

ITALY AND RUSSIA. CULTURAL AND POLITICAL INTERTWINATION OF TWO STATES

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Abstract

Italian-Russian relations have a very long history (Italian travelers have described Russia in their works since the 13th century). Russian language in various fields from music to cooking reflects the cultural influence of many generations of Italians who have connected their lives with Russia. The interrelation between two our countries has become even tighter when Peter the Great found St. Petersburg, Venice of the North.

I. DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN ITALY AND RUSSIA

Diplomatic relations between Italy and Russia were established on February 7–11, 1924 (terminated June 22, 1941 to October 25, 1944). Current relations are based on Friendship and Cooperation treaty between the two countries (October 14, 1994) and on the "Action Plan between Russian and the Republic of Italy". Italy is one of the closest partners of Russia in Europe.

Cooperation in cultural sphere is a major component of bilateral relations. Cultural connections between Russia and Italy are currently being implemented on the basis of an intergovernmental cooperation in culture and education agreement (10 February 1998), as well as exchange programs, which are negotiated through the Joint Italian-Russian commission for cooperation in the culture and education areas and committed to the bilateral 1 Protokol.

II. CULTURAL INTERACTIONS BETWEEN ITALY AND RUSSIA

Russian-Italian relations do not finish only with top-level ones. Italy has strong influence on lives of ordinary Russian citizens. So that the basic

interaction areas of two our countries are presented below.

Let us start with traditional Italian cuisine in Russia. It appeared in 1995 when the 1st Italian restaurant "Mario" was opened in Moscow. Nowadays the main feature of the Russian restaurant business is the demand of so-called restaurants for every day ("casual dining restaurants"), such as "Mama Roma", "Pizza Hut", "Rosario", "Olis" and "Sbarro".

It is possible for today to distinguish three basic trends connected with Italian cuisine in Russia. Firstly, in our country more and more businessmen invite native Italian chiefs to their restaurants of Italian food.

Secondly, a lot of restaurants have begun specializing on, for example, Sicilian, Neapolitan or Sardinian cuisine.

And, thirdly, Russian stores sell all ingredients for preparing special Italian dishes at home such as so-loved by Russians – tiramisu desert.

Both Italians and Russians love cars. The first social car of the USSR appeared also due to the Italians. The construction of VAZ plant began with the help of Fiat in Toliatti in 1966. The first cars batch under the direction of an Italian chef-instructor left the assembly line in 1970, it was a copy of the Fiat-124 adapted for Russian roads. Cars parts were brought then from Italy and the quality of the first cars can not be compared with the current ones.

The name "Giguli" was changed to "Lada" when the export started, as, for example, in Italy, the "Giguli" name was strongly associated with a gigolo.

Today, Russians as great specialists of cars prefer Lamborghini, Ferrari, Maserati and Alfa Romeo.

Another thing to mention is that Vespa is becoming very popular in Russia, it has become the style standard for young people.

Despite a considerable quantity of an individual transport, the tram is very popular in cities and towns (the tram is the most preferable kind of public transport of Petersburgers). That is why Italian Finmeccanica is going to build cars for "a light tram" jointly with St. Petersburg's "Vagonmash".

Italy has been associated with fashion for a long time in our country. The image of magnificent Italian fashion came after Fellini's films and Italian magazines, secretly brought to USSR.

In 1962, coat of dark blue material were very popular in Russia. It was called "Bologna" after the town where it was manufactured. Every fashionable Russian person had this coat. However, in Italy this material was used for working clothes.

Since 2000 the annual growth of Italian clothes import is estimated as 18%. Russia has the 6th place in the world for import of goods with the brand "Made in Italy". Italy exports to Russia about 45% of all goods produced for Europe.

The phrase "made in Italy" still means a lot, but not everything. Real quality and style is connected with the following names: "Gucci", "Prada", "Dolce & Gabbana", "Valentino" and "Armani".

The Italian music and songs, in particular, are known all over the world because of its melody and beautiful language. The masterpieces of great Italian composers such as V. Bellini, A. Vivaldi and D. Rossini are available in many musical scores of all musical educational institutions. They are played practically in different concerts of classical music, especially, in philharmonic societies and concert halls of all cultural capitals of the world.

In Russia the Italian songs became popular at the time of Soviet Union existing. Such authors and singers as Toto Cutugno, Adriano Celentano, Pupo, Raffaella Carra, Riccardo Fogli were the most famous ones. In the USSR "the Festival of San Remo" had a great success.

Soccer is very popular both in Italy and Russia. If we talk about St. Petersburg, on December 2009, it was confirmed Spalletti would join FC Zenit Saint Petersburg on a three-year deal with about 4 million Euros salary, replacing interim coach Anatoly Davydov.

After Spalletti was announced an official coach, Zenit has not lost in 23 matches. The table 1 below presents the statistics of Russian football club in 64 games (first 64 games under the direction of Spalletti).

Table 1

Statistics on Zenit games under the direction of Spalletti (period of working : 2010 – 2011)¹

Games	Game results		
	W	D	L
64	42	14	8

With him Zenit won the Russian Cup in 2010, in November 2010 clinched the 2010 Russian Premier League and in 2011 – Supercup of Russia.

In 2010 Spalletti was announced the best coach of Russian Premier League (according to Russian Football Association).

III. St. Petersburg is Venice of the North

The interrelation between two our countries has become even tighter when Peter The Great found St. Petersburg, Venice of the North.

St. Petersburg is situated at the outfall of the Neva River. The city became one of Russia's largest cruise ship ports and the only gateway to the Baltic Sea that is why St. Petersburg is called 'the Marine Capital of Russia.' The city is characterized by so many rivers and canals that it is often called North Venice and the table 2 confirms this fact.

Table 2

The quantity of rivers, islands, bridges in St. Petersburg and Venice¹

Object	Venice	St. Petersburg
Rivers and canals	177	117
Islands	117	42
Bridges	409	342

According to this table, St. Petersburg falls a little behind Venice. However, the length and the width of some rivers and canals in St. Petersburg are much bigger than in Venice. Not only the water but also Italian architecture makes St. Petersburg North Venice.

For example, Kazan Cathedral, constructed between 1801 and 1811 by the architect Andrei Voronikhin, was inspired by the Basilica of St. Peter's in Rome.

Every educated citizen of St. Petersburg knows a lot of Italian architects, which helped to build our city, such as D. Trezini, B. Rastrelli, K. Rossi, J. Quarengi and A. Rinaldi.

St. Petersburg is the European city. Peter the Great wanted it to look like Venice and Amsterdam, so he desired to create a network of canals in his city. Nevertheless, the project was not realized and today there are Lines instead of canals. The widest canal was thought to pass along the axis of the island – now there is Bolshoi prospect, parallel channels (Srednii and Malii prospects) ships would sail to the Stock.

Another thing to mention is that St. Petersburg like Venice suffers from floods practically each year. Most floods in St. Petersburg occur in September–December. Between 1703 and 2003, 324 floods were recorded with the height above 160 cm., of which 210 were higher than 210 cm. The largest flood occurred in 1824 and killed at least several hundred people. This flood inspired the poem The Bronze Horseman by Alexander Pushkin.

It is said that in Venice suburbs bathing-and-swimming season begins on May 1st and finishes in the end of September. What is about Russians? People in Russia swim even in winter when there is snow everywhere, lakes and rivers are covered with an ice and the temperature is -15°C. If you want to

¹ <http://ru.wikipedia.org/>

try this, authors advise to visit Russia on Christmas Holidays and become, as it is said here, a real "walrus".

But there is a special day on 19 January. It is Baptism of Jesus Holiday, one of the oldest holidays of Christian Church. In this day if you dive into ice-hole for 3 times, you are supposed to be cleansed of all sins.

Another thing to mention is that both Italians and St. Petersburgers love seafood. However Mediterranean seafood differs from Russian one a lot. For example, St Petersburg citizens like smelt-fish. Here citizens understand that spring comes when the whole city smells of smelt (fresh cucumber smell) and everyone here knows its fried taste. Restaurants even have some special Smelt-menu.

IV. CONCLUSION

In the conclusion, we would like to say that Italy means a lot for our country. Nowadays Russians can often meet mentions of Italy practically everywhere, especially in St. Petersburg. Moreover, our governments are working closely on international scene and within the bilateral agreements, 2011 is declared the Year of Italy in Russia and Russia in Italy. So relations between two countries have become much closer for the last 13 years and this is very important for international integration.