



# LEE'S SOCIAL STUDIES

WITH LEE LITAS | e-mail: tablehopping@yahoo.com

## Chicago celebrates Russia's birthday

The first Russia Day celebration in Chicago began June 13 at the Chicago Cultural Center with the playing of both national anthems: Russian and American.

The pageantry continued with cultural presentations by the Golosa Choir, cellist Ian Maksin, opera soprano Heather Aranyi, Joffrey Ballet's Academy of Dance and the Russian Cathedral Ensemble.

The event also included salutations by Sen. Mark Kirk (via video) and Prince Piotr Galitzine.

"This is the first time the city of Chicago is formally celebrating Russia Day, our national independence day," said Aleksandra Efimova, master of ceremonies and Moscow Committee co-chair. "I look forward to this becoming an annual tradition."

Russia's Independence Day is celebrated June 12 and commemorates the date in 1990 when the Russian Parliament formally declared sovereignty over Russia.

"It is a date when the political reality of Russia changed and a new era of leadership began," Efimova said.

Sergey I. Kislyak, Russia's ambassador to the United States, flew in from Washington, D.C., for the event.

"For me, as an ambassador, it is so rewarding because it is about friendship, about sharing the culture and history of Russians [and] how ever important the work of the government to build relations, it is not going to be sustainable and irreversible unless there are enough contacts between people and willingness to build bridges," Kislyak said.

Moscow is one of Chicago's 28 Sister Cities, a collaborative program encouraged originally in 1956 by President Dwight D. Eisenhower as a people-to-people initiative.

Vera Eliashevsky, chair of the Kiev Committee, was a guest at the observance.

"We try to support as many of the Sister Cities events as we can," Eliashevsky said.

Prince Piotr Galitzine attended with his wife, her imperial and royal highness, Maria Anna, granddaughter of Karl I, the last emperor of Austria.

"It's a birthday party. Happy birthday, Russia," Galitzine said.



Julia Bikbova of Glenview and members of the Skokie-based Chicago Association of Veterans of WWII: David Chernikhovskiy, Abram Sagalovich of Des Plaines, and the only Hero of the Soviet Union (the highest honor given to a soldier by the former USSR) Ivan Borozinets | PHOTOS BY LEE LITAS-FOR SUN-TIMES MEDIA



Lee Litás and Wilmette's Steve Robinson, general manager WFMT-FM



Gary Stoppelman of Oak Park



Chair of the Kiev Committee for the Chicago Sister Cities International Program, Vera Eliashevsky from Park Ridge