

## At last a Monument is Dedicated to the Russian Expeditionary Force in France



As is known from history, France was saved in 1914 by ‘the Miracle on the Marne’, when German forces were diverted from the Western Front by self-sacrificing Russian attacks against German Prussia on the Eastern Front.

What is less well-known is that Russia also sent an Expeditionary Force to France to fight on the Western Front itself. On 21 June 2011 a monument was at last dedicated to them, in the presence of the Russian Prime Minister, Vladimir Putin, and the French Prime Minister, Francois Fillon. The site of the memorial is in the Cours-la-Reine, in the 8e Arrondissement, not far from the Grand Palais and the Pont Alexandre III, who instituted the Franco-Russian alliance.

Prime Ministers Putin and Fillon had approved an agreement for the monument in November 2009. France paid for the cost of landscaping the site and the installation of the memorial, while the Russian side paid for the production and delivery of the memorial sculpture. The artist Vladimir Surovtsyov won the international competition for its design. This memorial is a tribute by both Russia and France to the soldiers of the Russian First Expeditionary Corps, thousands of

whom fell on French soil in one of the bloodiest wars in human history. France has not forgotten that, and it still honours the Russian heroes who contributed to the Allied victory over Germany. In 1916, when the first Russian infantry brigade marched down the Avenue des Champs-Élysées, the Parisians greeted them with thunderous applause and a rain of flowers. An enthusiastic reception was also accorded to the Russian corps when it landed in Marseille.

Among the Russian forces was George Tarasov, a pilot of the Russian squadron on the Western Front. Late, exiled in Belgium and then widowed, he was to become Archbishop George Tarasov of the Paris Archdiocese (+ 1981). A wonderful man or prayer, after the model of St Seraphim, he was mocked, hissed and booed at by modernist parishioners at Rue Daru. I was privileged to know him at the end of his life. It is a very sad reflection that the contemporary Russophobic Rue Daru was not officially represented at this ceremony, in which the new Orthodox Russia of today remembered its once forgotten White Russian heroes.

To His Eminence Archbishop George  
And all those who fought for the Orthodox Faith in the Great War  
Eternal Memory!

