

Amherst Center for Russian Culture
Nikolai Avskentiev Papers

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Quantity: 1 linear ft.

Containers: 1 archival box

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Director of the Center for Russian Culture

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Nikolai Dmitrievich Avskentiev

Biography

Nikolai Dmitrievich Avskentiev (Avxentieff) was born in Penza, Russia (located 625 km southeast of Moscow) on 16 November, 1878. His father, Dmitri Il'ich, was a talented lawyer, whom Nikolai greatly respected. He attended Penza's Classical Gymnasium, and graduated in 1897 with a scholarship and high honors.

Avskentiev then went to Moscow to continue his studies at Moscow State University. In Moscow, he became a leader in student organizations demanding the autonomy of the university from the state, and in spring 1899 he was expelled from that university and barred from all Russian universities because of his involvement in the student demonstrations of that spring (the so called "first student strike"). He, along with many others who would become part of his milieu in the Socialist Revolutionary (SR) Party and as an émigré, went to Germany to complete his education. He earned a doctorate in Philosophy from Halle University in 1904, and returned to Moscow in 1905.

Upon returning to Moscow, he became involved with the Socialist Revolutionary Party, a party of democratic socialists whose political program included the installation of a democratic government in Russia, the return of all land to the peasantry, and progressive labor reforms. During the period of civil unrest of 1905, he was the leader of the Petersburg Workers' Soviet, a delegate for the SR's Central Committee for the Committee of the First Workers' Deputy Council, and participated in the first Soviet. He was arrested in December 1905 for his revolutionary activities. He was tried in January 1906, and exiled to Siberia and stripped of his civil and property rights. He escaped from exile in 1907 and returned to European Russia to continue his revolutionary activities under an assumed name.

In 1909, Avskentiev emigrated to France, where he acted as a foreign delegate to the Central Committee of the SR party and edited the party's newspaper "Znamya Truda." When World War I broke out, he began to publish the magazine "Appeal," which vigorously supported the allies in their struggle against Germany and the forces of totalitarianism.

After the February Revolution, Avskentiev returned to Russia in March 1917, and he took an active role in the political life of Alexander Kerensky's Provisional Government. He served as a member of the Petrograd Soviet and the Constituent Assembly, was president of both the Pan-Russian Council of Peasants and the Provisional Council of the Republic, and also served as Kerensky's Minister of the Interior. He was arrested by the Bolsheviks shortly after their coup d'état, and was imprisoned in St. Petersburg's Peter and Paul Fortress from December 1917 until March 1918.

Upon his release from prison, he went to Siberia, where he organized the Union of the Re-birth of Russia. The meetings of this organization in Ufa and Omsk brought together anti-Bolshevik democratic organizations from Siberia and the Ural and Volga regions. In Omsk, this group decided to establish the Russian Democratic Government with Avskentiev as one of its leaders. This government was quickly overthrown by a coup, and in November 1918 Avskentiev was exiled to China.

From China, Avskentiev traveled to France via Japan and the United States. He lived in France from 1919-1940, where he continued his involvement in politics and publishing, becoming a significant figure in émigré life. He served as the Chairman of the Committee of the Members of the Russian Constituent Assembly, Chairman of the Russian League of Defense of the Rights of Man and Citizen, and Chairman of the Russian Town and Zemstvos Relief Committee. He, along with other members of the SR party, also edited the émigré political and literary quarterly “Sovremennye Zapiski.” In 1922, he married his wife, Bertha Avskentieva.

Following the capitulation of the French government in 1940, and fearing the possible consequences of his record of longstanding commitment to anti-totalitarian political movements, Avskentiev left France for the United States in 1940. He moved to New York, where he died on March 4th, 1943. In New York, he continued his involvement in émigré life, editing the publication “Za Svobodu.” In addition to the work over the course of his lifetime as an editor of and contributor to various publications, he also wrote several longer pieces about World War I (“Rossiia v Voine”), communism (“Pravye Kommunisty,”) the Russian intelligentsia (“Tvorchestvo Kul’tury”), and the sketch for a memoir about the overthrow of the Provisional Government by the Bolsheviks (“The Bolshevik Coup d’état and the Organization of the Struggle Against the Bolsheviks”).

Series Description

The collection is organized into 5 series:

Box/series 1 (0.2 linear feet)

Subseries 1– AVSKENTIEV’S WRITINGS (1915-1925).

Subseries 2– WRITINGS ABOUT AVSKENTIEV (1924-1960).

Box/series 2 (0.2 linear feet) PRINTED MATERIALS (1941-1954)

Box/series 3 (0.2 linear feet) PROFESSIONAL MATERIALS

Box/Series 4 (0.2 linear feet)

Subseries 1 (1922-1942) – PERSONAL DOCUMENTS

Subseries 2 (1940-1970s) – CLIPPINGS

Subseries 3 – MISCELLANEOUS

Box/series 5 (0.2 linear feet) PHOTOGRAPHS

N. Avskentiev Papers

Series 1, Subseries 1 **Avskentiev's Writings**

Box No.	Folder No.	Date	Description
1	1	1915-1917	Articles in "Prizym"
1	2	1915-1917	Articles in "Prizym"
1	3		Pravye Kommunisty
1	4		"Rossiia v Voine" – Typescript, 15 pages
1	5	1941	"Rossiia v Voine" – Reprint, 13 pages
1	6	1941	"Rossiia v Voine" – Holograph Manuscript, 27 pages
1	7	1925	"La Russie en guerre – Rossiia v voine" (notes in French)
1	8		"A Shot" – a Story by Avskentiev
1	9		"Sud'ba Rossii; Sovetskaia Rossiia i Balkanskie Gosurdarstva v sviazi s proiskhodiashchimi sobytiami"
1	10		"The Bolshevik Coup d'etat and the Organization of the Struggle Against the Bolsheviks" (Memoirs)
1	11		"Tvorchestvo Kul'tury"

N. Avskentiev Papers

Series 1, Subseries 2 **Writings About Avskentiev**

Box No.	Folder No.	Date	Description
1	12	Various, 1944, 1924, 1939	Writings about Avskentiev and his Family, Penza – Bertha Avskentieva, Victor Chernov, Alexandra Pregel, Stolkind, Maria Tseitlin, Unidentified Author; About Penza – V. Bakaleinikov, S.R. Mintslov, Entries from Encyclopedia of Brokhauz, Efron
1	13	1943	“Pamiati Avskentieva” – Novyi Zhurnal 1943
1	14	1960, 1963, 1959	Reviews and Letters – 1 letter Boris Pregel, 2 draft letters by Alexandra Pregel, letters by Boris and Alexandra Pregel to D. Radkey about “The Agrarian Foes of Bolshevism.”
1	15		Zenzinov about Avskentiev – 2 copies
1	16		Zenzinov: “Kniga vospominaniia”; Chapter 1: Penza, 17 pages
1	17		Zenzinov: “Kniga vospominaniia”; Chapter 1: Penza, 20 pages
1	18		Zenzinov: “Kniga vospominaniia”; 2 Chapters, 152 pages
1	19		Zenzinov: “Kniga vospominaniia”; Chapter

1	20	2: Moscow; 131 pages, handwritten notes Zenzinov: “Kniga vospominaniia”; Chapter
		2: Moscow; 121 pages, holograph corrections
1	21	Alexandra Pregel about her Father – 3 copies
N. Avskentiev Papers		
1	22	Zenzinov: “Kniga vospominaniia”; part of chapter 2: Moscow; 26 pages (p.100-126)

N. Avskentiev Papers

Series 2 **Printed Materials**

Box No.	Folder No.	Date	Description
1	23	1941-1942	“Za svobodu” (monthly publication); # 1, 2-3, 4-5, May 1941-February 1942
1	24	1942-1943	“Za svobodu” (monthly publication); # 6-7, 8-9, 12-13, March 1942-May 1943
1	25	1953	Vishniak, Mark “Pamiati ushedshikh N.D Avskentiev (k 10-letiiu so dnia smerti) [1953]” – 3 copies, transcribed by author to Avskentiev’s wife Bertha
1	26	1954	Vishniak, Mark “Pamiati ushedshikh: pamiati druga” – April 1954, Leaflet dedicated to V. Zenzinov, inscribed by author

N. Avskentiev Papers

Series 3 **Professional Materials**

Box No.	Folder No.	Date	Description
1	27		PSR in New York, Various Resolutions and Letters
1	28		PSR Memorandum
1	29	1942	From Editorial File of “Za svobodu” Magazine, 1942

N. Avskentiev Papers

Series 4, subseries 1 **Personal Documents**

Box	Folder	Date	Description
No.	No.		
1	30	n.d., 1922, 1940	Marriage Certificate for Nikolai & Bertha Zenzinov in French with Notarized English Translation, July 4, 1922"; Bio Data, December 19, 1940; Biographical Data Avskentiev, Nikolai & Bertha, n.d.; Handwritten Notes
1	31	1940	Various Documents: Notarized Copies of Birth Certificates for Nikolai & Bertha Avskentiev, August 2, 1940; Notarized Translation of a Letter from the Governor, August 10, 1940; Visa Request Letter, August 12, 1940; Immigration Papers December 3-December 30, 1940
1	32	1941	Immigration Documentation, January-February 1941; Application for Preexamination & Other Immigration Documentation, March-April 1941
1	33	1941	Immigration Letters, Documentation, May-July 1941; Immigration Documentation, Letters, August-December 1941
1	34	1942	Fingerprints, Immigration Letters, January-

1	35	April 1942	Avskentiev's Autobiography in English and Russian, a Copied Holograph Entry from Great Soviet Encyclopedia
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N. Avskentiev Papers

Series 4, subseries 2 **Clippings**

Box No.	Folder No.	Date	Description
1	36	1940-1970s	Newspapers Clips: Obituaries, In-memoriam, Articles and Letters (English, Hebrew, and Russian Languages); Clippings about Avskentiev's Talks and Activities 1940-1970s; Funeral receipts; Map of Cemetery

Series 4, subseries 3 **Miscellaneous**

Box No.	Folder No.	Date	Description
1	37		Miscellaneous Materials: A Plate, a Letter, a Clipping, a Card; Scrapnotes; Letters to Nikolai Avskentiev: 1 Letter by V. Vasiliev, n.d.; 1 Letter Unidentified, 18 June, 1941; Various; 2 Letters to Herbert Stoffard, n.d.

N. Avskentiev Papers

Series 5 **Photographs**

Box No.	Folder No.	Date	Description
1	38		Avskentiev & S.R. Party Members A-R: Avskentiev & Miliukoff (2 photographs); Avskentiev and S.R. Party Members: Zenzinov, Gots, Argunov, Argunova, Rogovsky (5 photographs); C. Breshkovskaia (2 photographs); N.V. Chaikovsky (4 photographs); Fondaminsky, Zenzinov, Vera Rudnev, Vadim Rudnev, Vishniak, Kerensky (1935, 1 photograph); Fondaminskaia (1 photograph, n.d.); Kerensky (2 photographs); V. Rudneva (3 photographs)
1	39		Avskentiev S.R. Party Members S-Z, Unidentified: Group Photographs of S.R. Party Members (6 photographs); Unidentified (11 photographs)
1	40		Nikolai Avskentiev's Personal Photographs: Avskentiev's Parents (2 photographs); Nikolai Avskentiev (15 photographs); Nikolai Avskentiev (9

photographs; Nikolai Avskentiev's Grave
and Coffin (6 photographs)