

# [GARP]

## PATRIOTISM, POWER & PROPAGANDA

THE SYMBOLISM AND SEMIOTICS  
OF THE USSR PIN BADGE

LEIGH BARTON



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The content of '**Patriotism, Power & Propaganda**' will guide you through the aesthetics and compositional meanings of visual practical design; using a select number of Cyrillic inscribed and illustrated enamel pin badges, minted during the later years of the Soviet Union, as primary examples (*Barton, 2013a; 2023b*).

Art and design usually emits a series of visual clues and signatures in order to communicate with us what an image contains and aims to achieve, i.e. its content, subject, scale, medium and its creator. The aim of this text is to further analyse these visual components to gain a greater understanding of the depth of meaning behind a visual compositional arrangement, in this instant, through the medium of USSR brooches. This notion of deconstruction can be applied by the theory of semiotics.

The word 'semiotics' derives from the Greek word 'semeiotikos', which translates to an interpreter of signs. Our understanding of signs is vital in translating messages from everyday occurrences: where to catch the bus, which products are gluten free, when is safe to cross the road etc.

The interpretation of the badges is guided by this extensive theory. Understanding the origins of the concept by the founding fathers of seminal thinking, Ferdinand De Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce, will allow an academic and historical background to research, whereas the application of recognised methods will enable both the aesthetics, surface and underlying messages to be analysed to fully comprehend the length of communication both these structures work to in cohesion.

One such method is that of Representational, Modal and Compositional meaning. For example, in this context, Representational meaning is the enamel illustration depiction of a person, figure or object in the featured badge's design. Modal meaning is a way to draw attention to particular elements, and or, via framing techniques, for example, a red ribbon worn of a worker, or the facial features of a badge's protagonist. And Compositional meaning is how a badge design achieves balance through placement of its images, text and framing device in order to appropriate the correct focus and emphasis on the content. Methods such as these, along with the relevance

of semantics, connotation, pragmatics and prosodic features, are all effective semiotic tools.

The application of these tools will allow underlying themes and codes to become apparent in the design of what is often seen as a propaganda tool to the Soviets.

Following many years of famine, strife and immense loss from casualties from a series of tensions and war, several revolutions and marches on government resulted in the infamous February Revolution of 1917, where Tsar Nicholas II and the royal family were forced to abdicate and held accountable to the political Bolshevik party. From then on, the history of Russia and its surrounding European neighbours would be shaped by the enforcing idealism of Communism. The USSR, its empire and the following seventy years of state-sanctioned education, industrialisation and military enforcement resulted in an enigmatic era of influence and power.

The positive portrayal and emphasis on Vladimir Lenin throughout this period is a well-known Soviet institution of pride and origin, resulting in his image being romanticized and endorsed via methods of propaganda. His comparison to his successor in power, Joseph Stalin, was also a common feature within the Union, to the extent of his representation on stamps, packaging and promotional material for youth groups, not too dissimilar to the Scouts of the British Isles.

Promotional material such as this was bold, enforcing and idealised, used as reminders to Soviet citizens to further stimulate state pride and prose for their ruthless, yet efficient, system of government. However, a less obvious and minimal approach to encourage the themes of patriotism, power and propaganda within the borders of the Soviet Union, was the mass production and distribution of badges.

A badge is practical, durable and transportable; a small tactile object that can represent a principle, love or ethic of its wearer. These properties make it the ideal platform for promoting positive and significant Soviet themes; established by the state and innocently worn by its citizens as a greater statement of the 'slava' (glory) of the Union.

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## INTRODUCTION

Significant themes such as military, tourism, institutions, politics and social culture are referenced both in Soviet history and in the examinations of this analytical essay. I shall attempt to address repetitive coda such as the significance of the five pointed gold star, and the excessive use of the colour red: understanding the structures of the framing device itself (the shape and line of the badge's design) and the symbolism of their use. I shall also look at the composition of both text and illustration, understanding the semantics (what a sentence means) of the Cyrillic word and understanding the possible differences through the USSR's

language barriers in Russian, Ukrainian and Bulgarian - all but to name a few of the applicable approaches to semiotics and these badge's designs.

The Soviet brooches included in this text are significant symbols within themselves of where a person has travelled, who or what they believe in, or what they have achieved during some part of their existence. However, when we begin to scratch off the cheap enamel surface, we can gain a much greater understanding of the importance of the design and status in being a tool of profiteering by the state...

# MILITARY

From their formation in 1918, under the developing influences of the Socialist Federation of Soviet Russia (SFSR), the Soviet Armed Forces enveloped the Army, Navy, Air-Force, State Political Directorate and Convoy Guards to create one state loyal armed movement.

The People's Revolutions that overthrew the Tsar's control over Russia had left a mental and physical void in the regimes of the working country and the military; a void that saw a Tsarist dictatorship replaced by Bolshevik political correctness. Terms such as 'rank' were initially substituted by a subtle change of code to give functional titles and roles to personnel, for example, Officer was replaced by Commander as not to remind soldiers of the hierarchy of Tsarist power.

During this time, soldiers were also encouraged, or even forced, to become members of the Bolshevik Communist Party as not to be seen as 'poor sports' or against the new and fairer society.

This new and seemingly unobtrusive power oversaw many aspects of the Soviet Military, resulting in a fiercely guarded and politically motivated Armed Force to protect, serve and remain loyal to the USSR and its citizens.

In this section, I will begin to illustrate how key themes such as these are reiterated into the aesthetics of pin badges decorated with military themes and honours.





**[FIGURE 01]**  
First Class Soldier



**[FIGURE 02]**  
Glory of the Military Maritime Fleet USSR!  
*Slava Voeyo Morskomy Flotu SSSR!*



**[FIGURE 03]**  
Excellence In The Soviet Army  
*Otlichnik Sovetskoy Army*



**[FIGURE 04]**  
Glory Mound  
*Kurgan Slavi*



**[FIGURE 05]**  
Soldier Sportsmen  
*Voin Sportsmen*



**[FIGURE 06]**  
9th May (Victory Day)  
*9 Maya*



**[FIGURE 07]**  
30 Years Victory  
*30 Let Pobedy*

In a purely Saussurian approach, one aspect of these military insignia can be explained via the semiotic theory of signifier and signified. For Ferdinand De Saussure, a founding father of semiotics, languages and linguistics had not only a practical element, but also contained a social aspect in their construction; this construction was composed of two elements, the signifier and signified.

In concept, the signifier is the method in which a message is communicated, and in this context, this is represented by the written Cyrillic text that adorns the majority of the badges here examined. The meaning of their translation thus produces the mental/verbal concept of their implication, representing the signified idea (*Cobley and Janz, 1999, p.10*).

However, to a non-reading, or speaking Russian individual, the initial message of the signifier may not be initially understood due to the language barrier: these texts are **“arbitrary in the sense they are not immediately transparent to us.”** *Hall (2012, p.26)*.

This issue may also create noise for the reader, where the meaning of a transmission may be altered, or misinterpreted though translation. For example, in Figure 05 the Cyrillic lettering can be understood in one of two ways: воин (phonetically, voin) translates into both warrior and soldier. If we choose to adapt the first of the interpretations to the badge, ‘Warrior’ Sportsman carries much more emphasis in power, with connotations of a fierce, frightful and fearful fighter than a ‘Soldier’ Sportsman: where both provide a similar meaning, our decision to understand the noise created will inevitably alter our perceptions of the warrior/soldier to whom this was awarded to.

The form of these text-based semantic units also carry significance to how we interpret their message as a whole: whether text is presented in bold or italics, underlined or understated all represent semiotic design. Note how in Figures 02, 03 and 05 the positioning of the text represents a circular, or semi-circular, shape almost encompassing the primary images within the centre. This almost creates a barrier, or margin, in which to divert attention to the importance of the central symbol, with the Cyrillic text acting as supporting information to the composition of the badge.

The positioning of the lettering in Figures 04

and 06 are almost symbolic themselves, representing the waves seen on banners and flags; considering their message content, celebrating the victories during the numerous conflicts during the Great Patriotic War, this is a significant and effective way to arrange the text to further symbolise these triumphs.

The bold lettering reading ‘30 Years’ in Figure 07 almost merges into the design of the soldier: characteristically placed over the heart and chest, this could be read as a strong emotive icon for the remembrance of the men lost, and victory celebrated.

The USSR pin badge, in this case those with a military theme, is a representation medium of method communication, and the importance of the co-ordination between both text and image is crucial in demonstrating and communicating the harmony of aesthetics of design.

**“Symbol, in Greek, means to ‘throw together’. With these symbols the meaning that is created is related to the nature of the object.”** *Hall (2012, p.32)*. These metonyms can be seen within the symbols featured in this chapter. For example, a running man (Figure 05) represents athletics, a star (Figure 06) often represents achievement, and a soldier in uniform (Figure 07) is a connotation of war. This symbolism can also be recognised again within the theory of Saussure’s signifier and signified.

On each badge in the military category (excluding Figure 04) the figure of a star, often five-pointed, is a prominent and re-occurring symbol. This being the signifier, its repetition, suggesting some underlying importance, can be extracted by the application of the signified. Due to the nature of these badges one would assume that the star would represent glory, success and achievement in the face of war or military training, and this would be a safe assumption. However, the prominence of these stars is much more political as the star is taken from the Soviet Union’s flag: the hammer, sickle and five-pointed stars are all decorative and propaganda features of the Communist regime. Their continuous appearance on these badges serves as a reminder of the powers that control and oversee the military, as well as being the judges of awards to congratulate

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servicemen for the services to the Union (*Author's Collection, 2012*).

The placement of the Communist star is also significant in understanding their semiotic importance within the design of the badge. Like in any hierarchy, people, objects or texts that are placed at the top of a system, or in this case, a composition within a badge, often carry more standing. As in each of these Figures (01, 02, 03, 05 and 07) show the star at the top-centre, their signified meaning is further amplified with connotations that the Soviet Union and Communist party is of greater importance than the award itself, or even the individual who has earned the kudos: so perhaps these badges meant more to the state than to the singular.

Presence is created by the way in which different aesthetic elements draw attention to certain features within a visual composition. The colour gold, which is a heavily used pigment in

the enamel design of these badges, asserts the running themes of glory and achievement. Gold medals are often associated with first place within an array of competitions or ceremonies: these badges of gold could, in theory, replace the body of a military medal, yet still carry the achievement and prestige. Gold enamel is a much cheaper alternative to smelting mineral gold: physically they have less worth than a traditional military medal, but in terms of subject they still represent an achievement to be proud of.

To the soldier, and citizen, who earned and displayed these semantic badges upon their person, they are a reminder of their personal attainments towards safe-guarding the future of their native land. To the institution, they are a self-congratulating promotional tool to the greater glory of their accomplishments.



# POLITICS & INSTITUTIONS

The birth of the USSR was a result of an illegal and aggressive political campaign; the stigma and effects of which continued to influence every inch of Soviet life here after, and thus the politics of the USSR have been greatly discussed, dramatized and promoted in various ways. The Bolshevik Communist party, led by Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, gained increasing popularity following the October Revolution of 1917, and with the backing of military personnel, declared the Bolsheviks the new power in government.

During this period of restlessness and frailty, and the subsequent reign of the Soviet Union, from 1922 to 1991, the concept of comradeship and the power between the Communist party and the Worker's Unions were vital in the attempt to collate the fractured remains of a country torn by civil war.

As part of a greater social movement, countless institutions and societies were adapted into the Soviet regime, as well as the creation of new initiatives; this structure was designed for citizens to be involved in actively running a part of their community as well as providing a wider service to their motherland. Such parties and organisations, including the world's largest railway network and the Communist Youth Groups of Russia and Bulgaria, focussed on large scale promotional material as a medium to exhibit the work between government and citizens, badges being one such method. These badges were instigated as a subtle, yet compactly powerful, example of how the politics of the nation could be further empowered: but was there a more authoritative motive behind these designs?



**[FIGURE 01]**  
Fire Department  
*UDPD*



**[FIGURE 02]**  
Railway



**[FIGURE 03]**  
Russian Soviet Federation Socialist Republic  
*RSFSR*



**[FIGURE 04]**  
Glory Great October!  
*Slava Velikomy Oktyabriu!*



**[FIGURE 05]**  
50 Years USSR  
*50 Let SSSR*



**[FIGURE 06]**  
Lenin Supports the Komsomol  
*Leninskaya Poverka VLKSM*



**[FIGURE 07]**  
80 Years, First Council, Ivanovo  
*80 Let, Pervomu Sovetu, Ivano*



**[FIGURE 08]**  
Vladimir Lenin





**[FIGURE 09]**  
Blood Donor



**[FIGURE 10]**  
Vladimir Lenin



**[FIGURE 11]**  
Druzhina Guard  
*Druzhinnik*



**[FIGURE 12]**  
Scientific Technical Society of the Soviet Union  
*NTO*



**[FIGURE 13]**  
OSVOD Young Water Rescue



**[FIGURE 14]**  
Chavdarche

Saussure believed that the visual composition of a design, and language, had **“a social aspect, reflected in the way in which they were structured.”** *Hall (2012, p.21)*: in summary, these badges belonging to a variety of Soviet institutions and parties, their semiotic codes were more important within their own society than one outside of the Soviet Union. Saussure’s theory **“considers individual items in culture not as items with intrinsic identities, but as significant in relation to their place in the structure.”**

*Cobley and Jansz (1999, p. 54).*

We can analyse this theory by understanding the symbolic nature of many of the figures that decorate the design of the enamel badges within this category.

In some cases, the relationship between the symbol and its meaning is more obvious, for example, in Figure 01 the badge depicts an image of a truck, subsequently surrounded by flames giving us the immediate conclusion that this must be a fire-truck, resulting in the badge being a celebration/recognition of this social organisation.

The profile of Soviet revolutionist Vladimir Lenin is one of the most recognisable images from Soviet history. His appearance on Figures 06, 08 and 10 provide the meaning of a pro-Lenin, pro-Union party or individual as his idolised image became a glorified emblem of the success and power of the new government.

However, as Saussure and other notable seminal figure Claude Lévi-Strauss theorise, symbols and images are reliant on cultural knowledge to understand what they mean.

Figure 14 features a rampant golden lion, the central feature in the overall composition of the pin, thus signifying its importance within the piece. Symbolically, the male lion represents strength, pride and power; from the lion’s placement, presence and overall appearance, one might presume to take these literal meanings to summarise the badge. This assumption would inevitably lead to the mistranslation of the badge’s greater connotations, as in line with Saussure and Lévi-Strauss’ principle, it is reliant on cultural understanding.

The golden lion, rampant on a green background is part of the Coat of Arms of Bulgaria. Being a part of the USSR meant that the country was ruled by the orders of Communism; this particular badge is for a

Bulgarian Communist Youth Movement (Chavdarche), a translation of which is reliant on a wider social knowledge (*OMDA, 2010*).

The translation of Figure 09 also conforms to this semiotic social idea: the design form is representative of a drop of blood. Whereas this symbol is relatively transparent in meaning, the addition of a cross and crescent adds to the need of information from the society in which it was produced.

The cross and crescent, in fact, is an international logo of the humanitarian aid group International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Society; thus producing a conclusion that the blood badge must have been a token award for blood donation via this organisation. Whereas this in part is indeed correct, my research indicates that the IFRC in fact did not sanction the production of these badges, resulting in this particular blood donor’s badge being a purely Soviet initiative within its borders (*Grant, 2013*). This crucial information would have been widely distributed throughout the Soviet states through its recipients, yet is lost in translation by those outside this social group as Saussure and Lévi-Strauss speculated.

Soviet groups such as the Druzhina (Figure 11) and the OSVOD (Figure 13) would have been common place within the countries of the USSR, and similarities between these Communist-run initiatives and their British doppelgangers can be noted.

The Druzhina, literally translating to ‘fellowship’ or ‘guard’, was a community initiative, with reputable neighbourhood figures volunteering for the position to maintain the peace and public order within their own sector. Although organisations like this were already in existence before the Revolution, the People’s Voluntary Druzhina was not formed until mid-1950 as a greater communal party.

The role of the Druzhina can be compared to the Community Support Officers of the United Kingdom; guards had the power to make citizens arrests, and were often accompanied by police officers during patrols or protests in order to maintain public safety.

However, whereas the role of a Druzhina is within the public and charitable interest, the symbolic nature of their badge is a significant mark of Communist status: adorned with the

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hammer and sickle, and the Communist-associated colours of red and gold/yellow, the badge acts as an authoritative stamp of the party more than the power or the presence of the individual. Rather than an image of community enterprise and goodwill, the composition of the badge is a fierce semiotic brand of the governing Communist party. To disobey a Druzhina would not be to snub a neighbour, but would undermine a greater, significant power.

Another similarity can be drawn between the USSR's OSVOD Water Rescue (Figure 13) and the British charity RNLI. Both groups' aim was to teach swimming and life saving techniques to the public, as well as the proper use of equipment and small lifeboats operated by the volunteers. Due to its success and wide benefits to the Soviet people, it soon grew into a huge state run well-being initiative (*The Great Soviet Encyclopaedia, 1979*).

The Druzhina, OSVOD and Chavdarche Youth of

Bulgaria are all primary examples of how the integrity and power of the Communist government subliminally influences the rules and initiatives of what was seen as a community supporting itself through charitable and innocent initiatives.

These badges, often seen as a token of their efforts, and an emblem to promote the well-being of their neighbourhood, could be argued to pronounce the greater power of the ruling Communist government as their symbolic and idolised images adorn the designs.

The social importance of the relationship between government and the institution groups was imperative in safeguarding Soviet power within the communal ladder. These badges became a symbol of these relationships, co-ordinating the strengths between each sector to communicate a sense of communal Soviet authority within the USSR.



# INTERNATIONALISM

The history of the Soviet Union's technological, literacy and military achievements have been long celebrated within its cultural calendar. Engineers, authors and officers that exceeded expectations were often emulated within the media and glorified as a specimen of Soviet education and training: each personal triumph becoming a state celebrated marketing tool.

Under the USSR, Russian space exploration became the first of many world-first achievements in this field, creating a platform in which the cosmos appeared so much closer to our reach and to the reach of other countries.

Pilots and engineers, native sons, became international emblems: celebrating their brave accomplishments, and celebrating the country that brought them that scale of distinction.

The importance of individuals, and creations represented by the enamel badges within this chapter, will be analysed with a semiotic approach, focussing on the importance of imagery, and how these compositions reflect on the perceived success of the USSR.



[FIGURE 01]  
TU-104 AIRPLANE



[FIGURE 02]  
Monument to A.V Suvorov, Sevastopol  
*Pamyatnik A.V Suvorov, Sevastopol*



[FIGURE 03]  
Marko Vovchok



[FIGURE 04]  
L.N Tolstoy



**[FIGURE 05]**  
Yuri Gagarin



**[FIGURE 06]**  
"Well, Just You Wait!"  
*"Nu, Podogdi!"*



**[FIGURE 07]**  
World Youth Festival, Moscow



**[FIGURE 08]**  
Figure Skating Championships  
*Championat Evropy Leningrad*





[FIGURE 09]

Rocket Train

*Turistski Poezd Rokhat*

The badges in this section form a depictive medium of a range of influential Soviet individuals and initiatives; including authors, pilots and military strategists. In order to successfully communicate the importance and achievements of said figures across the many countries of the USSR, and essentially neighbouring Europe and subsequent continents, the primary outcome is transmitted via the use of images and symbols.

The importance of the image is to transcend boundaries of other countries. Whereas text or written forms have greater immediate understanding, the Cyrillic and Slavic language barrier creates noise by the transmission of the message, thus making these International badges heavily reliant on pictures to portray their messages of Soviet promotion.

All nine badges in this section contain a central image in which text, or supporting data, surrounds the cartoon on its margins. The concept of centres and margins helps to understand the relevance of the placement of certain key features within a design. Centres provide a hub, or a point of focus in which the message formulates around, with lesser significance being placed on features on the surrounding sides. Semiotic understanding dictates that these stable points are initially read and understood first, with the information provided on the margins as additional material to add to our current understanding.

For example, the circular forms of Figure 02 and Figure 06 contain a large, centralised image, signifying their visual importance in understanding the context of the semantic unit. The portrait of a cartoon hare/rabbit in Figure 06 tells the reader, whether Soviet or otherwise, that his presence is the main communicative message of the badge - he is a cartoon hare, and this badge is promoting his image. It is not until we are able to read the supporting text, that we can devise that he is, not only a cartoon character, but the cartoon hare from *ну погоди!* ('Well, Just You Wait!'), a popular Russian cartoon from the 1970's. This shows that without the additional text provided in the margins, non-Soviet readers can still read that the context of the design is to promote a Soviet cartoon figure, an important factor in promoting Soviet inventions to an international audience.

However, the semiotic message from the initial

translation is not always carried through the medium to its end; upon acquiring additional information, otherwise absent on the design, can ultimately change our understanding of a composition. This also co-insides with Saussure and Lévi-Strauss' theory that visual language is also reliant on cultural knowledge; an aspect of semiotics that may be lost outside of the USSR. This can be seen through the chosen design of Figure 01.

The Tupolev 104 was a twin engine, turbojet powered Soviet airliner, commissioned in 1956 and was the first of its kind in the world. This pioneering engineering program was much adored in and out of the boundaries of the Soviet Union. Figure 01's design features an image of the popular plane, along with the Tu-104 typographic logo; these simple and recognisable features transcend the language and cultural barriers, with the promotion of the Tupolev being able to be celebrated by aviation enthusiasts around the globe.

We understand that the badge aims to promote these engineering feats, but history and extra knowledge dictates that the Tupolev did not remain successful, and the entire fleet was decommissioned in 1979 after a long series of fatal accidents.

Perhaps this failure in the badge's transmission, reliant on a greater social message, could have been designed on purpose in order to maintain the prestige of the Union's triumph in the eyes of others?

The badges in this group can also be categorised in one of three temporal placement brackets, i.e., Past, Present and Future. To comprehend the flow of message and design it is beneficial to place ourselves in relation to these eras. We often associate figures, or objects from the Past as classic, inspiring and nostalgic, whereas visions of the Future may be observed as pioneering, adventurous or frightening (*Hall, 2012, p.106*).

I have placed Figures 02, 03 and 04 under the time bracket of Past; Marko Vovchok, a popular Russian writer from the 1800's, who wrote a popular volume of Ukrainian folk-lore stories, and the internationally influential author and philosopher L.N Tolstoy both represent a past age of Russian literacy importance; and

one that is remembered and celebrated via the medium of these representative badges. Figure 02 marks the achievements of the Russian naval general and strategist A.V Suvorov; the influence and prestige of the Soviet military forces during this time of badge production is reflected and remembered in its origins from past citizens such as Suvorov.

These bronzed badges, portraying figures from Russia's cultural past, help to create a sense of origin for the current population of the USSR, and that their importance and influence has, and may continue to be so, a beacon for future recognition.

Badges from the Present time of the USSR can provide a vessel in which to show the current levels of impact and social standing within Europe and other continents; pioneering with a new age of Russia and promoting their success so far. Figures 06, 07 and 08 are primary examples. The European Ice Skating Championships and the World Youth Festival do well to show the standing of the USSR in being accepted and recognised to host these renowned competitions and celebrations of talent and charity (*WFDY, 2013*). They show what the nation is capable of doing, and giving back to the greater international community. Figure 06, of Zayats the cartoon Hare promotes the idea of the USSR being able to produce their own popular children's cartoon, instead of being reliant on outside influences such as the American 'Loony Tunes' or 'Tom & Jerry' for entertainment.

These Present examples of the USSR's capabilities, to provide a hub of social and cultural events, help to endorse the regime as equals amongst the neighbouring countries and to promote further exhibitions in the nearby future. They show what the USSR are doing now, and what their capabilities are in the current climate.

Whereas Figures 01, 05 and 09 are all current examples of Soviet initiatives, they are also good examples of how their achievements could impact the Future of the Soviet Union within its own borders, and also being internationally innovative. The Tu-104 plane, the experimental Rocket Train and the image of cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin all provide speculative material to the future of engineering and technological advances within the Union. The importance and development of the Soviet aviation and space exploration programs later enabled huge advances around the globe after the Russian's ground-breaking work; the first (Soviet) rocket, satellite and man in outer-space provided a stepping level for the rest of the world to continue revolutionary and futuristic advances. The presence of these badges helps to idealise the greater advances of the Soviet Union, and their greater international standing.

On an aesthetic level, one could also associate the silver colour with signifying futuristic qualities. Often in film and television, as early as the 1920's, the Future is represented as slick, uniform and chrome. This design quality may have been used on the badges in this section to signify the scientific importance and further significance of these technical enterprises.

Images on their own are often open to many forms of interpretation, yet the key form to these International badges is to provide a stable visual reference that the interpreter/reader can grasp, by image alone, in order for the successes of the Soviet Union to transcend language and cultural barriers in an aim to promote their past, present and future glory.

# CITIES & TOURISM

Due to the influence of the Iron Curtain across Western Europe and America, tourism within the USSR mainly relied on those travelling from each of the some fourteen states that made up the Communist empire. This exclusive circle resulted in a concentrated aura of Soviet pride within their tourist sites, historical monuments and popular cities.

Badges in this section mainly comprise of historic coats of arms belonging to a range of Russian and Ukrainian cities; despite their initial

lack of political or cultural stature, they still represent an idea of that every Soviet town and city should be marked and celebrated, at least through this medium, to command and circulate pride, and the notion that everybody, and every place has its role to fulfil.

In terms of analysis, I will begin in this section with the application of Representational, Modal and Compositional meaning in semiotics, *O'Toole (2011, p.6)*.



[FIGURE 01]

The Kremlin

*Moskovskii Kreml, Tsar Kolola, Tsar Pushka*



[FIGURE 02]

Kerch, Ukraine



[FIGURE 03]

Ferapontov Monastery



[FIGURE 04]

Sunny Beach, Bulgaria

*Praznits na Slunchev Bryag, Burgas 1966*



**[FIGURE 05]**  
Novgorod, Russia



**[FIGURE 06]**  
Mykolaiv, Ukraine



**[FIGURE 07]**  
Kaliningrad, Russia



**[FIGURE 08]**  
Lake Baikal, Siberia



[FIGURE 09]  
Sevastopol



[FIGURE 10]  
Dmitriyev, Russia



[FIGURE 11]  
Poshekhonye, Russia

Representational meaning refers to the overall aim of the features, upon in this case, an enamel badge, to represent some real life figure, place or event that has taken place and is preserved in this tactile form. With the badges in this section, this translates to the cities and places visited in the name of tourism, such as the historical cities of Novgorod (Figure 05) and Sevastopol (Figure 09), and the nature preserve around the Siberian water of Lake Baikal (Figure 08).

Modal meaning however concentrates on certain key elements within a badge's design that are presented in such a way that it draws attention to particular important elements. These usually take form as a central symbol or emblem that, on its own visually, is able to transmit a theme or figure of importance that can be vaguely understood without the reading of supportive text.

One such example of a modal image is the white flag ship featured on Figure 06. Its stark contrast of gleaming white enamel on a Soviet-red background makes the ship stand out as a central and important image, drawing our attention initially to this picture. Another modal meaning can be read from the silver fish on Figure 07. Like the badge for the city of Mykolaiv (Figure 06), the badge's design uses a contrast in colour for the primary image to stand out and to draw attention to the feature.

Finally, Compositional meaning explains how a badge's overall design is composed in such a way that it achieves balance through its particular placement of images, text and framing devices. This projects the symbolism within a design and how as a complete piece, individual sections create a greater harmony overall.

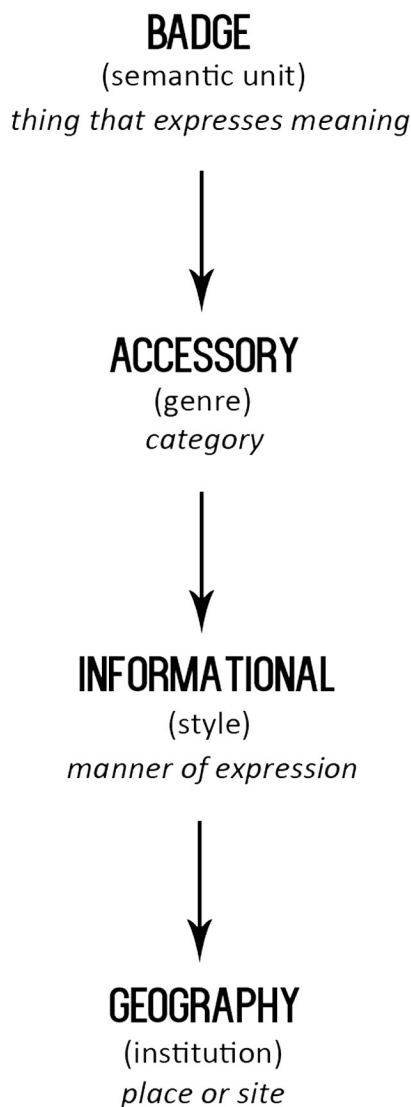
The choice of framing is one such detail; Figures 05, 06, 09, 10 and 11 encompass the interior designs within an exterior classic shield shape. The shield, as well as being a recognisable symbol for archaic battles and a method of protecting one's self, was also used to exhibit the coat of arms of a family, institution or place. All of these badges represent the coat of arms of Russian and Ukrainian cities. Without further knowledge to understand the Cyrillic text, or the symbolism of the images used, the basic message of these badges can still be understood, particularly by tourists from outside the USSR, via

the use of the decipherable shield shape.

Figure 02 also shows emphasis on the consideration of the shape of the badge's frame to create compositional meaning. Uniquely amongst the pins in this category, it is made of two separate metal pieces connected by a ring to create something that can be recognised as representing a medal. Distinctive in its design, the medal-like format provides connotations of military importance or prestige in the city of Kerch. This symbolism works well to create a sense of pride towards the city, its inhabitants and to its visitors, who may have purchased this badge to commemorate the city and their visit. This design actually centres on the award of the Hero City; places within the Soviet Union who showed great strength and reserve during the Great Patriotic War, Kerch being one such place (*Russian Warrior, 2007*).

In the cases of tourists and tourism outside the USSR, the use of metonyms within the pin designs can be used to promote key features of cities/places visited; these would also translate to be the representational medium within the compositions. Examples may include; Figure 07 and the silver fish, equating to a harbour or seaside port. Figure 08 and the silver squirrel in order to symbolise nature and woodland. And Figure 01, depicting a cannon and bell, to denote themes of military history. Despite Strauss and Saussure's semiotic theory that messages within images are reliant on cultural knowledge, on some visual level we are able to understand the basis of the pictures, on the pins in this section, due to our broad understanding of symbolism and shapes: a somewhat universal language that transcends some of the physical languages.





This simple diagram highlights the process of communication that could be read and understood by a wider audience: to those who are new, or yet to be, visitors to the USSR, with the central importance situated on symbols and imagery - a universal language within Europe, and especially within the states of the Soviet Union.

Whereas the majority of these badges promote simply a place, or site within the countries that make up the Soviet Union, Figure 04 also captures the essence of collecting and promotion. Figure 04 is part of a Bulgarian initiative called the 100 Tourist Sites of Bulgaria, in which a list of one hundred places, buildings and landmarks was published in order to promote tourism and travel within the country - primarily aimed at citizens (*Bulgaria Inside, 2007*). Stamps could be earned by visiting each of the sites, and in turn could be traded for commemorative badges once a certain number had been collected. This initiative not only provides gratification to the traveller in a sense of earning a bronze, silver or gold badge for their efforts, but also stands as a greater initiative to promote the great spaces within Soviet land; again, acting as a form of propaganda to further endorse the heritage of the countries.

During the age of the Soviet Union, travel from countries outside this collective was limited, but by the internal promotion of initiatives such as the 100 Tourist Sites of Bulgaria and production of pins sponsoring various beauty spots, landmarks and monuments, the attraction of visitation was exhibited amongst the Soviet people; further kudos demonstrating the charm and prestige of the countries in this group. These pin badges show how the Soviet people should, and could have been, proud to support this industry within their own home, helping to cement national pride.

Even though the subject of semiotics has academic understanding, literature, seminal figures and an array of established theories, the topic still remains a broad, unconquered sequence of principles. There are no definitive answers or concrete codes for translating a piece of clothing, food packaging, a painting, or in this case, a Cyrillic badge. Instead the application of semiotics encourages us to interpret these signs again and again with new information and a greater understanding each time. The badges featured in this essay cover such broad topics, and their aesthetic qualities can only be interpreted so far at each turn; we must continue to re-think and challenge our initial perceptions which each semiotic application.

There are, however, templates of signatures that can be exposed by our understanding of semiotics; the use of composition, placement of text and imagery, form and placement - all of which have been pragmatic in understanding some of the symbolism/importance of structural features on the badges within this essay.

Theorists such as Saussure, Pierce and Lévi-Strauss can also aid in the understanding of a formulaic or philosophical approach into the world of semiotic codes: whether it is via the use of the signifier and signified, or realising that it is down to cultural or social knowledge to truly understand the why's, what's and who's of a composition.

Although there are no right or wrong answers to be taken away by this, through these concepts, we have gained substantial information in the choices made in creating these series of pin badges produced in the USSR.

Despite being categorised into several subjects, re-occurring features have been used and noted (such as the repetition of the gold five-pointed star); these could be considered a moniker by

the producer, and the over-seer - the Soviet government. These symbols act as a strong, stable stamp of the regime; that no matter the context of the badge, whether an award for a prominent soldier or a citizen of a Ukrainian city, the Soviet government is always present within the initiative.

On one level, these badges were commissioned, distributed and worn as a sign of pride, achievement or belonging within their own culture and society - to feel like their presence is being noticed and rewarded within the governing of their own neighbourhood and national activities. These badges are a small representational symbol of the wearer's personality, and shows what they have personally done to earn, or feel to support, the subject of the design.

Badge themes such as military status, social history, academic achievement and community events seemed to have evoked a sense of pride within the Soviet nation. These metallic pins were used to promote the individual, but also the state.

Whether it was subliminal, or a conscious effort to ensure that the citizens of the Soviet Union always felt the presence of the ruling government, the repetition of communist symbols and the abundance of metal alloy and enamel-adored pin badges for such an array of topics, acted as a tactile piece of Soviet marketing.

Small, undistinguished, yet attractively designed, the Soviet pin badge appears to be a method of promoting both the individual citizen and the greater Soviet government in attempt to cement the sense unity and comradeship via the influential themes of patriotism, power and propaganda.



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