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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Town Asks Tarantino to Save 'Doctor Zhivago's House'

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Detinov / YouTube

Residents of a small Russian town have appealed to Hollywood director Quentin Tarantino to help them save the house where renowned Russian writer Boris Pasternak once stayed.

Located in the town of Kasimov southeast of Moscow, the "Pasternak House" belonged to Osip Kaufman, Pasternak's uncle. Kaufman is believed to have inspired his most famous protagonist, Doctor Zhivago.

His long-abandoned home now stands in ruins after local authorities couldn't afford to restore it following a 2017 fire.

"Dear Mr. Tarantino, we know that you love Russian literature and have a special spiritual connection with Boris Pasternak," the Kasimov residents say in the video posted on Pasternak's 132nd birthday. "Please help us save this house, which holds such a great historical importance to our town."

The residents say they want to turn the home into a literary museum and preserve "that part of pre-revolutionary Russia that was dear to Boris Pasternak."

"We are ashamed to seek help from you, an American director, but the local officials left us no choice."

Tarantino is known for his love of Pasternak and visited the novelist's grave in 2004. The Hollywood director said that he knows Pasternak's poems by heart and that the writer has greatly influenced his work.

In their video, the Kasimov residents note that Tarantino appreciates Russian culture far more than an average Russian official.

In their video message to Tarantino, Kasimov residents also invite the director to visit their town.

Kasimov authorities didn't comment on the residents' appeal, citing the mayor's illness.

Pasternak visited Kasimov in summer 1920. Literary critics believe that Yuri Andreievich Zhivago, the protagonist of his 1957 novel "Doctor Zhivago," shared many characteristics with the writer's uncle, and that Kasimov was the inspiration for the novel's fictional town of Yuryatin.

Russian photographer Yuri Feklistov posted photos of the decaying house on his Facebook page in 2018. According to Feklistov, there was no Pasternak plaque on the house until the local Jewish community helped install one in 2008. However, the plaque had disappeared by the time the photographer published his post.

"Doctor Zhivago," which offered a critical depiction of the Russian Revolution, was banned in the Soviet Union. The novel earned Pasternak the 1958 Nobel Prize for Literature but he was forced to decline it by the Soviet government.

This is not the first time Russian citizens have contacted famous foreigners for help.

In November 2020, residents of a Russian village asked then-German Chancellor Angela Merkel to repair their road.

Occupants of a residential complex in Ufa wrote a letter to Pope Francis to complain about a lack of heating in October 2019. The heating was later turned on — but only for one day.

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