

The Rarity of a Russian Double-Headed Eagle With All-Seeing Eye

by **Sir Knight James A. Marples**

It is commonplace to see images of the double-headed eagle as an emblem in heraldry, as an emblem of royal empires such as the Hapsburg Empire as well as the Russian Empire, and as a fraternal emblem as in the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry.

A "crowned" double-eagle is commonplace to see in all of the above settings, especially in Russian heraldry. However, to see a crowned double-eagle (issued by Russia) with the all-seeing eye within the delta or triangle is a true rarity. The example below is the only such example that I have ever seen. It is a Russian Medal, issued by Czar Nicholas I in the year 1849 for the "Pacification of Hungary and Transylvania." On the obverse is a radiant triangle with the eye of providence (Almighty God) above a crowned double-headed eagle, wings upward, shield of armor, with scepter and orb held in its claws. I think it is worth noting that the all-seeing eye of Almighty God is positioned above the man-made royal crown. The eagle's claws are holding the scepter and orb. The legend (translated) "God with us. Consider, Heathens, and Submit!"



The double-headed eagle symbol dates back thousands of years. Turkish princes used it on their banners, and later the Knight Crusaders adopted it, even though it had been their enemy's insignia. For some peculiar reason, the emblem instilled confidence and pride. The double-headed eagle in the Russian coat of arms dates back even before the reign of Ivan III (1462-1505). For centuries it was colored the traditional "imperial black" color. Today, it is generally

golden. However, in England, the Mercian Kings (region of the "Midlands" of England from the 6th to 10th Century) used the double-eagle as their symbol prior to the Norman Conquest by William-the-Conqueror in the year A.D. 1066. It was the seal of the Count of Wurzburg, Germany in the year 1202 and also the seal of the bishop of Cologne, Germany. It was the crest of the city of Vienna in 1461. In France, historical evidence shows the emblem used by Count de Montmajour with the motto: "I shall hold myself erect and not blink." It is clearly evident that the virtue of "Eternal Vigilance" was always associated with the double-headed eagle.

In a Scottish Rite Masonic context, the double-headed eagle was introduced by King Frederick the Great of Prussia, an early patron in the formative stages of the Scottish Rite. It first appears in the 30o as a Kadosh emblem, sometimes referred to as the degree of the "White and Black Eagle." Due to ritualistic confidentiality, the full significance is known to those Masons who hold that degree. Suffice it to say that the white and black duality has much underlying allegorical symbolism. The most apparent is the duality of the nature of mortal man. All of us are composed of traits which are both good and bad. Additionally, the duality of the light of "day" versus the dark of "night" is an inherent component of nature's equilibrium. The double-headed eagle of the 32o and 33o are generally silver in color in the Southern Jurisdiction of the United States of America and black in color in the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction. The gold beak and claws hold a ceremonial wavy sword from which a draped banner is held. The Southern Jurisdiction retains the motto of the 32o: "SPES MEA IN DEO EST" (My Hope Is In God.) Recently, the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction elected to abandon that in preference to a draped banner merely saying the English word, "FREEMASONS." The Latin Motto of the 33o is "DEUS MEUMQUE JUS," usually translated "God and My Right," however, from reading many ancient Masonic writings, I find a more accurate translation is "God and My Moral Rightness."

The background data indicates that the Pacification Medal was issued by Russia because the Hungarians, under the leadership of Lajos (Louis) Kossuth, rebelled against Austrian rule in 1848. Consequently, a young Emperor of Austria, Franz Josef, appealed to Tsar Nicholas I for military assistance. In June of 1849, Russian troops under the command of General Paskevich crossed the Carpathians from Poland and invaded Hungary. The Hungarians put up a resistance but were crushed, and Kossuth fled to Turkey. Small silver medals were given to military personnel, medics, and priests who participated in the pacification campaign.

Although Kossuth was defeated, he lived to champion democracy. He traveled to the United States and wrote out a handmade application form to petition to receive the degrees of Freemasonry in Cincinnati Lodge No. 133 Free and Accepted Masons in Ohio. The petition made the case for "emergency," and the next day, February 19, 1852, Louis Kossuth and four other friends were initiated as Entered Apprentices; passed to Fellow Crafts; and on the following day, February 20, 1852, were raised as Master Masons. Soon after, Louis Kossuth was exalted as a Royal Arch Mason in Cincinnati Chapter No. 2 of Royal Arch Masons. Brother Kossuth delivered many Masonic speeches in Indianapolis, Indiana; St. Louis, Missouri; and various other venues. Single-headed eagles have been used as symbols of "imperial power." By contrast, a double-headed eagle was a symbol of a double-empire. After the division of The Holy Roman Empire, the double-headed eagle was considered emblematic of one head figuratively "looking to the West" (or toward Rome) while the other head was

figuratively "looking to the East" (toward Byzantium). Ecclesiastically, the emblem took-on similar symbolism, due to East-West differences or influences. The Orthodox Church has traditionally had its "See" of authority in the Eastern Bloc countries, whereas the Roman Catholic Church has had its "See" of authority in the West, namely at Vatican City near Rome.

In the fraternal realm, with Ancient Craft Masonry in general and Scottish Rite Masonry in particular, a similar East-West symbolism was likewise implied. The first usage of the symbol in Freemasonry was in the year 1758, when a body calling itself "The Emperors of East and West" was established in Paris, France. However, The Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, when organized as such, utilized this emblem shortly after that time. The Supreme Council, 33o, Mother Jurisdiction of the World, at Charleston, South Carolina adopted the emblem as its official Insignia in 1801 when that Scottish Rite Supreme Council was founded, and the original "Seal" of the Masonic Grand Lodge of Texas, founded in 1838, bore a representation of the double-headed eagle.

As such, the double-headed eagle of Lagash is the oldest royal crest in the world. Lagash was an ancient Sumerian city located midway between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in modern-day Iraq. The "storm bird," as the symbol was called, was symbolic of soaring and flight, although representations of the double-eagle sitting perched or at-rest are quite common. The Crusaders brought it to the Hapsburgs and the Romanovs.

Getting back to the Pacification Medal by Russia, it features the Russian crowned double-headed eagle with a radiant all-seeing-eye of Almighty God above it. This is truly a rare sight.

Russia was then mainly Orthodox Christian, yet it would eventually become a communist-Leninist nation after the assassination of the Czar in 1918. After Emperor Nicholas I died, he was replaced by Alexander II and finally Nicholas II. It is worthy of note that this latter Czar Nicholas II's mother was a sister to the wife of King Edward VII of England (Maria Feodorovna). Thus, Edward, VII was an uncle by marriage to the Czar. Both were Christians; Nicholas II, a Russian Orthodox, and Edward, VII was the Head of the Church of England. Additionally, Edward VII was a kindhearted worldly gentleman as well as a Knight Templar Mason, and he also held the 33o in the Ancient and Accepted Rite of England and Wales and its districts and chapters overseas.

For a nation such as Russia to collapse into revolution in 1918 and to go communist and atheistic speaks volumes about that nation's past leaders. The gentle fraternity of regular Freemasonry has always and continues to champion liberty and a belief in a Supreme Being combined with the added belief in the hope for the Immortality of the soul. Many detractors want to blame Masonry for various grievances; however, Freemasonry has striven harder for religious freedom and toleration as well as for freedom from ideological oppression than nearly any other group. Freemasonry cannot be blamed for squabbles between nations. As just illustrated above, in countless wars and conflicts, there have been Masons or Masonic kinfolk on both sides.

The Pacification Medal issued by Russia trumpeted a victory in one battle in the overall scheme of mankind's history. Czar Nicholas I died during the Crimean War due to his catching a cold and stubbornly refusing to seek medical attention. However, the Crimean War led to

great leaps in medical advancements such as field surgery, the use of anesthetics, plaster casts for broken limbs, improved amputation methods, and development of five-stage triage. It was also the war with the first tactical use of railways, and the new invention of the "telegraph" enabled the first "live" reporting by war correspondents. It prompted the pioneer of the nursing profession, Florence Nightingale, and her staff of thirty-eight women and fifteen Catholic nuns to go directly to the war zone. Ms. Nightingale discovered the horrible neglect of wounded soldiers and was credited with reducing death-rates from forty-two percent by making improvements in hygiene herself or calling for the Sanitary Commission. By her devoted attention to wounded and ill patients, she earned the nickname, "The Lady with the Lamp," as she made her nightly rounds of visiting patients personally.

As for the Pacification Medal with "The All Seeing Eye of Providence" or "Almighty God," it is such a rarity that few Russian double-eagles before or afterward made such an outward display of reverence toward the Creator. In battles, mortal men often invoke God to be on their side. I think it is more important that we be on God's side. Had Nicholas I lived, it is possible that Orthodox Christianity would have thrived continuously in Russia without interruption. It is also possible that the atheist, Vladimir Lenin, would never have ascended to power. Revolutions thrive when people lose hope. Mid-19th Century Europe was evidence of this. Real pacification occurs when a citizenry is vigilant, at ease, and content but confident of military might, and unified, not by force or coercion, but by national loyalty. This medal, featuring the all-seeing eye of providence atop a Russian double-headed eagle, was a rarity for Russia. The word "pacification" in Pacification Medal is somewhat misleading. The countries of Hungary and Transylvania (part of modern-day Bulgaria) were defeated, and dissent was muffled. Despite that unsavory description, war is war. The purpose of this article is to show a rare instance where a Russian medal employed the best symbolism, yet when one element was later discarded (the emblem of Deity), it was a harbinger of Russia's gradual and downward spiraling decline from its past glory.

Almighty God, our Creator and preserver, is rightfully at the top of this medal. This is emblematic of God being a top priority in our lives. Separation of church and state can and should exist. A small degree of separation ensures that no parochial or partisan dominance will be able to snuff out the rights of persons with slightly differing beliefs. The "radiant" or rays of light depicted on the Medal are "blessings" bestowed by the Creator. As an omnipotent Supreme Being, Almighty God, truly reigns supreme. As this article illustrates, various empires and entities have employed the double-headed eagle design. Some survive although many have suffered eventual extinction, and a few empires which lost their sense of proper priorities, eventually degenerated into corruption, and some have either entirely faded away or have ceased to have an atmosphere of peace and prosperity when they lose faith in God. For all regular Freemasons, belief in Almighty God is paramount.



Sources / Exhibits / Recommended Readings

- Mackey's Encyclopedia of Freemasonry by Dr. Albert G. Mackey, M.D., 33° and a Knight Templar.
- 10,000 Famous Freemasons by William R. Denslow.
- "Louis Kossuth, Mason and Apostle of World Democracy by David Kruger". Scottish Rite Journal. June 2001
- 1849 Russian Medal for the Pacification of Hungary and Transylvania. Mint Year 1849. Weight 0.41 grams. Diameter 29 mm. Composition: Silver.
- Bro.: Kossuth spoke at a meeting of Center Masonic Lodge #23 at Indianapolis, Indiana, on February 28, 1852, in which he urged all people to appreciate Masonry's "excellent precepts and high moral teachings of the order to appreciate its benevolent purposes and useful works."
- "The Builder", a Journal of Freemasonry. April 1923 issue.

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