

The monument to M.P. Lazarev in Sevastopol: from the past to the present

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Nowadays the world faces the necessity of preserving historical heritage objects that are being destroyed because of various factors. Spread of nationalism and other radical ideologies, numerous global conflicts lead to removing, dismantling or to the toppling of monuments dedicated to outstanding people or historical events. For instance, monuments to the soldiers of the Red Army are being demolished in European countries or the monuments to the most powerful slave owners are being actively dismantled in the United States. Thus, monuments are sometimes regarded as sites of historical conflicts. However, it should be noted that this tendency of getting rid of “inconvenient” historical memory as part of controversial interpretations of the past has been observed for several centuries. For example, the Bolsheviks were accused of large-scale destruction of monuments in Russian history. This campaign involving the attempts to rewrite the history and erase memories of the heroic past events of our country affected many monuments of Sevastopol, including the first monument to M.P. Lazarev in the city.

Admiral M.P. Lazarev contributed significantly to the development of Sevastopol. The decision to create a monument to that outstanding person was made immediately after he died in 1851. However, the Crimean War that broke out in the Russian Empire, thwarted plans for the implementation of that project. The idea of installing the monument was reconsidered after the war [1, p. 6].

The first project of the monument was created by a Russian sculptor N.S. Pimenov. However, he made only a plaster model of the monument and marked the place of its installation during his trip to Sevastopol in 1863. After the death of N. S. Pimenov in 1864, his undertaking was continued by a student I. I. Podozerov who completed the casting of M. P. Lazarev’s figure. In 1866 emperor Alexander II, in the presence of the Grand Dukes Konstantin Nikolaevich, Alexei Alexandrovich and Nikolai Konstantinovich, after examining the sculpture, ordered to leave a plaster sample of the monument at the Academy of Arts in the memory of the works of the famous Russian sculptor N. S. Pimenov. The monument itself was cast at the St. Petersburg Foundry. After that, it was sent to Sevastopol where the Maritime Department had already prepared a pedestal [4, p. 504].

The ceremony of the monument’s opening took place in 1867 in front of the building of the Lazarev barracks. The bronze monument was represented as a full-length statue of the admiral, without a headdress, with a spyglass in hand [2]. The total height of the monument was about 15 meters; the bronze sculpture was 6 meters long. The monument could be clearly seen from the sea. It was placed with the face of M. P. Lazarev being turned to the Northern Bay. The Grand Admiral seemed to be looking at the sea. Alfred Rambeau, a French historian, called that monument a «giant». He described his impressions of the monument to admiral M.P. Lazarev: “It seems that he is leaned sadly over the burnt city, over the raid-widower of sunken ships” [6, p. 66].

The Scottish artist William Simpson, during his trip to Sevastopol, wrote: “In front of the huge barracks, if you look towards the main bay, the monument to Admiral M. P. Lazarev was placed after the war”. According to the inscription “1866”, the monument had stood there for

no more than two years. The admiral's powerful black figure had a scary appearance, standing opposite the ruins of the white barracks located behind. M. P. Lazarev was among the founders of Sevastopol and the Black Sea Fleet, therefore this statue was installed to honor his memory. But it was quite striking to see the figure of this man on the ruins of the city that he built» [5, p. 94-95].

The Monument to M. P. Lazarev in front of the Lazarev barracks survived the revolutionary events of 1905 and 1917, the Civil War, but in the late 1920s, it was demolished [6, p. 66]. The commission claimed that the monument “has no historical significance” in 1928 [2]. Lazarev statue was desecrated and dismantled during the struggle against the “tsarist satraps” and the manifestations of the «anti-people regime» [1, p. 6].

The Sevastopol City Council decided to restore the monument to Admiral M.P. Lazarev in May 2008. The new monument was supposed to look like the original one which was realized by the sculptor N.S. Pimenov in 1867 on the territory of the Lazarev barracks. Sevastopol architect L.A. Schaeffer made a project to re-create the monument on this basis [7]. Another project of the monument, made by the sculptor Fyodor Parshin, was presented on the territory of Moscow State University Branch in Sevastopol in 2018. The presentation of the model of the monument was attended by the commander of the Black Sea Fleet, Vice Admiral Alexander Moiseev, cadets of the Black Sea Higher Military School named after P. S. Nakhimov, students of the Moscow State University Branch in Sevastopol, and by the representatives of the city authorities. It was announced during the ceremony that the monument to M.P. Lazarev would be placed at its historic site near the Lazarev barracks in early 2020 in honor of the bicentennial of the discovery of Antarctica by the expedition of Belinshausen and Lazarev [3]. However, despite the public initiative, the restoration of the monument has not been done yet.

References

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