nikodim Pavlovič Kondakov. K tridca-tiletnej godovščine ego učenopedagogičeskoj dejatel’nosti”, *Zapiski Russkogo Arxeologičeskogo Obščestva*, IX (1897), pp. 1–32; Georgij V. Vernadskij, *O naučnoj dejatel’nosti N. P. Kondakova*, in Aa.Vv., *Nikodim Pavlovič Kondakov. 1844–1924. K vosmidesjatiletju so dnja roždenija*, Prague 1924, pp. 3–16; *idem*, *Nikodim Pavlovič Kondakov*, in Aa.Vv., *Recueil d’études dédiées à la mémoire de N. P. Kondakov. Archéologie. Histoire de L’art. Études byzantines*, Prague 1926, pp. 1–xxx; Viktor N. Lazarev, *N. P. Kondakov*, Moscow 1925. For critical reflections, see mainly: Irina L. Kyzlasova, *Istorija izučenija vizantijskogo i drevnerusskogo iskusstva v Rossii. F. I. Buslajev, N. P. Kondakova: metody, idei, teorii*, Moscow 1985; *eadem*, *Istoria otečestvennoj nauki ob iskusstve Vizantii i drevnej Rusi 1920–1930 gody. Po materialam arxivov*, Moscow 2000; *eadem*, “Kondakov N. P.”, in *Pravoslavnaja Enciklopedija*, Moscow 2014, vol. 36, pp. 599–601; Ivan Foletti, *From Byzantium to the Holy Russia. Nikodim Kondakov and the Invention of the Icon*, Rome 2017 [2011].

of a Russian sensibility open to both East and West, studying oriental subjects with methods borrowed from French and German archaeologists and art historians<sup>2</sup>. He made no secret of the fact that for him, studying Russian and Byzantine antiquities was also a patriotic duty<sup>3</sup>. It was no coincidence that some of his research was, as has been demonstrated by Vzdornov, deeply devoted to the service of his country. In some extreme cases, we could even say that Kondakov worked at the edges of what a modern reader would consider ethical, deforming historical reality in order to promote the interests of Czarist Russia<sup>4</sup>. But at the same time, as befitted a man working in his field, he was profoundly cosmopolitan, corresponding with the most prominent French, Italian, and German specialists, and towards the end of his life, even with English-speaking experts<sup>5</sup>.

In other words, Kondakov was clearly anchored in his times. His manner of politicizing his research was far from unique, and it is easier for us to understand if we consider his humble origins. Born a serf, Kondakov had an astonishing career, rising as far as to become the de facto imperial court historian, thanks to the political reforms of Alexander II (1855–1881) and the benevolence of his successor, Alexander III (1881–1894)<sup>6</sup>. Thus, his loyalty to the Czar and his country were completely logical and understandable.

The world of Imperial Russia, to which Kondakov owed his loyalty, was completely overturned by the Russian Revolution in 1917. Like many intellectuals, his first response to the chaos in Saint Petersburg was to flee to the countryside, and then, as the civil war neared its end in 1920, to leave Russia altogether<sup>7</sup>. Setting sail from Odessa on board a ship emblematically named the “Sparta”, he headed for Constantinople<sup>8</sup>. From what I have read of his diary I am convinced that when he left, he still held out hope that he would return someday, but his thoughts were dominated by a feeling of defeat, as if his life were simply over<sup>9</sup>. He had no idea at the time that his relatively brief stay in Czechoslovakia – where he arrived in 1922 – would leave an indelible imprint on the cultural history of Central Europe. But let us take one thing at a time. In this paper I would like to briefly deal with three distinct questions intrinsically linked to emigration and immigration as transformative phenomena. To start with, I would like to remind of the impact that emigration had on Nikodim Kondakov’s biography and scholarly work<sup>10</sup>. Second, however, I would also like to reflect on how both emigrants and Czech scholars, with financial support from the interwar political and cultural elite, benefitted from Kondakov’s heritage. Finally, I will conclude with a look at the long-term impact of Kondakov’s work, in the second half of the twentieth century and the first part of the twenty-first. My starting hypothesis will be a simple one: emigration changed not only the last years of Kondakov’s life, but also radically changed the subject of his scholarship and the way it was received.

### **Nikodim Kondakov in Czechoslovakia**

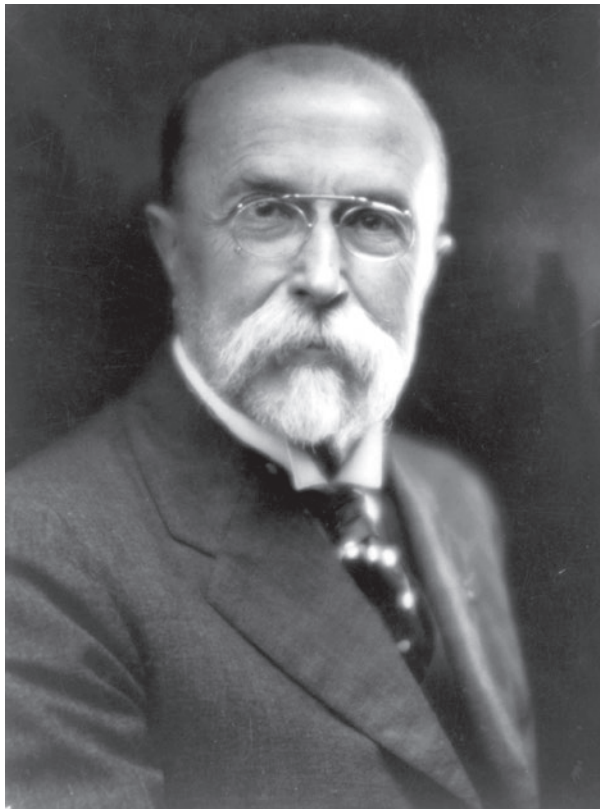
Before looking at what Kondakov did in Prague, it is important to retrace briefly not just his itinerary once he left Russia, but what happened along the way. The first stage of his exile was, as we noted, Constantinople. He then made a stop in Sofia before landing, two years after he left Russia, in Prague [Fig. 2]<sup>11</sup>. We all imagine emigration as a traumatic experience in which, besides losing our home, we also lose most of our material possessions. This is precisely what happened to Kondakov, who lost his extraordinary apartment in Saint Petersburg, his luxurious villa at Yalta, his notable collection of Byzantine coins, and to top it all off, his library as well<sup>12</sup>. But the way in which Kondakov was received, wherever he landed, demonstrates that these losses had not diminished, in any way, his status as a celebrity within his field and beyond. At Constantinople he managed to avoid,



2/ Grand Hotel in Sofia, ca 1920

along with his traveling companion Ivan Bunin, the humiliating disinfection simply by showing his *Légion d'honneur* to the French soldiers receiving emigrants at the port<sup>13</sup>. As soon as he reached Sofia, he was received by the Bulgarian emperor Boris III (1918–1943), thanks to whom he soon had not just accommodation, but also a personal chauffeur and a well-paid job<sup>14</sup>. Finally, the scholar travelled to Prague ostensibly on the invitation of his eminent colleagues Niederle and Polívka, but behind that invitation was the personal

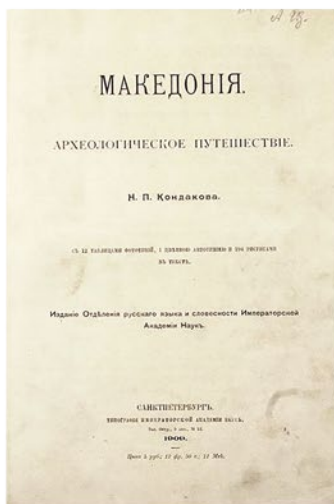
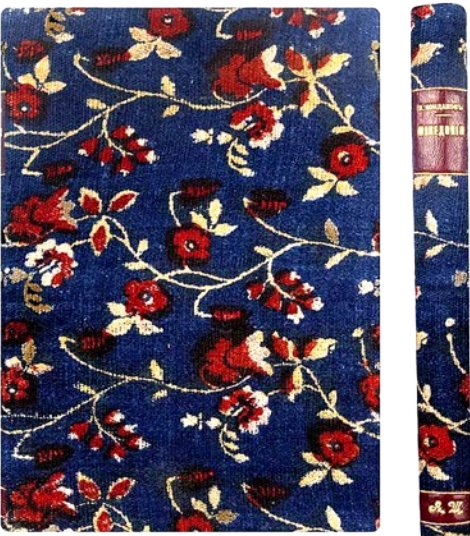
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- 2 Irina L. Kyzlasova, "O naučnom nasledii N. P. Kondakova. K voprosu o russo-italianskix naučnix svjazax", in *Europa Orientalis*, x (1991), pp. 71–94; Foletti, *From Byzantium to the Holy Russia* (n. 1), pp. 171–215.
  - 3 Nikodim P. Kondakov, "O naučnyx zadačax istorii drevne-russkogo iskusstva", in *Pamjatniki drevnej pismennosti i iskusstva*, Saint Petersburg 1899, pp. 1–47, sp. p. 46. See also Redin, "Professor Nikodim Pavlovič Kondakov" (n. 1), p. 13.
  - 4 Gerold I. Vzdornov, *Istoria otkrytija i izučenija russkoj srednevekovoj živopisi, XIX věk*, Moscow 1986; *idem*, "Nikodim Pavlovič Kondakov. V zerkale sovremennoj vizantinistiki", in *Restavracija i nauka. Očerki po istorii otkrytija i izučenija drevnepusskoj živopisi*, Moscow 2006, pp. 291–306.
  - 5 *Arxivny russkix vizantinistov v Sankt-Peterburge*, Ivan P. Medvedev ed., Saint Petersburg 1995; Foletti, *From Byzantium to the Holy Russia* (n. 1), pp. 171–215.
  - 6 Michel Heller, *Histoire de la Russie et de son Empire*, Paris 1997, pp. 829–830, 838.
  - 7 Kyzlasova, *Istoriya izučenija vizantijskogo i drevnerusskogo iskusstva* (n. 1); Foletti, *From Byzantium to the Holy Russia* (n. 1), pp. 62–71.
  - 8 Kyzlasova, *Istoria otečestvennoj nauki ob iskusstve* (n. 1), p. 45.
  - 9 Julia Jančárková, "N. P. Kondakov. Dnevniky 1922–1923 gg. Fragmentsy", in *Vzpomínky. Deníky. Vyprávění. Ruská emigrace v Československu*, Ljubov Běloševská ed., Prague 2011, pp. 251–316.
  - 10 Ivan Foletti, "Nikodim Kondakov et Prague. Comment l'émigration change l'histoire (de l'art)", *Opuscula Historiae Artium*, LXII/2 (2014), pp. 2–11.
  - 11 Foletti, *From Byzantium to the Holy Russia* (n. 1), pp. 70–74.
  - 12 Kyzlasova, *Istoria otečestvennoj nauki ob iskusstve* (n. 1), p. 33. About the Kondakov's apartment and collections see Sergej A. Žebelev, "ΟΕΥΣ ΤΑ ΠΡΑΓΜΑΤΑ", in Aa.Vv. *Nikodim Pavlovič Kondakov. 1844–1924* (n. 1), pp. 31–38.
  - 13 Vera N. Muromceva-Bunina, "N. P. Kondakov (K pjatiletiju so dnja smerti) (1930)", in Nikodim P. Kondakov, *Vospominanija i dumy*, Irina L. Kyzlasova ed., Moscow 2002, pp. 348–358, sp. p. 354.
  - 14 Kyzlasova, *Istoria otečestvennoj nauki ob iskusstve* (n. 1), p. 49.



3/Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk,  
Lomen Brothers, 1920

interest of President Masaryk [Fig. 3]<sup>15</sup>. It was probably thanks to Masaryk that Kondakov met, rich businessmen and celebrated Slavophiles from Chicago, the Cranes, who offered Kondakov a flat in the Schönborn Palace they owned. Meanwhile, Niederle and Polívka saw to it that Kondakov was immediately hired to teach at Charles University<sup>16</sup>.

This kind of reception, one which I would not hesitate to call regal, seems almost unimaginable to us today. Simply put, no modern-day art historian enjoys such prestige. The explanation for this phenomenon, however, is not so complex. The intellectual world at the turn of the twentieth century was, compared with our days, much smaller. We would exaggerate only slightly if we said that, in good European society, everyone knew everyone else. Moreover, art history was part of a politicized vision of the world, and politicians used art history to justify their aims. Kondakov was not only part of “good society” but had a special prestige at court simply for being a celebrated art historian. And as far as his relationship with the powers was concerned, Kondakov had been particularly vociferous in his opinions about whom Macedonia belonged to, ethnically and culturally<sup>17</sup>. In one study which appeared in 1909, he clearly embraces Russian Imperial policy regarding the region, while at the same time sympathizing with the Bulgarians [Fig. 4]<sup>18</sup>. This shines a different light on his triumphal reception at the court of Boris III: he was not just an exceptional emigrant, but one who, perhaps above all else, had used his pen to advance the interests of Bulgaria.



4/ Nikodim Kondakov, *Makedonia*, Saint Petersburg 1909

With Masaryk the matter was perhaps more personal. Once Masaryk began to favor independence ever more strongly, the future President was forced to leave the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and if Andreyev's recollection is correct, Masaryk requested a professorship at the university in Saint Petersburg. Professor Kondakov personally supported this candidacy<sup>19</sup>. For political reasons, i.e. to maintain good relations with the empire of Franz Josef I, Russia decided not to accept this troublesome refugee, but it was certainly logical for Masaryk to offer Kondakov a helping hand when the tables were turned some years later.

We can, of course, also note that Kondakov's presence in Prague was just one part of the "Russian Action" promoted by Kramář and Masaryk, which saw numerous Russian intellectuals and students arrive in Czechoslovakia<sup>20</sup>. Nevertheless, I am convinced that in the case of Kondakov, his previous scholarship and fame, as well as his personal connections, played a decisive role. By emigrating, then, Kondakov lost his material possessions but not his status. At a time when Europe's elite was still a relatively small club, his merits were enough to assure him a warm welcome wherever he went. It is no coincidence that just a few days after his death, it was learned that on the basis of a request from Antonio Muñoz, another of Kondakov's friends and correspondents, Benito Mussolini had invited

15 Kyzlasova, *Istoria otečestvennoj nauki ob iskusstve* (n. 1), pp. 56–78. See also the materials in the Prague Archives: Památník národního písemnictví, Fond Nikodim Pavlovič Kondakov, Korespondence vlastní, přijatá, John Crane, č. Přír: 165/42; *ibidem*, Korespondence vlastní, přijatá, Alice Masaryková, č. Přír: 165/42; *ibidem*, Doklady vlastní, Zasedací pořádek na návštěvě u T. G. Masaryka, č. Přír: 165/42, 15 ll.

16 See the archival documents at Památník národního písemnictví, Fond Nikodim Pavlovič Kondakov, Korespondence vlastní, přijatá, Lubor Niederle, *Letter to N. P. Kondakov*, č. Přír: 165/42, 15 ll. In the same archives there are also copies of the contracts.

17 Nikodim P. Kondakov, *Makedonia. Arxeologičeskoe putešestvie*, Saint Petersburg 1909.

18 The fact that this situation was already clearly perceived by his contemporaries is documented in an article by František Táborský, "Nikodim Pavlovič Kondakov", *Vzdělávací příloha, Národní Listy*, 1. 11. 1924. The framework of this situation was also described by Vzdornov, "Nikodim Pavlovič Kondakov, V zerkale" (n. 4).

19 Nicolaj Andreyev, "Material supplied by Dr. N. E. Andreyev, Formerly Student, Fellow and Acting Director of the Kondakov Institute in Prague", *Columbia University Libraries*, Manuscripts collections, Bakhmeteff Archive, Vernadsky Collection, box 158, p. 1.

20 Elena Chinyaeva, *Russians outside Russia. The Émigré Community in Czechoslovakia 1918–1938*, Munich 2001; Irina Mchitarjan, *Das "russische Schulwesen" im europäischen Exil. Zum bildungspolitischen Umgang mit den pädagogischen Initiativen der russischen Emigranten in Deutschland, der Tschechoslowakei und Polen (1918–1939)*, Bad Heilbrunn 2006; *eadem*, "Prague as the Centre of Russian Educational Emigration: Czechoslovakia's Educational Policy for Russian Emigrants (1918–1938)", *Paedagogica Historica*, XLV/3 (2009), pp. 369–402.