

Dmitry Sergeevich
Likhachov

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28 November [O.S. 15 November] 1906 in St. Petersburg – 30 September 1999 in St. Petersburg) was an outstanding Soviet Russian scholar who was considered the world's foremost expert in Old Russian language and literature. He has been revered as "the last of old St Petersburgers", "a guardian of national culture", and "Russia's conscience".



Life and career

Dmitry Likhachyov was born in Saint Petersburg. From his early childhood, he was passionate about literature, even though his parents did not approve of this interest.

In 1923, at only 16 years old, Likhachyov entered the Leningrad State University in the Department of Linguistics and Literature.

In 1928, at the end of his studies, Likhachyov was arrested and accused of being a member of the students' club "Cosmic Academy of Science," which was simply a playful name for a group of like-minded youths.



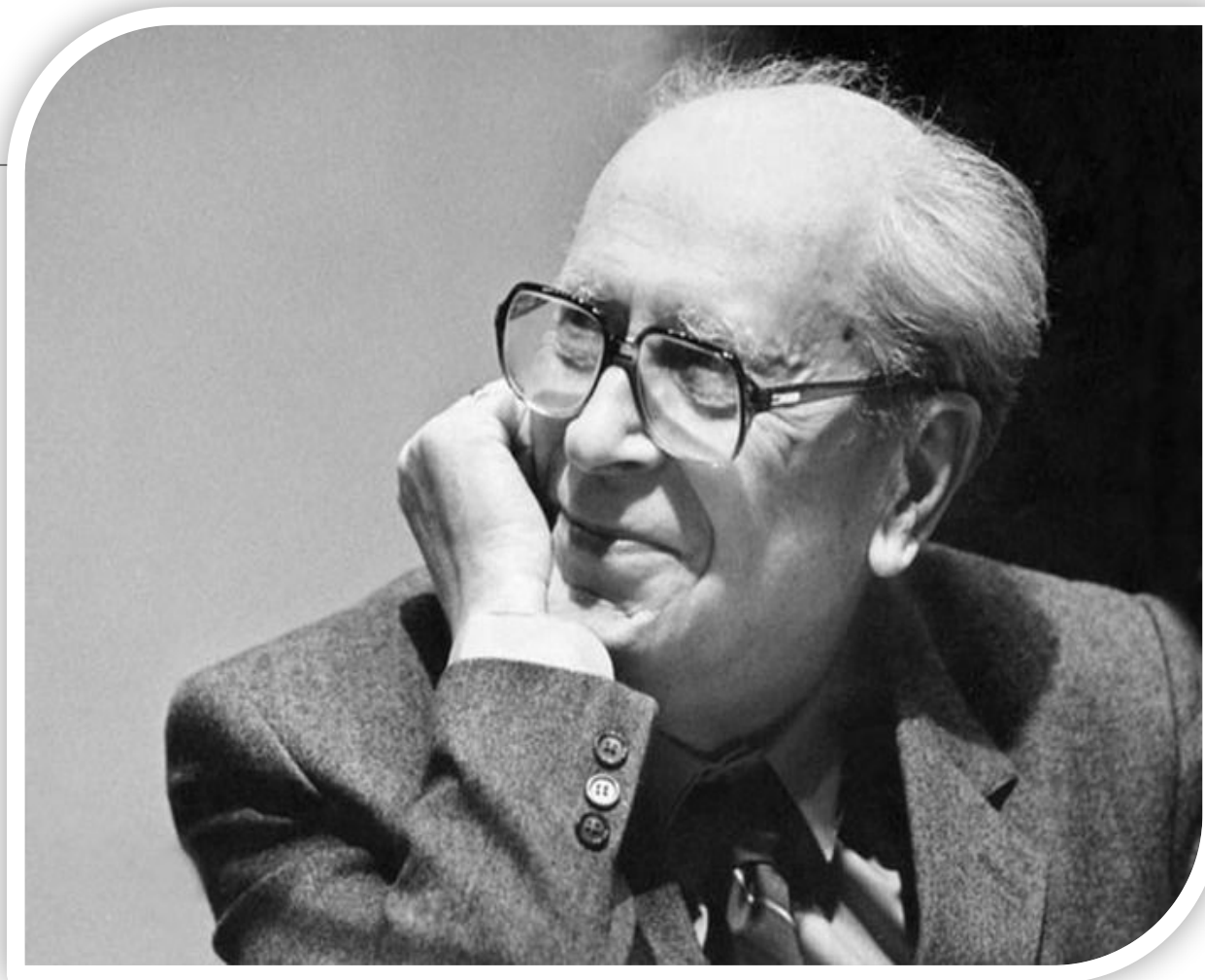
Dmitry Likhachyov's first scientific article, "Card Game of Criminals," was written in the Solovki camp. He did not play cards himself, but was a keen observer. He also gathered much material about the languages of thieves and later published articles and a book about thieves' slang and customs. Having returned to Leningrad (now Saint Petersburg), Likhachyov worked for five years as a proofreader in the publishing house of the Academy of Sciences. In 1936, thanks to petitions by the president of the Academy of Sciences, Aleksandr Karpinsky, Dmitry Likhachyov's criminal record was cleared. In 1938 the talented scientist was noticed and invited to the Department of Old Russian Literature of the Institute of Russian Literature (known as Pushkin's House). Dmitry Likhachyov worked here until the end of his life.



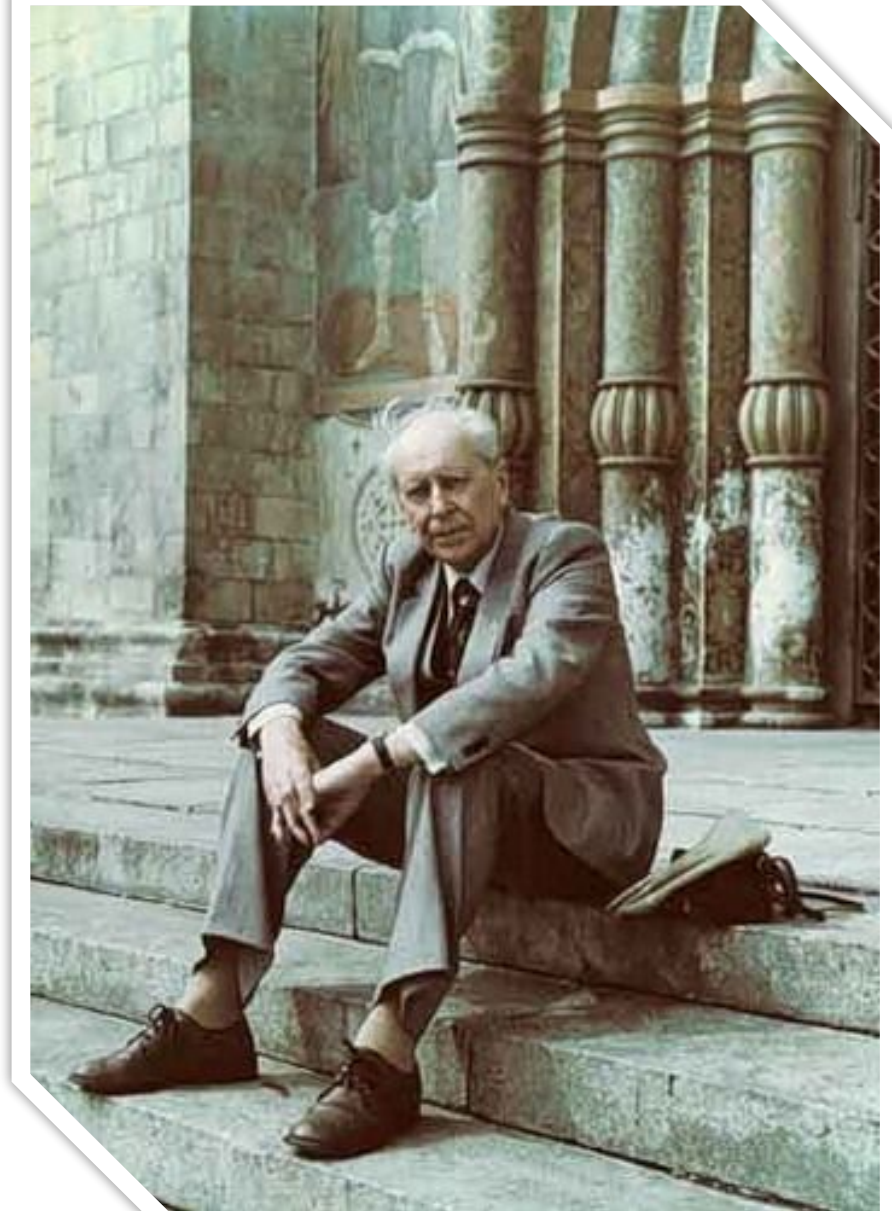
World War II brought new trials. Likhachyov, together with his wife and twin daughters, survived the horrors of the Siege of Leningrad. He described his experience in a story, full of harsh details, exposing different types of people and their heroic or appalling behavior when faced with starvation and death. In 1942, completely exhausted by hunger and cold, Dmitry Likhachyov started to gather materials on medieval poetry and soon published the book Defense of the Old Russian Cities. In 1943 Likhachyov and his entire family were exiled to Kazan, supposedly because of the "connection with the Solovetsky Camp." But by the end of the war they were back in Leningrad.



In 1947 Dmitry Likhachyov received his Doctor of Philology, having presented his thesis "Essays on the History of Annalistic Literary Forms of the 11th–16th Centuries." Three years later he became a professor at the Leningrad State University. From 1953 he was a corresponding member and from 1970 – a member of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. Dmitry Likhachyov's conquering of the scientific world was definitely a triumphant one.



Dmitry Likhachov gained world recognition as a theorist of culture and as a publicist. In the 1980s he developed a concept that considered the problems of humanization and the reorientation of educational goals and ideas. The scientist viewed culture as a historical memory, as a process of accumulation, rather than consecutive changes. This was also the theoretical basis for Likhachov's attention to ancient monuments, especially in architecture. Inspired by the works of Vladimir Vernadsky, Dmitry Likhachyov suggested the idea of a "homosphere"- a human sphere of the Earth. His original contribution to general science was also the development of a new discipline called the ecology of culture, which was defined as an essential sphere of human life.



The last works by Dmitry Likhachyov gathered together his general ideas about his native country. The book “Thoughts About Russia,” completed in 1999, a few days before the author’s death, is devoted to Russia’s place in world history, its myths and its most characteristic features. The edition “Russian Culture” was published in 2000, after the writer’s death.

