

## **Russia's Dr. Dmitri Kouznetsov: Can He Any Longer Be Believed?**

Some necessary remarks by the Editor

In the last Newsletter (no.43) I expressed some warnings regarding Dr. Dmitri Kouznetsov, the Moscow scientist who claimed to have scientifically demonstrated how the Shroud was 'enriched' with carbon 14 during the fire of 1532, thereby making misleadingly 'young' the date attributed to it by radiocarbon dating. In a letter also published in Newsletter 43 Dr. John Jackson, Director of the Turin Shroud Center of Colorado, queried the manner in which Dr. Kouznetsov had represented certain of his (Dr. Jackson's) calculations as if these were his own.

Both Dr. Jackson and myself phrased our concerns very carefully in order to give Dr. Kouznetsov, who was sent a copy of the last Newsletter, every opportunity to explain himself. In the event he has maintained a stolid silence, continued even in the face of a formal admonition sent on 24 September. Accordingly there seems no alternative but for certain fuller facts about his behaviour now to be made known to everyone associated with the Shroud, in order that they may take these into account when considering any offer or approach they may receive from him.

My first personal acquaintance with Dr. Kouznetsov began at the CIELT Shroud Symposium held in Rome in June 1993. Subsequently he was in touch a few times by phone, principally from the USA which he visited some six times as guest of John and Rebecca Jackson and others. He asked me to send him a copy of my book *The Turin Shroud*, as published by Gollancz in 1978, which I duly supplied. Then in the Spring of 1995 he called to say that he was hoping to get the book published in Russian. This I warmly welcomed in view of the perpetuated Russian veneration of the Mandylion (which I identify as one and the same as the Shroud).

My reaction was accordingly one of unguarded pleasure when in early September 1995 Dr. Kouznetsov phoned to say that he already had thousands of advance orders for the book, and all he needed from me, and very urgently, was a simple statement granting him the Russian language copyright. Russia being a 'poor country' he asked if I would accept just a 2% royalty.

The same day I faxed him agreeing to this, at his request simultaneously sending the signed original by air mail to Moscow. Days later he phoned again, followed up by a letter (the only one I received from him), asking for a rather more fancy letter, such as with 'seals' and other 'decoration', purportedly to satisfy a bureaucratic St.Petersburg printer. To this my response was that I had nothing fancier, suggesting instead that he prepare a simple contract, as would be normal in the West. This he promised, also promising the book's publication in the May of this current year, 1996, and intimating that he hoped to visit the U.K. probably in the February. To this latter my response was that he had only to let me know when he was coming, as I felt sure that the BSTS would welcome a talk from him given in London.

In the event this was Kouznetsov's last communication to me. No contract ever arrived, and when in early January (while preparing Newsletter no.42) I twice faxed him

enquiring about this, also whether he had any further news of the visit to England, he failed to reply. At the time this raised no special suspicions because I knew that he was away from Moscow for sometimes several months at a time (hence trying to phone him was useless).

But then in March came news that he had been hawking my granting of the Russian language rights letter among several Americans interested in the Shroud. I learned that he had offered these Americans very large profits in return for their funding the publication of this translation, and that sums of many thousands of dollars per financier had changed hands. My suspicions aroused, I faxed Kouznetsov immediately requesting an explanation, only again to receive no reply. When the American financiers, alarmed by my concerns for them, raised their own queries, they were initially reassured by Kouznetsov that the book had been published on schedule, that copies would shortly be sent to them and that their money was safe.

However, as at the date of publication of this present Newsletter no copy has been received by them, no profit-sharing has taken place, and the communication lines to Dr. Kouznetsov's Moscow office, however active previously, have all fallen silent.

All who may hitherto have looked very optimistically to Dr. Kouznetsov must therefore draw their own conclusions from the above. Business-wise Russia has yet to develop a lot of the checks and controls that we are familiar with in the West, and it may be that Dr. Kouznetsov's scientific claims may yet be upheld, despite some of the understandable doubts that may arise from this account of his business dealings. However, I and others would be very grateful to hear from any Newsletter readers who may have information either to supplement, or to throw a different light upon, the known facts as given here.

Ian Wilson