

In Memoriam



ANNA DOLININA

(12 MARCH 1923—16 APRIL 2017)

Anna Arkadievna Iskoz-Dolinina, a prominent Russian and Soviet Arabist, was born into a family of writers and educators. Her father, Arkady Semënovich Iskoz-Dolinin, was a Leningrad State University professor, specializing in Dostoyevsky. One of her brothers was a linguist, as was a cousin, while a sister-in-law was a writer and literature scholar. A nephew is a professor of Russian literature, while another nephew became a script writer and film director. Her life spanned a period of dramatic changes and tribulations in Russia and the Soviet Union. Born in Petrograd, which, after Lenin's death in 1924, became Leningrad, she lived to see the city regain its former name, St. Petersburg. So also the university, with which

all her adult life was connected: Leningrad State became St. Petersburg State University ("State" had replaced "Imperial" in the university's name after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution). Anna Dolinina's intention in applying to the University was to study German literature. WWII changed her plans. The siege of Leningrad (1941-1944) forced the evacuation of academic institutions and civilian population to various eastern destinations. The Dolinin family, with parts of the University, ended up in Tashkent. There, she became fascinated with the Orient and developed an interest in Arabic literature. The leading Russian Arabist of the time was Ignaty Krachkovsky (Ignatii Iulianovich Krachkovskii, 1883-1951). Krachkovsky, who survived the

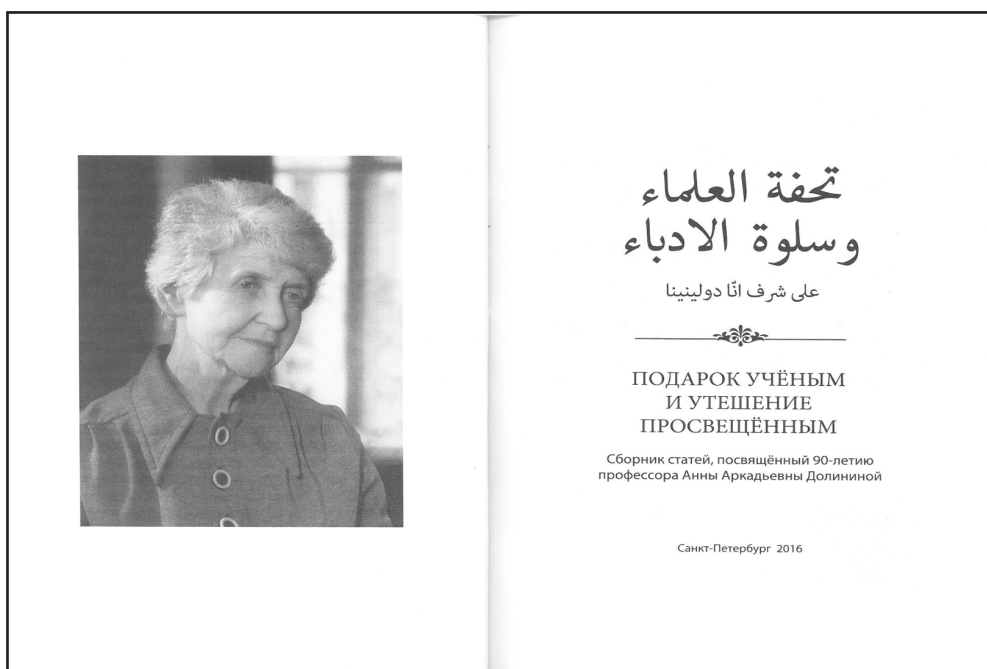
siege in Leningrad, wore several hats. A full member of the USSR Academy of Sciences, he became head of the Arabic Cabinet in the Oriental Institute of the Academy and the Department of Arabic Philology at the University. He presented her a copy of his 1945 book, *Among Arabic Manuscripts* (“Nad arabskimi rukopisiami”), with the inscription: “To Anna Dolinina in reward for abandoning German studies. The Author, Ignatii Krachkovskii.”

The meeting was fateful in a number of ways. Limited staffing in the post-war university meant that Krachkovsky had to teach courses in Arabic as well as in classical and modern Arab literature. As a result, Dolinina was qualified, upon graduation, to teach language and literature courses as well. It was on his advice that she chose to specialize in modern Arab literature, then barely known in Russia. Dolinina’s 1968 book, *Ocherki istorii arabskoĭ literatury novogo vremeni: Egipet i Siriia: publitsistika 1870-1914 gg.* (“An Historical Outline of Modern Arab Literature: Journalism of 1870-1914 in Egypt and Syria”) was followed in 1973 by *Ocherki istorii arabskoĭ literatury novogo vremeni: Egipet i Siriia: Prosvetitel’skii roman 1870-1914 gg.* (“An Historical Outline of Modern Arab Literature: The Enlightenment Novel in Egypt and Syria, 1870-1914”). She also became a translator of Khalil Jibran and Ameen Rihani, published a volume of Rihani’s *Selected Works* (“*Izbrannoe*”) in 1988, and wrote about the reception of Russian literature in the Arab world.

Dolinina was not Krachkovsky’s favorite student, but she became his first biographer. The publication of *Nevol’nik dolga* (“Prisoner of Duty,” 1994) brought her profound recognition

in Russian academic circles. Beyond extensive archival research and personal interviews with Krachkovsky’s widow, Vera Aleksandrovna Krachkovskaia, the book painstakingly presented the tableau of Soviet intellectual life in the years when everything “foreign” was alien, and anything to do with religion suspect. In fact, Krachkovsky was publicly accused by another Soviet Arabist of admiring a “feudal” culture. Loyal to the Soviet regime, he nevertheless possessed enough civil courage to support the research of his arrested or exiled students, publish their dissertations (Kovalevsky), and hire them upon their release (Shumovsky). Appropriately, in 2010, Anna Arkadievna became the first recipient of the memorial Krachkovsky Medal, established by the Oriental Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAN). In 2015, she was finally able to bring out a volume of Krachkovsky’s largely unpublished “Works on the History and Philology of the Christian Orient” (*Trudy po istorii i filologii khristianskogo Vostoka*).

Dolinina’s professional life centered on teaching Arabic literature in the very same Department of Arabic Philology where she graduated in 1949. For 50 years after completing her graduate studies in 1953, she taught generations of students, some of whom became university faculty, academic researchers, professional translators and interpreters or diplomats. It was as a beginning student at Leningrad State, in the Oriental Faculty, that I first met Anna Arkadievna in 1960. Given the curriculum set in the 1950s, she would have been my instructor in one of the senior “Modern Arabic Literature” courses, because my major was History of Arab Countries. But in 1960, things were changing in Soviet



The 2016 *Podarok uchënym i uteshenie prosveshchënnym* (“A Gift to the Learned and Consolation for the Enlightened”)

“Oriental Studies.” Soviet influence was growing in the Near East, and the Oriental Faculty was charged by the Ministry of Higher Education to begin training Arabic military interpreters. This meant that the usual enrollment limit of one section of six (!) Arabic majors was raised to two sections. As a result, there was a sudden shortage of qualified Arabic instructors, and Associate Professor Dolinina, who previously only taught literature courses, became the Arabic instructor for freshman majors in the history of the Near East.

In the 2016 Festschrift from her loving students and colleagues, *Podarok uchënym i uteshenie prosveshchënnym* (“A Gift to the Learned and Consolation for the Enlightened”), numerous contributions refer to Dolinina’s intellectual generosity, wry sense of humor, and demanding yet tactful treatment of students. Some authors reminisce about reading medieval

Arabic prose with her or struggling with translations of classical poetry; a few contributed their own poetry. Paradoxically, although I became a medievalist and while Dolinina developed, in effect, a second career translating classical Arabic literature, we “Historians” never took a class in pre-modern Arabic literature with Anna Arkadievna and were long gone when her remarkable translator’s gift became a boon to the reading public. My friendship with her developed in later years, when we met as professionals linked by warm memories and continuing interest in the health of Arabic studies in Leningrad/St. Petersburg.

It was at the Third All-Union Conference of Arabists (Erevan, 1969), which we both attended with other Arabists based in Leningrad, that Anna Arkadievna met the Moscow Arabist V. M. Borisov (1924-1987), with whom she embarked upon a project

that became her crowning achievement. Borisov was a lexicologist, translator and aphorist, and he cherished the ambition of rendering into Russian the *Maqamat* of al-Hariri, never before translated into Russian in full or from the Arabic original. Joining forces, they produced a volume of forty *maqamas* in 1978 and then of all fifty in 1987. In 1999, Dolinina published the *Maqamat* of al-Hamadhani (with Z.M. Auezova). These extraordinary translations entertain the reader in rhymed prose for *saj'* and in verse for poetic passages. Dolinina also produced the first Russian poetic translations of the *Mu'allaqat*, included in the 1983 anthology *Araviiskaia starina: Iz drevnei arabskoi poezii i prozy* ("Arabian Antiquity: Selected ancient Arab poetry and prose"), which also contains the first Russian

translation of the *Ayyam al-'Arab* by one of Dolinina's former students Vladimir Polosin.¹ In her Introduction, Dolinina explains the methodology and stylistics of producing a readable translation for the contemporary reader and tabulates the metre equivalents and rhyme and rhythm variations of Arabic and Russian poetry. In recognition of these sustained efforts, Dolinina became the first Russian scholar to be awarded the King 'Abdallah bin 'Abd al-'Aziz International Prize for Translation (2012). Her other awards include the 1999 award of the honorific title, *The Merited Worker of Higher Education of the Russian Federation* (*Zasluzhennyi rabotnik vysshei shkoly Rossiiskoi Federatsii*) and the 2013 medal "For Spiritual Unity" from the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Russian Federation.

— Marina Tolmacheva
Washington State University
(tolmache@wsu.edu)

1. On Polosin's work see D.J. Stewart, "Scholarship on the *Fihrsit* of Ibn al-Nadim: The Work of Valeriy V. Polosin," *Al-'Usur al-Wusta* 18.1 (April 2006), 8-13.