*Thank you to fellow Orloff breeder Alexander Korolev from Moscow, for this interesting article about the founder of the Russian Orloff breed of poultry.*

**Count Alexei Grigoryevich Orlov (1737–1808)** was by far the ablest member of the Orlov count family, and was also remarkable for his athletic strength and dexterity. In the palace revolution of 1762 he played an even more important part than his brother Gregory. It is alleged that he conveyed Peter III to the chateau of Ropsha and murdered him there with his own hands. (However, this is only conjecture), though Orlov's involvement is often cited and widely believed. It's believed that Catherine made sure she was no where near and claimed not to know of the murder until it was accomplished; sometimes it is said, against her will.

In the 19th century, Orlov trotters were considered the fastest in Europe.
In 1770 he was appointed commander-in-chief of the fleet sent against the Turks, whose far superior navy he annihilated at Chesme, a victory which led to the so-called Orlov Revolt and conquest of the Greek archipelago. For this exploit he received, in 1774, the honorific epithet Chesmensky, and the privilege of quartering the imperial arms in his shield.

The same year, on Catherine's request, he went to Livorno to seduce and bring to Russia the so-called Princess Tarakanova, who proclaimed herself daughter of Empress Elizabeth. Having succeeded in this unusual commission, he went into retirement and settled at Moscow.

There he devoted himself to breeding livestock, and produced the "finest race of horses" then known, the Orlov Trotter, by crossing Arabian Horses with the heavier but lively Friesian and with tall, swift English racing stallions. He also refined and popularized a breed of chicken, now called the Orloff in his honour. In the war with Napoleon during 1806-07, Orlov commanded the militia of the fifth district, which was placed on a war footing almost entirely at his own expense. He left an estate worth five million roubles and 30,000 serfs.

Beside of animal breeding he also formed the first Roma-choir (1774), selected out of his numerous Roma serfs (it were Xeladitka also called Russka Rom, not as sometimes thought imported slaves from Moldavië (Vlach) or from Oekraine (Servi-Rom). The choir reached an enormous popularity under the Russian aristocracy, and was copied by several other aristocrats training their Roma to sing in choirs. In 1807 the Orlov choir was given freedom. They could settle themselves in Moskow (which was forbidden to all other Roma) and lived and behaved as the aristocrats around them. Their offspring attended school and university and became the first Roma-intelligentsia. The Roma choirs influenced the image of the Roma in Russia a lot until at least the 20th century.