





### Russian Restorers Help Save Florentine Art Treasures

First, an excerpt from a letter addressed to YERA KARASYOVA, IGOR TARASOV AND ALEXANDER ZAITSEV.

"We express our boundless gratitude for the invaluable help, given during your stay in Florence, in saving art treasures damaged by flood waters. It's not happy that such fine human and business relations have grown up between us. We wish you further achievements in your noble profession...."

"**UMBERTO BALDINI, Director, Restoration Office**"

The whole world was shaken by the tragedy which befell Florence in November 1966, when the celebrated Italian museum town was flooded. Florence is a city in which every square, house, fence and even doorways may be a work of skilled masters. At that time, the Italian Government, the Soviet Union and other countries, the Soviet Union included, offered help to save the art treasures.

"We had to work on very damaged, large-sized canvases which had formerly adorned the old cathedrals and famous Uffizi gallery," Vera Karasyova told our correspondent. "They presented great difficulties for restoration. Our colleagues were especially interested in the Russian 'Tish glue', of which they had heard, but had never seen before. This glue, which forms a tough, elastic, transparent layer on the canvas has been used by Russian restorers since the time of Catherine II. On returning home to Moscow we sent our Italian colleagues a shipment of this glue as a token of our collaboration."

The varnish on many pictures had been damaged or destroyed. We used our own method for restoring it, a method which greatly impressed our foreign colleagues, who even made a tape recording of our description of it.

"I would like to mention the excellent organization of restoration work in Italy. We worked in the old fortress of Fortezza da Basso in which large studios were equipped in a very short time with air conditioning, fluorescent lighting and special tables."

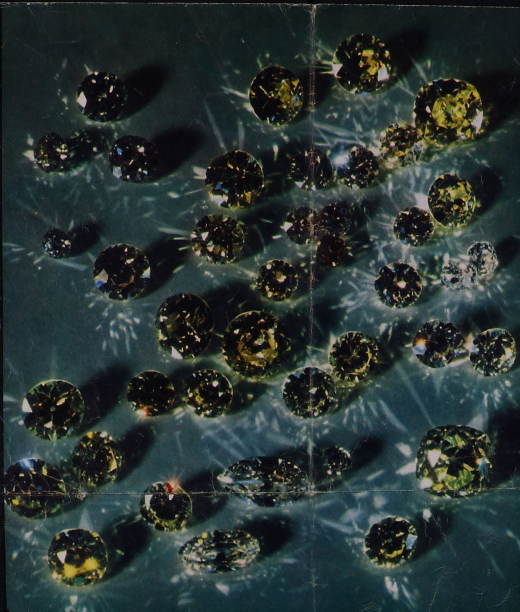
We took with us many pleasant memories of Florence, especially of the remarkably friendly people, with whom we were sorry to part."

Drawing by A. ZHITOMIRSKIY

A group photograph of restorers from Italy, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, the United States, Poland, Rumania, Hungary and other countries who helped in restoring the Italian treasures of art







## The USSR Diamond Treasury

THE DIAMOND TREASURY OF THE SOVIET UNION COMPRISES A UNIQUE COLLECTION OF GEMS AND JEWELS OF GREAT HISTORICAL AND MONETARY VALUE BUILT UP AROUND THE tsar's CROWN JEWELS. THE DIAMOND TREASURY WAS FIRST EXHIBITED PUBLICLY IN 1923. IT IS A REMARKABLE COLLECTION OF EXCEPTIONAL BEAUTY WHICH VIES WITH THE MOST CELEBRATED REGALIA OF OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES. IT INCLUDES THE SYMBOLS OF POWER OF PAST CENTURIES—CROWNS, SCYTHES, WAKES—MEDALS AND ORNAMENTS MANUFACTURED BY CELEBRATED JEWELLERS OF THE 15TH AND 18TH CENTURIES. TO THIS DAY THEY DELIGHT THE EYE WITH THEIR BRILLIANCE AND ARTISTIC TASTE, WITH THE MASTERY SKILL WITH WHICH THEY WERE MADE.

THE PRIZE SPECIMENS OF THE DIAMOND TREASURY INCLUDE PRECIOUS STONES, MANY OF THEM UNIQUE. AMONG THEM IS THE ORLOFF DIAMOND, FOURTH LARGEST IN THE WORLD, AN AMAZING STONE FOR ITS CLARITY AND MAGNIFICENT HUE. STOLEN FROM THE EYE OF AN IDOL IN A BRAHMIN TEMPLE IN INDIA, IT FOUND ITS WAY TO RUSSIA IN THE 18TH CENTURY AND AT THE TIME WAS PRICED AT THE FABULOUS SUM-OF 400,000 RUBLES. ANOTHER WORLD FAMOUS DIAMOND IS THE SHAH, WHICH WAS PRESENTED TO tsAR NICHOLAS I. BY THE PERSIAN PRINCE KHOSROV-MIRZA AS "REDEMPTION" FOR THE MURDER OF THE RUSSIAN AMBASSADOR, THE WRITER ALEXANDER GRIBOEDOV.

IN OUR TIME DIAMONDS HAVE ACQUIRED A NEW SIGNIFICANCE AS A SYMBOL OF TECHNOLOGICAL PROGRESS. IN THE WORDS OF THE AMERICAN EXPERT LESOR DAVIS, THE INDUSTRIAL POTENTIAL OF A COUNTRY LIKE THE UNITED STATES WOULD BE REDUCED BY HALF IF IT WERE DEPRIVED OF ITS DIAMOND SOURCES.

TEN OR FIFTEEN YEARS AGO THE SOVIET UNION EXPERIENCED AN ACUTE SHORTAGE OF DIAMONDS AS AN IMPORTANT INDUSTRIAL RAW MATERIAL. TODAY, THANKS TO THE DISCOVERY OF THE YAKUTIAN DIAMOND FIELDS, OUR COUNTRY IS ONE OF THE WORLD'S BIGGEST PRODUCERS OF DIAMONDS BOTH FOR INDUSTRIAL PURPOSES AND AS GEMS.

UNIQUE DIAMOND CRYSTALS FOUND IN THE YAKUTIAN FIELDS, CONTINUOUSLY COMPLEMENT THE DIAMOND TREASURY, ALONG WITH GOLD AND PLATINUM NUGGETS OF SPECIAL INTEREST. THE TREASURY INCLUDES 120 NUGGETS FOUND IN OUR COUNTRY AT DIFFERENT TIMES WHOSE TOTAL WEIGHT EXCEEDS 520 POUNDS.

M. MARIYNOVA, ART CRITIC

### FIRST ROW:

1. Brooch [mid-19th century]. Gold, silver, diamonds, sapphire [258 carats]. Size 6x 5.8 cm.
2. Pendant with miniature of Peter I [early 18th century]. Gold, silver, enamel, diamonds. Size 8x4.5 cm.
3. The Orloff diamond. 189.6 carats.

### SECOND ROW:

1. Diamond, 25.5 carats.
2. Hair pin in the shape of a cornucopia. Manufactured 1775-1780 by St. Petersburg master L. Druxal. Gold, silver, diamonds. Size 7.5x7.5 cm.
3. Gold nugget "Camel", 9,288.2 grams, fineness 863.4. Discovered in 1947 in Kolymsa fields.

### THIRD ROW:

1. "Order of the Golden Fleuret" [mid-18th century]. Gold, burnt Brazilian topaz, diamonds. Size 6.2x6.2 cm.
2. Brooch with 36-carat emerald (latter half of 18th century). Gold, diamonds. Size 4.5x3.6 cm.
3. The Shah diamond. 88.7 carats.

### FOURTH ROW:

1. Pink scharf, 233 carats, size 4x2.7x2.3 cm. Presented to Catherine II by King Gustave III of Sweden in 1777.
2. Platinum nugget, 5.9 kilograms. Found in the Middle Urals.
3. Detail of a bouquet made of diamonds, emeralds, gold and silver [about 1760]. Overall size 16x21 cm.
4. 15 diamonds of from 1 to 25 carats, cut at the Smolensk Diamond Works.