



GREEN CLOAKS

EXPANDED PLANETARY LORE

— ROSSI —



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The Planet Rossi: an Overview

Pronunciation: ROSS-ee

Name of people: Rossii (sing. and pl., also how it is spelled when used as an adjective)

Rossi is the smaller, colder, harsher neighbour to Ardheim, being colonised much later than the forest planet. Its population is far smaller, but even more tenacious: the environment on Rossi is bitterly cold in the winter, and cold in the summer (though Rossii just call it “fresh”). Its economy, however, thrives, as it has become an industrialised planet swiftly, with factories working around the clock. Most of these factories produce weaponry and munitions which supply not only the Rossi Defence Force but also the Defence Forces of other planets, but in particular Ardheim, with whom Rossi has strong trade routes. Ardheim mostly exports its famed timber to Rossi, and Rossi trades it for the products from its factories, and the vodka that it is famous for.

Rossi is a largely socialist planet, with the means of production owned communally, and an absence of social or economic class. The great machines and factories of the planet are intended to ease the work of all and not to enable a few to grow rich at the expense of millions of people. This has bred into the people of Rossi a hard working culture, where everybody pitches in and understands that they're all in it together. To a Rossii, laziness or the shirking of a duty is perhaps one of the greatest sins, though not as great as that of ignoring or being rude to one's grandmother. Rossii elders are given a lot of respect, but particularly grandmothers, because they are seen to embody the virtues of Grandmother Rossi herself – the affectionate way that Rossii people view and speak of their motherland. Grandmother Rossi may be a harsh and old mother, challenging her children and grandchildren, her body – like the environment – largely barren, but she will protect them with everything she has to the bitter end, and give hell to those who would harm them. Despite this, however, many Rossii choose to emigrate to Ardheim when they come of age, as the neighbouring planet is alluring with its promise of more warmth, fewer bears, jobs besides factory work and farms, and the sights that even Rossii tell stories of. As such, the regiments trained in Kingskeep on Ardheim are often made up of an even mix of Ardheimians and Rossii, and the two get on well together. Both have a strong tradition of storytelling and drinking (though arguments about mead or vodka often arise), and both come from a background of need for survival and practicality.

Rossii clothing is largely unadorned and unassuming, and a Rossii will usually not choose to wear an item of clothing or accessory that doesn't have practical use. This is a direct result of the socialist ideology of the planet: objects are valued by their use-value, as opposed to the accumulation of capital, wealth or status, and beauty is a luxury that many Rossii do not see as having much use-value. Rossii, due to the nature of their planet, often dress in very warm clothing, ensuring that their heads are covered. Even when on a warmer planet, a Rossii may choose to wear a lighter hat for the security of feeling it provides. Rossii are also rarely seen without some sort of drink to take the edge off things: even a Rossii that chooses not to partake of alcohol will keep water in a hipflask to keep up appearances, and some may even put on a show of being slightly drunk at all times. Many military units that have Rossii recruits find it useful to ensure that they have an accessible, yet limited, store of vodka available, as Rossii seem to function more efficiently with it. Of course, this means that Rossi has the opportunity to export vast amounts of vodka to the military stationed all across the galaxy...

Rossii people, perhaps because their environment is so harsh and bleak, have developed an industrious nature, but also one streaked through with dark humour. To others, it may seem like they are resigned to their cold, bitter world, but this is not the case: even though they may joke about the cruelty of Rossi or the ferocity of the bears, the bone-breaking cold or the

back-breaking factories, Russia will never fall out of love with any of those things. They made them who they are: resilient, tenacious, stubborn, and able to take anything while smiling darkly in its face.

Inspiration for characterisation: Russia, communism, socialism, Cossacks, Siberia.

1. Timeline

4899: Rossi is founded by Dr. Konstantin Levcek, Natalya Meklin and a small number of other explorers from Ardheim. Their first expedition reports resilient life that causes an influx of researchers to the mission. The first colonisation barge sets up small bases on the newfound planet, naming it Rossi.

4907: Death of Dr. Konstantin Levcek. He leaves no family behind, though he comes to be seen as a father figure by successive generations of Rossii men and women, and is often affectionately referred to as “Uncle Kosha” (the familiar form of Konstantin).

4925: Death of Natalya Meklin. She is survived by five children, eight grandchildren and twenty-two great-grandchildren. She lends her name to several institutions, buildings, schools and libraries, and statues of Natalya and Konstantin are erected some years later in the Dubrovka District of Petrakov, near the Council buildings.

4939: Large amounts of valuable ores are found on the planet, resulting in a fledgling mining industry. Initial research bases expand, eventually becoming cities in their own right. These become the major cities of Zelonograd, Darzan and Petrakov, the now-capital city.

4945: Expeditions are sent into the great forest, however all communications are lost within a day and none return.

4955: With the population growing so rapidly, a main governing council is set up, Sovet Rossi, to run the planet. Maryla Proch is appointed as the first chair of the council. Institutions and systems, such as educational aptitude tests, the Rossi Medical Corps and the Interstellar Trading Corps, are also created around this time.

4960: As more people settle on Rossi and the fledgling government becomes more organised, there is a massive technological and industrial boom. Industries such as mining and manufacturing flourish.

4962: The decision is made to colonise the deep forest and make full use of the lumber available.

4967: Casualties and losses from expeditions into the forest begin to rise. There is some unrest from lumber workers, who see further expeditions as little more than suicide.

4968: All scheduled expeditions going further into the forest are cancelled. Major colonisation of the forest is postponed indefinitely, leaving only a handful of small villages of workers’ homes and lumber processing plants scattered at the edge of the forest.

4970: Ardheim and Rossi sign a mutual agreement, complementing one another’s industry and expertise. A trade pact between the two planets is established.

4975: Smog and pollution become serious issues in Zelonograd and other factory cites. Masks become commonplace in certain areas. Darzan goes silent and the Sovet Rossi sends an expedition to investigate. Nothing and no-one are found; the machines, for once, are still.

4978: The great forest shows signs of withering. Trees start dying, species disappear and the smog makes some cities uninhabitable.

4980: Small-scale riots by ex-factory workers break out in the face of major job losses. The government responds by deploying more law enforcement officers. Rehabilitation Centre 27 (nicknamed “the Spike”) is created to house the most stubborn and intractable dissidents.

4985: Sovet Rossi starts a global push to combat the planet’s pollution before it becomes irreversible, with the establishment of the Ministry of Cultural Landscapes. Factories are required to dispose of waste off-planet. “Air cleansing centres” are hurriedly built in most cities to combat the air pollution. Deep 6 focuses on researching how to improve the fortitude of Rossi’s aquatic life.

4987: Creatures such as orcas, ravens and ursidae (bears) are placed into breeding programmes to increase numbers. Other creatures are imported from Ardheim to increase biodiversity. The great forest becomes a protected area; logging and venturing too deep is strictly prohibited. As the major logging area of the planet becomes unavailable, Rossi signs the Eco Treaty with Ardheim, creating a thriving exchange of ores, wood and other resources between the two planets.

4997: Reports tell of an incoming and powerful hostile force. Rossi starts storing resources and bunkers are constructed beneath major cities. The people are prepared for the worst.

4999: Rossi engages in a sabotage campaign, destroying One Bakkar transport ships in the area, masking them as accidents.

5011: Ballistic weave is invented by the noted Rossii scientist Valeriya Solokova, who develops a synthetic version of ursidae hide while based at a remote polar research station.

5012: The Segovax cluster bands together to resist the One Bakkar while also re-establishing communication and trade between Ardheim, Cantiacorum, Delmont, Durgan, Marazion V, Rossi and Tetrarch. The Green Cloaks taskforce is formed to counter the One Bakkar threat.

5013: Rossi becomes the centre of production for ballistic weave, with many old or disused factories converted to produce the fabric.

5120: Generations of bickering and occasional violence between Rossii and Cossacks comes to an end with the creation of the Cossack Autonomy Accord, allowing the Cossacks lands and self-government in return for four years compulsory military service in Cossack regiments. The Accord also acknowledges the role the Cossack people played in the early years of colonisation of Rossi.

5289–5294: These five winters on Rossi are the harshest and longest on record. Crops and livestock either fail or freeze. Mass starvation kills one fifth of the population. The government introduces rationing as a potential solution and rumours abound that council members, military leaders and others in charge are hoarding food for themselves. Civil unrest ensues.

5294: A major protest in Petrakov against the food shortages and lack of government response ends in violence as protesters are fired upon by police. The street leading towards the Sovet Rossi buildings, upon which the protesters are slain, is henceforth referred to as Alaya Ulitsa – “Scarlet Road”.

5295: After another harsh winter, a dangerous mood sweeps the population of Rossi, with many beginning to lose faith in their government, the community and, most significantly, in

the planet that seems now to refuse to sustain them. Huge numbers of the population begin emigrating first to Ardheim and then on to other planets in the cluster.

5489: After 1500 years of failed attempts by other explorers, an expedition led by Aleksandr Petrovich finally reaches the southern pole of the planet after a 13-month journey. The expedition team detects the presence of vast reserves of ore and oil that will ultimately provide a desperately needed boost to production and the economy. Unfortunately, Petrovich's drunken and rather loud celebration of these discoveries attracts the attention of a particularly hungry Ursa Polar, and both his merriment and legs are cut violently short.

5550: The armed forces of Rossi are split into two branches after the military faced severe logistical difficulties when a large portion of regiments joined the war effort of the Terran Sovereignty to combat the One Bakkar. The Rossi Defence Force and Rossi Rear Force are formed.

5599: Intelligence from other planets indicates that a small colony, rumoured to be the descendants of Rossii immigrants, on one of the remote border planets has successfully declared independence from the Terran Sovereignty after several years of fighting, their success largely due to the familiar icy terrain. This community allegedly refer to themselves now as the Koriak Republic.

5700–6000: As the One Bakkar threat decreases and after a string of excellent summers and crop harvests, the population of Rossi swells once again. For the first time, alien species begin to look to Rossi in earnest, with myr'na and vrede embassies being established in Petrakov in 5999.

5962: Significant reforms and reduction of the RDF by 60% are announced in order to create smaller, but more elite, fighting forces. This leads to the agreement and formation of the shared manpower pact with Ardheim. Known as the Kologrivov Reformation, this upheaval leads to a tighter relationship with Ardheim as both forces become engaged in training regimes on one another's planets.

5989: Rossii armed forces go on strike in protest of the lack of availability of vodka on deployment. The Rossi Defence Force appeals to the Terran Sovereignty Army to keep all Ardheimian and Rossii regiments stocked with an acceptable amount of the drink. As a result, soldiers in these regiments are given a ration of Rossii vodka.

6016: The jotun crisis on Ardheim spreads to Rossi, causing massive loss of life, including the fall of Moskva. The political and military infrastructure is moved to Zelonograd. The Skjaldborg Pact is agreed and the Ardheim–Rossi Defence Force (ARDF) is formed, merging both military branches under one command.

2. Colonisation

The colonisation of Rossi began in 4899. The need for minor terraforming was established on the basis of initial research into the planet as, whilst survivable, the freezing temperatures and thin atmosphere brought risks that had to be minimised. It remained a concern of the researchers to preserve the planet as close to its original state as possible, demanding only the smallest and most necessary of changes be made. Prior to any landing from the first settlers, small alterations were made to the atmosphere of Rossi to minutely improve the temperature and ensure the equator's ice would thaw further.

The initial settlers were primarily composed of the Russian and Slavic settlers that contributed to the colonisation efforts on Ardheim, the larger neighbouring planet. This group notably included Dr. Konstanin Levcek and Natalya Meklin, who were a key driving force for the early settlers. Dr. Levcek's research prior to settlement ensured that the early settlers could survive their new, hostile environment, and his continued scientific work paved the way for further exploration, discovery and technological advancement. Natalya Meklin's role was a more maternal one, offering support and maintaining supplies for the early settlers. It was in the darkest days of early settlement that her perseverance, kindness and practicality shone through, inspiring the settlers to place their claim even more stubbornly to these new lands. Many Rossii alive today claim direct ancestry to these most famous members of the colonisation party; whether such claims are true or not does not seem to matter to anybody.

The first landing of the expedition took place near the equator. The settlers had to work hard from the moment they set foot on the planet. The persistent cold temperatures and the threat of unusually aggressive wild animals required effective management of personnel, resources and territory. Each member of the group was expected to play a part in the survival of the mission, and was assigned a key role as per their specialisation. There was little dissent or debate regarding the workload as the whole expedition understood that a failure to perform could have potentially fatal consequences. This pushed the expedition to focus on the essentials before any exploration, which led to the creation of a built-up central hub.

Given the nature of the planet, many of the settlers found themselves reminiscing about their old home on Terra. Despite the dangers and threats, as well as the need for hard work, there was some security in the familiarity of the planet. It is most likely for this reason the settlers began to compare their new planet to a motherly, nurturing figure and that in its harshness and challenging nature it echoed their memories of home and asked the best of each one of them. This familiar planet led to the use of the small contingent of Cossacks among the settlers as guides and outriders, exploring the further reaches of their new home with greater ease due to their skill at navigating their old homeworld's icy terrain.

The expedition seemingly faced nothing but adversity throughout the colonisation process and often it seemed more advisable to relinquish the colonisation attempt and move on from the planet. However, the expedition members managed to maintain a high level of morale (and possibly stubbornness) and a deep-seated passion to succeed in the colonisation attempt of this planet that reminded them so much of home, continuing their efforts against all odds. In a few short months the initial settlers had established an effective society on the planet that perfectly reflected its climate: harsh but fair.

Perhaps the greatest challenge to this new society revealed itself at the last possible moment. Early in the colonisation it became clear to the settlers that the cold temperatures did not seem to abate, instead continuing to drop as winter approached. What was considered harsh before became mild in comparison to the bitter winter winds. The expedition had fared exceptionally well until this point.

The first casualty of the expedition was a small research outpost, composed of only three people who were left on site for the night to monitor the equipment and defend it from any hostile wildlife. In one night, a blizzard of considerable magnitude froze many of the external outposts of the expedition and when parties from the main camp returned, they discovered only the frozen bodies of the research party and equipment that no longer functioned.

Despite this disheartening loss, the expedition resolved to maintain and even double their efforts. As a result, more attention was given to atmospheric physics and secure alarms were established in all outposts and settlements to ensure any settlers were made aware of impending threats. The intensity and potential for damage of the blizzards was monitored and a scale of magnitude established to warn people of what to expect. Hiding indoors during a 3.4 is now mostly laughed at, whereas most people are sensible enough not to venture outside during anything higher than an 8.3.

The alarms formed the final aspect of the first Rossii society, within which the settlers were finally able to continue and develop their lives on the planet.

3. Culture

Dress and Appearance

Rossii men and women are as diverse in their appearance as those on other planets, although a large proportion of men choose to wear beards, or at least thick stubble, against the relentless cold. Blonde hair is something of a rarity, and having red hair is supposedly a sign of good luck. In more recent years Rossii–Ardheimian unions have become more common, however, leading to a greater number of fair-haired Rossii.

Those that live in cities have the benefit of being slightly more sheltered from the elements than those that make their living in rural areas. Clothing made and bought in the cities is ubiquitous and uniform-like, with only slight variations in colour and design (colour is usually muted, but often includes accents of bright red), and it is unusual to see anyone adorned with jewellery or similar accessories – unless it has some hidden purpose. However, Rossii who have chosen to live on Ardheim or elsewhere may choose to wear such items if they have been given as gifts or tokens by their friends, neighbours or lovers.

In rural areas, the principle function of clothing is protection from exposure. Heavy layers of wool, down and fur are common, often pieced or patched together from old garments that have been repurposed. Children often have to do a lot of growing into clothes that are handed down from siblings and cousins. A Rossii farmer, fisherman or hunter may choose to adorn themselves with ornaments of horn, tooth, claw or bone to attest to their prowess and skill. No-one begrudges anyone who has managed to kill a bear (or even escape from one with all their limbs) this small token of pride.

Most Rossii choose to keep their heads covered with hats or scarves, partly for warmth and partly for the strange sense of security that comes from having warm ears. Heavy, long coats are also common across Rossi, particularly in drab colours such as black, grey and navy. Layers are common to allow for easy regulation of temperature.

A sub-group of Rossii, numbering only about 5% of the overall population, Cossacks have developed their own style of dress that clearly displays their cultural affiliation. It is rare to see a Cossack outside of their kudan (community), but they proudly show their heritage in their choice of hairstyle and colour. Many men shave their heads apart from one side, allowing the hair there to grow long; they then style it so that it is swept over the other side of the head and often in front of one eye. Their clothing is more brightly coloured, with reds, blues, black and white accentuating their outfits, and jewellery is more common. Embroidered designs are often seen on their clothing, usually depicting animals. Cossacks sometimes adopt traditional dress from old Terran Russia. With the growing awareness among mainstream Rossii society of the Cossacks and their isolated ways, some younger Rossii have begun to adopt small nods to the brighter Cossack fashion.

Identity and Philosophy

Rossi are hard-working, community-oriented, determined and driven. They have to be on a planet where everything from the political system to the toaster are held together with duct tape, cable ties and the sheer force of collective will. People work together for the betterment of all rather than the advancement of a few. As a rule they are proud of this fact, although there are some dissident voices both from the public and in government. To shirk from one's duties at work, or to neglect one's family and community, are seen as the ultimate wrongs.

Rossii place a great emphasis on family ties, and could be considered a matriarchal society in the sense that great respect and honour is given to grandmothers, who tend to embody many of the same traits that Rossii see in their planet – strong, determined, weathered, wise and with a tendency to fire bullets (or an 8.9 blizzard) over your head if you put a foot wrong. The harsh environment of the planet is often seen as formative in the character of the Rossii people. Affectionately referring to their home world as *Ląd Mrozu* – “Land of Cold” – a traditional working song often sung by Rossii portrays the planet, and its people, as tenacious, strong and stubborn, with a dry sense of humour and the ability to face darkness with a wry smile.

Rossii are often noted for their dry sense of humour and their ability to make fun of even the darkest situations. This humour often comes hand-in-hand with conscious self-deprecation or double-speak, and Rossii are masterful at turning what would cause rage in others into grim acceptance. In the face of starvation, a Rossii might joke, “Well, I wasn’t planning on eating dinner tonight anyway, so at least I’m not disappointed!” They are supremely serious about not taking things too seriously.

Grandmother Rossi

“Grandmother” is the affectionate term for the planet that Rossii call home – harsh, wild and unforgiving, Grandmother Rossi demands determination, hard work and no small degree of stubbornness simply to make a living on her icy exterior. She is not a goddess or a supernatural figure, but a cold and bitter reality for all who make their home here, a member of the extended community in which Rossii must put their faith. Hard work is not a lofty ideal but an absolute necessity. Grandmother Rossi forges her people like iron: they bend and twist under her hands, but rarely do they break.

Of course, Grandmother Rossi also has a small, fiery core that is represented in all her stubbornly determined and unexpectedly cheerful inhabitants, who smile darkly in the face of all adversity and make everything work, even things that would have no business working anywhere else, because they must.

Grandmother Rossi is often blamed for the various environmental hardships that befall Rossii – during a bad harvest or particularly destructive blizzard, they may speak of her as being angry, or invoke the name *Baba Yaga* to demonstrate her capricious and dangerous nature.

Festivals and Traditions

Zima Luna

On the first day of winter, the souls of the dead are remembered and honoured. Fires are lit in burial grounds to warm great-grandmother’s old bones, but also to give the sun a head start against the encroaching darkness of winter. People cook food over the fires and tell greatly embellished/exaggerated stories of their ancestors. In cities or places where lighting open fires may be more difficult, families light candles and place them in every window. In some places, the vastly embellished stories of ancestors have become epic tales in their own right, repeated every year as tradition. A few are given a tune and passed down the generations. The longest of such epics on record is currently 471 verses long, though the ever-changing nature of such tales makes it difficult to be certain.

Linyeva Noc

A midwinter festival in which people spend the longest/darkest night of winter (a symbolic day only near the poles, which will not have seen the sun for several weeks) visiting friends,

exchanging small gifts of food (or toys for children) and celebrating with a great deal of vodka.

Colonisation Day

A national holiday commemorating the colonisation of Rossi, held in the height of summer to remember the day Natalya Meklin and Konstantin Levcek first set foot on their icy new home and realised just how much work they had to do. To honour their unflinching bravery, it is customary for Rossi for to do something that personally scares them to prove that they, too, are as worthy of being called Rossii as the original settlers. Such acts range from proposing to a lover to killing a mighty beast with one's bare hands.

Zenri Ves

A festival at the start of summer, usually practiced by citizens near the great forest, though it has begun to spread across Rossi. The custom is to give friends small, practical gifts, inspired by a tale about two Rossii children who venture into the forbidden forest and get lost. The idea is to give to your allies, which helps everybody, rather than hoard everything for yourself, which dooms you all. It is seen as an insult to give obviously impractical items, as it is seen as saying that the receiver cannot be of much use.

Birth

New life is cause for a great deal of celebration amongst Rossii families, mostly involving a great deal of wetting the baby's head with consumption of vodka. In families of a superstitious nature, red rags are tied to cribs for the first seven days of life to ward off the hags that might steal them away in the night. Useful gifts, such as toys, furniture, clothes and sometimes money, are traditionally given to the parents and new child. Within 21 days of birth, the parents will seek a Sponsor for their child, who will vouch for the parentage of the child on the necessary legal documentation and act as a guiding force throughout the child's life. Commonly, the Sponsor is a family member or trusted family friend. It is seen as extremely bad luck for the child if the parents are unable to find a suitable Sponsor. The child will refer to a male Sponsor as Dyadya ("Uncle") and a female Sponsor as Tetya ("Aunt").

Marriage

Upon witnessing the short, matter-of-fact wedding ceremony (a Rossi ceremony can take as little as five minutes), many outsiders accuse Rossii of being terminally unromantic and overly practical. This is usually met with amused and knowing looks as the unsuspecting visitor is led away to the most important part of the wedding. After the perfunctory ceremony, Rossii wedding celebrations last for two days of drinking, eating and dancing between the two families, with gifts being exchanged between mothers and fathers in law, brothers, sisters and the newlyweds themselves. Bonds between friends, neighbours, colleagues and the wider community are all important, but the bonds of family are the most important of all, the bonds that never break no matter how far they are stretched. Thus, a marriage is seen not just as the joining of two people, but the joyous union of two families. Brides and grooms will often wear red and white for the duration of the festivities.

Death

Bodies of the deceased are usually cremated and the ashes either kept in the family home or buried in small cemeteries. Families and friends gather to watch as the funeral pyre burns, drinking vodka and maintaining a vigil as the deceased departs. The traditional working song, "Land of Cold", is often sung over the pyre, at once a mournful lament and a testament to the tenacious and proud Rossii spirit. As pyre cremation can take a day or two, mourners will often set up a temporary camp in the cremation ground where they will cook and eat communally.

Religion

Rossi is not a religious planet. The pragmatic nature of the people and their general attitude do not lend themselves well to worship or trust in a higher power, not when it is far more efficient, and less hard on the knees, to sort out problems oneself.

Rossii do have some superstitions, however, particularly when it comes to the forest (it is hard not to be slightly nervous when so many go in, but so few come out), but mostly they put their faith in the community around them rather than a nebulous and vague concept of a creator god. Indeed, Rossii take great pride in the well-documented efforts of their ancestors in colonising the planet – to suggest it might in fact all be down to an omnipotent deity would be seen a terrible insult to the first settlers, all of whom dedicated their lives to allowing others to flourish.

The close links with Ardheim have seen the gods of that neighbouring planet introduced to Rossi over the years, and some Rossii with mixed heritage may harbour some religious faith in those gods. However, there are no formal Ardheimian religious institutions or practices on Rossi.

Language, Writing and Naming

All Rossii speak the common tongue of the Terran Sovereignty, but Rossi also has its own language, which is a blending of the Slavic tongues from old Terra. It is not often written; most of Rossii education, public broadcasting and other communication now takes place in the common tongue for the sake of ease. When it is written, however, the Rossii language is a form of Cyrillic script.

Between the harsh winds and many layers of thick clothing, it is at times unfeasible to communicate verbally. Instead, basic sign language with fists or body gestures help people to survive and communicate.

Rossii usually choose Slavic names from old Terra for their children, with Russian, Ukrainian, Polish, Czech, Slovak, Serbian and Bulgarian names being common. The close relationship between Rossi and Ardheim has, in the last two centuries, led to many Rossii bearing an Ardheimian name or surname, or Ardheimians bearing a Rossii name. It is becoming increasingly common to meet a Rossi who uses the matronymic/patronym surname form of Ardheim with their traditional Rossii name – Ivan Torsson or Galina levasdottir – or who has a traditionally Ardheimian first name alongside a distinctly Rossii surname – Torsten Zovnik or Freyja Ivanov. In some cases, a Rossii born into an Ardheimian patronymic/matronymic surname may “convert” it to Rossii using the suffixes -ovich instead of -son and -ovna or -evna instead of -dottir. Thus, a Rossi born as Petrov Ivansson might choose to become Petrov Ivanovich, and one born as Irinushka Yakovsdottir might choose to become Irinushka Yakovlevna.

Rossii that are familiar with each other will often use the informal or diminutive forms of each other’s names. This is usually achieved by adding a suffix to the first syllable or letter of a person’s name, usually “-sha”, “-ya” or “-ina”. For example, Mikhail becomes “Misha” or “Mikya”, Nadezhda becomes “Nadya” or “Nina” and Maria becomes “Mina” or “Masha”. There is no convention for how these suffixes are applied, or in what context. It usually arises spontaneously and naturally between two people who are familiar with each other.

Gestures

Visitors to the more rural areas of Rossi are advised to avoid making the “ok” sign with the thumb and forefinger closed to make a circle. This is considered offensive/negative and, depending on your company, can be a good way to lose the offending fingers – or at least to not be served any more vodka.

When Rossii feel particularly passionate about something, they may beat their chest or hold a closed fist against the sternum to indicate the strength of their feeling, showing it is close to their heart.

When a Rossii accomplishes a particularly brave or impressive feat, it is seen as good luck to take a small token as proof – the claw of a bear, some bolt or scrap metal from a well-flown ship or even a bullet well-dodged.

Tapping or flicking your own neck signifies either that you are drunk, that someone else is drunk, or that drinking is about to happen... whatever the reason, visitors to Rossi will see this gesture a lot amongst the older generation.

Vodka

It is a common misunderstanding that Rossii are permanently drunk. However, it cannot be denied that vodka plays an important role in individual life as well as the economy of Rossi. As one of the major exports, Rossii vodka can be found throughout the Segovax Cluster. Following a brief Rossii armed forces strike in 5989 against the lack of availability of their much-loved drink in the armed forces, the Rossi Defence Force appealed to the Terran Sovereignty Army to make sure that it kept all Ardheim and Rossii regiments stocked with an acceptable amount of the drink. As a result, soldiers in these regiments are given a ration of Rossii vodka. In 5890, rumours arose that the Rossi Defence Force had itself manufactured the strike as a way to increase export of the drink and improve Rossi’s economy. Nobody has denied or confirmed the claim.

When speaking about vodka, Rossii may also call it “Grandmother’s medicine”, “Rossii anaesthetic” and, simply, “water” (while winking).

4. Civics

Education

Rossii children begin their education at the age of three. Education begins at an early age to allow working parents to re-enter the workforce quickly; indeed, it is not uncommon for Rossii parents to seek out regular childcare before this age depending on their circumstances. From the age of 14, pupils undertake aptitude tests each year, and are offered a choice of classes that play to their strengths. In their final year, they undertake final exams, are issued with a technikum diploma and have lengthy sessions with a career analyst, who will suggest a number of different roles for which they may be suited.

Some students will require further study in universities or specialised further education institutions such as medical, law or military schools. Notable institutions include:

- Petrakov University
- Centrum Militarya (Petrakov)
- Sankt-Marya University (Gdanska)
- The Kamchatkan Institute for Medical Learning
- Kaunas University and University Hospital
- Konstantin Levcek Centre for Genetic Research.

The guidance of the state in the education and career choice of Rossii children is thorough. From the moment a child shows an aptitude in a particular area, it is encouraged and directed. Graduates are streamlined into careers and workplaces that they have been guided towards their entire lives, and career changes are rare. In some cases, a generation of Rossii children will be guided towards a particular area due to shortage in that area. This ensures that there is very little unemployment on Rossi. However, it has also led to some criticism from political dissidents, who claim that children lack autonomy and that they are treated as just another resource by the government. Claims have also been made that those with wealth can buy their child's way into any career of their choice, an option not available to the average Rossii.

Leadership and Politics

The politics and leadership of Rossi is administered in a similar manner to the education system. Candidates apply for testing and those that achieve above a certain grade may apply for a role in government.

A council known as Sovet Rossi represents the main decision-making body, made up of representatives put forward by each of the educational testing organisations, who pick the best of the best from a pool of tested applicants. The council is led by a Chair. This role is elected from the representatives of the main council. Other than in the less advanced Cossack society, this is the only time an official is elected in this way.

Decisions are made by discussion and votes of council, with the Chair having the deciding vote in the case of ties.

Crime and Punishment

There are two types of crime according to the Rossii legal system. Kutkha, named for the trickster raven of old Terra, are “minor” crimes – tricks, cons and dupes that are almost respected, and part of the game of life. It is a game played by young people on young people, building character and the ability to discern truth from lies, friend from foe. However, if Kutkha are visited upon the older generations, they fast become taboo. They are also very rarely successful – Grandma has played this game before, and probably better than you. Although it is rare that Kutkha are prosecuted, when they are the punishments are light and focus on teaching the culprit a lesson.

Zlodestva, or “villainies”, are crimes that result in long-term suffering, death or outright/public disrespect, and are dealt with far more harshly. The perpetrators of such crimes display a lack of respect for their community and the welfare of their fellow Rossii. A prison service is the first port of call if prosecution finds the culprit guilty, but most of these prisons are more like workhouses and aid various industries on the planet. All money earned is stored and rewarded at the end of the culprit’s service to aid them with their rehabilitation. Instead of working in these prisons, culprits can appeal to the penal service, where they will serve in various regiments on the front line. Alternatively, with good behaviour, a prisoner can become a muzhik, a free working labourer who is on fixed state pay. Muzhik workers pay off their debts of crime over a period of service while enjoying some freedom.

Repeat offenders and those convicted for the most heinous crimes go to maximum security prisons, are branded as sukas and left for dead. By choice, a suka can opt for the death penalty instead of long periods in prison.

Sukas who manage to escape justice or prison often become targets for the Cossack Huntsman regiment, who are given orders to hunt them to the bitter end. With the brutal reputation of the Huntsmen and the often hostile environments in which high-security prisons are built, only the most insane or desperate try to escape.

5. Ecology and Geography

Landscape, Fauna and Flora

Rossi, like all colonised planets in the Segovax cluster, has a Terran day–night cycle. However, due to being on the very edge of the golden area for life it is extremely cold (or, as an inhabitant might refer to it, “brisk”).

The majority of the planet is covered in snow and ice all year round, getting colder further from the equator, and most of the water that would, on any other planet, be open ocean is trapped in ice fields. The aquatic life under these ice fields is adapted to the extreme cold and most species have heavy layers of blubber to protect themselves. In particular, the whale analogues known as yubik survive these icy depths with ease. The frozen oceans are also homes to genetically modified orcas; these were part of the original colonisation efforts, as they were easy to train and could carry survey equipment. Rossi takes the protection of its environment and natural resources seriously, and protection of the yubik and other whale analogues in particular is part of the First Fleet’s duties. An illicit trade in yubik bone on the black market almost devastated the native population in 5761, and continues to be a threat today.

Closer to the equator, the ice thaws and, as well as free-flowing water, there can be found analogues of pine and other alpine trees from Terra. Ursidae – bear analogues – live in these greener areas as the main apex predator, along with packs of wild dogs that the original colonists brought with them. These non-native predators compete with the native wolf analogues known as vargur. There are various other Terran-like animals, along with animals bought by the original colonists. Genetically adapted buffalo that can withstand the cold have been introduced to the environment, and arctic foxes were trained for hunting and warning, along with other domestic animals and, of course, rats. It is often said that the colonisation of worlds by humans is also the history of the rat.

The *Ursa Rossi* is a species prevalent on the planet. It is the apex predator and is very similar to the Terran bear, except for being much greater in size. There are three species of ursidae: *Ursa Rossi polar*, *Ursa Rossi major* and *Ursa Rossi minor*. All ursidae are omnivores, usually mate for life, and unless verifiably dead they are extremely dangerous, even or most especially when starving, wounded or sick.

Ursa Rossi minor is found in the temperate forests of Rossi, is the least aggressive of the three species, and in some of the cities close to the forest they have been domesticated and bred for hunting and security (initially very much against their will, and with great loss of limb and life on the part of the domesticators). They are roughly 1.5 metres paw to shoulder and 2.4 metres nose to tail.

Ursa Rossi major is generally found near mountainous regions and usually keep to themselves unless hungry, when they may venture closer to towns. They are 2 metres paw to shoulder and around 3 metres nose to tail.

Ursa Rossi polar is only found in the icy wilds. Its thick skin and layers of fat allow it to swim in and occasionally under the icy seas; much like a dolphin it has great lung capacity and can stay submerged for up to half an hour. It is around 3 metres paw to shoulder and 5 metres nose to tail. They are incredibly dangerous and will hunt anything as potential prey.

Birds on Rossi tend to be adapted to the cold and high winds, possessing large wing spans and heavy plumage. The most common is the Rossi raven, also known as the “Black

Delmonte” due to its tendency to scavenge from the kills of larger beasts. It is a large black bird that is seen as a harbinger of hard times and the wisdom that comes with them, and is thus considered a comforting sight during hardship or challenge.

The woods of Rossi are regarded with some trepidation, but are protected with the same rigour as all Rossi environments. Due to forests on being a protected area, all lumber must be imported, facilitated by the Eco Treaty with Ardheim. Without the woodland there would be little shelter for the native fauna of Rossi and its biodiversity would suffer, having a massive impact on the environment.

Much of the pre-colonial ethnic folklore revolved around a healthy fear of “things in the woods” and this has remained firmly rooted in the Rossi psyche. Stories of the spirits of the old world following them to Rossi were once common, and although few believe them today, most still give the woods a wide berth without Cossack guides. These stories are mostly now told to children as cautionary or morality tales, the most popular being “The Huntsman and the Queen of Shadows and Fire” which is told around campfires and in cinemas alike. Alongside the mundane fauna of Rossi, usually in the more isolated settlements, young children often hear tales of mythical creatures – amongst these are the Rusalka who sing to lure fishermen to their deaths, the Nocrnitsa that sit on their chests and whisper nightmares into their ears, the Zarptika or Firebird, whose appearance can bring luck as well as grave misfortune, and the Domovoi, a helpful, bearded creature that can grant protection to a household if given the proper respect.

The population, which is estimated to number around 80 million, lives mainly within walled cities that follow the equatorial mountain ranges. Some settlements work to grow what crops they can to supplement the food produced in the ocean-based algae farms. These settlements mostly service native Rossi and the Cossack minority, usually in an uneasy alliance. Alongside this, animal farms provide a source of meat, and military bases and harbours maintain the submariner fishing fleets that serve the main cities.

Places of Interest

Petrakov – The capital city, Petrakov is also known as the cultural and educational centre of Rossi, holding the majority of the most highly regarded universities and colleges responsible for the testing of aptitudes.

Winter’s Vigil Port – Winter’s Vigil, or “The Vig”, is the main gateway to the northern ocean and the main submersible production centre. Situated in the underwater cliffside and with access granted by surface tunnels, it is one of the most well-protected places on the planet.

Deep 6 – One of several research bases in the southern ocean. Its primary function is the investigation and conscientious use of marine resources, along with research into yubik and other whale analogue intelligence.

The Great Forest – There are many stories about the great forest, some of terrible beasts, others of bandits or a lost mascen tribe. Although it has dwindled in size due to exploitation of its materials, it still covers an area the size of Terra’s Africa. It has never been mapped and expeditions into its depths have a nasty habit of vanishing.

Darzan – Once one of the great factory cities, one hundred years ago it went dark. When a team went in they discovered not a single soul. It is now a mausoleum, the mystery never having been solved.

Zelonograd – The largest of the factory cities on Rossi, running 13km along the Scarla mountain range. It is serviced by its own star port, so most of its goods go off-planet. It is also home to some of the worst slums and criminal elements on the planet. Zelonograd produces most of the ammunition used across the sector, however it is never enough. The machines producing munitions for the TSA work ceaselessly. Between the antiquated state of the machinery and the constant use, it is almost impossible to service or upgrade the machines. Instead, workers simply give malfunctioning machines a good kick, apply duct tape judiciously and hope for the best.

The Spike – The nickname given to Rehabilitation Centre 27, a prison located well beyond the southern mountain line, out on the ice. It is home to the worst criminals and dissidents on the planet. While there, the prisoners are expected to earn their keep through mining ore and the manufacture of heavy machinery. There is no fear of escape attempts, as to leave would mean dying of exposure on the ice. It is also the home to the Rossi Penal Legion, the members of which are known as Spikers.

6. Military

Structure

The Armed Forces of Rossi are controlled by the Commander-in-Chief and a civilian Minister of Defence. While the Commander-in-Chief is decided by their standing in the military, the civilian Minister of Defence is elected with each standing of office and often brings swift changes in structure and organisation.

The forces are split into two main branches:

- The Rossi Defence Force (RDF), which covers ground forces, aerospace forces and the navy
- The Rossi Rear Forces (RRF), an organisation of out-of-combat support services for the Rossi Defence Force.

It is important to note that both the RDF and RRF report to the same commanders and both have immense respect for one another.

In 5550, the armed forces of Rossi were split into the two main branches upon the order of Minister Dmitry Bulgakov after the military faced severe logistical difficulties when a large portion of regiments joined the Terran Sovereignty war effort against the One Bakkar.

In 5962, Minister Andrei Kologrivov and Commander-in-Chief Fyodor Uvarov announced significant reforms and reduction of the RDF by 60% in favour of a smaller, but more elite, fighting force. This led to the agreement and formation of a shared manpower pact with Ardheim. The Kologrivov Reformation led to a tighter relationship with Ardheim as both forces engaged in training regimes on one another's planets. This also led to multiple detachments with other planetary forces within the Terran Sovereignty.

In 6016, the RDF and the ADF were merged to combat the *Jotun insecticus* threat and now serve together as the ARDF, led by Commander-in-Chief Hjalmar Iwarsson.

The armed forces of Rossi are often deployed to fight in conditions of severe cold due to the natural hardiness of the Rossii people and their planet. They often use old weaponry out of respect, legend and superstition, preferring a weapon that has performed well in a previous battle. It is not unsurprising to find Rossii infantry with ancient-looking yet well-oiled, immaculate rifles. Uniforms include warm coats and practical clothing, allowing Rossii forces to train in snow, ice and urban settings. Due to this, Rossii forces are well known for their expertise in urban warfare.

Rossi is a peaceful planet, with more threats from the environment and wildlife than other forces. A tour in the Gorod Duty (Home Defence) is often a laborious affair leading to competitions and the enjoyment of military training games. Regiments will often have a dedicated squad of Streltsy, an honour badge given to the best marksmen of the regiment, awarded during the tours in Gorod duty. Units on Gorod duty often work alongside general police and fire brigade functions in major cities.

Due to the high number of Rossii infantry and close proximity of the neighbouring planet Ardheim, it is not uncommon to have Rossii attached to Ardheimian regiments and other planetary forces within the Green Cloaks.

The RDF employs conscription and all Rossii serve one year of military service. Some choose to serve a further two years in which they will do one tour of Gorod Duty and have the opportunity to serve on deployment.

Notable forces

1st Lifeguard Moskva Regiment – Decorated posthumously for their daring service in the evacuation of Moskva in 6016. The regiment remained behind and held off the flood of jotun, sacrificing themselves to ensure over 5000 civilians escaped the city unharmed. Reports state that the last of the regiment could have escaped as well, but instead they chose to remain and ensure the complete evacuation of a nursery of mascen children. The regiment is gone but not forgotten.

Cossack Huntsman and Diplomatic Corps – Members of this corps have a reputation as brutal, efficient and terrifying. Beginning as a diplomatic and patrol corps, they eventually came to be used as bounty hunters and assassins, often hired by the government to track down fugitives. Huntsman platoons will often be left on their own as deniable resources. Survivors of that sort of operation will add the words “abandoned and forgotten” after their name to remind those who sent them that they remember they were burned.

43rd Serov Army Regiment – Offworld in a relief force to help support the TSA, the 43rd Serov were ordered into the field to combat a One Bakkar light infantry unit. The 43rd Serov obeyed, but said, “They are not worth our bullets, nor our knives, take to them with the butts of your guns”. They drove the One Bakkar away with the butts of their guns, insults and laughter. The 43rd Serov were cited to be staggeringly drunk at the time. The 43rd have neither denied or confirmed this.

14th Spetsnaz Brigade – Known as “the Neumolimyy”, the 14th Spetsnaz is infamous as an example of disobedience. However, they still command a deep respect. The regiment was tasked with guarding a supply line, but Captain Kovalyov ignored the orders and instead led the 14th on a lightning strike, boarding and destroying a One Bakkar battleship and transport support ship. His final order to the regiment being to retreat, Captain Kovalyov remained behind with a set of explosive charges and detonated the battleship himself. The surviving regiment members do not talk about these actions, but rumours suggest that the day Kovalyov gave the order for the strike, news reached him that his wife and daughters had lost their lives to the very same One Bakkar battleship.

2nd Buh Cossack Stremya – Unofficially nicknamed the Zabyli Led (“forgotten ice”), the 2nd Buh Cossacks were abandoned and forgotten in the northernmost reaches of Rossi. Believed to be dead, no rescue or supplies were sent, but the Zabyli Led survived. Facing sub-arctic temperatures, outdated equipment, no fuel or heat, prolonged exposure, every last one of them lived. To this day questions are asked about how they survived, but the Zabyli Led answer only with cold, dead stares.

5th Life Grenadier Regiment – A heavy infantry unit, this regiment was nicknamed the Dermo Prizraks (“shit ghosts”) after an incident that occurred when they were holding out a tower block against a One Bakkar incursion. When the tower was demolished, the Grenadiers were all thought dead, yet in fact they had shed all weapons and gear and evacuated, swimming through the sewers. They swam one trooper at a time through enemy lines to a neighbouring bunker. The Dermo Prizraks continued to harass the One Bakkar and whittle them down through guerrilla tactics using only the tactical knives they took with them into the sewers and looted weapons.

Spike Penal Legion – All members of this legion come from the Spike (the nickname for Rehabilitation Centre 27, a prison located well beyond the southern mountain line, out on the ice). The Spike is home to the worst criminals and dissidents on the planet. All prisoners of the Spike are expected to earn their keep, and while some work in the mines, some are sent to the Spike Penal Legion. Regiments from this legion are sent to frontline duty, or members of the legion may be assigned to forces elsewhere in the Segovax Cluster as suits their training and speciality. Regiments from the Spike Penal Legion are often used in particularly dangerous missions from which high casualties are expected. Members of this Penal Legion are called “Spikers”.

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