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'I... Should Never Forget What You Did for Me.' Letters of Famous Russian Emigre Historian Nikolai Ottokar to Italian Scholar Gaetano Salvemini

Abstract

This article is a publication of letters of Nikolai Petrovich Ottokar (1884-1957), Russian emigre historian, specialist in the history of the Florentine Republic, professor at the University of Florence, to his colleague and opponent Gaetano Salvemini (1873-1957), established authority in Italian historiography, fervent antifascist, and emigrant as well. The author feels that the historiography implies that there was a certain strain between two historians that stemmed in Ottokar's harsh criticism of Salvemini's concept of the history of late Duecento era Florence, which he proposed in 1899. Also Ottokar succeeded Salvemini at the Department of

Contemporary History after Salvemini was expelled by the fascists from the University of Florence. The scholarship cites Ottokar's manifest 'loyalty' to the fascist regime in Italy, including his likely party membership. It recalls his cooperation in a number of scientific projects of the fascist era, for instance, the *Enciclopedia italiana*. The author feels that the texts published below allow to correct this outlook and also to add several significant details to the research field. First, as follows from the texts below, the relationship between two historians was clearly not strained, but rather friendly. Secondly, the published letters add a number of interesting details to the biography of the Russian scientist. It should be noted that the Italian scientist played an important role in Ottokar's life in 1924-1925. Apparently, Salvemini helped Ottokar to settle in Florence, where he emigrated from Perm in 1921. Apparently, Ottokar began his work at the University of Florence at the instigation of the Italian scientist. This, by the way, can testify, albeit indirectly, of a rather longer acquaintance of two scientists, which could have begun in the early 1910s, during N.P. Ottokar's international trip. Letters are published from autographs stored in the fond of Gaetano Salvemini in the Istituto storico Toscana della Resistenza in Italian and in Russian translation by the author accomplished with permission of the Comitato Salvemini.

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Keywords

Nikolai Ottokar, Gaetano Salvemini, history of Florence, history of medieval studies, Russian emigration in Italy, Istituto storico Toscana della Resistenza, Comitato Salvemini.

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