

2016-05-20. The Head of the House of Romanoff and the Heir visit Crimea and Sevastopol, May 15-20, 2016

From May 15 to May 20, 2016, the Head of the Russian Imperial House, H.I.H. The Grand Duchess Maria of Russia, and her son and Heir, H.I.H. The Tsesarevich and Grand Duke George of Russia, traveled to Crimea and Sevastopol, a trip that coincides with the 100th anniversary of the last visit of the Holy Royal Passion-Bearers Emperor Nicholas II and his family to Crimea. Their Imperial Highnesses arrived in Crimea on the invitation of the Speaker of the State Assembly of the Republic of Crimea, Vladimir Andreevich Konstantinov. This visit of the Head of the House of Romanoff and the Tsesarevich is their first visit since the unification of Crimea with Russia. Grand Duchess Maria of Russia had previously been to Crimea as part of her visits to Ukraine in 2011 and 2013. Grand Duke George visited Crimea for the first time in 2013 together with his mother.

Accompanying Their Imperial Highness were the Director of the Chancellery of the Head of the Russian Imperial House, Alexander N. Zakatov; the advisor to the Chancellery for Interregional and International Relations, Prince Vadim O. Lopukhin; the Chief of Heraldry, Stanislaw V. Dumin, and the advisors to the Chancellery Vladislav V. Pilkevich and Kirill K. Nemirovich-Danchenko.

On **May 15**, Their Imperial Highnesses arrived in Moscow. First, Grand Duke George of Russia arrived from Brussels, and Grand Duchess Maria of Russia arrived later from Madrid. They were met at Sheremetev Airport by the Permanent Representative in Moscow of the Republic of Crimea, by members of the Chancellery of the Head of the Russian Imperial House, and by other members of the public.

That same day, the Head of the Russian Imperial House, her Heir, and those accompanying them during this trip, departed from Moscow for Simferopol, where they were met by Sergei Pavlovich Tsekov, a member of the Federation Council for the Republic of Crimea; Andrei Dmitrievich Kozenko, the Deputy Speaker of the State Assembly of the Republic of Crimea; Efim Zisievich Fiks, the Chairman of the Committee for State Construction and Local Self-Government of the State Assembly of the Republic of Crimea; Iurii Viktorovich Averin, a staff advisor to the Representative of the President of the Russian Federation in the Crimean Federal District; Archpriest Ioann Mikhailovich Shimon, the Dean of the Second Simferopol Deanery; and by Vladislav Valerievich Pilkevich, advisor to the Chancellery of the Head of the Russian Imperial House for Relations with the Organs of Government, and Religious and Civil organizations in the Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol.

See the official press reports released by the State Assembly of the Republic of Crimea here: http://crimea.gov.ru/news/16_05_16.



For other photos, see here: https://vk.com/photo-1323320_415998095.













During their visit, Their Imperial Highnesses stayed at the Hotel Ukraine.

On **May 16**, the Grand Duchess and the Tsesarevich went to Yevpatoria, where they were greeted by Sergei Nikolaevich Kudrin, the Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Crimea to the President of the Russian Federation, and by Elmar Izetovich Mambetov, the Deputy Chief of Staff for the City of Yevpatoria.

Their Imperial Highnesses began their visit to the city by going to the Karaite Kenesa. They were greeted in the Vineyard Courtyard (Vinogradnyi dvore) by the Chairman of the Spiritual Council of the Karaites, by Hazzan (Cantor) David Zakharovich Tiryaki, who delivered a welcoming speech describing the history of the Karaite community and its service to the nation, and by the Deputy Chief of Staff for the City of Yevpatoria, Elmar Izetovich Mambetov. David Zakharovich Tiryaki then described for the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess the project to build a memorial fountain to commemorate the visit of the Holy Royal Passion-Bearer Emperor Nicholas II to the Kenesa.

Their Imperial Highnesses then participated in the unveiling of a memorial plaque commemorating Nicholas II's visit 100 years ago.

See photos here: : <http://my-evp.ru/knyaginya-romanova-otkryla-memorialnuyu-dosku-nikolaya-ii-v-karaimskix-kenasax/>.

The Grand Duke and Grand Duchess also placed flowers in the Memorial Courtyard.

Afterward, in the Marble Courtyard, Their Imperial Highnesses visited the stele in honour of Emperor Alexander I, who was the special patron of the Karaite community and had exempted them from compulsory military service. In the Courtyard of Waiting for the Prayer Ritual, the Grand Duchess and Grand Duke were told of the many privileges that had been given to the Karaite community by Russia's emperors. And when they made their way to the portico of the Kenesa, the Grand Duchess and the Heir learned about the historical details of the restoration work of these and other buildings in the Kenesa complex.

Their Imperial Highnesses passed through the Royal Gates and into the Kenesa and listened as prayers for the Imperial House were raised to Heaven. Then they toured the building and visited the school and museum attached to the Kenesa. In the museum, Their Imperial Highnesses were shown footage of the visit in 1916 to Yevpatoria of the Holy Royal Passion-Bearers. The Head of the Russian Imperial House awarded the Imperial and Royal Order of St. Stanislaw II Class and the "Imperial Commemorative Medal of the 400th Anniversary of the House of Romanoff, 1613-2013" to D. Z. Tiryaki, and the Imperial Order of St. Anna III Class to the Honorary Chairman of the Spiritual Council of Karaites, David Moiseevich El, and to the philanthropist Solomon Borisovich Sinani. Their Imperial Highness ended their visit to the Kenesa with tea and a sampling of some traditional Karaite dishes.

From the Kenesa the Grand Duchess and Grand Duke went to the Church of St. Nicholas in Yevpatoria, where, at the invitation of the Chairman of the Imperial Orthodox Palestinian Society, Sergei Vadimovich Stepashin, they took part in the unveiling of a memorial bust to the Holy Royal Passion-Bearer Emperor Nicholas II. Their Imperial Highnesses were greeted at the entrance to the church by the Chairman of the Imperial Orthodox Palestinian Society, Sergei Vadimovich Stepashin; by S. P. Tsekov, a member of the Federation Council of the Republic of Crimea; by Andrei Vladimirovich Filonov, the Mayor (Head of Administration) of the city; and by Olesya Viktorovna Kharitonenko, the Chairwoman of the Yevpatoria City Council.

The memorial bust was blessed by His Eminence Metropolitan Lazar of Simferopol and Crimea, His Eminence Metropolitan Platon of Feodosia and Kerch, and by other clergy.

For photos, see here: <http://my-evp.ru/v-evpatorii-otkryli-byust-nikolaya-ii-fotoreportazh/>.



After the completion of the ceremony, S. V. Stepashin awarded the Head of the Russian Imperial House the Order of the Bethlehem Star—the highest award of the Imperial Orthodox Palestinian Society, of which the Grand Duchess is an honorary member. Grand Duchess Maria of Russia awarded Metropolitan Lazar and Metropolitan Platon the Imperial Medal “In Memory of the 100th Anniversary of the Great War, 1914-1918,” and S. V. Stepashin the “Imperial Commemorative Medal of the 400th Anniversary of the House of Romanoff, 1613-2013,” and the Imperial Commemorative Medals “Anniversary of the Nation’s Victory, 1613-2013,” and “In Memory of the 100th Anniversary of the Great War, 1914-1918.” Several Imperial Commemorative Medals were likewise awarded to other members of the Imperial Orthodox Palestinian Society.

Afterward Their Imperial Highnesses attended a lunch in honour of the dedication of the monument, which was hosted by the Mayor's Office of the city of Yevpatoria and by the Imperial Orthodox Palestinian Society. Also attending the lunch were S. V. Stepashin, His Eminence Metropolitan Platon, Andrei V. Filonov, Olesya V. Kharitonenko, members of the Chancellery of the Head of the Russian Imperial House, the organizers of the project to erect the monument, A. N. Panin and S. Ya. Vaksman, other members of the Imperial Orthodox Palestinian Society, and members of the public in Crimea.

Their Imperial Highnesses then took a short tour of the seacoast and city of Yevpatoria.

In the afternoon, Their Imperial Highness visited the Juma-Jami Mosque in Yevpatoria, where the Grand Duchess awarded the "Imperial Commemorative Medal of the 400th Anniversary of the House of Romanoff, 1613-2013," to the regional Imam of Yevpatoria, Eskender Memetov.

For photos, see here: <http://qmdi.org/index.php/ru/glavnye-novosti/2594-glava-imperatorskogo-doma-romanovykh-posetila-khan-dzhami-v-evpatorii>.



After leaving the mosque, Their Imperial Highnesses participated in the opening of a new tourist hotel and park visitor center named "Romanoff."

For photos, see here: <http://my-evp.ru/knyaginya-romanova-otkryla-memorialnuyu-dosku-nikolaya-ii-v-karaimskix-kenasax/>.

After returning to Simferopol, the Head of the House of Romanoff and her Heir met with the Chairman of the Spiritual Council of the Moslem Community in Crimea and Sevastopol, Mufti Emerali Seitigraimovich Ablaev. The Grand Duchess awarded the Mufti the Imperial Order of St. Anna and

the "Imperial Commemorative Medal of the 400th Anniversary of the House of Romanoff, 1613-2013."



During her meeting with Muslim religious leaders in Crimea, the Head of the Russian Imperial House, Grand Duchess Maria of Russia, shared her impressions about her visit to Crimea, emphasizing her view that the peninsula is a unique place in the world—a place where members of different religions and nationalities live together in peace and harmony.

"This region should be an example to the entire world," she said. "We must respect and understand each other. We must instill in the younger generation a respect and knowledge of other cultures and traditions, so that Crimea remains one of the places in our world where peace and mutual understanding reign."

Mufti Emerali Ablaev in turn remarked that the chief goal of Muslim religious leaders in Crimea today is to help revive religious traditions in the community.

"What is most important," Mufti Ablaev said, "is to revive our traditions. This is vitally important to us right now. Religion is the stone upon which human society is built."

The leader of the Crimean Muslim community then presented the Grand Duchess and the Grand Duke a picture of the mosque built by Emperor Alexander I in the Horse Guards Regiment, which was made up entirely of Crimean Tatars. Mufti Ablaev underscored in his comments that the Crimean Tatars had always been loyal to the Emperor. The Crimean Tatars had been in the most elite units of the Horse Guards, and served as the Emperors' personal escort.

It will be remembered that Emperor Alexander I built a mosque in Moscow to commemorate the heroism of this Regiment. In 1909 the Regiment was named after Empress Alexandra Feodorovna, memorializing how it had met and escorted her when she was still the bride-to-be of the heir to the throne, the future Emperor Nicholas II. After 1917, the Crimean Tatar Horse Guards Regiment remained the only military unit on the peninsula that refused to betray its oath of allegiance to the Emperor.

"Building the mosque in the barracks of the Imperial Horse Guards was a truly great gesture of respect and affection by the Emperor for the Muslims who served in the Imperial Army," Mufti Emerali Ablaev said.

The Grand Duchess noted that, during this trip, she had participated in deeply moving events marking the anniversary of the deportation of the Crimean Tatars and commemorating the many lives lost at that time.

"I can understand your pain," she said, "because the wounds are still fresh. Many are still alive today who witnessed the genocide of your people. We must never forget the history of what happened here. We need to remember it in order to build our future together." The Mufti echoed her words: "We must never forget our history. Those who perpetrated this genocide are no longer alive and therefore cannot answer for their crimes. So it is for us now to remember and to make sure that it never happens again."

Mufti Ablaev said that in the 30 years since the return of the Crimean Tatars from exile, there have been 70 mosques restored, and as many new ones constructed. Madrassas now have been established. Mosques now are places where the language of the Crimean Tatars is taught, the Koran is studied, and the basic teachings of Islam are introduced to members of the community. Every year, a Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca is organized for Crimean Muslims, and the construction of a main mosque has begun.

Grand Duchess Maria ended her meeting with the clergy of the Crimean Muslim community by wishing them all peace, happiness, fortitude, and patience, and she pledged to attend the opening of the main mosque when construction is completed.

(For more information, see: <http://www.islamsng.com/sng/news/10726>)

On **May 17**, The Grand Duchess and the Heir traveled to Sevastopol.

Their Imperial Highnesses' visit to Sevastopol began with a stop at St. Nicholas Church and to the Brotherhood Cemetery, and they placed flowers at the monuments to the soldiers and Sisters of Mercy of the Crimean War and Second World War.

The Grand Duchess awarded the "Imperial Commemorative Medal of the 400th Anniversary of the House of Romanoff, 1613-2013" and the Imperial Medal "In Memory of the 100th Anniversary of the Great War, 1914-1918" to the rector of St. Nicholas Church, the well-known Church historian Archpriest Georgii Poliakov. Afterward, the Grand Duchess, the Grand Duke, and their party had tea with Fr. Georgii.

Then the Grand Duchess went to Balaklava, where she toured the exhibits in the Submarine Museum. She then visited several other sites in the city.

Meanwhile, Grand Duke George of Russia, Alexander N. Zakatov, and Vladislav V. Pilkevich, along with Anton R. Titsky, the president of the youth organization "Bastion," went to nearby Cape Fiolent, where, together with trained divers and Archimandrite Tikhon (Maslennikov), who oversees the site, they dove to the Cross placed on the seafloor just off the coast. For photos, see here: <http://nts-tv.com/rubriki/obshhestvo/10917/12387/>.

At 12:30 PM, the Head of the Russian Imperial House met with the Deputy Governor and Chairman of the Government of Sevastopol, Alexander Gennadievich Pushkarev, and with the Acting Chairwoman of the Legislative Assembly of the City of Sevastopol, Ekaterina Borisovna Altabaeva. They then together placed flowers at the Eternal Flame and at the monument to Empress Catherine II the Great. Afterward, Her Imperial Highness attended a luncheon held in her honour by the Governor of Sevastopol. Grand Duke George and those accompanying him returned from their dive at Cape Fiolent in time to join the Grand Duchess at lunch.

Also present at lunch were the Deputy Commander of the Black Sea Fleet, Rear Admiral Iurii Ivanovich Olekhovsky, Deputy Governor and Chairman of the Government of Sevastopol, Alexander Gennadievich Pushkarev, the Acting Chairwoman of the Legislative Council of the City of Sevastopol, Ekaterina Borisovna Altabaeva, the Dean of the Sevastopol Deanery, Archpriest Sergii Mikhailovich Khaliuta, and members of the Chancellery of the Head of the Russian Imperial House.

Then Their Imperial Highnesses attended services at the St. Vladimir Cathedral. The Grand Duchess awarded Imperial and Royal Orders and Imperial Medals to government and civic figures. The Chairman of the Sevastopol Naval Assembly, Viktor Pavlovich Kot, awarded the Head of the

House of Romanoff a certificate recognizing her as an honorary member of this organization.

That evening, the Grand Duchess and Grand Duke visited the Vadim Elizarov Academic Theatre of Dance, where a concert was performed in their honour. After the concert, Their Imperial Highnesses were the special guests at a dinner attended also by Aleksei Mikhailovich Chalyi, a Deputy in (and former Chairman of) the Legislative Council of the City of Sevastopol; Alexander Ivanovich Korolev, the former Vice-President of the Transnistrian Moldavian Republic; members of the Grand Duchess's Chancellery; Alima Abelevna Belialova, the Director of the Imperial Cultural Center; Elena Alexandrovna Krasnenkova, a member of the Board of the Imperial Cultural Center; and Andrei Konstantinovich Ushakov, the President of the Crimean Nobility Association, with his wife.

After dinner, Their Imperial Highnesses returned to Simferopol.

On **May 18**, the Head of the House of Romanoff and the Heir placed flowers at the memorial to the victims of the deportation of Crimean Tatars, located in Park Salgirka in Simferopol, then departed for Bakhchisaray.

In Bakhchisaray, Their Imperial Highnesses toured the Khan's Palace, then visited an exhibit of the photographs of Alexandra Blaginina. Then the Grand Duchess and Grand Duke went to the Devlet-Sarai Museum Complex, where they took an extensive tour of the buildings and grounds.

After a formal luncheon given in their honour by the Founder and Director of the Devlet-Sarai Museum Complex, Guliver Rustemovich Altin, Their Imperial Highnesses visited the exhibit "Tears of Memory" by the Crimean artist V. Sorokin, which commemorates the deportation of Crimean Tatars. They then met with Chief Imam of the Bakhchisaray region, Ramazan Asanov, and with intellectuals and other representatives of local society. Then the Grand Duchess and Grand Duke attended a conference "Bakhchisaray—A History of the City of Peace and Harmony." Afterward they met with reporters and attended a concert.

Their Imperial Highnesses then returned to Simferopol and met with Aleksei Mikhailovich Chalyi, a Deputy in (and former Chairman of) the Legislative Council of the City of Sevastopol. The Grand Duchess awarded him the Order of St. Vladimir and the "Imperial Commemorative Medal of the 400th Anniversary of the House of Romanoff, 1613-2013." Their conversation touched on a number of topics, including the preservation of the region's historical legacy and ways to memorialize the victims of the Revolution and the Civil War, while at the same time fostering reconciliation. The Grand

Duchess and Tsesarevich enthusiastically endorsed the idea of erecting a memorial to the forced Exodus from Sevastopol and Crimea of their countrymen in 1920.

On **May 19**, the Feast Day of the Holy Job the Long-Suffering and the birthday of the Holy Royal Passion-Bearer Emperor Nicholas II, the Head of the Russian Imperial House of Romanoff and the Heir, accompanied by E. Z. Fiks, the Chairman of the Committee for State Construction and Local Self-Government of the State Council of the Republic of Crimea, and Aleksei Iurievich Cherniak, Chairman of the Committee for Resorts and Tourism, placed flowers at the memorial complex "Red," which is located on the site of a former Nazi death camp. The complex's Director, Sergei Zhuchenko, presented Their Imperial Highnesses books and videos about the site. In the Church of All Saints of Crimea, the rector, Fr. Alexander Grin, and Hieromonk Nikon (Levachev-Belavenets), a member of Her Imperial Highness's Chancellery who had come from Moscow, chanted the hymn "Memory Eternal" on behalf of those who had been martyred and murdered on this site.

Then the Grand Duchess went to St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral in Simferopol, where she met with His Eminence Metropolitan Lazar of Simferopol and Crimea.

After a moleben service, Metropolitan Lazar read the following formal greeting to the Grand Duchess and Grand Duke, and to the crowd gathered in the Cathedral:

"Your Imperial Highnesses, Grand Duchess Maria of Russia and Grand Duke George of Russia,

"Christ is Risen!

"My heart was filled with joy when I learned that you would be visiting us in Crimea, a land that has been so very blessed by God. For many centuries, it has been the pearl of Orthodoxy. A Russian Athos. Its prayerful spirit has not been diminished over the years or by its many hardships. And we today have lifted our voices with you in prayer in this magnificent cathedral.

"For the Imperial Family, Crimea was not merely some peninsula where their palaces were located. It was their favorite location in the Empire. An unofficial capital of the Empire. The Romanoff dynasty deeply cared for the development and prosperity of this Russian Riviera. Under their scepters, cities and roads were built. The Black Sea Fleet was created, vineyards were planted, and Orthodoxy was brought to this place. It would be no

exaggeration to say that it was thanks to the Imperial Family that Crimea became famous around the world. Crimea rivaled the other great tourist destinations in Europe. Crimea is a bearer of historical, cultural, and spiritual values that are significant to the entire world. All this bears witness to the genuine Christian love that the Imperial Family had for Crimea.

"That same love for Crimea and for the people living here I see also in you, Grand Duchess Maria and Grand Duke George. I am very grateful to you for the reverence you hold for this land of ancient Tauris, which you display so plainly to all those you meet.

"On this significant Feast Day, I pray you enjoy strength of body, spiritual joy, God's help in all things, and success in all your many efforts and endeavours, for many years! Always remember our meetings and how we prayed together. May God bless you!"

The Grand Duchess and the Heir presented Metropolitan Lazar a copy of the Feodorovskaya Icon of the Mother of God, with inset icons of St. Alexander Nevsky and the Holy Royal Passion-Bearer Emperor Nicholas II. (See <http://www.imperialhouse.ru/eng/allnews/news/2016/4485.html>.) The Grand Duchess then awarded the Imperial Order of St. Vladimir and the Imperial Medal "In Memory of the 100th Anniversary of the Great War, 1914-1918" to S. P. Chekov, a member of the Federation Council of the Republic of Crimea. The Grand Duchess also presented Imperial and Royal Orders and Imperial Medals to a number of residents of Crimea, as well as other regions of Russia.

Their Imperial Highnesses then walked from St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral to the building of the State Assembly of the Republic of Crimea, where the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess met with members of the Presidium: Efim Zisievich Fiks, the Chairman of the Committee for State Construction and Local Self-Government of the State Council of the Republic of Crimea; Aleksei Iurievich Cherniak, Chairman of the Committee for Resorts and Tourism; Edip Gafarov, Chairman of the Committee for International Relations; Yevgenia Aleksandrovna Dobrynia, Chairwoman of the Committee for Property and Land Matters; Sergei Anatolievich Trofimov, Chairman of the Committee for Legislative Affairs; as well as Oleg Georgievich Shishkov, the Deputy Chairman of the Committee for International Relations; and Alexander Aleksandrovich Shuvalov, Deputy Chairman of the Committee for Labor, Social Services, Health Care, and Veterans' Affairs. Also participating in the meeting was Iurii Viktorovich Averin, a staff advisor to the Representative of the President of the Russian Federation in the Crimean Federal District.

Among the topics discussed during the meeting was the situation on the peninsula since its incorporation into the Russian Federation. In particular, it was noted that, despite the efforts of some elements in Ukraine to destabilize the situation in Crimea by imposing a water, energy, and transportation blockade, the people of Crimea have remained resolute in their desire to be one with Russia.

For her part, the Grand Duchess shared with the members of the Crimean parliament her impressions of her visit to so many cities and regions in Crimea, noting that press descriptions in the West of what is going on in Crimea diverge significantly from what she observed on the ground during this visit. In her words, in every place that she and her delegation have been she has been warmly received by the people of Crimea, who appear to be living in peace and harmony with each other. "While it may be that the problems here are not being resolved as quickly as many would like, I remain convinced that soon these problems will find their solution and this peninsula will again become the pearl of the Russian Federation," the Grand Duchess said.

After the meeting, the Presidium hosted a formal lunch in honour of the Grand Duchess and Grand Duke.

That afternoon, Their Imperial Highnesses met with the plenipotentiary representative of the President of the Russian Federation to the Crimean Federal District, Oleg Yevgenievich Belaventsev. Also attending this meeting were Lieutenant-General Nikolai Georgievich Vodorezov and Vladimir Alekseevich Bobrovsky. The Grand Duchess awarded O. A. Belaventsev and N. G. Vodorezov the Imperial Medal "In Memory of the 100th Anniversary of the Great War, 1914-1918," and she presented copies of books on the history of the House of Romanoff to all those participating in the meeting.

After a press conference in the office of RIA-Novosti (see <http://www.newc.info/articles/17881/>), Their Imperial Highnesses visited the city of Massandra, where they participated in the ceremony at the Massandra winery of adding new bottles of the red port wine "Crimea" to the wine collection, a wine that had in his day been especially praised by the Holy Royal Passion-Bearer Emperor Nicholas II. Also attending the ceremony was the Head of the Administration of the President of the Russian Federation in the Republic of Crimea, Oleg Efimovich Prikhodko, who formally greeted and welcomed Their Imperial Highnesses to the winery. The Grand Duchess presented the Director of the winery, Ya. P. Pavlenko, with a formal charter recognizing the Massandra winery as an official purveyor of wines for the Russian Imperial House. For more information, see <http://nts-tv.com/rubriki/obshhestvo/10917/12423/>

From Massandra, the Grand Duchess and Grand Duke went to Livadia, where they placed flowers at the memorial bust of Emperor Nicholas II and attended a service in the Church of the Elevation of the Cross in Livadia Palace. The Grand Duchess awarded the Imperial and Royal Order of St. Stanislaw to the designers of the monument, A. N. Panin and S. Ya. Vaksman.

That evening, Their Imperial Highnesses visited the town of Alupka, where they participated in the opening of an exhibition entitled "The History of Russian Perfumes and Cosmetics" in the Vorontsov Palace. While there, Their Imperial Highnesses had the opportunity to speak with the Director of the Vorontsov Palace Museum, A. P. Balinchenko, with the museum staff, and with prominent figures in local society and with intellectuals. They then returned to Simferopol.

Back in Simferopol, the Grand Duchess and Tsesarevich met with Elena Aleksandrovna Aksyonova, the wife of the President of the Republic of Crimea, Sergei Valerievich Aksyonov, who arrived to welcome formally Their Imperial Highnesses to Crimea.

Elena Aleksandrovna Aksyonova conveyed greetings from her husband to Their Imperial Highnesses, and the Grand Duchess asked that Elena Aleksandrovna likewise convey to the President, her husband, their deepest appreciation for the warm greetings. They discussed together a range of social and cultural topics, including plans to erect a new monument in Simferopol to the Grand Duchess's ancestor, Empress Catherine II the Great.

Grand Duchess Maria of Russia presented E. A. Aksyonova with the "Imperial Commemorative Medal of the 400th Anniversary of the House of Romanoff, 1613-2013" and several books on the history of the House of Romanoff.

Also present at this meeting were the Director of the Chancellery of the Head of the Russian Imperial House, Alexander N. Zakatov; the advisor to the Chancellery for Interregional and International Relations, Prince Vadim O. Lopukhin; and the advisors to the Chancellery Vladislav V. Pilkevich and Kirill K. Nemirovich-Danchenko.

That evening Their Imperial Highnesses attended a farewell dinner, which was also attended by those who had helped to organize this visit to Crimea and Sevastopol, including: the Vice-President of the Imperial Cultural Center, Mikhail Alexandrovich Krasnenkov; the Director of the Imperial

Cultural Center, Alima Abelevna Belialova; and members of the Board of the Imperial Cultural Center, Elena Alexandrovna Krasnenkova and Igor Vyacheslavovich Kuzmin. Also attending the farewell dinner were members of the Chancellery of the Head of the Russian Imperial House; the Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Crimea to the President of the Russian Federation, Sergei Nikolaevich Kudrin; the Assistant to the Deputy Permanent Representative, Iurii Iurievich Didenko; the Director of the A. V. Suvorov State Memorial Museum in St. Petersburg, Vladimir Gennadievich Gronsky; the President of the Crimean Nobility Association, Andrei Konstantinovich Ushakov, and his wife Elena; and others.

On the morning of **May 20**, the Grand Duchess and Grand Duke left the Hotel Ukraine for the airport, where they were accompanied by Efim Zisievich Fiks, the Chairman of the Committee for State Construction and Local Self-Government of the State Assembly of the Republic of Crimea. After their arrival in Moscow, the Head of the Russian Imperial House, H.I.H. The Grand Duchess Maria of Russia received in audience the Chairman of the Foundation for the Support and Development of Education, Art, and Culture, E. V. Bayakhchian; and Colonel V. P. Poterukhin and the Secretary of the Knights' Council of the Imperial Military Order of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker, Colonel O. V. Kuznetsov. The Grand Duchess then departed for Madrid. The Grand Duke remained in Moscow in order to continue his travels in Russia, which include trips to Riazan and St. Petersburg.