



Nicholas II Coronation Beaker (aka "Cup of Sorrows"), 1896.

Enameled steel, gilt. Measures 105 mm top to bottom, 95 mm wide at the top. Transfer print design shows the ciphers of Nicholas II and Alexandra with the crown, surrounded by a geometric pattern in Russian folk style. The opposite side has the double-headed Romanov Eagle with provincial coats of arms.

In very fine condition, one of the best of its kind we have handled in years. The enamel on both the decorative outer side and inside the cup has held up exceptionally well. With the exception of 1-inch-long chip to the rim and to the gilt under it, there are only some small chips to the rim and a few tiny nicks below it (virtually all surviving cups appear to have been bumped into a few faucets while the owner was getting a drink of water, but unlike the others, this piece does not have extensive enamel damage or holes to the underlying steel.) The interior bottom has only two very tiny chips that are barely noticeable. The white enamel on outer bottom of the cup is completely intact - also a very uncommon case. Unlike the vast majority of the surviving Romanov coronation cups, nearly all of the fragile gilt is still present.

This beaker is among many that were distributed along with some food presents to celebrate the coronation of Nicholas II, as had been the long-standing tradition in Russia on Coronation Days. On the morning of 18 May 1896, over half a million revelers gathered on the ragged Khodynka Field in Moscow in anticipation of receiving presents and especially the commemorative cups (enameled tableware was still a great novelty at the time). The crowd was much larger than the field could safely accommodate, especially considering that it was designed as an army obstacle course and there were many trenches and pits dotting the plain in front of the Tsar's podium. The mob rushed the tables laden with gifts. In the confusion and panic that ensued, over a thousand people were trampled to death. This tragic event was taken as the omen of things to come for the rest of Nicholas' reign. The coronation cup became known in Russia as the Cup of Sorrows and the Tsar himself received the nickname of "Nicholas the Bloody" - despite his best efforts to compensate the families of the victims.

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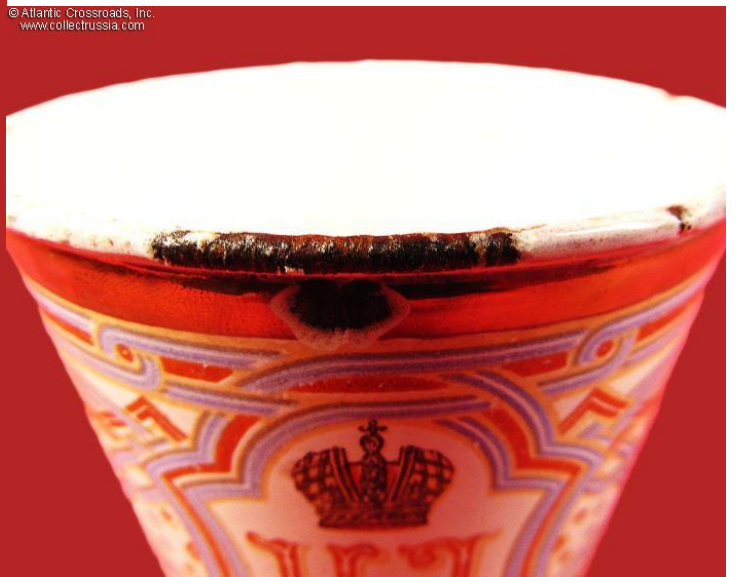
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