

Printing and Social Control in Russia 3: Blank Forms

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The printed blank form is among the most significant, most widely used and influential, yet most neglected, products of print culture. Blank forms in general do not have to be printed: where scribal labor is cheap, the hand-written blank can also be viable; but it was the fixity of print that enabled the blank form to thrive, to become established and embedded as the quintessential tool and emblem of bureaucratic administration. What, for many, is the activity that most pithily defines our dealings with authority? Form-filling. Nor has the influence of the printed blank become obsolete in the digital age. It is the direct and necessary precursor of almost all online transactions. Yet in surveys of print culture in Russia there is almost no identification of the blank form as an object of study or note. The history of print has been dominated by the history of books. Blank forms are (with very few exceptions) neither catalogued nor classified. Their preservation is random and sporadic. West European bibliography and bibliophily suffer from analogous lopsidedness, but in Western convention “ephemera” have at least constituted a recognized subject, with a tradition of formal and informal study ranging from collectors’ societies, through major digitalized library holdings,¹ to more-or-less systematic textbooks and guides.² The history of blank forms in Cyrillic remains virtually a blank page.

¹ E.g., the John Johnson Collection in the Bodleian Library, Oxford;
<http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/johnson> (accessed 9 August 2012).

² Maurice Rickards, *The Encyclopedia of Ephemera: a Guide to the Fragmentary Documents of Everyday Life for the Collector, Curator, and Historian*, completed and

In uncharted territory one has to start by making maps. The present survey covers the early stages of blank forms in Russia, with particular focus on the proliferation of “secular” blanks in civic type during the first decade or so of their production (c. 1714-24). I will suggest a provisional taxonomy of blanks, before proceeding to some remarks on their contexts, scope, limitations, subsequent development and significance. In recent articles I have touched on some aspects of the question: partly on the basis of legislative sources,³ partly in a broader discussion of print and manuscript cultures in Russia.⁴ Here the objects of study are the objects themselves: surviving printed blank forms. The primary sources come mainly from the archives of the St Petersburg Institute of History of the Russian Academy of Sciences (SPb II RAN), derived in large part from the remarkable collections of Nikolai Petrovich Likhachev (1862-1936), one of the very few Russian scholars whose interests did extend to printed ephemera, and hence to blank forms.⁵ Some

ed. Michael Twyman (London, New York: Routledge, the British Library, 2000);

Michael Twyman, “Printed Ephemera,” in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain. Volume 5, 1695-1830*, ed. Michael F. Suarez, Michael L. Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 67.

³ Simon Franklin, “Printing and Social Control in Russia 1: Passports,” *Russian History* 37/3 (August 2010): 208-37.

⁴ Simon Franklin, “Mapping the Graphosphere: Cultures of Writing in Early 19th-Century Russia (and Before),” *Kritika* 12/3 (Summer 2011), 531-60 (esp. 544-49).

⁵ On Likhachev and his collections see “*Zvuchat lish’ pis’mena... K 150-letiiu so dnia rozhdeniia akademika Nikolaia Petrovicha Likhacheva. Katalog vystavki*,” ed. A. O. Bol’shakov, E. V. Stepanova (St Petersburg: Izdatel’stvo Gosudarstvennogo Ermitazha, 2012). Parts of the relevant materials were listed in Likhachev’s own

supplementary material is taken from other archives in St Petersburg, Moscow, Edinburgh, Cambridge, Oxford and London. The survey cannot be complete or comprehensive, but I hope that the source base is adequately representative for an initial model, subject to modification and improvement.

I. Precursors

The institutional pioneer of printed blanks in Russia was the Church. Three types of printed blank have been identified in the second half of the 17th century.⁶ Two are ecclesiastical, one is secular. The earliest recorded Muscovite printed blanks for ecclesiastical appointments (*stavlennye gramoty*) date from February 1652, when, over a period of four weeks, Patriarch Nikon put in an order for a total of 7,000 blanks, in five batches, for the appointment of priests, archpriests and deacons.⁷ Thereafter there is evidence for approximately forty subsequent issues over the second half of the century, with print runs ranging from a few dozen to a few thousand. These *stavlennye gramoty* represent the Muscovite Church's first regular

Katalog letuchikh izdaniia i ikh perepechatok: manifesty, ukazy i drugie

pravitel'stvennye rasporyazheniia (St Petersburg: Tip. V. S. Balasheva, 1895), but the collections were dispersed among various institutions after Likhachev's fall from favor, and his 1895 lists have not been collated against current archival holdings.

⁶ For an overview see E. V. Luk'ianova, "Listovye izdaniia Moskovskogo pechatnogo dvora vo vtoroi polovine XVII v. (po dokumentam Prikaza knigopechatnogo dela)," in *Fedorovskie chteniia 2003* (2003): 214-24.

⁷ According to the Printing House archives: see L. N. Gorbunova, E. V. Luk'ianova, *Moskovskie kirillovskie izdaniia XVI–XVII vv. v sobraniakh RGAD. Katalog, no. 3: 1651–1675* (Moscow: Indrik, 2003), 197, nos. 6-10.

use of printing for administrative purposes.

Certificates of absolution (in the sources: *razreshal'nye*, *razreshatel'nye*, or *razreshennye gramoty*; in modern convention *razreshitel'nye gramoty*) are documents issued to the deceased and placed in their hands at burial.⁸ To issue or sell certificates of absolution was a privilege of the patriarchs of the Eastern Church. Blank certificates were from time to time produced for them at the Moscow Printing House.⁹ The first record of blank *razreshitel'nye gramoty* - referring to an order, also issued by Nikon, for one thousand to be printed for the Serbian patriarch - dates from 28

⁸ On varieties of “passport to heaven” in the Russian tradition, see B. A. Uspenskii, *Filologicheskie razyskaniia v oblasti slavianskikh drevnostei* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1982), 122-25; also W. F. Ryan, *The Bathhouse at Midnight. An Historical Survey of Magic and Divination in Russia* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1999), 295-97, and cf. fig. 14 on p. 444 (a late-18th-century printed blank).

⁹ According to the Printing House archive: see Gorbunova, Luk'ianova, *Moskovskie kirillovskie izdaniia*, Appendix 1, pp. 195-225, nos. 16, 54, 73, 74, 89, 90; note also no. 52, on the issue of *proshchennye gramoty* (seemingly another term for the same thing) in March 1667. Actual documents are very scarce indeed. See E. V. Ukhanova, “K voprosu o razreshitel'nykh gramotakh vostochnykh patriarkhov v Rossii: novye ekzempliary v fondakh GIM,” *Kapterevskie chteniia* 8 (2010): 91-114; Iu. E. Shustova, “Geografiia izdaniia razreshitel'nykh gramot vostochnykh patriarkhov v XVII v.,” in *Istoricheskaia geografiia: prostranstvo cheloveka vs chelovek v prostranstve. Materialy XXIII Mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii. Moskva, 27-29 ianvaria 2011 g.* (Moscow: RGGU, 2011), 463-67; “Razreshitel'nye gramoty 40-kh godov XVIII v. Ierusalimskogo patriarkha Parfeniia: problemy izucheniia i atributsii,” *Kapterevskie chteniia* 9 (2011): 215-41.

May 1655.

Church anticipated State by a little over a decade. Preparations for printing the first secular blanks, for grants of land by the Tsar (*zhalovannye gramoty*), are mentioned in the Printing House archive in December 1667, when the carpenter Elizar was paid 13 altyn and two dengas for the materials needed to make a large tympanum for the printing of *zhalovannye gramoty*.¹⁰ The earliest batches of documents date from 1668.¹¹ The innovation was remarkably successful: almost overnight the production of traditional handwritten versions ceased, while subsequent issues of the printed *gramoty* were fairly regular, with a peak in the mid-1680s.¹² The issue of *zhalovannye gramoty* in 1668 is thus an overlooked landmark in the history of Russian print culture. It is a truism to state that 17th-century Muscovite printing was

¹⁰ I. V. Pozdeeva, A. V. Dadykin, V. P. Pushkov, *Moskovskii pechatnyi dvor - fakt i faktor russkoi kul'tury. 1652-1700 gody. Kniga 2* (Moscow: Nauka, 2011), 487.

¹¹ E.g., SPb II RAN, coll. 238, op. 2, karton 201, nos. 1, 2. A manuscript alteration to the printed date shows that the latter, though issued to its recipient in 1669, was printed in 1668.

¹² A. A. Guseva, "Neizvestnye izdaniia Verkhnei tipografii (Tsarskie zhalovannye gramoty 1681-1683 gg.)," in *Kniga. Issledovaniia i materialy* 65 (1993): 130-36; Pozdeeva, Dadykin, Pushkov, *Moskovskii pechatnyi dvor - fakt i faktor russkoi kul'tury. 1652-1700 gody. Kniga 2*, 487-97. The SPb II archive contains around twenty printed specimens in two clusters, 1668-77 and 1688-99: koll. 238, op. 2, kartony 201 and 177. For the broader history of 17th-century *zhalovannye gramoty*, both handwritten and printed (but without reference to SPb II), see N. A. Komochev, *Tsarskie zhalovannye gramoty (1613-1696) svetskim litsam: istochnikovedcheskoe issledovanie* (kand. diss., Moscow: RGGU, Istoriko-arkhivnyi institut, 2010).

overwhelmingly ecclesiastical. If we ignore primers, then the standard list of exceptions amounts to an isolated cluster of just three books from mid-century: a 1647 translated manual of infantry formation, the 1648 version of Smotritskii's grammar (if one counts as secular a grammar of Church Slavonic), and the 1649 law-code (*Ulozhenie*). According to the truism, the history of regular Russian secular printing begins in the 18th century. Remove the assumption that print history is book history, and the truism ceases to be true. The history of regular secular printing in Russia begins with the production of *zhalovannye gramoty* in 1668.

However, the 17th-century *zhalovannye gramoty* did not in themselves generate, or serve as prototypes for, the subsequent tradition. Though very important, they were also self-contained, restricted chronologically, formally, and functionally. The resort to print was convenient for the production of complex documents in large numbers, but it did not reflect any move towards overall simplification. The printed *zhalovannye gramoty* were cumbersome and expensive. They were meant to display the dignity of their royal origins. In content and presentation they followed closely their manuscript equivalents,¹³ comprising a very substantial narrative and rhetorical text¹⁴ in massive format (around 45x66 cm. and bigger), with decorative (printed) headpiece and borders, authenticated through the attachment of a weighty royal seal, and protected by an expensive cloth cover.

This was not the way of the future. For almost the whole of the 18th century

¹³ See Komochev, *Tsarskie zhalovannye gramoty*, ch. 2, sect. 1. The printed versions increased the sense of luxury, since they tended to be produced on larger-sized paper.

¹⁴ See, e.g., the text for an issue of 1676: Pozdeeva, Dadykin, Pushkov, *Moskovskii pechatnyi dvor - fakt i faktor russki kul'tury. 1652-1700 gody. Kniga 2*, 488-91.

major Imperial grants of land reverted to manuscript.¹⁵ The late-17th-century period of the printed blank *zhalovannye gramoty* was significant, but not productive. The “real” start of the age of proliferating secular blanks began in the second decade of the 18th century, and involved major changes in format, and a diversification of functions: from the grand, florid and loquacious document of permanent record, to the small, and succinct, plain and portable certification of temporary regulations or dispensations, in the new civic type.

The change did not happen overnight. In 1706 Peter issued versions of a printed blank which, in all but typeface, looked like a product of the new age: modest in format, economical in expression, ephemeral in function. The document instructed military commanders in Ukraine not to take, or to allow their troops to take, more than their designated due from the estate or individual whose name was entered in the blank section. The form designated itself an *oboronitel'nyi list* (fig. 1).¹⁶ This term does not appear in the relevant dictionaries, not did it become part of any regular terminology of documentation, but its meaning is reasonably plain: a permit for travel on official business, with a request or instruction for safe passage. This, more than the

¹⁵ See O. O. Khoruzhenko, *Dvoriarskie diplomy XVIII veka v Rossii* (Moscow: Nauka, 1999), esp. p. 165. On the switch in terminology: the list of foreign words appended to Peter's *General'nyi reglament* of 1720 glosses *zhalovannaia gramota* as *diplom*: see *Polnoe sobranie zakonov rossiiskoi imperii* (hereafter *PSZ*), no. 3534 (vol. 6: 160).

¹⁶ SPb II RAN, coll. 283 op. 1 no. 2 (1) (a pristine form, not filled in). For other versions see T. A. Bykova, M. M. Gurevich, *Opisanie izdani, naпечатannykh kirillitsei. 1689-ianvar' 1725 g.* (Moscow, Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1958), nos. 55 (from BAN), 56 (from RGADA).

zhalovannye gramoty, was a pointer to the future. Yet it, too, appears to be isolated, not yet the start of a continuous tradition. The woodcut initial has led to the plausible conjecture that the *oboronitel'nye listy* were printed not in Moscow or St Petersburg, but in Kiev.¹⁷ More substantial evidence for the start of a continuous and diverse history of secular printed blanks in civic type points to a slightly later date, *circa* 1714.

II. Types of secular printed blank

On what basis can the blanks be classified? A first assumption might be that we should label the types of document according to the names by which they were known at the time. However, the blanks themselves do not use a consistent vocabulary of self-designation. This is not because they were new. On the contrary, terminological variability was a traditional feature of Russian document-production in manuscript as well as in print.¹⁸ A second possibility would be to classify the blanks according to technical criteria such as verbal formulae, apparatus of authentication, or features of their design and presentation. Again, however, it is hard to draw clear boundaries. Some formal attributes became reasonably consistent, others did not. Systematic technical description is for a future catalogue. This provisional taxonomy resorts to a third option: classification by function. Though I will refer both to terminology and to formal attributes, the following subdivisions relate to the principal purposes that a given blank or group of blanks was meant to serve. The main survey is

¹⁷ Bykova, Gurevich, *Opisanie izdanii, naпечатannykh kirillitsei*, 140-41.

¹⁸ See A. N. Kachalkin, *Zhanry russkogo dokumenta dopetrovskoi epokhi* (Moscow: Izd. MGU, 1988); idem, "Nazvaniia dopetrovskikh delovykh tekstov," *Russkaia rech'*, 2 (2002): [no. 2:] 73-80.

also restricted to documents that I have seen. A section at the end indicates some other types of document whose existence may be inferred from indirect evidence.

1. Patents

A patent (*patent*) in this context is a service commission, a certificate attesting to the conferment of rank.¹⁹ These were vital documents. Article 4 of Peter I's *Tabel' o rangakh* of 1722 states that nobody may claim the privileges of rank without being able to show the relevant patent.²⁰ Fragments of evidence bear witness to the printing of patents at least from 1714. In a letter of 2 June 1714, written during the Gangut (i.e. Hankö) campaign, Peter asked his Grand-Chancellor, Gavriil Golovkin, to send printed patents for various naval ranks, with gaps for the name, date and rank.²¹ The museum in the Montenegrin town of Perast exhibits a patent apparently issued on 1 May 1714 to Matvei Zmaevich (= Matija Zmajević), conferring on him the rank of "captain commander." Matvei Zmaevich served in the Hankö campaign. However, the Perast patent needs further investigation: it is fully printed (i.e. not a blank), the verbal formulae are unusual, and it is defective, lacking both seal and signature.²² The

¹⁹ The appendix to the 1720 *General'nyi reglament* glosses *patent* as *zhalovannaia gramota na chin*: PSZ, no. 3534 (vol. 6: 160).

²⁰ Scan available on the Russian State Library website;
<http://dlib.rsl.ru/viewer/01003341475#?page=7> (accessed 9 August 2012).

²¹ *Materialy dlia istorii Gangutskoi operatsii. Vypusk I, chast' II. Gramoty, ukazy i pis'ma Petra Velikogo* (Petrograd: Tipografiia Morskogo ministerstva, 1914), 119.

²² On the museum's website:

http://www.muzejperast.me/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=18:dip-loma-matiji-zmajeviu (accessed 9 August 2012); better quality reproduction on

first extant and currently identified complete blank patent was issued later the same year, on 7 December 1714, to the *shturman* Boris Lebiadnikov, conferring on him the rank of *poruchik*.²³

Patents were not ephemera. Like *zhalovannye gramoty*, they were signs of imperial favor, often bearing the ruler's signature, and they had to be robust enough to be preserved.²⁴ They were usually printed on parchment (tougher than paper, as well as being more expensive). Hence they have survived in comparatively large numbers. Just one of the collections in the SPb II RAN archive contains nearly two hundred

http://samlib.ru/img/g/gnitiew_m_j/bizant/. See also I. A. Voznesenskaia, "Patent na chin kapitana-komandora Matii Zmaevicha iz muzeia Perasta," in *Vspomogatel'nye istoricheskie distsipliny v sovremennom nauchnom znanii. Materialy XXV*

Mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii 31 ianv. – 2 fevr. 2013 g., ed. Iu. E. Shustova et al. (Moscow: Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi gumanitarnyi universitet, 2013), 244-46.

Note that three small holes in the parchment could be consistent with the original attachment of a seal.

²³ SPb II RAN, coll. 238, op. 2, karton. 182, no. 5; now described and illustrated in "Zvuchat lish' pis'mena...", 350 (no. 259).

²⁴ This was apparently expected even when a given patent had been superseded by a subsequent promotion: see, from the archive of the Military-Historical Museum of Artillery, Engineer and Signal Corps (VIMAIViVS, F. 2, op. ShGF, d. 1902, l. 24) a hand-written register, produced after March 1762, recording which officers had kept or lost which of their past patents, in some cases in a sequence going back as far as 1738. I am again grateful to Irina Aleksandrovna Voznesenskaia for images of several documents from this archive.

patents from the 18th century.²⁵ Printed blank patents through the 1720s appear to have been fairly stable both in their verbal formulae and in their production and presentation. All are roughly the size of the 1714 version (c. 21x33 cm.), with few frills except a decorative initial letter.²⁶

Patents served vanity as well as function. Though the verbal formulae changed little, the recipient could choose, at a price, to order far more luxurious versions, custom-printed (though still usually with a gap for the date), on much larger sheets of parchment, with elaborately engraved or hand-coloured borders, sometimes with gold highlights. I have not yet seen luxury versions dating from before the late-1730s.²⁷ In mid-century the two processes were conducted at different presses. A Senate decree of 15 March 1745 determined that the blank form itself was to be printed at the Senate's press, while the decorative flourishes were to be added at the Academy of Sciences press.²⁸ Other presses, too, were keen to become involved. It seems there was money to be made from the printing of patents. A decree of 10 May 1759 pointed out that the press of the Naval Cadet Corp derived considerable profit from this

²⁵ SPb II RAN, coll. 238 (kartony 182-185a, 186-187a, 197, 208).

²⁶ E.g. SPb II RAN, coll. 238, op. 2, karton 183, no. 1-2 (1730), karton 208, no. 1 (1724). Cf. the identical wording, preserved in an English translation, of the patent issued by Peter aboard his flagship, the *Ingermanland*, on 11 July 1719, when appointing Captain Thomas Gordon to the rank of Rear-Admiral: National Archives of Scotland, GD24/1/854/21.

²⁷ See, e.g., coll. 238, op. 2, karton 183, no. 17 (14 May 1737), which measures 42x31 cm. The tradition continued through the century: see, e.g., "*Zvuchat lish' pis'mena...*", no. 272, from 1788.

²⁸ PSZ, no. 9122 (vol. 12: 345-46).

branch of its activities (*ot togo byvaet nemalaia pribyl'*), and therefore permitted the recently-established Infantry Cadet Corps press to cross-subsidize its otherwise loss-making operations by printing and selling patents.²⁹ Soon the Artillery Cadet Corps (founded in 1762) had joined in. Patents did not have to be luxurious in order to be profitable. The archive of the Military-Historical Museum of Artillery, Engineer and Signal Corps preserves a hand-written invoice, dated March 1766, sent to General Grigorii Orlov in the field, for a routine order of 247 printed blank patents at 53 kopeks and three quarters apiece.³⁰ This was close to what, in the jargon of West European print history, might be known as ordinary “jobbing” printing.

Patents are exceptional for two reasons. First, they constitute a distinct type of document, with a distinct function, consistent verbal formulae, and consistent terminology of self-designation. Second, they relate to grants of long-term privileges. Most other types of printed blank relate to grants of short-term permissions.

2. Exemptions and release from military service

Several of the early printed blanks deal either with temporary exemption from military service, or with permanent release or retirement. Over the relevant period they are characterized by fluidity both in form and in formula. This can be shown on the basis of a comparison between clusters of blanks issued in 1718 and in 1721-2.

On 5 August 1718 the *stol'nik* Grigorii Iakovlevich Miasnoi was given a printed certificate to confirm that two weeks previously, on 26 July, he had presented himself as ordered at the military inspection in St Petersburg, but that he had not been assigned to any duties and was hence permitted to return home. Provincial officials

²⁹ PSZ, no. 10,952 (vol. 15: 346-47), 10 May 1759.

³⁰ VIMAIViVS, F. 2, op. ShGF, d. 1902, p. 10.

were told not to assign him any duties without a further instruction from the Senate (fig. 2).³¹ Note that this blank designates and presents itself as a decree (*ukaz*) of Peter, issued through the Senate chancellery. Like a normal *ukaz*, it has no seal, but ends with a printed roundel indicating the *locus sigilli* (*mesto pečati*). Like a normal *ukaz*, it also specifies the date and place of its own printing – by contrast with most blanks, which leave spaces for components of the date on which they are formally activated (by being filled in and issued to their recipients), but which are rarely concerned with the date of their own printed production.

This was the habit in the summer of 1718. Although the form has elements of a one-off *ukaz* for a specific occasion, it functioned transferably like a generic blank, to be reprinted and updated periodically. Copies of the *ukaz*/blank of 5 August were also used to confirm exemptions for those who presented themselves for inspection on 27 August.³² The same *ukaz*, identical in all respects except the date, was reprinted on 25 September, for those granted exemptions after the inspection the previous day, 24 September.³³

Turning to the later cluster: in December 1721 (the day is not specified, though a space is left for it in the printed text), following the military inspection in St Petersburg, Larion Ivanovich Zhelnyrskii was granted permanent exemption from service on grounds of old age.³⁴ This blank was no longer designated an *ukaz* in itself, but was issued “in compliance with,” or “according to,” a decree (*po ukazu*). Instead of the printed roundel indicating the *mesto pečati*, the completed form preserves

³¹ SPb II RAN, coll. 238, op. 2, karton 197, no. 2 (1).

³² SPb II RAN, coll. 238, op. 2, karton 197, no. 2 (2).

³³ SPb II RAN, coll. 238, op. 2, karton 197, no. 2 (3).

³⁴ SPb II RAN, coll. 238, op. 2, karton 197, no. 6.

remnants of an actual wax seal (of Peter). It was further authenticated not by the signature of a single dignitary, but by a bevy of bureaucrats: an Over-Secretary, a Secretary, and a Notary. Its text was no longer an instruction to local officials not to assign further duties, but a general grant of safe passage home, stressing that Larion Ivanovich had been permitted to leave (*otpushchen iz*) St Petersburg, and that he must be allowed to pass without hindrance (*propuskat' bez zaderzhaniia*). Then the document labels itself: it was a passport (*sei pashport*). This is the earliest example of such a self-definition that I have thus far identified in a printed blank.

Some time in 1721 (the month and day are not stated) a slightly different blank was printed in St Petersburg, for essentially the same purpose.³⁵ The bearer was to be allowed to pass freely (*vezde ego propuskat'*), and to be shown the respect due to his service (*za ego sluzhby pokazyvat' k nemu vsiakoe blagodeianie*). The heading stated that the document had been issued in compliance with Peter's decree (*po ukazu*), yet in the text it reverted to calling itself an *ukaz*. It was to be authenticated by the seal of the Voennaia Kollegiia. One might see this as a kind of transitional hybrid – except that, up to a year later, identical versions were being produced according to the same template, such as the certificate of release issued on 20 November 1722 to Fedor Elizarov, permitting him to return to his home village of Besovo in Poshekhonskii uezd.³⁶

From March 1722 we have yet another set of certificates of permanent release

³⁵ RGADA, coll. BMST (= Biblioteka Moskovskoi sinodal'noi tipografii), gr. P, 657

(1). I am very grateful to Kirill Khudin for locating and transcribing this and other documents from the same collection in RGADA.

³⁶ SPb II RAN, coll. 238, op. 2, karton 197, no. 7 (1)

from service.³⁷ Again there are both differences and similarities. These blanks were set in what computer printers would call “landscape” format, where the width is greater than the length; the 1718 and 1721 blanks had been printed “portrait” style, where length is greater than width. The exact day of *production* – 5 March – appeared in the printed text of the first version, as in a decree, though a handwritten note at the bottom gave the date of *issue* as 9 March, and in a second copy the printed date was over-written by hand (with a new date of 16 March). Then the blank was reprinted, leaving a gap for the day.³⁸ All versions were signed by the Over-Secretary, Secretary and Notary, plus the counter-signature of the *protokolist*. The text merely confirmed the bearers’ exemption, with no “passport-type” formulae of safe passage. One copy bears a seal, the others do not.

From almost exactly the same time we have a template for a certificate of temporary exemption. The text is again different: in compliance with Peter’s *ukaz* of 16 March the recipient is allowed home, but is to report immediately if summoned by the *gerol’dmeister*. A remarkable annotation in red ink, made at 12.00 on 16 March, approves the blank for printing, with minor technical adjustments, and instructs the press to produce 500 copies of “such passports” (*500 takikh pashportov*).³⁹

It is hard to tell whether the production of printed blanks for these functions was episodic or continual in the period 1718-22. The high level of coincidence between surviving examples in unrelated collections (SPb II and RGADA) may indicate that it was episodic. At any rate, the degree of fluctuation in basic form,

³⁷ SPb II RAN, coll. 238, op. 2, karton 197, no. 7 (2-5).

³⁸ The latter two in the SPb II group; also a pristine (unfilled) copy in RGADA, coll. BMST, gr. P, 660 (1).

³⁹ RGADA, coll. BMST, gr. P, 542 (1).

content and terminology, in blanks with analogous functions, suggests that, by contrast with patents, there was as yet little sense of a generic norm.

3. Military travel passes

On 7 March 1720 a blank was issued to Second-Major Ivan Bol'shoi Bulgakov. It stated that, in compliance with a decree (*po ukazu*) of Peter, the bearer was “permitted to leave (*otpushchen iz*) St Petersburg”, and that all military personnel were to allow him and his attendants to pass without hindrance (*propuskat' bez zaderzhaniia*).⁴⁰ The document had four main signatories, including Prince Golitsyn, plus a signature of the chancellery secretary, and it was stamped with Peter's seal. The elaborate apparatus of authentication was more likely a reassurance than a burden, for in 1720 it was seriously risky matter for an officer to be travelling around Russia independently. The *ukaz* to which the heading refers could be one of several, including two that had been issued in the previous year (19 March and 30 October 1719) making it clear that soldiers who went absent without leave may be subject to the death penalty, as was anybody who failed to report them. A travelling soldier's life could depend on his possession of the relevant valid documents mentioned in the *ukazy*, variously referred to as *svobodnye priamye otpuski*,⁴¹ *prokhozhee pis'mo*, *proezzhee pis'mo*, *propusknoe pis'mo*, *pashport*.⁴² The printed text of this document gives no generic designation. One of the handwritten additions describes it as an *otpusk*. The archive's own description lists it (inappropriately) as a *podorozhnaia*.⁴³

⁴⁰ SPb II RAN, coll. 238, op. 2, karton 197, no. 4.

⁴¹ PSZ, no. 3334 (vol.5: 683), 19 March 1719.

⁴² PSZ, no. 3445 (vol. 5: 750), 30 October 1719.

⁴³ On different meanings of *podorozhnaia*, see below, n. 57.

The instruction to military personnel is reminiscent of the *oboronitel'nyi list* of 1706. The phrase *propuskat' bez zaderzhaniia* is a standard formula of passes or passports.⁴⁴

4. Foreign travel passes

There were two varieties of permit to leave the country: a passport for a return trip; or a one-way exit permit. Travel documents were a traditional requirement. Evidence for the early use of printed blanks is very sparse.

By far the earliest printed foreign travel passport in the SPb II RAN archive was issued on 15 April 1719 to Georg Wilhelm de Hennin, or Henning (here written as “Genik”). The document, authenticated with a wafer seal and signed by Golovkin, certified that the bearer and his entourage were allowed to travel “to Hamburg, Holland and other European regions” on the tsar’s business (fig. 3).⁴⁵ Henning was a distinguished artillery officer and mining engineer. In 1719 he was sent abroad to investigate mining works, and he returned with the specialists and the expertise that eventually led to his being associated with the founding of Petrozavodsk, Ekaterinburg (where a statue to him was erected in 1998), and Perm.⁴⁶ The printed text of Henning’s passport reproduced several of the international formulae of travel documents: requests “to whom it may concern” to allow the bearer to pass freely,

⁴⁴ See, e.g., *propuskati vezde bez zaderzhan'ia* in handwritten exit passes authorized by Mikhail Romanov a century earlier: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Add. D. 75 f. 3 (December 1626); or by Aleksei Mikhailovich: Cambridge University Library, MS. Add. 152 (February 1652).

⁴⁵ SPb II RAN, coll. 238, op. 2, karton 197, no. 3.

⁴⁶ See Lindsey Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 431.

without let or hindrance, and to afford protection and assistance. The document's self-designation, in the last line of the printed text, is as a *pas*, which by then was already a traditional word for various kinds of travel permit.⁴⁷ A handwritten German translation (rendering the name correctly) was added on the reverse.

That, for the moment, is all. I have not yet been able to locate or inspect any other printed foreign travel permits before mid-century, after which they become quite common. On the one hand, we might surmise that Petrine legislation on exit permits may well imply that the relevant documents would have been or should have been in the form of printed blanks.⁴⁸ On the other hand, perhaps the scarcity of evidence is no accident. Both types of pass continued to be issued in (or reverted to) manuscript, not only in the late 1720s but at least through to the middle of the century.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ *Slovar' russkogo iazyka XI-XVII vv.*, vol. 14 (1988), 158; *Slovar' russkogo iazyka XVIII veka*, vol. 18 (2011), 224-25.

⁴⁸ E.g., PSZ, no. 3420 (vol. 5: 732; a decree of 31 August 1719 forbidding foreigners to enter or leave the country without permits); or PSZ, no. 3937 (vol. 6: 540; a section of the *Admiralty Regulation*, published on 5 April 1722, prescribing documentary procedures to be followed by those who wished to leave the country after release from naval service).

⁴⁹ E.g., the manuscript pass issued on 14 July 1727 for travel to Poland on official business, signed by Menshikov: illustrated in V. G. Chernukha, *Pasport v Rossii 1719-1917 gg.* (St Petersburg: Liki Rossii, 2007), facing p. 160; the permanent exit permit, along with a certificate of release from military service (*abshid*), both handwritten, issued in St Petersburg on 3 and 13 March 1740 to William MacKenzie: National Archive of Scotland, GD46, fol. 29-30; or the handwritten passport to travel

5. Certificate of release (for prisoners of war)

On 16 October 1721 Peter I gave instructions that, following the Treaty of Nystad in August of that year, all Swedish prisoners-of-war were to be released.⁵⁰ Article 5 of the decree specified that those who were unencumbered by debts or marriage were free either to remain in Russia or to return home to Sweden. They were to bring their letters of release (*svobodnye pis'ma*) from the provinces to the Voennaia Kollegiia, where they would be issued with an appropriate pass (*otpusk*). The first blanks were printed (and issued) even before the *ukaz* was technically promulgated on 21 October. Thus, the SPb II RAN archive preserves a form issued to a dragoon from Helsingborg.⁵¹ The blank, issued by the Voennaia Kollegiia, signed by Menshikov and dated 20 October, affirmed that it was produced in compliance with Peter's decree (*po ukazu*). Indeed, it followed precisely the prescriptions in Article 5: the former prisoner was permitted either to go home (*otpushchaetsia v ego otechestvo*), or to remain and work in Russia. In its function as an *otpusk*, the form included the typical formula of passports, that the bearer was to be allowed to pass without

to London on official business, issued in Moscow to John Owen on 26 August 1744:

British Library, MS Stowe 142, fol. 110-111 .

⁵⁰ *PSZ*, no. 3839 (vol 6: 442-444).

⁵¹ SPb II RAN, col. 238, op. 2, kart. 197, no. 5. Note also Peter's manifesto issued in April of the same year, in German and Russian, offering to release prisoners-of-war who were prepared to work or serve in Russia: *PSZ*, no. 3778 (vol. 6: 383-87); German version in T. A. Bykova, M. M. Gurevich, *Opisanie izdanii grazhdanskoi pečati, 1708-ianvar' 1725 g.* (Moscow, Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1955), Prilozhenie I, no. 19.

hindrance (*vezde propuskat' bez zaderzhaniia*).

Like some of the certificates of release from service, the 1721 blank shows that the presses could be ready to act quickly. However, here the occasion and the terms were rather specific, leading to a kind of hybrid (both exit permit and internal residence permit). It would be risky to infer that this blank represents a genre or sub-type.

6. Peasant travel passes (*pokormezhnye*)

Peter I's *plakat* of 26 June 1724 decreed that peasants could travel up to thirty versts with permits issued by their landowner, but for more distant travel this must be exchanged for a centrally issued permit provided through the provincial authorities. The *plakat* itself did not specify how this latter permit was to be produced, though the evidence of other types of permit surveyed thus far suggests that printed blanks may have been issued. Two years later, on 1 February 1726, Catherine I decreed that all such permits must be printed, and that handwritten equivalents would not be accepted as valid.⁵² The legislative background is therefore plain, but the documents themselves are elusive. Collection 238 in the SPb II RAN archive contains fifty of the printed permits from 1733 to the end of the 18th century.⁵³ However, by contrast with some of the other blanks we have discussed, the form and formulae of these peasant passes were exceptionally stable throughout, so it is reasonable to extrapolate back

⁵² See Franklin, "Printing and Social Control in Russia 1," 213-17.

⁵³ SPb II RAN, coll. 238, op. 2, karton 194, no. 1 (13 documents from Serpukhov, Kostroma, Iaroslavl', Poshekhon'e, 1733-1774, plus two double pages of unfilled blanks issued by Paul); no. 2 (35 documents from Uglich, 1745-1760, bound together as an album).

from the extant blanks to the previous few years.

The standard printed text included two terms of self-designation: the document was both an *otpusk*, and a *pokormezhnaia* (implying *gramota*), since its function was to certify that the bearer was permitted to travel *v rabotu dlia prokormleniia*. Confusingly, in the first line of the printed text the landlord's handwritten permit, which had to be shown and registered in order for the printed permit to be issued, was also labelled a *pokormezhnaia*. Handwritten endorsements on the verso frequently called the document a *pashport*.⁵⁴ The procedure outlined in the text is exactly as prescribed in Peter's 1724 *plakat*. Indeed, so embedded was the notion of adherence to the Petrine legislation that the standard heading, throughout the century, referred to double authority: the permit was issued *po ukazu ee* (or *ego*) *Imperatorskogo Velichestva i po publikovannomu v narode Plakatu*. The peasant permits are the smallest and flimsiest of the blanks so far described. Printed in multiples on a single sheet, they were cut to almost-square single documents (generally 16-18x20 cm., with each block of print c. 6x17 cm.).

The most distinctive and innovative feature was to be found not in the routine handwritten information inserted into the gaps left for it in the printed text, but in the sometimes extensive handwritten additions *after* the end of the printed blank itself. These lines provided personal details about the bearer. Thus, for example, the earliest *pokormezhnaia* in this group, issued in Serpukhov on 3 October 1733, tells us the height of its recipient, the peasant Semen Mironov, as well as the shape of his face and the color of his moustache and beard (fig. 4).⁵⁵ This information was also prescribed by Peter's *plakat*, and is highly significant. Unlike all other types of blank

⁵⁴ E.g., SPb II RAN, coll. 238, op. 2, karton 194, no. 1 (5, 7, 8); no. 2 (1, 22).

⁵⁵ SPb II RAN, coll. 238, op. 2, karton 194, no. 1 (1).

in this survey, which neither provided nor required proof that the bearer was who he purported to be, the *pokormezhnye* combined the function of travel permit with that of identity document. In view of the fact that these were standard elements, it is curious that they were not actually incorporated into the printed templates until the 19th century.

7. Varia, dubia, desiderata

The above set of classifications does not cover all types of printed blank that were issued in the relevant period. It is a provisional list, limited to the extant specimens that I have thus far been able to locate and inspect. Others may be inferred either from legislation or from occasional references in later sources. I list some here, with minimal annotation.

(i) *Podorozhnye*. A Senate *ukaz* of 23 January 1718 required that all *podorozhnye* for travel between Moscow and St Petersburg must be printed.⁵⁶ Surprisingly, this was the first and only Petrine *ukaz* which stated expressly that print was the sole and obligatory medium for the issue of a given type of permit. The meaning, however, is not absolutely clear. The word *podorozhnaia* has both a narrow, specialist usage, and a looser, general sense.⁵⁷ In its narrow meaning, a *podorozhnaia* (*gramota*) was a permit for the use of official transport, including, where appropriate, the requisitioning of post horses. In effect, it was a kind of state-issued ticket. I have

⁵⁶ *PSZ*, no. 3145 (vol. 5: 532).

⁵⁷ See *Slovar' russkogo iazyka XI-XVII vv.*, vol. 19 (1990), 31-32. Both meanings are attested from the 16th century onwards, but the broader meaning is the rarer (here cited in the locutions *podorozhnyi list*, *podorozhnaia pamiat'*). See, however, the looser meaning in a decree of 1743: *PSZ* no. 8749 (vol. 11: 845-46).

not yet found early specimens of printed blank *podorozhnye* in this sense.⁵⁸ If we understand *podorozhnaia* in its broader sense of “internal travel pass,” then some of the above documents may fit the label.

(ii) Licence to operate as a naval privateer. The volume of documents associated with the Hankō campaign includes the Russian text of a large and very wordy unfilled blank, dated January 1714 and apparently issued both in Russian and in Dutch, conferring on a privateer (i.e. one who has provided a ship and crew from his own resources) authority to act on Peter’s behalf.⁵⁹

(iii) Certificate of assignment to a military unit: the counterpart of the certificates of exemption after inspection. This appears to have been the function of a blank from 1722 in the Synodal Press collection of RGADA.⁶⁰

(iv) Customs clearance. The 1895 list of documents then in the N. P. Likhachev collection cites a *pasportnyi tamozhennyi blank* certifying that all customs dues on a ship’s cargo had been paid.⁶¹ The reverse of the form is said to provide the printed text of the relevant legislation: an *ukaz* of 20 May 1726 (or was it the other way around – an *ukaz* with a template blank on the reverse?). I have not thus far been able to locate either the blank or the *ukaz*.

And so on. This provisional taxonomic template leaves plenty of gaps to be filled.

⁵⁸ For *podorozhnye* from the second half of the 18th century, see, e.g., SPb II RAN, coll. 238, op. 2, karton. 195, no. 3 (1-4).

⁵⁹ *Materialy dlia istorii Gangutskoi operatsii. Vypusk I, chast' II*, 15-16 (no. 99). The blank is labeled (by the editors) *patent na saperstvo*.

⁶⁰ RGADA, coll. BMST, gr. P, 542 (2).

⁶¹ *Katalog letuchikh izdanii i ikh perepechatok*, 293, no. 1.

III. Contexts, aftermath, significance

Russia was slow to exploit the potential of printing as a routine tool of secular administration. In the 17th century only one type of printed blank was produced with any regularity: the large and cumbersome *zhalovannye gramoty*, starting in 1668. This was an important step, but also, in a sense, a false start, as were occasional isolated documents such as the *oboronitel'nye listy* of 1706. The continuous history of secular printed blanks begins in or around 1714. Over the following decade, printed blanks were introduced in a diverse range of administrative procedures. Why?

The broadest context was, rather tritely, Peter's "Europeanizing" initiatives in governance. More specifically, the regular recourse to printed blanks can be seen as an extension of his policy of developing a secular print culture, whether in administration, education, or public information. Still more narrowly, it should be associated with a better known decision taken by Peter in 1714: his *ukaz* of 16 March that henceforth print was to be the technology of record for *ukazy*.⁶² It is surely no coincidence that the start of the continuous history of printed administrative blanks was so close chronologically to the start of the continuous history of printed legislative documents in general.

The Petrine blanks were expressly linked to legislation. They were not merely aids to operational efficiency in bureaucratic practice. All types of blanks referred to legislation as their justification and as the source of their authority. Indeed, the initial blanks were presented (and perceived) *as* legislative acts. Patents were framed as direct orders from the ruler, in the first person. The early military exemptions were

⁶² See Simon Franklin, "Printing and Social Control in Russia 2: Decrees," *Russian History* 38 (2011): 467-92.

actual *ukazy* both in self-designation and in format (the initial formula, the precise date of printing, the *mesto pechati* roundel). All subsequent blanks included a phrase stating that they had been issued in accordance or compliance with an *ukaz*. In several cases we can trace the line from a specific *ukaz* to an extant blank: orders on military exemptions, followed by blanks, sometimes printed and issued on the same day; the *ukaz* of October 1721 on the release of Swedish prisoners-of-war; legislation of 1719 and 1722 on exit permits for foreigners, and on internal travel permits for military personnel; the 1724 *plakat* on peasant travel passes. Almost none of the Petrine legislation stated explicitly that the relevant operational documents had to be in printed form, but the evidence of the documents themselves implies that this may well have been assumed or implemented, even when not expressly required.

We should not overemphasize diversity. Apart from the patents, all the blanks dealt directly or indirectly with an analogous set of problems: all were concerned with permission to travel (whether abroad, or within Russia for work, or back home after military service or inspection). There is no obvious connection between the two themes – except that, fortuitously or otherwise, we do find them linked in a single document from Peter right at the start of the process. His letter of June 1714 to Golovkin, ordering printed blank patents during the Hankö campaign, contained one additional request: to send a model letter, in Russian and German, for safe passage in a theatre of war. Peter knew that proper permits required proper templates, but he confessed that he did not know the right form.⁶³ One might speculate that the turn to

⁶³ *Materialy dlia istorii Gangutskoi operatsii. Vypusk I, chast' II*, 119: *takzhe prishli po-russki i po-nemetski obraztsovoe pis'mo, kakim manirom daiutsia priezzhie pasy mezhdz temi, kto voiuutsia mezhdz soboiu, ibo nyne shvedy [...] prosiat pasy, a napisat' ne umeem.*

printed blanks, alongside or in place of manuscript conventions and templates, was one expression of Peter's sense that the proper regulation of people required proper and regular forms. The next phase in the functional and thematic diversification of printed blanks, which extended into the sphere of economic transactions (banknotes, promissory notes), was a feature of the second half of the century.

Nor should one overemphasize continuity. Like many Petrine initiatives, this initial flurry of blank-production did not immediately settle into a consistent, growing and unbroken tradition. Some of the Petrine blanks were episodic at the time. Others are separated by a long chronological gap from the next equivalent examples that I have thus far encountered. Much more material, from many more archives, is needed before we can confidently reconstruct a history of printed blanks across the century. Even the most stable of types – patents, and peasant *pokormezhnye* – have heavily punctuated histories. I have shown elsewhere how repeated legislation reveals the practical difficulty of enforcing the regular use of printed *pokormezhnye*.⁶⁴ As for patents: despite the assertion (in the *Tabel' o rangakh*) that commissions were not valid without a patent, several specimens from the late 1720s and 1730s reveal that in practice many years could pass between the conferral of rank and the issue of the patent.⁶⁵ In each case the printed text includes an identical, formulaic phrase (*no tokmo emu na onoi chin patenta po nyne bylo ne dano*), which implies a known, formulaic situation. The phrase is not limited to the earliest period, and hence cannot

⁶⁴ Franklin, "Printing and Social Control in Russia 1: Passports."

⁶⁵ SPb II RAN, coll. 238, op. 2, no. 183 (2) (signed by Anna, issued October 1730; rank conferred February 1728); no. 182 (5) (signed by Menshikov and others, issued September 1725, rank conferred May 1717); no. 182 (6) (signed by Menshikov and others; issued February 1726; rank conferred December 1714!).

merely reflect “teething troubles.” Exactly the same formula appears in a set of handwritten templates, sent from the Voennaia Kollegiia to General Aleksandr Vilboa (= Alexandre Villebois) for patents to be printed in 1763.⁶⁶ As for less stable types of printed form: sometimes it can seem that inconsistency was and remained a functioning norm for decades. For example, the SPb II RAN archive preserves a set of three internal travel permits issued at the end of the century to the merchant Nikita Matveevich Khabcheev from the Ustiuzhina-Zheleznopol’skii uezd.⁶⁷ The first is a handwritten (but duly signed and sealed) annual *pashport*, dated 3 March 1792. The second, from 28 February 1794, is also an annual permit, but on a standard printed blank form (printed blanks were supposed to have been compulsory for merchant passports at least since 1744). And the third, issued on 30 May 1797, is again handwritten, but follows exactly the wording of the standard printed peasant *pokormezhnye*, even including the statement that it was issued in compliance with the *plakat* (and including the addition of Nikita Matveevich’s personal identifying features). One person, one function, three quite different forms of document.

However else one may interpret the use of printed blanks, clearly they were not *simply* convenient replacements for handwritten equivalents. On the contrary: in a certain sense, operationally and even ideologically their “inconvenience” was the point. It was both problematic and necessary. The natural assumption is that printing was or should have been a more efficient replacement for handwriting, yet printing in Russia was a far less accessible technology. In much of Western Europe anybody

⁶⁶ VIMAIViVC, F. 2, op. ShGF, d. 1901, f. 30, 32, 33: concerning patents issued by Catherine II to officers who had been promoted under Elizabeth, but who had not yet received their patents.

⁶⁷ SPb II, coll. 238, op. 2, karton 194, no. 3(1-3).

with the means could order printed documents or other ephemera from the multitude of commercial, “jobbing” printers jostling for custom. Not so in Russia, where the State had a monopoly over the means of production. Here a printed document was by definition an instrument of authority. By contrast with its handwritten equivalent, the technology itself provided assurance of the document’s status and authenticity. Printed blanks provided a measure of protection against forgery. Print was a guarantor and symbol of power.

Finally, there is the question of culture. It would seem presumptuous, and perhaps faintly absurd, to suggest that printed blank forms are of cultural significance. Surely the printed blank is the emblem of bureaucracy, the very opposite of culture? Surely this is why the printed blank has rightly been ignored by historians of Russian culture, even of Russian print culture? Printed blanks are documentary sources of information; culture was in books. Nevertheless, the introduction and early institutionalization of “secular” printed blanks does raise questions about the culture of printing in Russia, about stages in the distribution and perception of the printed word. We can posit, for example, a dynamic process based on the following crude outline of a sequence. Most people’s prime contact with the printed word as *object* had come through the medium of ecclesiastical books. Beyond a rather restricted circle of churchmen and bureaucrats, direct apprehension of the printed word as *text* became widespread as a result of the distribution and public display of printed decrees and other public announcements pinned on walls and gates and church doors from 1714 onwards. Block-printed words as parts of *images* gained currency with the increasing availability of engravings and *lubok* woodcut pictures. However, for the letterpress printed word to migrate from institutional or public space into private space, from the church lectern or the town gate into the soldier’s or peasant’s pocket –

this (whether as an accidental side-effect or as a principal function) was part of the wider cultural reach and impact of the printed blank form.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Since this survey was completed, Ta'iana Aleksandrovna Lapteva, from RGADA, had kindly drawn my attention to, and provided specimen images of, a further type of printed blank. On 3 February 1718 Peter I issued a decree disinheriting his son Aleksei and requiring all to take an oath that they now acknowledged his son Peter as the sole and legitimate heir (*PSZ* no. 3151; vol. 5: 534-39). Fond 104 in RGADA consists of these oaths (*kliatvennye obeshchaniia*). Printed on the same day as the decree, the single-sheet texts leave a gap for the name of the signatory, to be filled in by hand. These blanks complement the classifications proposed in the present article, and are particularly eloquent examples of the new role assigned to the printed blank form, from the 1710s, in mediating the relationship between ruler and ruled.