

= Grigory Potemkin =

Prince Grigory Aleksandrovich Potemkin @-@ Tavrisheski (Russian : ????? ? ??? ?????? ? ?????? ????????? @-@ ????? ? ?????? ; ? Potyomkin ? , r Grigoriy Aleksandrovich Potyomkin @-@ Tavrisheskiy ; October 11 [O.S. September 30] 1739 ? October 16 [O.S. October 5] 1791) was a Russian military leader , statesman , nobleman and favourite of Catherine the Great . He died during negotiations over the Treaty of Jassy , which ended a war with the Ottoman Empire that he had overseen .

Potemkin was born into a family of middle @-@ income noble landowners . He first attracted Catherine 's favor for helping in her 1762 coup , then distinguished himself as a military commander in the Russo @-@ Turkish War (1768 ? 1774) . He became Catherine 's lover , favorite and possibly her consort . After their passion cooled , he remained her lifelong friend and favored statesman . Catherine obtained for him the title of Prince of the Holy Roman Empire and gave him the title of Prince of the Russian Empire among many others : he was both a Grand Admiral and the head of all of Russia 's land and irregular forces . Potemkin 's defining achievements include the peaceful annexation of the Crimea (1783) and the successful second Russo @-@ Turkish War (1787 ? 1792) . The fall of Ottoman stronghold Izmail that he orchestrated prompted Gavril Derzhavin and Osip Kozlovsky to write Russia 's first national anthem , " Let the thunder of victory sound ! " .

In 1774 , Potemkin became the governor @-@ general of Russia 's new southern provinces . An absolute ruler , he worked to colonize the wild steppes , controversially dealing firmly with the Cossacks who lived there . He founded the towns of Kherson , Nikolayev , Sevastopol , and Ekaterinoslav (now Dnipropetrovsk) . Ports in the region became bases for his new Black Sea Fleet . His rule in the south is associated with the " Potemkin village " , a largely fictional method of ruse involving the construction of painted façades to mimic real villages , full of happy , well @-@ fed people , for visiting officials to see . Potemkin was known for his love of women , gambling and material wealth ; he oversaw the construction of many historically significant buildings , including the Tauride Palace in St. Petersburg . A century after Potemkin 's death , his name was given to the Battleship Potemkin , which featured in the 1905 Russian Revolution and was fictionalized in Battleship Potemkin , a silent film by Sergey Eisenstein .

= = Biography = =

= = = Early life = = =

A descendant of the Moscovite diplomat Pyotr Potemkin (1617 @-@ 1700) , Grigory was born in the village of Chizhovo near Smolensk into a family of middle @-@ income noble landowners . The family claimed Polish ancestry . His father , Alexander Potemkin , was a decorated war veteran ; his mother Daria was " good @-@ looking , capable and intelligent " , though their marriage proved ultimately unhappy . Potemkin received his first name in honour of his father 's cousin Grigory Matveevich Kizlovsky , a civil servant who became his godfather . It has been suggested that Kizlovsky fathered Potemkin , who became the centre of attention , heir to the village and the only son among six children . As the son of an (albeit petty) noble family , he grew up with the expectation that he would serve the Russian Empire .

After Alexander died in 1746 , Daria took charge of the family . In order to achieve a career for her son , and aided by Kizlovsky , the family moved to Moscow , where Potemkin enrolled at a gymnasium school attached to the University of Moscow . The young Potemkin became adept at languages and interested in the Russian Orthodox Church . He enlisted in the army in 1750 at age eleven , in accordance with the custom of noble children . In 1755 a second inspection placed him in the élite Horse Guards regiment . Having graduated from the University school , Potemkin became one of the first students to enroll at the University itself . Talented in both Greek and theology , he won the University 's Gold Medal in 1757 and became part of a twelve @-@ student delegation sent

to Saint Petersburg later that year . The trip seems to have affected Potemkin : afterwards he studied little and was soon expelled . Faced with isolation from his family , he rejoined the Guards , where he excelled . At this time his net worth amounted to 430 souls (serfs) , equivalent to that of the poorer gentry . His time was taken up with " drinking , gambling , and promiscuous lovemaking " , and he fell deep in debt .

Grigory Orlov , one of Catherine 's lovers , led a palace coup in June 1762 that ousted the Emperor Peter III and enthroned Catherine II . Sergeant Potemkin represented his regiment in the revolt . Allegedly , as Catherine reviewed her troops in front of the Winter Palace before their march to the Peterhof , she lacked a sword @-@ knot (or possibly hat plumage) , which Potemkin quickly supplied . Potemkin 's horse then (appeared to) refuse to leave her side for several minutes before Potemkin and horse returned to the ranks . After the coup Catherine singled out Potemkin for reward and ensured his promotion to second lieutenant . Though Potemkin was among those guarding the ex @-@ Tsar , it appears that he had no direct involvement in Peter 's murder in July . Catherine promoted him again to Kammerjunker (gentleman of the bedchamber) , though he retained his post in the Guards . Potemkin was soon formally presented to the Empress as a talented mimic ; his imitation of her was well received .

= = = Courtier and general = = =

Although Catherine had not yet taken Potemkin as a lover , it seems likely that she passively ? if not actively ? encouraged his flirtatious behaviour , including his regular practice of kissing her hand and declaring his love for her : without encouragement , Potemkin could have expected trouble from the Orlovs (Catherine 's lover Grigory and his four brothers) who dominated court . Potemkin entered Catherine 's circle of advisers , and in 1762 took his only foreign assignment , to Sweden , bearing news of the coup . On his return , he was appointed Procurator , and won a reputation as a lover . Under unclear circumstances , Potemkin then lost his left eye and fell into a depression . His confidence shattered , he withdrew from court , becoming something of a religious hermit . Eighteen months later , Potemkin reappeared , probably summoned by Catherine . He became an army paymaster and oversaw uniform production . Shortly after , he became a Guardian of Exotic Peoples at the new All @-@ Russian Legislative Commission , a significant political post . In September 1768 , Potemkin became Kammerherr (chamberlain) ; two months later Catherine had his military commission revoked , fully attaching him to court . In the interval , the Ottoman Empire had started the Russo @-@ Turkish War of 1768 to 1774 and Potemkin was eager to prove himself , writing to Catherine :

The only way I can express my gratitude to Your Majesty is to shed my blood for Your glory . This war provides an excellent opportunity for this and I cannot live in idleness . Allow me now , Merciful Sovereign , to appeal at Your Majesty 's feet and request Your Majesty to send me to ... the front in whatever rank Your Majesty wishes ... [to serve] just for the duration of the war .

Potemkin served as Major @-@ General of the cavalry . He distinguished himself in his first engagement , helping to repulse a band of unruly Tatar and Turkish horsemen . He also fought in Russia 's victory at the Battle of Kamenets and the taking of the town . Potemkin saw action virtually every day , particularly excelling at the Battle of Prashkovsky , after which his commander Aleksandr Mikhailovich Golitsyn recommended him to Catherine . Potemkin 's army , under Pyotr Rumyantsev , continued its advance . Potemkin fought at the capture of Jurja , a display of courage and skill for which he received the Order of St. Anna . At the Battle of Larga , he won the Order of St. George , third class , and fought well during the rout of the main Turkish force that followed . On leave to St. Petersburg , the Empress invited him to dine with her more than ten times .

Back at the front , Potemkin won more military acclaim , but then fell ill ; rejecting medicine , he recovered only slowly . After a lull in hostilities in 1772 his movements are unclear , but it seems that he returned to St. Petersburg where he is recorded , perhaps apocryphally , to have been one of Catherine 's closest advisers . Though Orlov was replaced as her favourite , it was not Potemkin who benefited . Alexander Vasilchikov , another Horse @-@ Guardsman , replaced Orlov as the queen 's lover . Potemkin returned to war in 1773 as Lieutenant @-@ General to fight in Silistria . It

appears that Catherine missed him , and that Potemkin took a December letter from her as a summons . In any case Potemkin returned to St. Petersburg as a war hero .

= = = Favorite of Catherine II = = =

Potemkin returned to court in January 1774 expecting to walk into Catherine 's arms . The political situation , however , had become complex . Yemelyan Pugachev had just arisen as a pretender to the throne , and commanded a rebel army thirty thousand strong . In addition , Catherine 's son Paul turned eighteen and began to gain his own support . By late January Potemkin had tired of the impasse and effected (perhaps with encouragement from Catherine) a " melodramatic retreat " into the Alexander Nevsky Monastery . Catherine relented and had Potemkin brought back in early February 1774 , when their relationship became intimate . Several weeks later he had usurped Vasilchikov as Catherine 's favorite , and was given the title of Adjutant General . When Catherine 's friend Friedrich Melchior , Baron von Grimm objected to Vasilchikov 's dismissal , she wrote back to him , " Why do you reproach me because I dismiss a well @-@ meaning but extremely boring bourgeois in favour of one of the greatest , the most comical and amusing , characters of this iron century ? " His uncouth behavior shocked the court , but Potemkin showed himself capable of suitable formality when necessary .

The frequent letters the pair sent to each other survive , revealing their affair to be one of " laughter , sex , mutually admired intelligence , and power " . Many of their trysts seem to have centered around the banya sauna in the basement of the Winter Palace ; Potemkin soon grew so jealous that Catherine had to detail her prior love @-@ life for him . Potemkin also rose in political stature , particularly on the strength of his military advice . In March 1774 he became Lieutenant @-@ Colonel in the Preobrazhensky Guards , a post previously held by Alexei Orlov . He also became captain of the Chevaliers @-@ Gardes from 1784 . In quick succession he won appointment as Governor @-@ General of Novorossiia , as a member of the State Council , as General @-@ in @-@ Chief , as Vice @-@ President of the College of War and as Commander @-@ in @-@ Chief of the Cossacks . These posts made him rich , and he lived lavishly . To improve his social standing he was awarded the prestigious Order of St. Alexander Nevsky and Order of St. Andrew , along with the Polish Order of the White Eagle , the Prussian Order of the Black Eagle , the Danish Order of the Elephant and the Swedish Royal Order of the Seraphim .

That Catherine and Potemkin married is " almost certain " , according to Simon Sebag Montefiore ; biographer Virginia Rounding expresses some doubt . In December 1784 Catherine first explicitly referred to Potemkin as her husband in correspondence , though 1775 , 1784 and 1791 have all been suggested as possible nuptial dates . In all , Catherine 's phrasing in 22 letters suggested he had become her consort , at least secretly . Potemkin 's actions and her treatment of him later in life fit with this : the two at least acted as husband and wife . By late 1775 , however , their relationship was changing , though it is uncertain exactly when Catherine took a secretary , Pyotr Zavadovsky , as a lover . On 1 January 1775 , Zavadovsky became Adjutant @-@ General to the Empress (he became her official favorite in May) and Potemkin moved to command the St. Petersburg troop division . Signs of a potential " golden adieu " for Potemkin include his 1775 appointment , at Catherine 's request , to the title of Prince of the Holy Roman Empire . Though he was " bored " with Catherine , the separation was relatively peaceful . The Prince was sent on a tour to Novogrod , but , contrary to the expectations of some onlookers (though not Catherine 's) , he returned a few weeks later . He then snubbed her gift of the Anichkov Palace , and took new apartments in the Winter Palace , retaining his posts . Though no longer Catherine 's favorite , he remained her favored minister .

Though the love affair appeared to end , Catherine and Potemkin maintained a particularly close friendship , which continued to dominate their lives . Most of the time this meant a ménage à trois in the court between the pair and Catherine 's latest swain . The favorite had a high @-@ pressure position : after Zavadovsky came Semyon Zorich (May 1777 to May 1778) , Ivan Rimsky @-@ Korsakov (May 1778 to late 1778) , Alexander Lanskoï (1780 to 1784) , Alexander Yermolov (1785 @-@ 1786) , Alexander Dmitriev @-@ Mamonov (1786 @-@ 1789) and Platon Zubov (

1789 @-@ 1796) . Potemkin checked candidates for their suitability ; it also appears that he tended to the relationships and " filled in " between favorites . Potemkin also arranged for Catherine to walk in on Rimsky @-@ Korsakov in a compromising position with another woman . During Catherine 's (comparatively) long relationship with Lanskoj , Potemkin was particularly able to turn his attentions to other matters . He embarked upon a long series of other romances , including with his own nieces , one of whom may have borne him a child .

= = = Diplomat = = =

Potemkin 's first task during this period was foreign policy . An anglophile , he helped negotiate with the English ambassador , Sir James Harris , during Catherine 's initiative of Armed Neutrality , though the south remained his passion . His plan , known as the Greek Project , aspired to build a new Byzantine Empire around the Turkish capital in Constantinople . Dismembering the Ottoman Empire would require détente with Austria (technically still the Habsburg Monarchy) , and its ruler Joseph II . They met in May 1780 in the Russian town of Mogilev . The ensuing alliance represented the triumph of Potemkin 's approach over courtiers such as Catherine 's son Paul , who favored alliance with Prussia . The May 1781 defensive treaty remained secret for almost two years ; the Ottomans were said to still have been unaware of it even when they declared war on Russia in 1787 .

Elsewhere , Potemkin 's scheme to develop a Russian presence in the rapidly disintegrating state of Persia failed . Plans for a full @-@ scale invasion had previously been cut back and a small unit sent to establish a trading post there was quickly turned away . Potemkin focused instead on Russia 's southern provinces , where he was busy founding cities (including Sevastopol) and creating his own personal kingdom , including his brand new Black Sea Fleet . That kingdom was about to expand : under the Treaty of Kuçuk Kainarji , which had ended the previous Russo @-@ Turkish war , the Crimean Khanate had become independent , though effectively under Russian control . In June 1782 it was descending again into anarchy . By July 1783 , Potemkin had engineered the peaceful annexation of the Crimea and Kuban , capitalizing on the fact that Britain and France were fighting elsewhere . The Kingdom of Georgia accepted Russian protection a few days later with the Treaty of Georgievsk searching for protection against Persia 's aim to reestablish its suzerainty over Georgia ; the Karabakh Khanate of Persia initially looked as though it might also , but eventually declined Russian help . Exhausted , Potemkin collapsed into a fever he barely survived . Catherine rewarded him with one hundred thousand roubles , which he used to construct the Tauride Palace in St. Petersburg .

= = = Governor @-@ General and city builder = = =

Potemkin returned to St. Petersburg in November 1783 and was promoted to Field Marshal when the Crimea was formally annexed the following February . He also became President of the College of War . The province of Tauris (the Crimea) was added to the state of Novorossiia (lit . New Russia .) Potemkin moved south in mid @-@ March , as the " Prince of Tauris " . He had been the namestnik of Russia 's southern provinces (including Novorossiia , Azov , Saratov , Astrakhan and the Caucasus) since 1774 , repeatedly expanding it via military action . He kept his own court , which rivalled Catherine 's : by the 1780s he operated a chancellery with fifty or more clerks and had his own minister , Vasili Popov , to oversee day @-@ to @-@ day affairs . Another favored associate was Mikhail Faleev .

The " criminal " breaking of the Cossack hosts , particularly the Zaporozhian Cossacks in 1775 , helped define his rule . However , Montefiore argues that given their location , and in the wake of the Pugachev rebellion , the Cossacks were likely doomed in any case . By the time of Potemkin 's death , the Cossacks and their threat of anarchic revolt were well controlled . Among the Zaporizhian Cossacks he was known as Hrytsko Nechesa .

= = = Builder = = =

Potemkin then embarked on a period of city @-@ founding . Construction started at his first effort , Kherson , in 1778 , as a base for a new Black Sea Fleet he intended to build . Potemkin approved every plan himself , but construction was slow , and the city proved costly and vulnerable to plague . Next was the port of Akhtiar , annexed with the Crimea , which became Sevastopol . Then he built Simferopol as the Crimean capital . His biggest failure , however , was his effort to build the city of Ekaterinoslav (lit . The glory of Catherine) , now Dnipropetrovsk . The second most successful city of Potemkin 's rule was Nikolayev (now better known as Mykolaiv) , which he founded in 1789 . Potemkin also initiated the redesign of Odessa after its capture from the Turks ; it was to turn out to be the greatest .

Potemkin 's Black Sea Fleet was a massive undertaking for its time . By 1787 , the British ambassador reported twenty @-@ seven battleships . It put Russia on a naval footing with Spain , though far behind the British Navy . The period represented the peak of Russia 's naval power relative to other European states . Potemkin also rewarded hundreds of thousands of settlers who moved into his territories . It is estimated that by 1782 the populations of Novorossiia and Azov had doubled during a period of " exceptionally rapid " development . Immigrants included Russians , foreigners , British convicts diverted from Australia , Cossacks and controversially Jews . Though the immigrants were not always happy in their new surroundings , on at least one occasion Potemkin intervened directly to ensure families received the cattle to which they were entitled . Outside of Novorossiia he drew up the defensive Azov @-@ Mozdok line , constructing forts at Georgievsk , Stavropol and elsewhere and ensured that the whole of the line was settled .

In 1784 Lanskoï died and Potemkin was needed at court to console the grieving Catherine . After Alexander Yermolov was installed as the new favorite in 1785 , Catherine , Yermolov and Potemkin cruised the upper Volga . When Yermolov attempted to unseat Potemkin (and attracted support from Potemkin 's critics) , he found himself replaced by Count Alexander Dmitriev @-@ Mamonov in the summer of 1786 . Potemkin returned to the south , having arranged that Catherine would visit in the summer of 1787 . She reached Kiev in late January , to travel down the Dnieper after the ice had melted (see Crimean journey of Catherine the Great) . Potemkin had other lovers at this time , including a ' Countess ' Sevres and a Naryshkina . Leaving in April , the royal party arrived in Kherson a month later . On visiting Sevastopol , Austria 's Joseph II , who was traveling with them , was moved to note that " The Empress is totally ecstatic ... Prince Potemkin is at the moment all @-@ powerful " .

== = " Potemkin Village " == =

The notion of the Potemkin village (coined in German by critical biographer Georg von Helbig as German : Potemkinsche Dörfer) arose from Catherine 's visit to the south . Critics accused Potemkin of using painted façades to fool Catherine into thinking that the area was far richer than it was . Thousands of peasants were alleged to have been stage @-@ managed for this purpose . Certainly , Potemkin had arranged for Catherine to see the best he had to offer (organising numerous exotic excursions) and at least two cities ' officials did conceal poverty by building false houses . It seems unlikely , however , that the fraud approached the scale alleged . The Prince of Ligne , a member of the Austrian delegation , who had explored on his own during the trip , later proclaimed the allegations to be false .

== = Commander @-@ in @-@ Chief == =

Potemkin remained in the south , gradually sinking into depression . His inactivity was problematic , given that he was now Russia 's commander @-@ in @-@ chief and , in August 1787 , another Russo @-@ Turkish war broke out (the second of Potemkin 's lifetime) . His opponents were anxious to reclaim the lands they had lost in the last war , and they were under pressure from Prussia , Britain and Sweden to take a hostile attitude towards Russia . Potemkin 's bluster had probably contributed to the hostility , either deliberately or accidentally ; either way , his creation of

the new fleet and Catherine 's trip to the south had certainly not helped matters . In the center , Potemkin had his own Yekaterinoslav Army , while to the west lay the smaller Ukraine Army under the command of Field @-@ Marshal Rumyantsev @-@ Zadunaisky . On water he had the Black Sea Fleet , and Potemkin was also responsible for coordinating military actions with Russia 's Austrian allies . Potemkin and Catherine agreed on a primarily defensive strategy until the spring . Though the Turks were repelled in early skirmishes (against the Russian fortress at Kinburn) , news of the loss of Potemkin 's beloved fleet during a storm sent him into a deep depression . A week later , and after kind words from Catherine , he was rallied by the news that the fleet was not in fact destroyed , but only damaged . General Alexander Suvorov won an important victory at Kinburn in early October ; with winter now approaching , Potemkin was confident the port would be safe until the spring .

Turning his attention elsewhere , Potemkin established his headquarters in Elisabethgrad and planned future operations . He assembled an army of forty or fifty thousand , including the newly formed Kuban Cossacks . He divided his time between military preparation (creating a fleet of a hundred gunboats to fight within the shallow liman) and chasing the wives of soldiers under his command . Meanwhile , the Austrians remained on the defensive across central Europe , though they did manage to hold their lines . Despite advice to the contrary , Potemkin pursued an equally defensive strategy , though in the Caucasus Generals Tekeeli and Pavel Potemkin were making some inroads . In early summer 1788 , fighting intensified as Potemkin 's forces won their naval confrontation with the Turks with few losses , and began the siege of Ochakov , a Turkish stronghold and the main Russian war aim . Less promising was that St. Petersburg , exposed after Russia 's best forces departed for the Crimea , was now under threat from Sweden in the Russo @-@ Swedish War of 1788 ? 90 . Potemkin refused to write regularly with news of the war in the south , compounding Catherine 's anxiety .

Potemkin argued with Suvorov and Catherine herself , who were both anxious to assault Ochakov , which the Turks twice managed to supply by sea . Finally , on 6 December , the assault began and four hours later the city was taken , a coup for Potemkin . Nearly ten thousand Turks had been killed at a cost of (only) two @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half thousand Russians . Catherine wrote that " you [Potemkin] have shut the mouths of everyone ... [and can now] show magnanimity to your blind and empty @-@ headed critics " . Potemkin then visited the naval yard at Vitovka , founded Nikolayev , and traveled on to St. Petersburg , arriving in February 1789 . In May he left once more for the front , having agreed contingency plans with Catherine should Russia be forced into war with either Prussia or the upstart Poland , which had recently successfully demanded the withdrawal of Russian troops from its territory . (Catherine herself was just about to change favorites for the final time , replacing Dmitriev @-@ Mamonov with Platon Zubov .) Back on the Turkish front , Potemkin advanced towards the fortress of Bender on the Dniester river .

The summer and autumn of 1789 saw numerous victories against the Turks , including the Battle of Foc?ani in July ; in early September , the Battle of Rymnik and the capture of both Kaushany and Hadjibey (modern day Odessa) ; and finally the surrender of the Turkish fortress at Akkerman in late September . The massive fortress at Bender surrendered in November without a fight . Potemkin opened up a lavish court at Jassy , the capital of Moldavia , to " winter like a sultan , revel in his mistresses , build his towns , create his regiments ? and negotiate peace with [the Turks] ... he was emperor of all he surveyed " . Potemkin even established a newspaper , *Le Courier de Moldavie* . His preferred lover at the time ? though he had others ? was Praskovia Potemkina , an affair which continued into 1790 . Potemkin renamed two ships in her honor . As part of the diplomatic machinations , Potemkin was given the new title of " Grand Hetman of the Black Sea and Yekaterinoslav Cossack Hosts " and in March he assumed personal control of the Black Sea fleet as Grand Admiral .

In July 1790 the Russian Baltic Fleet was defeated by the Swedish at the Battle of Svensksund . Despite the damage , the silver lining for the Russians was that the Swedes now felt able to negotiate on an even footing and a peace was soon signed , based on the status quo ante bellum , thus ending the threat of invasion . The peace also freed up military resources for the war against the Turks . Potemkin had moved his evermore lavish court to Bender and there were soon more

successes against Turkey , including the capture of Batal @-@ Pasha and , on the second attempt , of Kilia on the Danube . By the end of November , only one major target remained : the Turkish fortress of Izmail . At Potemkin 's request , General Suvorov commanded the assault , which proved to be costly but effective . The victory was commemorated by Russia 's first , albeit unofficial , national anthem , " Let the thunder of victory sound ! " , written by Gavril Derzhavin and Osip Kozlovsky .

After two years he returned to St. Petersburg to face the threat of war against an Anglo @-@ Prussian coalition in addition to the war with Turkey . His return was widely celebrated with the " Carnival of Prince Potemkin " . The Prince came across as polite and charming though his latest mistress , Princess Ekaterina Dolgorukaya , appeared sidelined and Potemkin found himself embroiled in court intrigue whilst trying to force Zubov out . Catherine and Potemkin fought over military strategy ; the Empress wanted no compromise , while Potemkin wanted to buy time by appeasing the Prussians . Fortunately for the Russians , the Anglo @-@ Prussian alliance collapsed and a British ultimatum that Russia should accept the status quo ante bellum was withdrawn . In this way , the threat of a wider war receded . Though Russia was still at war with the Ottomans , Potemkin 's focus was now Poland . Potemkin had conservative allies including Felix Potocki , whose schemes were so diverse that they have yet to be fully untangled . For example , one idea was for Potemkin to declare himself king .

Success on the Turkish front continued , mostly attributable to Potemkin . He now had the opportunity to confront the Turks and dictate a peace , but that would mean leaving Catherine . His procrastination soured Catherine 's attitude towards him , a situation compounded by Potemkin 's choice of the married Princess Paskovia Adreevna Golitsyna (née Shuvalova) as his latest mistress . In the end , Potemkin was given the requisite authority to negotiate with the Turks (and , afterwards , to pursue his Polish ambitions) , and dispatched by Catherine back to the south . She sent a note after him , reading " Goodbye my friend , I kiss you " .

= = = Death = = =

Potemkin fell ill in the fever @-@ ridden city of Jassy , though he kept busy , overseeing peace talks , planning his assault on Poland and preparing the army for renewed war in the south . He fasted briefly and recovered some strength , but refused medicine and began to feast once again , consuming a " ham , a slated goose and three or four chickens " . On October 13 [O.S. October 2] , he felt better and dictated a letter to Catherine before collapsing once more . Later , he awoke and dispatched his entourage to Nikolayev . On October 16 [O.S. October 5] 1791 Potemkin died in the open steppe , 40 miles from Jassy . Picking up on contemporary rumor , historians such as the Polish Jerzy ?ojek have suggested that he was poisoned because his madness made him a liability , but this is rejected by Montefiore , who suggests he succumbed to bronchial pneumonia instead .

Potemkin was embalmed and a funeral was held for him in Jassy . Eight days after his death , he was buried . Catherine was distraught and ordered social life in St. Petersburg be put on hold . Derzhavin 's ode Waterfall lamented his death ; likewise many in the military establishment had looked upon Potemkin as a father figure and were especially saddened by his death . Polish contemporary Stanis?aw Ma?achowski claimed that Aleksandra von Engelhardt , a niece of Potemkin and wife to Franciszek Ksawery Branicki , a magnate and prominent leader of the Targowica Confederation , also worried for the fate of Poland after the death of the man who had planned to revitalise the Polish state with him as its new head . Potemkin had used the state treasury as a personal bank , preventing the resolution of his financial affairs to this day . Catherine purchased the Tauride Palace and his art collection from his estate , and paid off his debts . Consequently , he left a relative fortune . Catherine 's son Paul , who succeeded to the throne in 1796 , attempted to undo as many of Potemkin 's reforms as possible . The Tauride Palace was turned into a barracks , and the city of Gregoripol , which had been named in Potemkin 's honor , was renamed .

Potemkin 's grave survived a destruction order issued by Paul and was eventually displayed by the Bolsheviks . His remains now appear to lie in his tomb at St. Catherine 's Cathedral in Kherson . The

exact whereabouts of some of his internal organs , including his heart and brain first kept at Golia Monastery in Jassy , remain unknown .

= = Personality and reputation = =

Potemkin " exuded both menace and welcome " ; he was arrogant , demanding of his courtiers and very changeable in his moods but also fascinating , warm and kind . It was generally agreed among his female companions that he was " amply endowed with ' sex appeal ' " . Louis Philippe , comte de Ségur described him as " colossal like Russia " , " an inconceivable mixture of grandeur and pettiness , laziness and activity , bravery and timidity , ambition and insouciance " . The internal contrast was evident throughout his life : he frequented both church and numerous orgies , for example . In Ségur 's view , onlookers had a tendency to unjustly attribute to Catherine alone the successes of the period and to Potemkin the failures . An eccentric workaholic , Potemkin was vain and a great lover of jewelry (a taste he did not always remember to pay for) , but he disliked sycophancy and was sensitive about his appearance , particularly his lost eye . He only agreed to having portraits made of him twice , in 1784 and again in 1791 , both times by Johann Baptist von Lampi and from an angle which disguised his injury .

Potemkin was also an intellectual . The Prince of Ligne noted that Potemkin had " natural abilities [and] an excellent memory " . He was interested in history and generally knowledgeable . Potemkin loved the classical music of the period , as well as opera . He liked all food , both peasant and fine ; particular favorites included roast beef and potatoes , and his anglophilia meant that English gardens were prepared wherever he went . A practical politician , his political ideas were " quintessentially Russian " , and he believed in the superiority of the Tsarist autocracy (he once described the French revolutionaries as " a pack of madmen ") . Potemkin 's habits included biting his nails , to the point where he developed hangnail . One evening , at the height of his power , Potemkin declared to his dinner guests :

Everything I have ever wanted , I have ... I wanted high rank , I have it ; I wanted medals , I have them ; I loved gambling , I have lost vast sums ; I liked giving parties , I 've given magnificent ones ; I enjoy building houses , I 've raised palaces ; I liked buying estates , I have many ; I adore diamonds and beautiful things ? no individual in Europe owns rarer or more exquisite stones . In a word , all my passions have been sated . I am entirely happy !

Ultimately Potemkin proved a controversial figure . Criticisms include " laziness , corruption , debauchery , indecision , extravagance , falsification , military incompetence and disinformation on a vast scale " but supporters hold that only " the sybaritism [devotion to luxury] and extravagance ... are truly justified " , stressing Potemkin 's " intelligence , force of personality , spectacular vision , courage , generosity and great achievements " . Though not a military genius , he was " seriously able " in military matters . Potemkin 's contemporary Ségur was quick to criticise , writing that " nobody thought out a plan more swiftly [than Potemkin] , carried it out more slowly and abandoned it more easily " . Another contemporary , the Scotsman Sir John Sinclair , added that Potemkin had " great abilities " but was ultimately a " worthless and dangerous character " . Russian opponents such as Semyon Vorontsov agreed : the Prince had " lots of intelligence , intrigue and credit " but lacked " knowledge , application and virtue " .

= = Family = =

Potemkin had no legitimate descendants , though it is probable he had illegitimate issue . Four of his five sisters lived long enough to bear children , but only the daughters of his sister Marfa Elena (sometimes rendered as ' Helen ') received Potemkin 's special attention . The five unmarried Engelhardt sisters arrived in court in 1775 on the direction of their recently widowed father Vassily . Legend suggests Potemkin soon seduced many of the girls , one of whom was twelve or thirteen at the time . An affair with the third eldest , Varvara , can be verified ; after that had subsided , Potemkin formed close ? and probably amorous ? relationships successively with Alexandra , the second eldest , and Ekaterina , the fifth .

Potemkin also had influential relatives . Potemkin 's sister Maria , for example , married Russian senator Nikolay Samoylov : their son Alexander was decorated for his service under Potemkin in the army ; their daughter Ekaterina married first into the Raevesky family , and then the wealthy landowner Lev Davydov . She had children with both husbands , including highly decorated General Nikolay Raevsky , Potemkin 's great @-@ nephew . His wider family included several distant cousins , among them Count Pavel Potemkin , another decorated military figure , whose brother Mikhail married Potemkin 's niece Tatiana Engelhardt . A distant nephew , Felix Yusupov , helped murder Rasputin in 1916 .

= = Legacy = =

Despite attempts by Paul I to play down Potemkin 's role in Russian history , his name found its way into numerous items of common parlance . The phrase Potemkin village entered common usage in Russia and globally , despite its fictional origin . A century after Potemkin 's death , the Battleship Potemkin was named in his honour . The ship became famous for its involvement in the Russian Revolution of 1905 and subsequent dramatization in The Battleship Potemkin , a Soviet movie by Sergey Eisenstein , which at one point was named the greatest film of all time . The name of the giant seaside staircase in Odessa , featured in the movie , eventually became known as the Potemkin Stairs .