

RUSSIAN COINS

THE BERNARD POINDESSAULT COLLECTION OF RUSSIAN COINS

(mainly from the famous Alexander STAKHOVICH collection of Russian coins)

will be auctioned on

Sunday, October 12th 2008, at 2 p.m.

at Hotel AMBASSADOR - 16, boulevard Haussmann in Paris 9^{ème}

Metro: Chaussée d'Antin (Line 7 and 9) or Richelieu-Drouot (Line 8 and 9)

the day after the coin show organized by the SNENNP

(Palais Brongniart, Saturday October 11th, from 9 a.m. till 5 p.m.)

This sale is organized by Maison Palombo

(www.maison-palombo.com)

Bernard Poindessault's foreword

As a foreword to the auction of my collection of Russian coins, I was asked to explain how I became a numismatist and why I was in possession of such an exceptional collection of Russian coins since I am especially known for my studies on Greek and Roman ancient coins as well as on French coins.

It all began during the Second World War, probably in 1943. I was 8 years old then and as Paris was occupied by the Nazis, there wasn't much to do for a boy of my age. But I was an active reader and through the books of Alexandre DUMAS I started having a passion for history. Moreover, in the absence of my father prisoner of the Germans, who had tried to escape on several occasions and who was in the camp of RAWA RUSKA (*"the camp of a drop of water and of slow death"* commented Winston CHURCHILL) before finally succeeding in his escape in early 1944, my grandmother, "Colonelle" VIGNE, was very generous with me – I was her only grandson at the time – and gave me more money than I could spend.

Thus the hazards of life led me to avenue de Neuilly (now avenue Charles de Gaulle) in front of the shop of an antiquarian. There, I saw bronze coins with the inscription "Roman coins". Overcoming my shyness, I walked in and asked the shopkeeper *"are there coins with the portrait of Julius Caesar?"*. She answered yes. And I asked *"how about Alexander the Great?"* and again she answered yes. That's when I became a numismatist. I often visited her shop, spending the money given by my grandmother on sestertii with the portraits of Roman emperors. Unfortunately, they were in such poor condition, which I discovered later, that I didn't keep any.

My first “serious” antique coin was a drachma of Alexander the Great given to me by my uncle for my eleventh birthday. Then, becoming a teenager, one may have other things to think about, which is why I neglected my collection till the war in Algeria.

I had been to the military school of Saumur and been promoted second lieutenant when I was sent to Batna during the Algerian war. I was detached from my regiment (4th RCA) and sent to Khenchela to manage the implementation of a training centre. When the building works began, I realized we were on the location of the thermal baths of the antique city of Mascula, a flourishing Roman city during the 3rd and 4th centuries of our era. The marble plaque at the entrance of these baths is now in the Museum of Constantine. A little further, I found a dupondius of Antoninus Pius (138-161) under the sarcophagus of a child, a coin placed there for him to pay Charron to cross the river Styx.

At the foot of a stone wall, I found a bunch of small bronzes from the time of Constantine the Great in such poor condition that you had to place them in vinegar in order to have a glimpse of what could make it possible to identify them. These discoveries are at the root of my career as a professional numismatist. I had studied law and when I returned to France after 28 months in the army, I discovered the professional coin dealers in rue de Richelieu and I spent an important part of my income buying Roman coins (this time in good condition).

In 1964 or 65, I was lucky enough to be invited to appear on a live television show called “Avis aux Amateurs” (Notice to amateurs) produced by SABBAGH and FOLGOAS.

With over 1.200 letters received I had beaten all the records of the show. It took me over 15 months to answer them all and these letters became the base of my mailing list. I then decided to sell the insurance cabinet I had created and in September 1967, I opened my first numismatic shop thus devoting myself to my passion for history and art.

The following year, either by chance or because of my rising notoriety, I was asked to sell a very important collection of Russian coins: the STAKHOVICH collection comprising over 2.000 coins of which 600 were silver roubles. The collector had tried to have, if possible in perfect condition, all the varieties of the roubles struck from the time of Peter the Great (†1725) till the massacre, in 1918, of the family of Nicolas II at Yekaterinburg.

He had been able to flee Russia before the arrival of the Bolsheviks, maybe with part of his collection and with enough money to create a financial establishment or small private bank.

Was he a bad businessman or was his bank a victim of the 1929 crash? No one knows but according to what I was told in 1968, he had enough money left to buy a taxi and became a taxi driver in Paris.

He was an unquestionable and unquestioned specialist in Russian coins. He would be consulted by French professional numismatists and later by other European dealers. It seems he had his services paid in coins and he continued to buy coins for his collection whenever he could.

When I found myself in front of the important number of coins of his collection which I had been obliged to buy by installments, I realized that I had to quickly sell a good amount of them so as to be able to pay. Even though I had to sell some beautiful coins that I would have liked to keep, I had put aside for my collection the roubles that are now going to be auctioned and which I had selected for their quality and historical interest. There are nearly all the

varieties of portraits and reverses of these Tsars of Russia. As for the "Poltinas" or half roubles from the STAKHOVICH collection, I had sold them along with some nice roubles to my colleagues and as they were mostly interested in the more spectacular coins they had purchased, it wasn't too difficult for me to buy them back.

There were no gold coins in the STAKHOVICH collection. Those featured in this auction were bought by me to improve my collection and give a better "illustration" of the history of Russia.

I also included in this collection a few bronzes in an exceptional state of conservation as well as the complete series of the coins minted in 1775, under Catherine the Great, for circulation in Siberia. It is of course very rare to have such a series of the same type and year, especially as it comprises extremely rare small denominations.

I have nearly said all I had to say, except for the reason why I finally decided to sell this collection of Russian coins which I started mainly in 1968, when I was 33 years old, now that I am 73. Well, after having collected Roman coins since childhood and then French coins that tell the history of my country, I started a collection of antique Greek coins selecting those in excellent condition and with a good artistic style. It finally became obvious that it would not be a bad idea to sell my collection of Russian coins in order to improve my collection of ancient Greek coins.

That is what made me decide!

Having heard of this collection of Russian coins, two or three of the most well-known foreign professional numismatists asked me to consign with them the collection for an auction with a prestigious catalogue distributed worldwide.

If I finally decided to consign my collection with the Palombo brothers, it is because Eric is an active member of the committee of the SYNDICAT NATIONAL DES EXPERTS NUMISMATES ET NUMISMATES PROFESSIONNELS (SNENNP, the French association of professional and expert numismatists) of which I am honorary President, while his brother, Stephane, also does his best for the promotion of numismatics, especially by organizing each year an important coin fair in Marseille.

May they be thanked for what they do!...

Bernard POINDESSAULT