**POTEMKIN’S GLORY: A GLANCE THROUGH THE AGES**

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There are a lot of different parks and gardens in Kherson. One of the most famous and important in Kherson’s history is the one near the Kherson Music and Drama Theatre. You can always see children playing there or young people spending their time together kissing under the trees. The loveliest part of the park is the monument to Potemkin, one of the founders of Kherson. Hundreds of people pass by the monument every day, but only some of them know how the statue appeared there and what a great number of problems there was in the way of its erecting.

The idea of putting up a monument to Potemkin first arose when the Prince was still alive. The idea belonged to Catherine the Great – the most renowned female leader of the Russian Empire. She ordered the Senate to put up a majestic statue as a reward for his outstanding services during the Russo-Turkish War of 1787 – 1792. The place was expected to be chosen by Potemkin himself. After his death, the Empress issued a manifesto with the order to establish a marble memorial in one of the most important places to Potemkin – in Kherson. According to Alexander Samoylov – who was a Russian general and Potemkin’s nephew – that monument was supposed to be a part of the crypt near St. Catherine’s Cathedral. Unfortunately, Catherine II died before the plan was carried out, her son Paul became the new ruler of Russia, and her wishes failed to be realized.   
Only during the reign of Alexander I, who respected his grandmother Catherine a lot, the plans about the monument got a chance to be revived. Alexander Samoylov asked the Emperor to put up the monument at the expense of prince’s relatives and he received the satisfaction of the request soon. However, because of some problems the erection of the memorial was postponed again.   
Finally, Russian Prince and field-marshal Mikhail Vorontsov put an end to that disorder. In 1823, he was appointed governor-general of the region north of the Black Sea called New Russia. Vorontsov commenced the improvement of public services and started to beatify many towns and cities in this region. During the campaign, he invited Ivan Martos, a famous Russian sculptor (whose ancestors were from Ukraine, by the way), to work on the project of the monument to Potemkin.

The very first design of it was both astonishing and quite expensive: there was a statue on a round pedestal with a circular staircase leading to it. Four additional statues of ancient gods and heroes – that symbolized the strengths of the Generalissimo and some aspects of his life – also surrounded the composition. Two of them were Mars with a shield and a sword and Neptune sitting on a dolphin and holding a trident in his hands. They were symbols of army and navy. Opposite them, there were Apollo and Hercules that stood for Alexander Potemkin’s strength and courage.

Of course, that project required too much money – the total sum was expected to be about a hundred and seventy thousand rubles! Martos had to reduce expenditures and decided to put up only the statue of Potemkin. In 1836, it turned 45 years since Potemkin was buried in St. Catherine’s Cathedral and the monument finally took its present place. The author of the new massive granite pedestal was the Italian architect Francesco Boffo who had already made the other one for the statue of Richelieu in Odessa. The monument became the center of an amazing square in a little while.

After the Revolution of 1917, the monument to the general was covered with a tarpaulin and because of that was called by local residents ‘Kherson ghost’. In 1921, it was removed to the courtyard of the Kherson Historical and Archaeological Museum, and in 1944, the statue disappeared with the retreating Nazi troops. In 1922 Potemkin’s place was taken by Karl Marx and the street was named after the revolutionary socialist before long. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, for a certain period of time the pedestal was absolutely empty. Finally, to commemorate the 225th anniversary of the city’s foundation, in 2003, the monument was restored and now it’s one of the most famous symbols of Kherson city again.

**Based on:** *‘Вулиці старого Херсона’ by Victor Pivorovich and Sergey Dyachenko*

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