Translated by Greg Gorsuch (Part 3)

STATE OF THE RUSSIAN NATION
FROM THE IXth UNTIL THE XIIIth CENTURY.

The expeditions of Oleg to the frontiers of the Greek Empire prove that the government established among the Russians, in the beginning, was only the supremacy of a military chief, freely elected by his companions. The heredity of power, in this order of things, had the value of a fact more than the virtue of a principle, and he alone who had exercised power with brilliancy was sure of transmitting it to his own. Such has been nearly everywhere, in the north as in the south of Europe, the primitive character of military and feudal royalty.

In Russia, however, the throne seems to have been rather constantly hereditary, and the power to dispose of it is what has often compromised it by slowing down the rise of the nation. "By dividing his empire among his twelve sons, Vladimir the Great," -- says the historian Muller, whom we have often consulted -- "retarded the progress of commerce and letters, and diminished the political importance of Russia. The troubles and the wars which resulted from this division plunged the Russians back into barbarism, from which they were beginning to emerge."

Iaroslav's code contains provisions full of wisdom and humanity; there are even some which recall the fine traditions of ancient Greek legislation; others, and this is the greatest number, come close to the code of the Franks, which is called Salic Law. But, alongside these luminous strokes of a nascent reason, he finds the strangeness of which astonishes: for example, to pull a hair from a man's beard was a much greater offense than to break his limb.

Iaroslav had made laws in favor of merchants and foreigners, such as this: "In case a where a man of the country will be obliged to produce seven witnesses, foreigners will be tasked to provide only two." This favor was great, at a time when almost all causes were judged on the depositions of witnesses. Thus this foresight of the legislator, by attracting foreigners to Novgorod from all parts, had raised that country to a high degree of commercial prosperity.

When a murder was committed, the father, or the son, the brother, or finally the nephew of the deceased, had the right to take revenge for the crime and to take the life of the culprit; but no other could exercise this right, the death penalty having been abolished by the children of Iaroslav and the law of pecuniary compensation substituted for that of retaliation. In the classification of persons, which was a consequence of this new legislation, merchants and foreigners held the second rank; the merchants, in cases of precedence, therefore marched immediately after the first statesmen.

The life of slaves was not abandoned to the whim of free men, as among most peoples of antiquity; there was also consideration for the weaker sex. The pecuniary compensation for the murder of a female slave was stronger than for a male slave.

The ordeal of hot iron or boiling water was ordered against the accuser who could not support his accusation by witnesses.
It was permissible to kill a thief at night when caught in the act; but if they kept him until
daybreak, he would have to be taken to the prince's tribunal; if he was killed by day, and
witnesses testified that they had seen him, the murderer was condemned to pay a fine.

Usury was then so exorbitant that, in spite of the article of the code which put a check on the
cupidity of the lenders, the latter could still withdraw from their capital 150 and even 200 per
cent of interest per annum.

The judges were itinerant; they were fed and paid by the inhabitants of the places where they
came to administer justice. They were accompanied by an assessor; often the assessor and the
judge, neither able to read nor write, used sizes to mark the fine they imposed: it could be paid
in several terms.

Vladimir, second of the name, modified and increased the code of Iaroslav. From this last
revision came the body of laws which governed the Russians until the XVIth Century, when Czar
Ivan Vasilyevich gave them new legislation.

Russia, from the IXth to the XVth Century, borrowed everything from the Greeks; but from this
last period down to the XVIIIth Century, it borrowed everything from the Germans and the
French; finally, even today, unable to draw from its own resources the elements of moral
existence for society, the Russian government exchanges its rubles and its ribbons for industries
and talents which are foreign to it. Thus, the first developments of this people, far from being
enough for him, seem to have fallen back into oblivion. It must be admitted that the child of the
north has been treated less liberally by nature than the other races; so civilization has penetrated
only with difficulty through these frosts which strike the human faculties with numbness.

The Christian religion, which began to establish itself under the regency of Olga, does not appear
to have exercised a very powerful influence on the primitive customs of the Russians. The
harshest personal servitude, fierce habits, and, in a word, the bloody code of force, yielded
nothing to the new religion. Besides, Christianity was forced to sit on the stubborn vestiges of
ancient idolatry. The worship of false gods was not completely or suddenly eradicated. For a
long time still, the Russians had no Christians except baptism, this symbol of faith, and a few
other practices communicated by the Eastern Church. The people saw only with contempt, even
with horror, this new religion, abstract in its dogmas and austere in its prescriptions, replacing
the old Slavic polytheism, which spoke to the imagination, and which above all flattered
bloodthirsty passions, and warlike instincts passed down from his ancestors. The people
regretted Perun and Svetovid, whose altars streamed with human blood; Koupalo, a gentler
divinity, who presided over the productions of the earth; Lada and Lelya (Venus and Love),
Dzidzilela (Lucine) and Domovic Doukhi, tutelary genies of the household, whom the peasants
still revere. Finally they asked for the Roussalka, those nymphs of the waters and of the forests,
shining with youth and beauty, who, loosening their fair hair, played in the transparent lakes, or
swayed gently on the flexible branches of the birches in bloom.

Be that as it may, the usurpers of the clergy ended by being no less rapid in these northern
countries than in the most superstitious countries of the south.
The popes made every effort to retain Russia in the bosom of the Roman Church; but their influence only delayed for a hundred years the adhesion of the Russian Church to the schism of the Greek Church. This religious revolution had been consummated in 1048 by the patriarch Cerularius, and we see, in 1075, Iziaslav, first of the name, or Demetrius, stripped of the sovereignty of Kiev by his brothers, sending his son to the pope to claim the intervention of this father of the faithful. The pope of that time was that famous Gregory VII, of usurping memory, and before whom all the sovereigns of Europe had to bow their heads.

Constant relations with Greece had introduced into Russia that taste for the arts and luxury which always precedes the advantages of civilization. In Vladimir’s time, Greek architects were already building palaces and Italian painters were decorating their interiors. In the XIth Century, this luxury was considerable enough for its influence, destructive of ancient mores, to be pointed out by the writers of neighboring nations. One of them remarks that Bolesław, King of Poland, having sojourned for a long time in Russia, with his army, brought back to his country seeds of corruption at the same time as he brought back softened men. "This opulent country, they say, delivered to delights, abandoned to dissolution and lost by the commerce of the Greeks, was no less fatal to the Polish warriors than the voluptuousness of Capua had been to the soldiers of Hannibal."

Such was the state of Russia, when a formidable people, preceded by the noise of its conquests, remounting towards the regions of the North, because it had nothing more to tame in the South, came to plunge the Russians back into the servitude and remove from the eyes of Europe the empire founded by Rurik.
RUSSIA

Imperial Guard

REGULAR COSSACK. -- SENIOR OFFICER OF THE CAVALRY.
SECOND PERIOD.

INVASION OF THE CHILDREN OF GENGHIS-KHAN

Domination of the Mongols.

(From 1223 to 1462.)

Before speaking of the arrival of the Tartars and the establishment of their domination in Russia, we must say a word about this devastating people.

Three principal races have, from time immemorial, shared the vast regions which separate Siberia from India and China: these nomadic races are the Turks, the Kalmucks or Mongols and the Manchurians.

The Turks conquered western Asia and part of Europe. The Mongols have taken possession of India, and the Manchurians reign in China. The latter, very susceptible to civilization and full of courage, have a common origin with the Tunguses, a hunting and cunning people, enemy of rest and whose races extend from the borders of China to Jenisseik (Yenissei). These peoples had customs and a way of waging war which were to subject the world to them.

The Kalmucks have hardly any beards, their eyes are small and sunken, their noses flattened, their shoulders broad, their build large; though small in stature, they possess great muscular strength: their features are not very pronounced. Such were also the Huns, their predecessors. Their black faces covered with incisions, in the manner of the savages, resembled a shapeless mass of flesh.

After great wars and numberless excursions, they finally reached Novgorod-Seversky, in Little Russia, to the northeast of Chernigov. Weary at last of success and carnage, they went to Genghis-Khan, their leader, who was then in Bukhara. This prince, astonished at the prodigious number of prisoners presented to him by his generals, publicly lavished flattering praise on them and showered them with honors and riches.

After this invasion (1228), the Russians, delivered to the fury of the civil wars, continued to slaughter each other. Pusillanimous as they had been in the presence of strangers, they were brave and intrepid against themselves. Only the inhabitants of Pleskof stood up to this universal delirium with a language and a behavior whose wisdom exudes more than surprise, in the midst of this barbarism. Íaroslav, Prince of Novgorod, asking them for help against the city of Riga, newly founded, and which he wanted to attack and destroy, these generous citizens replied: “You know that men are brothers; Christians or infidels, we are all one family. We must not make war on those who do not share our beliefs and do not take it upon ourselves to punish their mistakes. It is wiser to live in peace with them, because then they will cherish our gentleness and our virtues, and from the friendship they will conceive for us they will pass to the love of our religion.” But the higher reason which dictated these fine words was too far removed from those times of ignorance to be generally understood. The Russians continued to tear each other apart, and Batu, one of the (grand) sons of Genghis, having crossed the Kama, after subjugating the Bulgarians, advanced on the Don at the head of six hundred thousand men.
This second invasion of Russia was no less fortunate for these barbarians than had been the first. Moscow and Torzhok succumbed. The Tartars massacred, burned, destroyed everything that was found in their path and returned once more to their deserts without having drawn more solid advantages from their ephemeral conquest; but they reappeared the following year (1239), and seized Pereislav and Chernihiv. In 1240, Möngke-Khan was sent by Batu to make an attempt on Kiev, where Michael reigned. This cowardly prince fled to Hungary, after having had the deputies of Möngke assassinated. Batu, indignant, came himself to lay siege to this city; and in spite of the bravery of the namesnik Dmitri, who defended it, this place was taken, and the barbarians filled it with murder and desolation. After these exploits, Batu turned his weapons against Poland and Hungary.

The peoples whom the sovereigns of Russia had subjugated, and those who saw their aggrandizement with anxiety, took advantage of its exhaustion to attack it in their turn. The Lithuanians fell on Smolensk. The sword-bearing knights, possessors of the ancient country of the Teutons, named Tchoude in the Russian chronicles, today Livonia and Estonia, leagued with Sweden and Denmark to take advantage of the remains of the Tartars. They were completely defeated, on the banks of the Neva, by Alexander, Prince of Novgorod, to whom this victory gave the surname of Nevski (1242).

After his travels in Hungary and Poland, Batu returned to Kaptchak (1243). He demanded that Iaroslav, prince of Vladimir, come to pay homage to him. The latter resigned himself to this humiliating step, and left with Constantine, one of his sons. The Khan, satisfied with his submission, recognized him as the principal ruler of Russia.

Since this manifest act of vassalage, no Russian prince, down to Ivan, third of the name, dared to take possession of a principality without going to pay homage to the Khan.

This domination of the Mongols, which was established, as we have just seen, at the beginning of the XIII\textsuperscript{th} Century, did not end until the middle of the XV\textsuperscript{th}; it therefore continued for three hundred years; too long a period of shame and misery, where one saw princes, without nobility and without courage, ferociously pursuing a degraded power, and claiming in turn the intervention of the Khan of the Mongols, greedy and disdainful arbiter who played on the ambition and weakness of all.

However, the Tartars, conquerors of Asia (from 1260 to 1320), united as long as they had to conquer and plunder, divided for the partitioning. The grandsons of Genghis dismembered his vast inheritance, and Nogai, one of the most famous generals of the khan of Kaptchak, having revolted, made a particular domination for himself on the coasts of the Black Sea, the inhabitants of which retained his name.

Dmitri Ivanovich, surnamed Donski, who ascended the throne in 1362, was the first to refuse the Khan of Kaptchak the customary tribute. A lapse of twenty years still elapsed in reciprocal excursions between the Russians and the Tartars.
Finally, the latter, to regain possession of their ancient rights, advanced towards the mouth of the Voronezh, in the Don, under the leadership of Mamai, grand khan, and to the number of six hundred thousand men (1380). Dmitri, on his side, crossed the Don at the head of four hundred thousand soldiers; and, to put his people in the necessity of conquering or dying, he caused the bridges to be broken. Mamai was defeated, and fled with the frightened remnants of his army. But new hordes of Tartars were not long in reappearing in the regions covered with the bones of the first (1382). Moscow was devastated by them, and all its inhabitants massacred. Dmitri, given over to impotence by the cowardice of the other princes, saw his country ravaged without being able to defend and avenge it. This prince, just, brave and generous, was nicknamed Donski because of his victory over the Don. He died young and passed quickly, in the middle of his century, as a hero of another age and another society. Such and no less remarkable had been this Alexander Nevski whom Russia had canonized, and who deserved better than Vladimir the honor of this Christian apotheosis.

Vasily II (sic), Dmitrievich, eldest son of Dmitri-Donski, followed his father's plan to recover and free, by uniting them to his domination, the different principalities of Russia. The occasion was a good one to accomplish this purpose. Timur, another predestined devastator, had just arisen in Asia: his attacks shook the empire of the degenerate sons of Genghis-Khan. This conqueror advanced as far as the government of Voronezh, directing his march towards Moscow. Terror spread on all sides, and the loss of this prince seemed certain, when God suddenly aroused another thought in the soul of Timur, who, against all hope, returned to his steps; but he had dealt the mortal blow to the horde of Kaptchak, which since then has steadily grown weaker. Vasily fought against the khan with varying luck: his last feat was the capture and destruction of the city of Kazan, which belonged to the dominion of the Kaptchaks. He did not die until long after this victory (1396).

However, the suzerainty of the khans had survived; as for the tribute imposed formerly by the lieutenants of Genghis, one paid it when one was weak, one refused it when one felt strong. Its quota varied according to these alternatives. But we must explain here what was the nature of this tribute and the singular manner in which it was paid.

In default of gold or silver money, which the Russians did not yet know, they used representative things. The first was marten skin (kuna), which must not be confused with Siberian sable, because this country was not yet discovered. There were twenty kunas or sable skins in the grivna.

The vékokhe, another currency, was the kind of squirrel we call small-grey. There were twenty skins in the kuna. It is also believed that four rézaus made a vékokhe. This word rézaus came from rézal (to cut); it was apparently a quarter skin coupon.

Ears and even half-ears of squirrel served as extras. The quarter of the kopek is still called polouchko (half-ear), which is equivalent to the Russian penny; they also had, as currency, lobki or squirrel foreheads, and mordki or marten snouts.

Delivered from Timur, Vasily-Dmitrievich made war on Vytautas, Prince of Lithuania, who had seized Smolensk. The hope of destroying these two princes, one after the other, caused the
Boulon-Sultan, who then reigned over the Tartars (1409) to intervene in the quarrel. A resounding victory over the Tartars of Kazan and the complete ruin of this city marked the last years of Vasily I, who died in 1425.

External wars, civil wars, family attacks, terrible reverses and sudden returns to power filled the reign of Vasily III (sic). His uncle Yury, or Georges, first wanted to dispute the throne with him. The two contenders agreed to go to the horde, that is to say the court of the Tartar prince, to settle their dispute: Vasily won; the Khan Ulugh-Muhammad even exempted him from all tribute. Yury appealed to force and marched against his rival with an army. Vasily, lost and blockaded in Kostroma, could not defend himself there. However, his uncle, using victory more nobly than might be expected of such an ambitious man, gave him the city of Kostroma as his appanage. Yury died there. Vasily continued the war against his cousins, took them prisoners and put out their eyes (1442).

Three years later (1445), Vasily fell into the power of the khan of the Tartars. Here we see a generosity that astonishes in a barbarian; for it would still be admirable in a well-behaved man. Disarmed by the misfortune of this prince, formerly his guest, now his enemy, Ulugh-Muhammad sent him away, contenting himself with exacting a ransom which the Russian was to fix himself; but fortune was more severe with Vasily: on his return to his States, surprized by one of the sons of Yury, the only one who escaped his fury, he had his eyes gouged out: it was the torture he had inflicted on the brothers of its competitor. Vasily II died in 1462, mourned by his subjects who had always loved him, which makes one suppose that the administration of this prince was better than his policy.

Such are the sad vicissitudes which, during this unfortunate period, occupied the tributary royalty of the descendants of Rurik; but a new era began with the reign of Ivan III; this civilization, whose ancient source existed in the East, was about to receive a powerful impulse, after having seen its progress suspended for three hundred years. Russia, forgotten by Europe, and hitherto a prey to the robberies of the savage hordes whom it was her destiny to subdue, was about to show herself on the stage of the world; for it must not be imagined that these vast countries were not opened to the torch of reason and to the blessings of the arts except under Peter the Great. A man, however vulgar, can well, even in centuries of ignorance, imagine industrial improvements; but the birth of a regular civilization, the sudden transformation of a people, is beyond the power of any mortal, because social organization cannot be improvised. Great men help a nation out of chaos, there is no doubt; however, the cause of all that they create exists before them, because before them an invisible and celestial hand arranges the ground on which these happy cultivators must sow.