

Yaroslavl (Russian Federation)

No 1170

1. BASIC DATA

State Party: Russian Federation
Name of property: Historical Centre of the City of Yaroslavl
Location: Yaroslavl Oblast
Date received: 31 January 2003
Category of property:

In terms of the categories of cultural property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a *group of buildings*. In terms of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, this is the historic centre of a town which is still inhabited.

Brief description:

The historic city of Yaroslavl, on the river Volga, developed from the 11th century into a major commercial centre, renowned for the numerous churches dating to the 17th century. Yaroslavl is an outstanding example of the urban planning reform ordered by Empress Catherine The Great in the whole of Russia, in 1763. While keeping some of the significant historic structures, the town was thus renovated in neo-classical style on a radial urban master plan.

2. THE PROPERTY

Description

The historic city of Yaroslavl is situated some 250km northeast of Moscow on the river Volga at the confluence with Kotorosl river. The site was convenient due to facility to benefit from natural features and build defences. The origins of the city go back to the early 11th century. The city got its present-day form and structure mainly as a result of the major urban reform in 1763, ordered by Empress Catherine The Great for the whole country. However, some of the existing streets and structures were retained in this renewal process, which lasted from 1770 to the 1830s.

The nominated area consists of the historic centre of the city, the so-called 'Slobody', forming roughly a half circle with radial streets from the centre. In its general architectural character the city of Yaroslavl is Neo-Classical with harmonious and uniform streetscapes. Most residential and public buildings are two to three stories high along wide streets, and vast urban squares. Within this context, there is a large number of churches with their onion cupolas, and monastic ensembles, dating from the 16th and 17th centuries, and having valuable mural paintings and iconostases.

Spassky Monastery is one of the oldest monasteries found in Upper Volga region. It was built on the site of a pagan temple in late 12th century. The oldest buildings that have

been preserved date from the 16th century (Cathedral of Transfiguration, Refectory, Holy Gate, Bell Tower), though some have been restored various times. Yaroslavl Miracle Men Church with a classical portico dates from 1851.

Over 50 churches were built in the 17th century. The *Church of Epiphany* (Epiphany Square) was built in 1684-93. It has five cupolas, and its red brick facades are decorated with polychrome tiles; the interior was painted in 1692-93. Other churches include: the *Church of St. Nicholas Nadein* (1620), at the bank of Volga, the *Church of Nativity* (1644), with a unique bell tower, the *Church of Elijah the Prophet* (1647), which became the focus of the classicist radial town plan of Yaroslavl.

The nominated area extends ca 2km along the west bank of Volga and 1.5km on the north bank of Kotorosl river. One block away from Volga, a main avenue runs parallel to the river, crossing the Soviet (Iliinskaya) square, which forms the focal point of the historic town. The centre area is surrounded by a boulevard forming half a circle, Ushinsky street, built in the 17th century immediately behind the city's defences. The boulevard crosses Volkov square, the starting point for the road to the town of Uglich in the west. The nominated core zone includes the historic centre. This area is surrounded by the buffer zone, which extends one or two blocks further west on the landside, as well as across both of the two rivers. The buffer zone encloses natural areas, as well as several important historic buildings.

On the embankment of Volga, there are a number of significant neo-classical buildings, e.g. the metropolitan's residence (originally built in 1680s), Church of SS Elijah and Tychen (1825-31), Volga Tower (a defence tower from 1685), Volga Gate (early 19th century elevations), Ensemble of the former Governor-General's house (1820-60), Deduylin house (early 18th century), Ensemble of the Nativity (17th century).

The Soviet square ensemble was built from mid 17th to 18th centuries. The focal point of the square is the Church of Elijah the Prophet (1647-50s) with its rich decorations and wall paintings. The buildings of the Government Offices include some of the first construction according to the 1770 town plan built in early classical style.

The Volkov square originated as a place for small trade. In early 19th century, a theatre was built here (first in timber, then in stone). This was replaced by a new structure in 1911 always in neoclassical style. On the square there is also one of the remaining defence towers, St. Blase Tower, built in stone after a fire in the 17th century.

The Ushinsky Street, originating from the 17th century, has a number of interesting buildings in classical style. Some of these buildings have been rebuilt or renovated towards the end of the 19th century, thus representing a variety of styles, from classicism to rococo and neoclassical.

History

The city of Yaroslavl, in 2010, will celebrate its 1000th anniversary from the foundation. Initially, there was a small wooden fortress. In the 12th century, two monasteries were built next to this: Spassky monastery on Kotorosl, and Petrovsky monastery on the Volga, and the place

became an outpost of Christianity. In the 13th century, it belonged to the territory of Rostov (a town with an important bishop's residence, 'Kremlin'). From this time, Yaroslavl started developing and it became the centre of a grand duchy. In 1463, Yaroslavl Grand Duchy joined the powerful Moscow state.

After several fires, the original wooden town was gradually rebuilt in stone starting from the 16th century. Yaroslavl grew in importance becoming the second city in the state. Through the Volga river, it was in trading contacts with Persia and India as well as with Ottoman Turks. Moscow also developed its contacts with Western European trading centres. As a result, foreign trade companies and craftsmen started arriving to establish businesses. The 17th century is considered the golden age of Yaroslavl, and for example some 50 new churches were built in stone.

In 1711 and 1762, there were several fires, which damaged the city's trading position, though its development continued. In 1769, a new town plan was adopted, revised in 1778. This plan was radial in its centre part, and based on a rectangular grid towards the west. Even though following the new guidelines imposed by the Empress, the town plan took into account the existing situation, and kept parts of the street network and historic building stock, where the most significant historical structures (churches, mediaeval towers) were used as visual and compositional dominants of a new plan.

The construction activities continued well into the 19th century, when some of the old fabric was renovated in a more formal manner in the downtown area. At the end of the 19th century, Yaroslavl once again experienced a fast growing period. This time, a number of industries were brought into the city. The number of inhabitants increased from 52,000 in 1887 to 109,000 in 1913. At this time, also a number of new functions were introduced, including hotels, restaurants, banks and offices.

In the 20th century, Yaroslavl has gone through problematic times like most other cities in Russia. The 1920s and 1930s, as well as 1960s and 1970s, have been periods with many losses particularly in religious ensembles. Also Yaroslavl had changes but fortunately much less than elsewhere. The development took place on the outskirts of the city, and relatively few new constructions came into the old centre. In the 1990s, Yaroslavl has once again started developing, but this time with full consciousness of its cultural inheritance. The churches and monasteries are being rehabilitated and opened again for worshippers. At the present, the municipal area of Yaroslavl has some 600,000 inhabitants.

Management regime

Legal provision:

The buildings and sites in the nominated area have a mixed ownership, including the Russian Federation, the Yaroslavl Oblast Administration, Yaroslavl City Administration, as well as private persons and institutions.

In accordance with the decision by the Executive Committee of the Yaroslavl Oblast Soviet of People's Deputies, 21-06-1990 N191, the historic centre of Yaroslavl has been protected as "the reserve territory of

the city". This status provides for the full control of planning and construction in the area concerned, as well as for the restoration and rehabilitation of historic buildings. It can allow reconstruction, modernisation and alteration of the functions of existing buildings, as well as the elimination of functions or elements that are discordant with values of the environment and the protected area.

Furthermore, the area is subject to various legal provisions of the Russian Federation, regarding cultural heritage, preservation of historic monuments, and archaeological sites, maintenance and repair of architectural surfaces, engineering infrastructures, etc.

Management structure:

The control and practical implementation of the legislative and standard-setting acts in the historic area is the responsibility of the Committee of Historic and Cultural Heritage.

The management of the historic area is the responsibility of two offices:

- Yaroslavl Oblast: Department of culture and tourism;
- Yaroslavl Municipality: The Board of Architecture.

The plans concerning the protected area of Yaroslavl include:

- Tourism Development Plan for 2001-03;
- List of Priority Measures on Preservation and Development of Culture and Arts for 2002-04;
- Goal-orienting Plan for Reducing Anthropogenous Impact on the Environment for 2001-04; and
- Development Strategy of the City of Yaroslavl up to 2010.

Resources:

The financial resources for the conservation and rehabilitation come from the federal budget, Oblast budget, Municipal budget, as well as from extra-budgetary sources.

The majority of tourists comes by steamships along the Volga in the summer period. In recent years the number has been increasing. There are various types of tourist facilities, including organised visitor routes, 1400 beds in hotels, ca 100 restaurants, etc.

Justification by the State Party (summary)

Yaroslavl historical centre is the oldest part of one of the most ancient and rich historic cities in Russia. It is a representative example of the development of ancient Russian cities as a part of unique town-planning reform pursued by Empress Catherine the Great in the second half of the 18th century.

The primary and unique feature of Yaroslavl historical centre is the presence of ancient churches, outstanding in terms of their architecture, acting as town-planning dominants and composition centers.

Another aspect is the organic use of the rich natural landscape at the junction of two rivers, with picturesque banks and wide water expanses.

Architectural monuments in the Yaroslavl historical centre present all artistic styles in Russia during the past five centuries. Many historic buildings have unique patterns of monumental painting of the 16th-17th centuries.

Criterion ii: It is a sample of the complex demonstrating successive development of architecture and town-planning art, monumental art, city landscape arrangement for over 500 years, while brightly representing historical process of this development in the vast central region of Russia.

Criterion iv: It is an outstanding example of development of the typology of urban environment architectural and planning arrangement, architecture of public buildings and housing within the historic buildings, landscaping and planting of trees and gardens in the historic parts of the city pertaining to the long period of Russian history and closely related to development of such activities in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

3. ICOMOS EVALUATION

Actions by ICOMOS

An ICOMOS expert mission visited the nominated property in August 2004.

ICOMOS has also consulted its International Scientific Committee on Historic Towns and Villages.

Conservation

Conservation history:

The city of Yaroslavl has been fortunate in surviving through difficult periods, particularly in the 20th century, when most historic cities in Russia were affected by destruction of churches and convents, and the transformation of the urban fabric. In the recent decades, the authorities have initiated a programme, which has already allowed the conservation and restoration of several historic buildings.

State of conservation:

The historic centre of Yaroslavl has been preserved exceptionally well. Several historic buildings have been restored in recent years. There are others that need repair subject to availability of funds.

Management:

The nominated territory enjoys the highest protection within the framework of the historic monuments legislation of the Russian Federation. The banks and islands of the Kotorosl river are protected as natural conservation area. On the whole, the Russian legislation enables the state authorities to interfere markedly with the rights of ownership. The current economic situation however gives limited possibilities for state contributions to the owners of listed historic buildings. Grants can be given to Orthodox churches, which are in need for repair, but the funds are mainly given to historic buildings that are directly owned by the State.

In the buffer zone the height of new buildings is limited to 14m and 17m, so as not to interfere with the historic townscape. A new bridge over Volga river is under construction at some distance from the historic town, and

will divert heavy transitory traffic outside the historical core.

There is a strict professional control of any changes and new constructions in the core zone and the buffer zone. There exist several civic associations who sustain the protection of historic town. According to the present legislation they do not interfere with the decision-making process. Nevertheless, they represent a potential for the future.

Risk analysis:

The principal risks are related to the fact that Yaroslavl is a living historic town that continues to develop. Therefore, as always in such cases, particular attention is required to monitoring and management trends and eventual changes in the built fabric as well as the functions of the nominated area and its buffer zone.

Authenticity and integrity

From the town-planning point of view the nominated territory has retained its integrity and authenticity. Even the former Secretariat of the Communist Party of the region of Yaroslavl, built in 1982 in the heart of the town, is considered harmonious with the 18th-century plan. It is noted that, differing from many other renovation projects in the Soviet period, the banks and islands of the Kotorosl river have been preserved, retaining the historic town with its rare natural framework. Even the river port on the Volga built in the 1980s does not interfere excessively with the town-planning composition of the town.

In the Stalinist periods, thousands of churches were demolished especially in larger cities in Russia. In Yaroslavl, instead, from some 80 churches and chapels, 56 have survived intact. This number has no analogy in other parts of Russia. Even though some churches were used as prisons or warehouses, they have usually retained their artistic finishes. Only a minimum of restoration is required, and has already been started with several buildings. The work done so far is considered to respond to required standard. The residential buildings, dating from 18th to early 20th centuries, have survived almost completely. Parts of the masonry fortifications have also been preserved in the northern and north-eastern section of the town, as well as the towers of the Virgin and Uglic, and the Volga Gates.

Comparative evaluation

The history of Russian architecture may be conditionally divided in two major periods: dominance of a "national" style from the 10th century to the end of the 17th century, mainly based on regional mediaeval traditions, and – following Peter the Great's reforms – "western" styles from about 1700 to the present. The Empress Catherine the Great was responsible for a major urban renovation, more than doubling the number of urban centres in the Empire to ca. 600. At the same time, she also ordered an important urban reform, which meant the preparation of new master plan for all the existing cities respecting regularity and the ideas of the Enlightenment and introducing the Neo-classical style for the civic architecture.

Yaroslavl ranks among the most significant historic towns in Russia, along with Moscow, St. Petersburg, Novgorod Veliky, Pskov, Vladimir, Suzdal, Smolensk, Rostov Veliky. Within this context, Yaroslavl, is the most significant example of the urban reform, as well as being a town that has best preserved its overall integrity through the many troubles that most cities faced in the transformation processes of the 20th century. This concerns also the exceptionally fine churches, which were preserved, while at the same time religious buildings elsewhere were often destroyed.

On the World Heritage List, there are few historic towns, representing the same period, even though these are in different cultural contexts. These include, e.g. Weimar in Germany, which stands for German Classicism and is associated with major personalities such as Goethe and Schiller, the City of Bath, representing English Neo-classicism at the time of George III, and Edinburgh, where the New Town is an example of Western-European planning. In comparison with these properties, Yaroslavl represents a completely different social-political context, being associated with the major urbanisation process of the Russian Empire and the implementation of the relevant ideas in the urban reform.

Outstanding universal value

General statement:

The historic city of Yaroslavl is an outstanding example demonstrating the synthesis of the mediaeval urban structure and new regular pattern as the cornerstones of the great urban reform that was ordered by Empress Catherine the Great in the whole of Russian Empire, starting immediately after her accession to the throne in 1762. This reform has no precedent in European history, and remains a uniquely Russian phenomenon, resulting in the re-urbanisation of practically all the cities. Based on the ideas of the Enlightenment, the reform coincided with the general aim for the government to promote the general welfare of the nation. The reform is characteristic of the 18th century, which started with the rule of Peter The Great concluding with Catherine The Great, and marked a major change in the country.

Yaroslavl presents one of the most creatively balanced examples of this reform, producing a new and highly esteemed aesthetic quality. The city has been one of the major commercial centres on the Volga river, and it is also renowned for its exquisite Russian Orthodox churches dating from the 17th century, adorned with notable mural paintings and multicoloured tiles. These churches together with the remaining medieval gates and towers were integrated in the new scheme as visual dominants and focal points in the urban skeleton.

The cityscape of Yaroslavl represents one of the finest examples in Russia of the integration of Neo-classical architecture into a harmonious whole, radiating from the large square with the Church of the Prophet Elijah in the focal point. The scale of the central square is unrivalled in its size comparable only with the size of squares in metropolitan cities, representing the “Russian tsar scale”, which symbolised the transformation of provincial cities into distinct urban entities.

Evaluation of criteria:

Criterion ii: The historic town of Yaroslavl with its 17th-century churches and its Neo-classical radial urban plan and civic architecture is an outstanding example of the interchange of cultural and architectural influences between Western Europe and Russia. It is characteristic of this urban development that the old churches were taken as dominants in the new design of the neo-classical urban form of the late 18th century, thus establishing historical continuity.

Criterion iv: The historic town of Yaroslavl is an outstanding example of the town-planning reform ordered by Empress Catherine The Great in the whole of Russia, implemented between 1763 and 1830. This planning reform, in its scale and unity of scope, can be seen as unique, and the town of Yaroslavl became a particularly successful implementation both in its cityscape and the way it was composed in relation to the Volga river. While being exceptionally representative, Yaroslavl is also the best preserved example of this reform considering that most of the other towns have been substantially modified or destroyed during the 20th century.

4. ICOMOS RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that the World Heritage Committee adopt the following draft decision:

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC-05/29.COM/8B,
2. Inscribes the property on the World Heritage List on the basis of ***criteria ii and iv***:

Criterion ii: The historic town of Yaroslavl with its 17th century churches and its Neo-classical radial urban plan and civic architecture is an outstanding example of the interchange of cultural and architectural influences between Western Europe and Russian Empire.

Criterion iv: Yaroslavl is an outstanding example of the town-planning reform ordered by Empress Catherine The Great in the whole of Russia, implemented between 1763 and 1830.

ICOMOS, April 2005



Map showing the boundaries of the nominated property



View of the Historical Centre of Yaroslavl



View of Spassky Monastery