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## THE HERALDIC “THEATER” OF RUSSIAN CITIES

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### Abstract

The usurpation of the right to unite the surrounding territories bestowed some exclusive rights upon Moscow. Which other coat of arms apart from that of Moscow could surround itself with such a suite, such an entourage, of serving shields of arms on its heraldic map? An almost ideal social and geographical model is drawn up around the capital by the coats of arms of Moscow's retinue: all three principal forces of society are gathered in this national nucleus – those being craftsmen, parishioners and warriors – forming the trade, monastic and defense appendages to St. George's robe.

A century ago, the Bolsheviks placed Russia within a chain of catastrophic events and then effectively ring-fenced the country for about seventy years. The article below was first published in *Geograffity* magazine in the early 1990s when the Iron Curtain finally came down. The emergence of a magazine like *Geograffity* was a result of cultural claustrophobia, and it was one of the first attempts in the former Soviet Union to expose the world to the ideas of Russian intellectuals who had worked in total isolation for so many years.

*Geograffity* was produced by Quantum Bureau (Russia), a subsidiary of the Russian Academy of Science and a well-known publisher of *Quantum* magazine, an English language replica of *Kvant*, an outstanding Soviet journal popularizing the maths and sciences among the youth. *Geograffity* was printed in Hong Kong and distributed in the U.S., Canada, Europe, and Asia by the McDonald and Woodward publishing house (USA).

Sergei Rogatchev is a tremendously talented professional geographer, lecturer, country-studies specialist (for Africa, the Middle East, and Russia), and geography professor at Moscow State University. “The Heraldic Theater of Russian Cities” is a wonderful piece of geographical representation of Russian identity through the careful analysis, mapping, and interpretation of the coats of arms of the country's cities.

*Alexei Novikov,*  
Geograffity, Editor-in-Chief 1990–1994

### Moscow

*The wonder of St. George and the dragon*

**S**aint George is striking the dragon lying prostrate at his horse's feet. This image of slaughter, placed in the center of Russia's heraldic map, is uncommon among the Russian regional coats of arms. Moscow's “wonder of the dragon” looks an absolute wonder alongside some of the routine and humdrum subjects which constitute most ancient Russian heraldic

symbols. One comes across such imagery of violence perpetrated against another solely in the coats of arms of Archangel'sk,<sup>1</sup> Novogeorgievsk, and Yegor'yevsk. However, on these coats of arms such themes are merely illustrations interpreting the city names, the heraldic readings of place names. The suggestion of massacre on the coat of arms of Moscow seems, however, to be deliberate, for the capital proclaims through this heraldic bearing its exclusive right to both execution and mercy.

The ancient seal of Kiev also bore a heraldic composition depicting a saint striking the dragon. When it brought the former South Russian capital under its power, Moscow deprived the Kiev warrior of his challenger, and the monster disappeared from Kiev's coat of arms. Recognizing the historical merits of Kiev, Moscow's authorities left an armed archangel on the armorial shield of Kiev, yet wrested from him his right to choose and castigate the enemy independently. The dragon deserving the spear's agonizing thrust could be decided upon only by George the Victorious bearing the gilded shield of Moscow.

Before the unambiguous language of Moscow's heraldry brought the spear-bearing horseman to Kiev,<sup>2</sup> some nearer provinces had found themselves in the role of the dragon under the onslaught of the center's spear. The Moscow horseman assumed the right to govern and speed up the centralization process, which, in spite of the internecine wars among the local princes, started its development in the area between the Volga and the Oka rivers. When in the 13th century the princes of Tver', Pereyasavl', Vladimir, and Moscow arrived at a concord of unity and their princely crowns came together onto the ermine background of the coat of arms of Dmitrov — "to commemorate the famed reunion of the four Russian princes in this town,"<sup>3</sup> their crowned heads never imagined that the "confederation" shield of Dmitrov would soon be headed by Moscow's mounted ruler.<sup>4</sup> Dmitrov's coat of arms was a testament to the "democratic" alternative to Moscow's sweep across Russia, a monument to an unsuccessful attempt at centralization from below.

#### *Suite of St. George*

Usurpation of the right to unite the surrounding territories bestowed upon Moscow some exclusive rights. Which other coat of arms apart from that of Moscow could surround itself with such a suite, such an entourage, of serving shields of arms on its heraldic map? The town of Podol'sk is cutting and trimming the stone for Cyclopean Kremlin buildings with its crossed stone hammers. The silk-spinning wheels of Bogorodsk are turning tirelessly; Aleksandrov is working in metal; the horse-breeders of Bronnitsy are raising "golden horses in green fields" for the court of Tzar Theodor Ioannovich.<sup>5</sup>

- 1 Though according to the coat of arms of Arkhangel'sk, the Warrior is not killing the devil (at least, the heraldic scene tells nothing about it) but merely shaming this mystical enemy of the human race.
- 2 The author alludes to the proverb: "The tongue will lead one to Kiev," i.e., a very well-known place in ancient Russia. But later the understanding of the proverb changed, and it started to mean that by asking people, one can learn the way to a very remote point.
- 3 The late 13th century abounded in princely feuds aggravated by the princes' support by rival groups in the Golden Horde. In 1299, Andrew Great Prince of Vladimir, Michael Prince of Tver', Ivan Prince of Pereyasavl', and Daniel Prince of Moscow came together in the town of Dmitrov to make peace. Andrew and Daniel succeeded in working out their mutual problems, while Ivan and Michael parted to feud (*All quotations in this article are taken from N.A. Soboleva, Starinnye gerby Rossiyskikh gorodov (Ancient coats-of-arms of Russian cities), Moscow, 1985*).
- 4 Generally speaking, the regional coat of arms is found in the upper part of the heraldic shields of regional centers, the smaller settlements normally playing a quite formal part and telling us about their administrative subordination. The "upper figure" has nothing in common with the local heraldic figure either in terms of composition or plot. We have removed (except for some special cases) the local "headers" from regional coats of arms featured on the heraldic map here. Yet the position of the Moscow victor on the coat of arms of Dmitrov is so expressive that one is tempted to regard the whole coat of arms as an integral composition. The Moscow horseman is aiming its centralizing lance not only at the conventional dragon, but also at local equality shimmering feebly at the foot of the shield.
- 5 Theodore Ivanovich, tzar of Russia, last of the Ruriks' dynasty (to say nothing of Basil Shuisky), who reigned in 1584–1598.

Volokolamsk, Ruza, Mozhaysk, Vereya and Borovsk<sup>6</sup> repel the blows of Western Europe aimed at Moscow with their symbols of fortification and martialism, while Serpukhov, Kashira, Kolomna and Ryazan' guard the southern borders from marauding nomads. Intimidating potential enemies, the Serpukhov peacock spreads its tail as a barrier; a glorious border sign is raised high in Kolomna — "in sky-blue field a white post with the crown at its top." Two stars on the sides of the Kolomna post threaten trespassers of the lord's Rubicon with heavenly fire. The prince of Ryazan' who, like the saint on Kiev's seal, was for determining the enemy independently, guards the Oka border of the Center, his sword in hand.

Prayers are offered for the Moscow emperor in the monastery cells of the towns of Sergiev and Voskresensk (New Jerusalem); *ex occidente* — an ancient bell — tolls either joy or danger at the monastery named after "Savva the Vigilant" (Storozhevskiy) in the town of Zvenigorod.

An almost ideal social and geographical model is drawn up around the capital by the coats of arms of Moscow's retinue: all three principal forces of society are gathered in this national nucleus, — those being craftsmen, parishioners, and warriors — forming the trade, monastic and defense appendages to St. George's robe.

At first, the hostile West and South — whose attacks Moscow's feudal sovereign beat off with the aid of his vassals, relying little on his own spear — could not take easily to the tranquil elevation of Moscow. The silver horse of St. George could run north and east with much more audacity. Practically no heraldic military symbols were encountered in this wide and spacious area, from the castles of the Baltic knights and bishops up to Sviyazhsk and the Simbirsk steppe.

### **Bears' corner (god-forsaken places)**

#### *Yaroslavl' bear at service*

Moscow conquered easily the lake lands of Pereyasavl' in the North and thus provided the tables of its citizens with "golden herrings." Afterwards, Rostov and Yaroslavl' joined, and with due obedience, as if from a zoo's cages, their animals too stepped out onto the heraldic shields. Rostov's deer allowed the gilding of its hoofs and mane to look like a wrought metal collar. And Yaroslavl's bear shouldered an axe, with which Prince Yaroslav the Wise,<sup>7</sup> the leader of all Novgorodians, once killed this animal sacred to the Finns living in the Upper Volga.

It is notable that the scene of this symbolic hunting was never depicted on the heraldic shield of Yaroslavl', when in this particular instance the scene of butchery would be more historically justified than that on Moscow's coat of arms. The bear is neither lifeless nor blood-soaked, for the exclusive right to execution and mercy no longer belongs to Novgorod's leaders, but to the horseman "in silver armor and sky-blue cloak." The authors of Yaroslavl's heraldic coat of arms revived the animal, and as a comical clown he walked onto the shield doomed to humiliation, carrying a pole-axe on his shoulder — not so much as a reminder of his slaying at the hands of Prince Yaroslav, but as his "sword of Damocles,"<sup>8</sup> a sign of his subordination to Moscow.

6 Here is the description of the coat of arms of Borovsk. In the times of the Second Pseudo-Demetrius (in 1607, the Second Impostor, whose real name is unknown, but who is commonly known as the Thief of Tushino, declared himself Demetrius, son of Ivan the Terrible, and headed a party of insurgents for Moscow, where he held his ground for two years and was killed in 1610), Borovsk and Pafnutyev, a monastery abiding in Borovsk, were the site where the defenders of the town betrayed their Motherland and surrendered the town and the monastery to that villain Pseudo-Demetrius. However, Prince Volkonsky, one of the defenders, did not stop fighting and, pierced by dozens of arrows, was slain at the left-hand choir in the monastery church. To recall this honorable feat the coat of arms has a silver background (which stands for innocence and a kind heart) and a reddish golden heart (evidence of faithfulness) which is emblazoned with a cross. The heart is surrounded by laurels signifying the strength and honorable resistance that brought fame to this leader and many others who perished in the name of justice

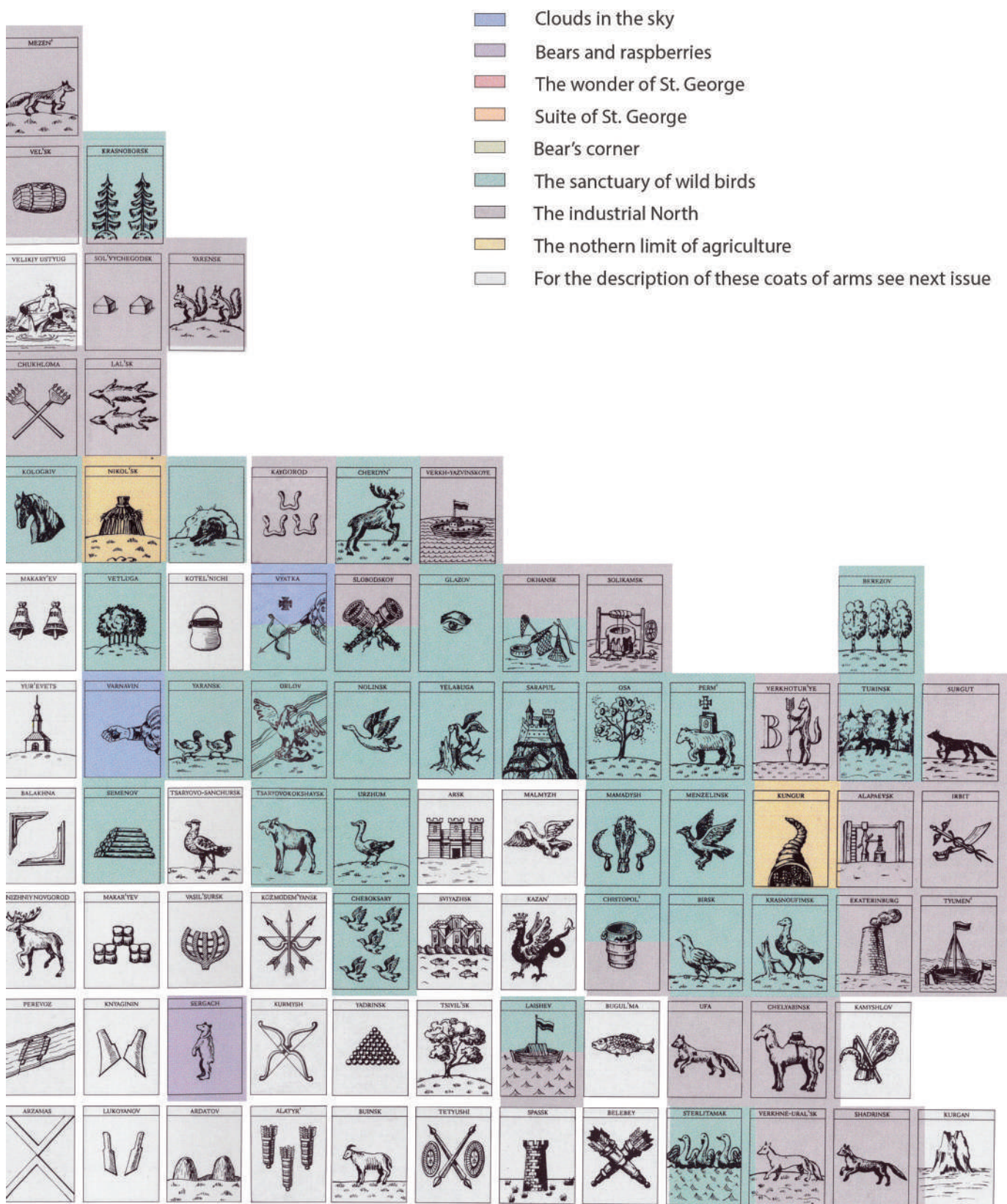
7 Yaroslav the Wise, prince of Kiev 1019–1054; in his youth he was designated prince of Novgorod by his father, Saint Vladimir.

8 In 1918 "the sword of Damocles" would hit the rebellious people of Yaroslavl'. Demidov's Lyceum, burned down by Moscow gunners (this is a reference to a mutiny stirred up by the opposition and suppressed by the Bolsheviks), became for Yaroslavl' as irreplaceable a loss as the killing of its furry totem had been for earlier pagans. The pagans' domain disappeared, as did Yaroslavl', famous for the first theater and the first provincial magazine. But the bear is still doomed to carry the instrument of its murder, and the axes of smoke from Yaroslavl's plants, fixed on the poles of their chimneys, are rising high over its head.









The schematic map of cities. Each city is represented by its coat of arms. The location of each city on the scheme in relation to any other location approximately corresponds with the real location of the city on the topographic map. Only distances between cities have been distorted, but neighbors and orientation are maintained.

### *Bears' clumsy assistance*

Striving for power, Moscow was very sophisticated in finding different ways of pursuing the heraldic struggle with rival towns. In the South the authors of Russia's heraldic emblems overthrew the Prince (formerly Grand Prince) of Ryazan' and forced him to stand at attention before the Moscow horseman and guard the peace of Moscow at its unsafe southern borders. But in the not so dangerous North, Moscow's heraldic conclave preserved the throne of Tver's Grand Princes on the field of Tver's coat of arms — as a pleasant gesture toward the suppressed grandeur of the rival — while the Tver' prince was mercilessly dislodged from his throne.

After Tver' it was the turn of "Lord Novgorod the Great." On Novgorod's heraldic shield the steppen<sup>9</sup> was replaced by the monarch's throne. The throne is vacant, but the scepter placed on it speaks clearly about the presence of an autocratic Moscow. (Remember the witty observation from *Dead Souls* by N.V. Gogol — the district police officer needn't go personally to calm down his rebellious peasants, it being sufficient just to send his police cap.)

Neither the snow leopard nor the bear is guarding Novgorod's throne, as they did on the ancient seal of Novgorod. Since that time there have appeared two bears symmetrically placed as though holding the Novgorod symbol with their elbows. The snow leopard is a far too independent symbol to bow to the heraldic influence from the West. The bear is simpler and safer. Sending a bear-governor to replace the snow leopard in Novgorod, Moscow both "strengthened the local administration"<sup>10</sup> and deeply humiliated Lord the Great: the bear that was placed on Novgorod's heraldic shield as the master and the Yaroslavl' pagan who earlier gave fealty to Novgorod are as like as two peas. That explains why those who devised the coats of arms in Moscow decided to revive, tame, and arm Yaroslavl's beast.

The practice of sending out heraldic bears was not confined to the correction of Novgorod's coat of arms. According to the formal similarity of two place names, the heraldic conclave would deliberately move the Yaroslavl' bear onto the coat of arms of the town of Maloyaroslavets. The bear from the northern woods was placed forward to persecute the steppe eagles that overflowed the shields of Mosal'sk and Odoev, as heraldic replicas of the shield of the town of Chernigov.<sup>11</sup>

The bear was also lifted onto the heraldic shield of Sergach. Unlike his Yaroslavl' and Novgorod brothers, who have lost their animal nature and have become purely symbolic figures, the bear of Sergach is living and natural. He has no other heraldic burdens and is absolutely "naked." His at service posture was chosen by the Sergach people without the influence of any heraldic canons, for they were able pupils of Moscow's herald masters and famous bear tamers as well. They caught and trained bears; the trainer of "General Toptygin"<sup>12</sup> was undoubtedly from Sergach.

Export of the ancient Yaroslavl' bear in the new Sergach version (the strong bear knew the mysteries of the Volga left bank woods but was absolutely tame;<sup>13</sup> he was wild, though easy to train) contributed a great deal to turning this heraldic protagonist of the Russian North into the informal national symbol of Russia — especially for foreigners.

### *Bears and raspberries*

The heraldic area situated to the north-west of the heraldic ingot of Moscow, between the far-flung bears' routes to Novgorod and Yaroslavl', looks a veritably god-forsaken place. In this remote corner, lost between the colonial routes of the Moscow horseman, the ideas of heraldry arc at slumber.

The author of the coats of arms for the Yaroslavl' region became the victim of doubts; he thus failed to devise any individual and specific attribute for the towns of Danilov, Lyubim, Poshekhonye, Borisoglebsk, and Petrovsk. Here he found no food for his heraldic thought and succumbed to trifling with the regional bear.

9 Stepen is a raised seat for *posadniks* (designees). The political system of Novgorod was notable for the weak power of the prince. The greatest power was vested in the *veche*, the assembly of free citizens (the word was also used for the meeting place itself). The *veche* elected a *posadnik*, who would administer the city and judicial system.

10 A communist idiomatic cliché.

11 Chernigov's coat of arms, with minor additional detail, is depicted on the coats of arms of Mosal'sk and Odoev. The eagle on the coat of arms of Chernigov signifies that, earlier, those towns were drawn into the Chernigov domain.

12 General Toptygin, a bear, the character of a satirical poem of the same name by Nikolai Nekrasov.

13 "Is the bear with you?" "Don't worry, ours is tame and quiet." N. Nekrasov, "General Toptygin."



We run up against a very rare situation for Russian heraldry with the coats of arms for the towns in the Yaroslavl' region. They broke the custom according to which the regional symbol, usually placed at the top of the local shield, served as a universal crest for all the local coats of arms. The upper, regional figure never interfered in the affairs of the independent figures located in the lower, local part of the shield.<sup>14</sup> But this is absolutely different for the Yaroslavl' region. Only a few local coats of arms independently carry their own meaningful figures. Yet the bear of Yaroslavl' is given a free hand, and he becomes a protagonist in half of the coats of arms of the Yaroslavl' region. Each time, he acquires arbitrary size and background color. The choice of position on the shield is also left to the bear: one can find him in the center, upper, or left-hand part. At times he is depicted to the local people as a whole form, at times its top half; he may face fully or half-face his audience.

No other regional heraldic hero in Russia could afford such unruly behavior as the famous General Toptygin could in his heraldic domain. Toptygin went on a spree, for localities subordinate to him could put forward no worthy symbols of their own. Even in recent documents and papers about the local towns of the Yaroslavl' region, we come across only humiliating definitions such as "Although an administrative district, Poshekhonye is a mere rural area, without a town."

Could the small mouse of Myshkin (*Myshkin* in Russian means *that of a mouse*, for *mysh* is the Russian for *mouse*) struggle even with a small bear? All rights of the mouse to appear on the heraldic shield come down to the interplay of the place name and heraldry. Similarly, the red hill on the coat of arms of Krasnyy Kholm in the Tver' region (in Russian *krasnyy kholm* stands for *red hill*) could never be an obstacle for the bear's expedition to Novgorod.<sup>15</sup>

Oh, no! Instead of trying to resist the advance of General Toptygin it is much better to welcome him with some delicious food. The Tver' province welcomes the bear with a cane of delicious raspberries placed on the tray of the Bezhetsk's shield. It is better to do the bear such a favor than to let him step onto the field of the regional coat of arms and the throne of Tver', as happened in Novgorod.

The passive suffering and geographical lack of expression of this area are built up by the picture of the crawfish of Ves'yegonsk and the hare of Korcheva. Both animals became a delicious dish recently, but in earlier times, when coats of arms were being formulated, such symbols denoted the dull banality of the places to which they were awarded.

The most expressive symbol of the suffering and passivity characteristic of this Upper Volga "bears' corner" is the coat of arms of Uglich, which depicts the innocent Prince Demetrius<sup>16</sup> holding the knife of his murderer.<sup>17</sup> What other role could be played by Uglich, which belonged to the land of mice, hares, and bears fed with raspberries, and which used to be the nearest destination from Moscow for political exile, as well as the place of secret political murder?

Where could an outcast find asylum here? Behind the monastery gate of Kalyazin or the ground city wall of Mologa, which was to remain the protector of monuments of archaic times for posterity? Could these museum strongholds be taken seriously by the Moscow horseman, who had surrounded himself by the stone castles of Mozhaisk and Sergiev, by the traditions of Vereya and Kolomna, and by the modern fortifications of Volokolamsk, and who demolished everything, even the eternal stones of Podol'sk and Nikitsk?

The coat of arms of Uglich echoes that of Yaroslavl'. The last fortress of the pagan's domain, cut down with an axe, resembles the last tzar from Rurik's dynasty, murdered with a knife six centuries later. Together with the empty thrones of Tver' and Novgorod they give almost eschatological

<sup>14</sup> In later local coats of arms the regional symbol is placed in the upper "right-hand" corner (actually meaning left-hand corner, since heraldic terminology uses mirror images.)

<sup>15</sup> This group of coats of arms is based on place names and extends further into the southwest of the Moscow – Novgorod line: an aged nun (Russian: *staritza*) in Staritza, an isle (*ostrov*) in Ostrov, prongs (*zubtzy*) in Zibtsov, a hill (*kholm*) in Kholm.

<sup>16</sup> Demetrius, son of Ivan the Terrible, was murdered in Uglich in 1591. An official commission appointed to investigate the murder included Basil Ivanovich Shuisky. The commission reported Demetrius to have stabbed himself in an epileptic fit. In 1606, Basil Shuisky headed a plot against the First Impostor, known as Grishka Otrepyev, who had declared himself as Demetrius Ivanovich. After the First Impostor had been murdered, Shuisky was crowned tzar in Moscow. Written statements were circulated by Shuisky, who now testified to the violent nature of Demetrius' death, thus backtracking his own words, but proved to be to no avail in precluding the appearance of the Second Impostor, the Pseudo-Demetrius II.

<sup>17</sup> Naturally, there is no murderer on the coat of arms. The figure of the villain placed near the innocent boy would have inspired respect for the memory of the Prince. Nevertheless the hand that lifted the knife could never appear on the heraldic shield of Uglich. Only the Center can execute and show mercy, which it did – either by the hand of noble Basil Shuisky, who signed the investigation document about the casual suicide of the boy or by the same tzar's hand pointing at the murderers.

meaning to the whole heraldic area, where, along with the ending of the pagan realm and of Rurik's dynasty, of the independence of Tver' and of Novgorod, Vladimir-and-Suzdal' Russia came to an end; blood flowed freely everywhere (probably, the ancient earthen wall around Mologa is somehow connected with the battle at the river Syt'<sup>18</sup>). Both the long-eared hare of Korcheva and the small unarmed bear of Mologa seem to foresee their end, listening carefully for the roar of bulldozers, as if the author of the coats of arms had read the future plans of "Hydroproject"<sup>19</sup> and deliberately gave Korcheva and Mologa these symbols that are so poor in vitality!

But we cannot say that the heraldic "bears' corner" of the Upper Volga region looks senseless or that it passed without purpose. Its sufferings teach us a lesson. On the heraldic map of Russia, the victim of Uglich on his blood-red shield is the first (on the heraldic map of Russia) reminder of morality in politics. The frightened figures of Korcheva's hare, drowned in the artificial lake, and the unarmed bear from Mologa, who in vain hid himself behind the city wall ruined by the waters of "the Big Volga," should be regarded as a revelation about a morality in economics that is only nowadays approaching us.

*Bears' corner in the sanctuary of wild birds*

In 1812 the Moscow prizefighter would trudge the road to Paris fairs with the bear of Sergach through Kovno (a monument to Russia's victory in the Napoleonic war rises high in Kovno's coat of arms). Not all the bears of heraldic Russia want to walk on their hind legs as performing clowns beyond the Kovno milestone.<sup>20</sup> Not all of them want to wear on their shoulders the uniform attributes signifying service to the Center.

The bear of Great Perm would only agree to carry the Bible and the cross laid on its back for the famous educator, Saint Stephen of Perm.<sup>21</sup> Moscow's heraldic conclave, trying to disturb the bear of Ust'-Sysol'sk, faced open resistance. This bear was unwilling to become a human being, either through heraldic symbols or through the training of Sergach, and would hide deep in his den, exposing his white fangs.

The bear of Ust'-Sysol'sk is literally cornered, driven to the upper corner, which "collapsed" between the economic axes of the Volga and the Urals. His perilous roar prevents men from feeling free deep inside these areas. They dare hunt only with heavenly help, and in the coat of arms of Vyatka a hand appearing from the clouds holds the bow, while the shield itself is emblazoned with a cross. This land is bountiful, not with things of human concern, but with the twitter and song of many different birds: hawks, wild duck, geese, wood-peckers, and even an eagle are placed on the heraldic shields of the Vyatka region. The elk of Cherdyn', which has gone to lick salt at the Solikamsk mine, is galloping back to the safety of this nature's asylum. At the southern end of it his mate of Tzarevokshaysk remains prone, trembling with each new knock of the logs rolled by the Volga timber cutters to the stack of Semenov. There is no room for wild animals in the hearth of life active on the Volga. Only the wild ducks, soaring high in the heavenly blue in the coat of arms of Cheboksary, feel temporarily safe from men. They can find sublime peace only in the depth of Vyatka of Yaransk's heraldic shield.

The essence of this heraldic area, forgotten by proud man, is very well expressed in the allegorical description of the coat of arms of Nolinsk, of "the flying swan, because birds fly by, never stopping near the town." Yet the human eye of Glazov (*glaz* is the Russian for *eye*) has shrewdly pierced this remote corner. It will be very, very soon that the ministries, avoiding every stranger's look, will set their eyes on these territories. The bears, birds, and elk are ideal spectators for the future defense constructions.

In the west, "the land of peaceful birds" is trimmed with a strip of heraldic impersonality. Interpretations of place names — the white willows (*vetla* in Russian) of Vetluga, the horse's head with

<sup>18</sup> The battle of the river Syt' took place in 1238. Here, Khan Baty defeated the armies of the Vladimir principedom.

<sup>19</sup> Hydroproject is an organization which draws up land melioration and hydro engineering projects. In particular, it managed the Volga reservoirs that inundated a considerable number of old villages and towns including Korcheva and Mologa.

<sup>20</sup> Besides its literal meaning, "beyond the western border", the phrase "beyond the Kovno milestone" means "far." It is analogous to "the Kolomna milestone," an expression that is synonymous for something long and that derives from the belief that the Moscow-Kolomna road was marked out with milestones set extremely far apart.

<sup>21</sup> Stephen of Perm preached the Gospel to the local Finnish peoples.



a large mane (*griva*) of Kologriv, the buoy (*buy*) of Buy, the red pine forest (*krasny bor*) of Krasnoborsk — link the corner of Vyatka with the remote areas of the Yaroslavl' and Tver' regions both geographically and semantically.

In the East the chatter of Vyatka's birds is drowned in the active clatter of the Kama shipbuilding industry of Laishev (like that of the Volga in the South); the bread trade of Chistopol; the corn growing of Mamadysh; the colonial castle of Sarapul; the fishing of Okhansk; the educated bear of Perm'; and the saltworks of Solikamsk. The woodpecker of Elabuga, in the vicinity of the Kama, is also affected by the sound of the woodcutter's axe, since the ax has already touched the banks of the Kama (like those of the Volga in the town of Semyenov), and the woodpecker is now pecking at a tree stump. Yet beyond the Kama one again finds oneself in the kingdom of birds, recurrent in the coats of arms of Menzelinsk, Birsk, Krasnoufimsk, and Sterlitamak, and on to the very Urals.

The river sparrow of Birsk and the geese of Sterlitamak appear as heraldic water pointers on the left tributary of the Kama — the river Belaya. Like the wild goose of Urzhum, the blue ribbon of Orlov and the fishing nets of Slobodskoy suggest the existence of a hidden valley around the Vyatka, the right tributary of the Kama, deep in the bird wilderness of Vyatka.

### *Clouds in sky*

This kingdom of impersonal and passive towns, with its animals that are of little use to the people, forms an expansive belt over Moscow's heraldic bar from the Pskov boundaries to the Urals — from the island (*ostrov* in Russian) of the town of Ostrov to the cauldrons (*kotyol*) of Kotel'nich and the wasps (*osa* in Russian) of Osa.<sup>22</sup> The northern economic border of this barren belt is the northern limit of agriculture, signified on the heraldic map by the rye sheaves of Demyansk and Nikol'sk (in Vologda region), protruding to the North,<sup>23</sup> between them the linen of Pudozh and, continuing the line to the east, the not so abundant horn of Kungur rye.<sup>24</sup> Naturally Kungur, where it is possible to grow and harvest corn, seems absolutely abundant to the bear of Perm' and the sable of Verkhotur'ye, surrounded as they are not by fertile cornfields, but by the woods of Osa and Berezov.

Running almost parallel to this rational economic boundary of agricultural poverty, one can see on the heraldic map a borderline displayed in a different way, which is either climatic or semimystical. This is a heraldic chain of clouds connecting the shields of Pskov, Olonets, Vologda, Varnavino, and Vyatka. This line of heraldic water suspended in the sky resembles the isohyet of maximal precipitation in the Russian plain. But the heavenly hands appearing out of the clouds reveal on the obscure horizon the cover of Providence, Moscow's cloak covering the ancient Russian lands that since olden times have been under the temporal and absolute tyrannical influence of the Center. Development is suppressed under that cloudy and gloomy halo of prestigious Moscow in this land of withering agriculture. Place names and their meanings are monotonous and artificial, and the remote bears' and birds' heraldic shields are only disturbed by glimpses of lakes, the vision of St. Demetrius, and the ghostly vacant thrones of Tver' and Novgorod.<sup>25</sup>

### **The industrial north**

#### *Industrial colonization*

Desperate bears with axes go wandering through the Yaroslavl' North, near the boundary of withering agriculture, and are searching for their best application. Not all of them can join the administrative service to hunt for the outcast ounce of Novgorod or travel — through Maloyaroslavets's stirring

22 The insects of Osa are called bees in the description of its coat of arms. This is apparently conditioned by the desire to bring more sense, to retouch the offensive picture that depicts these useless and harmful wasps on the coat of arms of a small, harmless, and remote town.

23 This northern protrusion corresponds to the actual curve northwards around the lakes of the Beloozero and the Ladoga, which used to be the limit of Russian agriculture.

24 The rye ears inside the horn of plenty seem an embodiment of heraldic irony, for normally the horn is depicted full of all the exotic fruits imaginable.

25 For the moment we will disengage ourselves from the transport symbols of Moscow and St. Petersburg fighting their way through these virgin heraldic areas. We will come back to them later.

eagles — to the desirable hives of Sosnitsa (we will speak about the hives later). Few of them are ready to choose the path of a Sergach dancer.

Leaving the orbit of immediate subordination to Moscow, breaking the harshness of poor agricultural soil, the bears head for the industrially colonized North, where, above the clouds, St. George's spear of Moscow will never reach them. It is in the depth of their adored woods that they create an amazing and versatile range of trading activities, without comparison among other parts of the heraldic map.

With their ready and speedy axes, the forest inhabitants are hired to make the vats (*kadka* in Russian) of Kadnikov and to produce wood-tar and fill barrels with it in Vel'sk. In the woods they hunt for fox (Mezen'), marten (Lal'sk, Shadrinsk and Ufa), squirrel (Yarensk) and in the taiga, up to the Urals, and further — for Siberian sable (Verkhoturys) and ermine (Verkhneural'sk). The hunt for trivialities becomes so attractive that Tot'ma's hunters spread their trade as far as Russian America. And it was from the American islands that the silver fox stepped onto the Tot'ma and Surgut coat of arms, for it was never seen in those places before.

With the golden harpoons borrowed from the shield of Chukhloma, these northern animals go fishing not only to the Chukhloma Lake, but also to the Beloye Lake (fishes are on the coat of arms of Belozersk) and Il'men' Lake (four silver fishes make the base of the Novgorod throne). The residents of Okhansk and Slobodskoy get their fishing nets, rods, and other tools, "with the help of which different species of fish can be caught there in great abundance." In this vicinity the people of Kaigorod boil fish to make "fish glue." The silver river salmon fill the tubs of Luga. There is also enough salt there to pickle it.

The second golden currency after furskins in the bear's Russia — salt — is boiled off at the salt works of Staraya Russa and falls in geometric crystals onto the shields of Soligalich and Sol'vychevodsk. The old salt sources are running out, yet a new salt mine is dug out in Solikamsk — "with a bucket for lifting the salt to the surface."

Salt was not the only reason for penetration into the northern forests. The coats of arms of Ustyuzhna (Ustyuzhna of the Iron Field) and Cherepovets draw attention to the significant — for those times — marsh resources of iron ores. Soon three iron hammers covered with a forked branch<sup>26</sup> thump at the shield of Petrozavodsk, indicating the abundance of ores and the different workshops abiding in the area. The North passes the baton of iron-processing on to the Urals, where Ekaterinburg is extracting ores from its "iron mine" and smelting them in "the silver furnace," while Alapayevsk is forging iron with its mechanical hammer.

The Urals are rightly seen as so attractive in terms of economy that the heraldry sees them neither as mountainous (all attention to the Urals' heights is limited to "the three green hills, which are actually situated nearby" on the heraldic map of Kostychy), nor as an impenetrable border obstacle. The Russian crossing of the Urals is marked off by no milestone or monument, by no kind of "Kolomna milestone"; the first milestone in the East appears only in the pyramid of Tobol'sk, much further to the East of the Urals. On the contrary, the heraldic heart of iron works in the Urals (Ekaterinburg and Alapayevsk, bordering Solikamsk in the North) is on all sides surrounded by blood vessels of transport and trading symbols (Laishev, Chistopol', Verkh-Yazvinskoye, Irbit, Chelyabinsk, Tyumen').

It is beyond the Ural mountains that the bear, who had gone through the purgatory hearth of metal-forge drudgery and toil, who had escaped Yaroslavl' and Sergach slavery, Novgorod gendarmery, Perm' humiliation and Ust'-Sysol'sk bondage, started a free and natural life, going without a care onto the enchanting clearing of the coat of arms of Turinsk.

<sup>26</sup> Quite often, metal deposits and water bearing strata used to be found by the divining method, with the use of a forked branch. The branch, when held in the diviner's hands, would rotate over the deposit.

С.В. РОГАЧЕВ

## ГЕРАЛЬДИЧЕСКИЙ «ТЕАТР» РОССИЙСКИХ ГОРОДОВ

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