

RUSSIA AS IMPERIAL SPACE

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**SESSION IV: RUSSIAN IDEA: CULTURE, LAW
AND RELIGION AS FACTORS OF CONTINUITY**

RUSSIA LOST OF FOUND

11TH OF JUNE 2009

"Empire is a country for fools"

Joseph Brodsky, "Post aetatem nostra", 1970



"May you lie -- you -- / who took life like a
bumblebee touching a sun-heated bud / but
instead froze to death in the Third Rome's
cold-piss-reeking entrance"

Joseph Brodsky, "To a Friend: In Memoriam",
1973

Popular Soviet films and their imaginary geographies



"Space is a national category. A necessary condition for the realization of a nation. When I look at the Soviet map, our scarlet bedsheet, I feel distance—enormous distance—but I still don't feel open space." Andrei Bitov



“And if there’s a little speck squeezed into a corner somewhere, like a tiny marsh (Estonia) or washtub (Armenia), how could you suspect it had any kind of space? Stand in the center and spin around on your heel, and your eye would demarcate all its boundaries. How could anyone live on a pocket handkerchief like that? Backed by distances so inconceivable, you shrug.” Andrei Bitov



- ▶ what is the space constructed in the passage, what is the nation defined by that space?
- ▶ from which viewpoint do Estonia and Armenia seem as "specks squeezed in the corner"?
- ▶ what is the bird's-eye-viewpoint that the speaker here reconstructs, from which heights is he observing the space spread on the map?

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Andrei Bitov