

FRENCH BULLDOGS, FABERGE AND THE ROMANOV FAMILY

Published on TasmanianTimes.com 26 June 2018

Part III: Prince Felix Yusupov, the Grand Duchess Tatiana and their French Bulldogs

Prince Felix Yusupov's grandmother had been lady-in-waiting to the Empress, Maria Feodorovna. His mother, Princess Zinaida Yusupova, was the heiress to Russia's largest private fortune and therefore enjoyed great favour at court. Her youngest son Prince Yusupov, 'the most handsome man in Russia', grew up at court and as a result befriended the children of Tsar Nicholas II, Olga, Tatiana, Maria, Anastasia and Alexei.

The Yusupovs were among the most influential families in Romanov ruled Russia. Their estates dotted the Russian landscape, including four palaces in St Petersburg, three palaces in Moscow, 37 estates in different parts of Russia, and oil fields on the Caspian Sea. A flamboyant young man of striking good looks, Prince Felix was the only surviving child of Princess Zinaida Yusupova and Count Felix Soumarokoff – Elston. The family purchased in Paris another small English uncropped, rose-eared bulldog, Gugusse in 1901. Gugusse is photographed centre stage on a table in the family portrait seen here being held by Felix's brother Nicolai, who was killed in a duel in 1908.

By the time of the portrait painted by Valentin Seroff of Felix and Gugusse, circa 1909, the fashion for English rose-eared bulldogs with cropped or uncropped ears had waned, and Gugusse's ears are seen here as being changed by the artist under the instructions of Yusupov to the more correct and popular tulip-ears of the true Bouledogue Francais.

Felix writes quite extensively about *Gugusse*, a real Parisian guttersnipe, in his autobiography:

For eighteen years, Gugusse was my devoted and inseparable companion. He soon became quite famous, for everyone knew and loved him, from members of the Imperial family to the least of our peasants. He was a real Parisian guttersnipe who loved to be dressed up, put on an air of importance when he was photographed, adored candy and champagne ... He was most amusing when slightly tipsy. He used to suffer from flatulence and would trot to the fireplace, stick his backside into the hearth and look up with an apologetic expression.



Photograph: Circa 1902, Felix with his older brother Nicolai, his mother and Father. Gugusse is on the table



Prince Felix Yusupov (23 March 1887 - 1967) with his first rose eared English Bulldog circa 1888 and his second Gugusse circa 1901 both dogs with uncropped ears.



Gugusse loved some people and hated others, and nothing could stop him from showing his dislike by relieving himself on the trousers or the skirts of his enemies. He had such an aversion for one of my mother's friends that we were obliged to shut him up whenever she called at the house. She came one day in a lovely gown of pink velvet, a Worth creation. Unfortunately, we had forgotten to lock up Gugusse, and no sooner had she entered the room than he made a dash for her. The gown was ruined and the poor lady had hysterics.

Gugusse could have performed in a circus. Dressed as a jockey, he would ride a tiny pony or, with a pipe stuck between his teeth, would pretend to smoke. He used to love going out with the guns and would bring in game like a retriever. The head of the Holy Synod (*Supreme Council of the Russian Orthodox Church) called on my mother one day and, to my mind, stayed far too long. I resolved that Gugusse should create a diversion. I made him up as an old cocotte, sparing neither powder nor paint, rigged him out in a dress and wig and pushed him into the drawing room. Gugusse seemed to understand what was expected of him, for he made a sensational entry on his hind legs, to the dismay of our visitor who very quickly took his leave, which was exactly what I wanted.

Prince Felix Yusupov's only surviving brother, Nicolai, died in August 1908, three months later The Grand Duke Alexei died in Paris and the following year Prince Felix went to England to study the fine arts at Oxford University.

While in England, Felix acquired a proper French Bulldog, an event he mentioned in a letter to his friend Dmitri Yannovich:

I have now a new pet, a charming little French Bull Dog, given to me by our friend Andrei. He is simply too charming with his little prick ears but does snore rather insufferably. I shall bring him with me when I return home.

Punch was a highly fashionable cream/fawn French Bulldog with tulip, or more probably, bat ears. Prince Felix recounts some of his antics:

One day when I was at Davies my tailor's, a very smartly dressed old gentleman wearing a checked suit, came in. Before I could stop him, *Punch* rushed at him and tore a huge piece out of his trousers.

On another occasion I went with a friend to her furrier's. Punch noticed a sable muff encircled by a black and white checked scarf. He immediately seized it and rushed out of the shop with it. I, and everyone else at the furrier's, ran after him halfway down Bond Street and it was only with the greatest difficulty that we managed to catch him and retrieve the muff, happily almost intact.

As he had mentioned in his letter to Dmitri Yannovich, Felix brought Punch back home to Russia with him during a university vacation and planned to take him back to Oxford when term resumed. Felix, unfortunately, had conveniently forgotten that dogs entering England were required to stay in quarantine for six months. Not one to conform to society's requirements, Felix devised a plan to spare Punch jail time:

As six months in quarantine was out of the question, I decided to evade the law. On my way to Oxford in the autumn, I passed through Paris and went to see an old Russian ex-cocotte (prostitute) whom I knew. I asked her to come to London with me, She would have to dress as a nurse and carry Punch, disguised as a baby. The old lady agreed at once, as the idea amused her immensely, although at the same time it frightened her to death.

The next day, we left for London after giving "Baby" a sleeping draught so as to keep him quiet during the journey. Everything went smoothly and not a soul suspected the fraud.

The Yusupov's close association with the Romanov family makes it probable that he would visit Elizabeth Balletta in Paris on his way to England. Probably still grieving the death of the Grand Duke Alexei, the former courtesan and the owner of fawn tulip eared French Bulldog called Cody, she is the most likely person to take Punch to London.

On his return to Russia, on completion of his studies in 1913 Prince Felix went via Paris and organises the purchase of another French Bulldog. In a letter to a family friend in 1914, he stated:

I am greatly pleased with the French Bull bitch my friend has just sent me from Paris. She is of finest quality and pleasing colour.

I suggest that the friend mentioned is again Elizabeth Balletta, and that Yusupov intends to breed French Bulldogs in Russia on coming down from university from the beginning of 1914.

Further evidence that the two were connected is the recent discovery of the intimate Journal/Diary of the Grand Duke Alexei Alexandrovich amongst the Yusupov papers in the Russian National Library. These family papers have remained virtually untouched since the



Photograph: Prince Yusupov on the lawn at another family palace in the grounds of Tsarskoe Selo with Punch. Was it here adjoining the palace of the Tsar that the puppies were bred?

That Prince Felix Yusupov bred bat eared bulldogs is evidenced from this oil painting of him circa 1917 painted after his banishment over the murder of Rasputin. It is still in the Yusupov villa at Koreiz in the Crimea. This may be the bitch purchased in Paris.



Yusupov's banishment by the Imperial family from St Petersburg after the murder of Rasputin on 30th December 1916. It is of note that certain, possibly compromising pages, have been removed, possibly by Elizabeth Balletta before she handed over the document.

On 22 February 1914 Prince Yusupov married Princess Irina Alexandrovna of Russia, the only daughter of the Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich and Grand Duchess Xenia Alexandrovna take out, the only niece of Tsar Nicholas II. That Punch was his favourite dog can be ascertained by an

entry in Prince Felix's autobiography. After his wedding into the Romanov family he writes:

The time for our departure arrived at last; a crowd of relatives and friends were waiting at the station. Once more we had to shake hands and be congratulated. After the last demonstrations of affection were over and we had entered our coach, a black nose suddenly emerged from a profusion of flowers, and there was my Punch triumphantly ensconced among the roses.

The newly-weds took *Punch* on honeymoon with them to Egypt and Jerusalem where *Punch* bit a policeman and launched an attack on the Greek Patriarch. The couple returned to Russia after war broke out between Russia and Germany in early August 1914 from Berlin, where they were nearly trapped.

On their return from honeymoon, Prince Felix and Princess Irina converted a wing of the family Moika Palace in St Petersburg into a hospital for wounded soldiers. In much the same way Empress Alexandra Feodorovna created a private military hospital in the grounds of their family home at Tsarskoye Selo and where, together with their mother the two eldest Grand Duchesses Olga and Tatiana, they became nurses.

It is as a nurse in the hospital that the Grand Duchess Tatiana falls in love with Dmitri Yakovlevich Malama, the son of a highly decorated cavalry general in the Russian army, a member of the military council and advisor to the Tsar. Dmitri had attended the Imperial Corps de Pages, and on graduation in August 1912 he was made a cornet in the Uhlan Lancer Guard Regiment of her Imperial Highness Empress Alexandra Feodorovna, and would have served as a page to the Empress or one of the Grand Duchesses at court. It is possible the Grand Duchess Tatiana and Dmitri Malama may have met before the war broke out. During the first week of the war Malama was seriously wounded in the leg. He was brought to the Tsarskoye Selo hospital and remained there until December 1914.



Photograph (left): Circa September 1914. Nurse Tatiana Romanov and her infirmary patient Dmitri Malama

Photograph (right): October 1914. The earliest photograph of the Grand Duchess Tatiana with her French Bulldog Ortipo then a newly born puppy.

Peter de Malama wrote of his cousin:

Dmitri Yakovlevich Malama was an officer in the Imperial Russian Cavalry who met Tatiana in hospital as his nurse when wounded in 1914. They fell in love. The romance developed and later the young man was appointed an equerry to the court of the Tsar at Tsarskoye Selo.

In September, Malama gave the Grand Duchess Tatiana a French Bulldog she named Ortipo reportedly the name of Malama's favourite horse. The Grand Duchess Tatiana writes to her mother:

30 September 1914 – Tsarskoye Selo. Mama darling mine, forgive me about the little dog. To say the truth, when he asked should I like to have it if he gave it me, I at once said yes. You remember, I always wanted to have one and only afterwards when we came home I thought that suddenly you might not like me having one. But I really was so pleased at the idea that I forgot about everything. Please, darling angel, forgive me. Tell Papa about it. I hope he won't have anything against it ...

The connection of the Yusupov and Malama's families to the Tsar, and the fact that Felix Yusupov was married to Grand Duchess Tatiana's only female cousin suggests that the puppy Ortipo is likely to have come from a litter owned by Yusupovs and bred from the French Bulldog bitch he had sent from Paris on his return from Oxford at the beginning of 1914.

Dmitri Malama returns to the front on his discharge from hospital in December 1914, returning on leave in the middle of 1916 when the Empress writes to her husband, Tsar Nicholas II:

My little Malama came for an hour yesterday evening, after dinner at Anya's. We had not seen him for 1½ years. Looks flourishing, more of a man now, an adorable boy still. I must say, a perfect son-in-law he would have been – why are foreign princes not as nice! Ortipo had to be shown to his 'Father' of course.

During Malama's time away it seems that Ortipo produced a cross bred litter at the beginning September 1915, the father being unknown. Tsar Nicholas notes this in a cable to his wife on 5 September 1915 ...*Too bad about Ortipo*. The Tsar wrote to his daughter Tatiana from the front on the 9 September 1915 *Your telegram about the scandal that happened with Ortipo had me very amused – I imagine what it would be like ... the little monster ...* The puppies were destroyed on the 17th September.

The Imperial Family was arrested at the start of the Russian Revolution in July 1917 and imprisoned firstly at their home palace, Tsarskoye Selo, and later at a private residence in Toblosk, and then Yekaterinburg in Siberia.

Pierre Gilliard, the family's Swiss French tutor, records his last sight of the imperial children at Yekaterinburg:

The sailor Nagorny, who attended to Alexei Nikolaevitch, passed my window carrying the sick boy in his arms. Behind him came the Grand Duchesses loaded with valises and small personal belongings. I tried to get out but was roughly pushed back into the carriage by the sentry. I came back to the window. Tatiana Nikolayevna came last carrying her little dog, and struggling to drag a heavy brown valise. It was raining, and I saw her feet sink into the mud at every step. Nagorny tried to come to her assistance; he was roughly pushed back by one of the commissars ...

Late on the night of 16 July, the family was awakened and told to come down to the lower level of the house because there was unrest in the town at large, and they would have to be moved for their own safety. They emerged from their rooms carrying pillows, bags, and other items to make Alexandra and Alexei comfortable. They asked questions of the guards but did not appear to suspect they were going to be killed. Yurovsky, who had been a professional photographer, directed the family to take different positions, as a photographer might. Alexandra, who had requested chairs for herself and Alexei, sat to her son's left. Yurovsky came in, ordered them to stand as he read the sentence of execution. Tatiana and her family had time only to utter a few incoherent sounds of shock or protest before the death squad under Yurovsky's command began shooting. It was the early hours of 17 July 1918.

Photograph (left): circa September 1915 Grand Duchess Tatiana Nikolaevna of Russia with a pregnant bat eared Ortipo before the start of their imprisonment.



Photograph (right): The Grand Duchess Anastasia with her King Charles spaniel Jemmy, the Grand Duchess Tatiana with the brindle bat eared Ortipo, the Tsarevitch Alexei with his spaniel Joy.





Photograph: Grand Duchesses Olga and Tatiana with Ortipo during their imprisonment, with their heads shaved from an attack of the measles 9 June 1917.

Ortipo is again mentioned in Anya Vyubova, the Romanov family's Lady-in-Waiting, biography:

Alexei's pets were two, a silky little spaniel named Joy and a beautiful big grey cat the gift of General Voyeikov ...There were two other dogs, Tatiana's French Bull and a little King Charlie which I contributed to the menagerie.

Many varying accounts recall the fate of the family and their pets on the night of 16 July 1918. A later account mentions the bayonetting of Anastasia's lapdog, in Yekaterinburg. This was almost certainly *Ortipo*, being the only dog in Yekaterinburg small enough to be described as a lapdog.

One of those who participated in the shooting, Aleksandrovich Medev Kudrin, in his manuscript account of the murder *Hostile Winds* addressed to Premier Khrushchev notes:

As the bodies were being moved from the basement of the house into the truck, a little dog appeared from upstairs and rushed into the courtyard, obviously much distressed and upset and probably looking for his people. A soldier took up his bayonet and stabbed the dog to death (it can be assumed *Ortipo* was attacking the soldier in defence of her family), throwing his body into the truck with the Romanovs.

A dog's death to dogs Kudrin remembered Goloshchokin, another member of the firing squad commenting as they stood watching. In his will Kudrin left his Browning pistol that killed the Tsar to Khrushchev.

Tsarevitch Alexei's spaniel, Joy, survived and was taken to England and was given to King George V, and is suitably buried at Windsor Castle.

It appears that when Malama hears of the shooting of Grand Duchess Tatiana and the Romanov family he loses the will to live and is subsequently killed in action in 1919 while commanding a unit of the White Russians fighting the civil war against the Bolsheviks in the Ukraine.

Together with their servants, the court physician Eugene Botkin, maid Emma Demidova, footman Alexi Trupp, and cook Ivan Kharitonov they were all shot, bayoneted or clubbed to death on the night of the 16th July 1918 in the cellar of Ilatiev House ... later known as The House of Special Purpose by the Bolsheviks in Yekaterinburg.



Tsar Nicholas II with his family in happier times taken from a later coloured black and white photograph circa 1913: The Tsarina Alexandra, their daughters Maria, Olga, Tatiana centre rear Anastasia and son Alexei.