

Webmaster's Note. Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna requested to write the following obituary for *Orthodox Tradition*, an English-language publication of the American Exarchate of our Holy Synod, where it will appear later this Spring. The Editor of *Orthodox Tradition*, His Grace, Bishop Auxentios, Acting Exarch in America, received the following gracious response to it by Count Nikita Cheremeteff's daughter, Kyra: "I shall treasure this beautiful tribute from a man whom my father so admired and trusted and whose company he truly especially enjoyed."

Repose of Count Nikita Cheremeteff

On February 24, 2013 (Old Style), the Feast of the First and Second Finding of the Head of St. John the Baptist, Count Nikita Cheremeteff, a good friend and supporter of the St. Gregory Palamas Monastery and the Convent of St. Elizabeth the Grand Duchess (where his daughter, Mother Seraphima, is a nun), reposed in Chevy Chase, MD, his home in retirement. He slipped away peacefully, surrounded by his close family members, the Orthodox Church's prayers in preparation for the departure of the soul having been read. He was



80 years of age. He is pictured at left during his last visit, in 2011, to our Etna monastic communities, not long after the death of his wife, Countess Maiko, in 2010. He will be laid to rest with her at the Novo-Diveyevo Convent in Nanuet, New York.

In addition to Mother Seraphima, Nikita is survived by another daughter, Kyra Cheremeteff Richardson, of Washington, D.C., two sons, Constantin, of Bethesda, MD, and Nicholas, of London, England, five grandchildren, and a sister, Mrs. Daniel P. Davison, of New York City, NY.

Count Nikita was born in Geneva, Switzerland. He spent much of his youth in France and South America, before settling in the U.S. He attended Yale University, where he completed his undergraduate degree in chemical engineering, and New York University, where he did his graduate studies in business administration, going on to a successful business career in executive positions in firms throughout the world. Nikita was not only a polyglot, but a witty and gifted raconteur, active in a number of social and cultural organizations—notably, Director Emeritus of the Russian Nobility Association in New York—and a patron of numerous Russian charitable organizations, including the New York Tolstoy Foundation.

Count Nikita hailed from a very prominent Russian noble family. Yet in demeanor he was humble and accessible, self-effacing in his brilliant sense of humor, and wholly and unaffectedly pious. One of the last of a fading group of Old World nobility that suffered the loss of their fortunes and stature, like the best of these aristocrats, he maintained a sense of dignity and uprightness. The historian and author Douglas Smith visited the Count and his wife several years ago, while doing research for a book on one of the Cheremeteff forebears. In his reminiscences of that visit, which also appear in summary form in the “Acknowledgments” section of his newest—and superb—volume, *Former People: The Final Days of the Russian Aristocracy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012), he subtly captures the delightful and charming qualities of Nikita and a great many of those disappearing figures who, like him, connect us to a bygone past:

It was the winter of 2005 and I had been invited to dinner at the Connecticut home of Nikita and Maïko Cheremeteff. I was writing a book on one of Nikita’s ancestors, an eccentric aristocrat from the reign of Catherine the Great who had fallen in love with and secretly married one of his serfs, a brilliant opera singer who performed as ‘The Pearl.’ We talked for hours about Russia, its beauties and tragedies, and about the fabled history of the Counts Sheremetev (as the surname is most commonly anglicized), one of the richest families under the tsars with palaces in St. Petersburg and Moscow, vast estates, and over 300,000 serfs. And then, in 1917, came the revolution. Within a few months the Sheremetevs, like the rest of the nobility, lost everything. Some in the family were arrested and executed; many, like Nikita’s father, fled the country with nothing more than what they could carry.

At one point during dinner, Nikita held up a piece of silverware, something vaguely resembling a small pâté knife. ‘Douglas,’ he said with a slight grin, ‘this is all that remains of the Sheremetev fortune.’

Much more than a dinner utensil, of course, remains. What remains is the memory of the Counts Cheremeteff in our own times, among whom Count Nikita will always be remembered as a remarkable and treasured figure.

Вечная память! Memory Eternal!