



Duke Maciej Radziwiłł and Konstanty Mikołaj Radziwiłł II attend Radziwiłł family album presentation in Minsk

Picture gallery of famous personalities presented in book

Radziwiłł family — the most influential aristocratic dynasty in Eastern Europe — appear in re-published album, for first time since 18th century

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By Viktor Korbut

The Radziwiłłs are the most famous aristocratic family from Belarus, with their descendants possessing huge swathes of land from the 16th century up until 1939. Their castles were located in Lithuania, Ukraine, Poland, Italy and Germany. Now, the remaining members of the family reside in Poland. They still visit the homeland of their ancestors regularly and recently made a trip to Minsk — the capital of the country, and Nesvizh — their family capital. Magnificent Nesvizh, with its beautiful architectural monuments, was built by the Radziwiłłs and is now on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Visiting Nesvizh Castle, once owned by their ancestors, Maciej Radziwiłł and Konstanty Mikołaj Radziwiłł II advised the staff of the museum on how best to restore the castle's interiors. The pair also invited the museum's employees to travel to Warsaw to see their family collections.

Duke Maciej Radziwiłł noted his plans to bring unique family artefacts to Belarus soon, which belonged to representatives of the Radziwiłł family who lived in the Nesvizh Castle before WW2. These will form the basis of a new long-term (though not permanent) exhibition at the castle. Much depends on negotiations with Belarus and permission from Polish authorities to remove these cultural treasures from the



Album of Radziwiłł family portraits presented in Minsk among historically reconstructed surroundings

country. According to Maciej Radziwiłł, Belarus is currently demonstrating great interest in the history of his family and he visits our country at least twice a year.

The magnates, who were the uncrowned kings of Belarus for 400 years, are now being officially bestowed with state honours. Recently, the Information Ministry joined the National Library of Belarus and Petrus Brovka Belarusian Encyclopaedia to make a luxurious gift to the Radziwiłłs. The family's album, entitled *Radziwiłłs: 18th-19th Century Album of Portraits*, has been pre-

sented in the National Library.

The launch party for the book was attended by representatives of the Ministries for Information and Culture, alongside those from the National Library of Belarus and the National Nesvizh Historical and Cultural Museum. Representatives from the embassies of Russia, Georgia, Poland and Lithuania also attended, showing that the Radziwiłłs are more than a historical family; they are part of the cultural and public life of contemporary Belarus.

The *Radziwiłłs: 18th-19th Century Album of Portraits* book contains engravings of 165 repre-

sentatives of the Radziwiłł family, with comments added over two centuries ago (written in Latin). These have been translated into English, Belarusian and Russian for the 2,000 copies of the album. Special watercolour paper was ordered from St. Petersburg, manufactured only by the Goznak Factory of the Russian Federation, which imitates ancient paper of Belarusian manufacture; it took six months for the order to arrive.

"The original title of the album was *Icones Familiae Ducalis Radziwiłłianae*," notes Olga Bazhenova, a candidate of art history and an

author of the edition. She knows everything about this book. "It's the largest 18th century family portrait album to be assembled in Eastern Europe, taking over 10 years to create. In 1758, 50 copies were released by the Nesvizh printing house and a second run was made in 1875, in St. Petersburg, using the original 18th century plates. The engraver who created most of the illustrations for the album is Girsh Leibovich. He was born in Mir, which is now famous for Radziwiłł Castle, registered on the UNESCO World Heritage List."

Tatiana Belova, Director of the Petrus Brovka Belarusian Encyclopaedia Publishing House, tells us that the album is a result of efforts by the Radziwiłł family, the Royal Castle in Warsaw, and the National Museums of Kraków and Lithuania. Now, an encyclopaedia of the Radziwiłłs is being assembled, to continue the album.

The MT's reference:

Maciej — a 14th generation descendant of Radziwiłł Sierotka (the founder of Nesvizh) — is a philosopher on education and a financier. He works as an executive director for a Warsaw railroad construction company. His wife, Anna, is a 15th generation descendant of Mikołaj 'the Black' Radziwiłł. Konstanty Mikołaj Radziwiłł II is a doctor and a former president of the Supreme Medical Council of Poland, who now heads the Standing Committee of European Doctors.