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## FROM THE HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH CLUB IN CHIȘINĂU

The modern word “Club” sounds in English as “Club”, German as “Klub”, French as “Cercle” and Russian in the 19th century as a “club”. It is known that “Great Britain is the country where a special kind of society, the so-called clubs, first appeared. Initially, the Saxon word “clubbe” meant “stick”, then “clubbing” or “share, which is allocated to each member of a partnership, meeting, and finally, the meeting itself, as well as a building for public meetings” [1, p. 424]. As a rule, members of one social class gathered to communicate with different goals, “starting from pleasures and ending with political, scientific, artistic, literary aspirations” [1, p. 424].

In England, one of the first such clubs was visited by the famous William Shakespeare. In the USA, such clubs were mainly of a political nature, which operated during presidential companies and ended after the election. In France, “Circle” initially gathered princesses and duchesses, later similar circles or clubs were used for conversations between men and women. There were also Catholic

clubs for artisans organized by French clerics, as well as military clubs or clubs for officers. In Germany, clubs were mostly political, often banned, and, like throughout Europe, did not last long. In Austria, such institutions were called parliamentary groups.

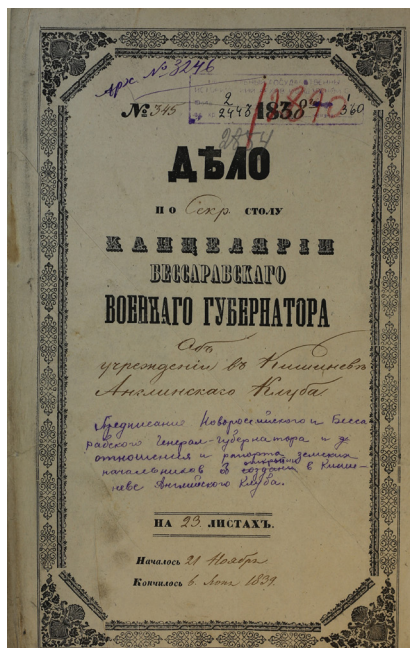
In Russia, officially, clubs were called meetings, the main purpose of which was to “give members the opportunity to have a good time” [1, p. 426]. For this, various games were organized, masquerade balls, dances, musical evenings and dramatic performances. And they also organized readings of newspapers and magazines, which were written out especially for these events. Sometimes charity evenings were held. The very first such club was opened in St. Petersburg at the initiative of foreigners. During the reign of the Russian Empress Catherine II, starting in 1762, mainly the British came to St. Petersburg on issues related to trade. In 1770, “the manufacturer Francis Gardner, invited his associates to establish a club. Thus, the oldest and most fashionable of the Russian clubs was created – the

St. Petersburg English meeting or club” [1, p. 426]. The founders chose the motto: “Concordia et Laetitia”, which means “consent and pleasure” in Latin. By the end of 1771, the number of members of the English club had reached 250, and over the next 10 years there were even more people wishing to join the club. They even had to set the highest rate as 300 people for entry to the club.

Since 1780, English clubs have become popular among the Russian nobility. And then the fashion for visiting such clubs continued to grow. “Being a member of an English club meant having a secular position”. [1, p. 426]. Among the members of the St. Petersburg Club were such creative celebrities as A. S. Pushkin, I. A. Krylov, V. A. Zhukovsky and many others. Also an honorary member of such an English club in 1813 was Commander M. I. Kutuzov and other representatives of the highest nobility.

In Moscow, the English club also appeared under the reign of Catherine II, but at first did not last long, being a temporary institution of the nobility. “Under Alexander I, the English club was restored in 1802, and by the end of that year the number of its members had increased to 600 people” [1, p. 426]. At the same time, a noble or noble Russian assembly arose in Moscow. It is known that A. S. Pushkin was also “in the ward of the English club, P. Ya. Chaadaev; Emperor Nicholas I sometimes asked what they say about this or that government measure in the Moscow English club” [1, p. 427].

Similar English clubs began to be created in many Russian provincial and district cities. At the beginning of October 1838 in Chişinău, such a society also appeared, known as the



Archival documents about the foundation of the English club in Chişinău in 1838-1839.

English Club. “Among some of the most respectable persons that make up this society, people of different ranks and status, such as nobles, citizens, military and civil officials, even artists, are participating” [2, p. 4]. This is documented in the archives “On the Establishment of an English Club in Kishinev”.

The title of archival documents, connected with the creation of English club in Chişinău [2].

On June 6, 1839, the Bessarabian branch of the Chancellery of the Novorossiysk and Bessarabian Governor General sent a request to His Excellency Pavel Feodorov and requested “to inform one of the Charter of the English Club in Chişinău for introduction to the affairs of the Chancellery of the Governor General, adding that the existence of this club was approved by the manager Ministry of the Interior” [2, p. 9-9 inv.]. This decision was based on earlier government legalization of April 11, 1831, when the local authorities were not allowed to independently approve

the rules for the creation of any society or institution. That is why, for the opening of the English Club in Chişinău, a special order of the Ministry of Internal Affairs was necessary.

According to the charter, the English club in Kishinev was established with the aim of “composing a society in which it would be pleasant to spend time engaging in conversation, reading newspapers or permitted games” [2, p. 16]. But it was not so easy to join the club. In addition to a certain status, it was necessary to receive the recommendation of a member of this meeting, who with his signature in a special registration book was to confirm his guarantee. The final decision as to whether or not a candidate is a member of an English club was made during a vote with the mandatory participation of at least one third of all holders of an honorary club membership and all directors. One of them was in charge of the cash register and resolved economic issues, the other two were his assistants. It was one of these club managers who presented the ball to each voter and announced the name of the candidate and his guarantor, while not allowing anything that could affect the benefit or the detriment of the new applicant. Then they brought a box with two compartments. Those who voted in favor of the candidate put balls in the white compartment; balls of those who voted against the new applicant fell into the other section. A candidate was considered elected if more than two-thirds of the club voted for him, and the balls were counted in the presence of one of the directors and all members of the club. “Any business which cannot be resolved otherwise than by ballot should be proposed to the club by directors in writing in Russian and Moldavian languages” [2, p. 17],

was one of the important rules of the English Club in Chişinău was written into the charter.

If one of the members wanted to bring a visitor with him, then he had to write down his name in the so-called “Deliberate book” and verify this with his signature. Moreover, no more than four visitors were allowed daily.

Club members and guests were educated people, “because everyone knows that in the whole society the first rule is to observe all public decencies” [2, p. 17]. Obscene, rude acts, offensive remarks in relation to religions, and rash reasoning against other members of the club were strictly prohibited. Violators were threatened with either reprimand or expulsion, in the opinion of the majority and with notification of this in the government. “To please reading” [2, p. 17], the club’s management wrote out various Russian and foreign newspapers and magazines of their choice of directors. And if someone wanted to offer a periodical of their choice, he had to provide a requirement signed by no less than 20 members. In this case, “directors must respect it” [2, p. 17]. But not one of the members of the club had the right to take newspapers and magazines to their homes earlier than two weeks after receiving new issues. Violators of this rule were charged a fine of “the entire annual price of a prematurely taken magazine or newspaper” [2, p. 17].

“In the reading room, members were not allowed to play any games, speak loudly, or read aloud. The club had billiards, which were paid for by games from parties. The same people were not allowed to play more than three games. And lists of people who wanted to play were posted in advance, and, of course, the people indicated in them got an advan-

tage in the game. Gambling card games were strictly prohibited. But they were allowed to play non-gambling games, as well as checkers, chess, lotto etc.

The English club in Chişinău was open daily, especially on those days when dancing evenings and masquerade balls were held. On those days, the club worked from 9 a.m. until midnight, and at half past twelve, the bell ringed the time. Anyone overstaying the time had to pay a fine starting from 1 ruble, and this amount doubled for every overdue hour.

In the club one could get “pipes, tea, coffee, chocolate, cups and portions, grog, lemonade, ice cream, liquors, different sorts of wines, glasses and bottles, snacks, lunch and dinner” [2, p. 17]. But pipes were allowed for smoking only in specially designated rooms. It was not allowed to enter the club premises in a hood, fur coat, with a head covered, or with a stick or a sword. All these objects and things were left at the entrance, under the gaze of the doorman.

Debts on the game were paid to the club immediately; otherwise lenders were forced to report this to the directors within five days. Those who did not comply with this rule lost the right to complain to management. If after seven days the debt remained unpaid, the director required confirmation in writing or verbally, and after three days, usually the debtors were expelled from the club, and their names appeared on a shameful black board until the debt was fully paid.

From the report on the secret table of the Office of the Bessarabian Military Governor dated November 21, 1838, we learn about the first director of the English club in Chişinău – Mr. Khotyev, as well as about the regional

criminal solicitor who complained to the governor general that he was not accepted into the club without a ballot. He believed, “that it is not indecent for a Russian nobleman and provincial official to run for the ballot of merchants, artists etc.” [2, p. 17], and such rules insulted and degraded the rights of a free citizen. But at the same time everyone knew that no one was allowed to change the conditions in the charter of the English Club, and therefore, without a ballot and recommendations they were not accepted as members of this institution. “Taking into account that Kishinev stands along with other provincial cities of a well-organized Russian state ... the club’s goal was to recognize as necessary ... to support pre-existing meetings in which dancing and playing cards were the only thing ... but to deliver to those wishing to participate in the public circle ... in conversation and reading at the choice of each literary, commercial and other public publications” [2, p. 6-6 inv.].

On May 12, 1839, the Ministry of the Interior sent a letter to the Novorossiysk and Bessarabian Governor General about the continuation of the English club in Chişinău, but with the request that the Chişinău police keep secret surveillance, “so that there will not be any disturbances in the aforementioned club” [2, p. 13]. According to later documents, the English club was located in Kishinev, in a public house, and, after a while, the building needed to be repaired. The National Archive of the Republic of Moldova keeps some documents on the reparation of the building of the English Club from 1846–1850 [3]. The documents of this case confirm that the club continued to work. Moreover, in correspondence with the Kishinev City Council, such a name appears



The bulding of Noble Assembly in Chişinău. Arhitect H. Lonsky.

as “clob”. In August 1846, the City Architect Luka Zaushkevich was commissioned to draw up an estimate “for the correction of the town house occupied by the English Klob” [3, p. 6], which was supposed to spend 27 rubles and 35 kopecks in silver. It was about building a new floor in this building. In 1848, the club’s directorate, continuing the protracted repair, “so as not to suspend club meetings, found herself compelled to hire carpenters, buy beams and proceed” [3, p. 98 inv.] to remodel the floor. And in 1849 it was already “necessary to paint the roof on it, fix it with plaster, exterior walls and other spoilage, which, according to the calculation of architect Zaushkevich, required 192 rubles 48 kopecks by silver” [3, p. 90]. In the act of August 9, 1849, after the inspection of the building, it was noted that: “1) the roof painting has completely deteriorated from time to time and therefore it is necessary to repaint it again with oil paint; 2) fix the gutters and drain-pipes” [3, p. 91]; 3) make a frame and a door in the cellar instead of those that have become unusable; 4) in places to fix the plaster of the

walls and whitewash the entire building twice with lime outside. All these recommendations were signed by the city architect Luke Zaushkevich, who was responsible for the repair of this house rented by the Chişinău English Club.



A part of the Noble Assembly’s building.

The building of Noble Assembly in Chişinău [5].

Other archival documents tell about the construction of the English city club in the Chişinău Alexander Garden in 1888–1889. So, the Austrian citizen architect Heinrich Lonsky drafted and estimated the building of the Noble Assembly.

The part of a building of Noble Assembly in Chişinău [5].

It was at the site of the building of the English Club that was burnt down by the fire and a new structure was to appear on the street. Alexandrovskaya. And, as the former governor of Bessarabia, Prince Sergey Dmitrievich Urusov wrote in his book, “the general character of Chişinău society was most clearly reflected in the life of the first local club as the Noble Assembly” [4], which was always filled with regulars and card game lovers.

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#### **From the history of English club in Chişinău**

**Abstract.** This theme is connected with the creation of the Chişinău English Club in 1838–1839. It was a society, consisting of the most respectable persons: nobles, military, civilian officials, artists and other citizens. The club’s building was located in the City Garden. According to the adopted charter of this club, the main goal of its creation was to spend time with benefit: reading newspapers and magazines, organizing interesting conversations or playing various permissible games. It was strictly forbidden to play gambling and card games in the club. The Chişinău English Club was open every day, especially on the days when the dancing evenings and masquerade balls were held there. But the activity of this organization was always followed by the city police. Later, the English Club occupied the building of the Noble Assembly. The National Archives of the Republic of Moldova contains informative documents, confirming the establishment and activities of the English Club in Chişinău in the 19th century.

**Key-words:** Chişinău English Club, construction, charter, rules, games, building.

#### **Din istoria Clubului englez din Chişinău**

**Rezumat.** Acest studiu relatează despre înfiinţarea Clubului englez de la Chişinău în 1838–1839. Acesta era o societate formată din cele mai respectabile persoane ale nobilimii, militari, oficiali civili, artişti şi alţi cetăţeni. Clădirea clubului era situată în Grădina Oraşănească. Conform statutului adoptat al acestui club, scopul principal al creării sale era de a petrece timpul cu beneficii, citind ziare şi reviste, organizând conversaţii interesante sau jucând diverse jocuri permise. În club erau interzise jocurile de noroc şi cărţile de joc. Clubul englez de la Chişinău era deschis în fiecare zi, mai ales în zilele în care se ţineau seri de dans şi baluri de mascaradă. Dar activităţile acestei organizaţii au fost întotdeauna monitorizate de poliţia oraşului. Mai târziu, Clubul englez a ocupat clădirea Adunării Nobile. Arhiva Naţională a Republicii Moldova conţine documente substanţiale care confirmă înfiinţarea şi activitatea Clubului englez din Chişinău în secolul al XIX-lea.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** Clubul englez din Chişinău, construcţie, statut, reguli, jocuri, clădire.