Proof of Sincere Love for the Tsar: Popular Monarchism in the Age of Peter the Great

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Popular Monarchism in the Age of Peter the Great

Evgenii Trefilov

It is a commonplace among historians that subjects in tsarist Russia held a high regard for the power of the tsar.[1] This phenomenon, frequently referred to as "naive monarchism,"[2] contends that commoners (i.e., peasants, lower-class townspeople, Cossacks) revered the ruler in their own distinct way, contrasting the image of the "good" tsar with that of his "wicked" boyars and counselors, or, in extreme cases, the image of a "good" tsar with his opposite, a false or "bad" tsar.[3]

Indeed, many declarations to this effect from loyal subjects of the tsar have survived to this day. However, from time to time, scholars have voiced doubts about the sincerity of these pronouncements. For instance, the Soviet

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[1] See, e.g., Michael Cherniavsky, *Tsar and People: Studies in Russian Myths* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961); Daniel Field, *Rebels in the Name of the Tsar* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976); Maureen Perrie, *The Image of Ivan the Terrible in Russian Folklore* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Maureen Perrie, *Pretenders and Popular Monarchism in Early Modern Russia: The False Tsars of the Time of Troubles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); and P. V. Lukin, *Narodnye predstavleniia o gosudarstvennoi vlasti v Rossii XVII veka* (Moscow: Nauka, 2000). For a detailed historiography of popular conceptions of sovereign power in imperial Russia, see E. N. Trefilov, "Predstavleniia o tsarskoi vlasti uchastnikov narodnykh buntov petrovskogo vremeni" (Candidate of Historical Sciences diss., Russian State Humanities University [RGGU], 2010), 5–16.

[2] The scholarly literature sometimes notes that this terminology stems from the Soviet historiography (e.g., Field, *Rebels in the Name of the Tsar*, 1). Indeed, Soviet historiography frequently uses the term "naive monarchism." However, the term has been employed in Western scholarship as well, as the title of this work suggests: David Luebke, "Naive Monarchism and Marian Veneration in Early Modern Germany," *Past and Present*, no. 154 (1997): 71–106.

[3] For a more detailed explanation, see Field, *Rebels in the Name of the Tsar*, 1–2; Trefilov, "Predstavleniia o tsarskoi vlasti," 6–8.

historian Pavel Ryndzuskii argues that assertions of peasant monarchism "were, as a rule, based on a most literal reading of the regular forms of address used by 'subjects' in their petitions to the authorities, including petitions brought 'to the tsar' [*na vysochaishee imia*], formulaic expressions of supplication employed to increase the effectiveness of one's petition or prescribed by official regulations on presenting petitions."[4]

Noted insults and defamations of members of the ruling dynasty constitute another argument put forth by certain researchers against the traditional view of the population's utmost respect for the monarchy. From these statements they conclude that the Romanov dynasty, which ruled Russia from 1613 to 1917, did not enjoy widespread authority among the people. The Russian historian Evgenii Anisimov has expressed this argument clearly. He proposes that in the 18th century the authority of the ruling family, and the institution of the tsar's power more broadly, suffered in the eyes of the people when "the behavior of the tsars and tsarinas … constantly reaffirmed the 'illegitimacy' of the members of the Romanov dynasty." He bases this conclusion on sources drawn from political investigations, which yielded numerous invectives against the bearers of supreme power. According to Anisimov, the evidence of these investigations makes clear that "for the people, not a single monarch appeared decent, kind, wise, or just. In the popular mind, the moral character of nearly every ruler had a tainted reputation."[5]

Sometimes even historians who hold a different view of the relationship between authorities and subjects raise questions about "naive monarchism." For example, in her article on the attitudes held by participants in the 1648 uprising against Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich, Valerie Kivelson argues that the middle of the 17th century marked a break in traditional political culture. It was precisely Aleksei Mikhailovich's deviation from the archetype of the benevolent tsar, the defender of his subjects, that constituted a violation of the underlying principle of this political culture and precipitated a conflict between the Muscovites and the monarch, whom they were prepared to consider a traitor.[6] In Kivelson's words, "to use force against the tsar himself and to view him as a traitor undermine[s] the 'naive monarchist' characterization of the Russian people as unquestioningly and unwaveringly loyal to their tsar."[7]

[4] P. G. Ryndzundskii, "Ideinaia storona krestianskikh dvizhenii 1770–1850-kh godov i metody ee izucheniia," *Voprosy istorii*, no. 5 (1983): 10.

[5] E. V. Anisimov, *Dyba i knut: Politicheskii sysk i russkoe obshchestvo v XVIII v.* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 1999), 66.

[6] Valerie Kivelson, "The Devil Stole His Mind: The Tsar and the 1648 Moscow Uprising," *American Historical Review* 98, 3 (1993): 733–56.

[7] Ibid., 746–47.

The abundant irreverent statements about Russian rulers as well as the doubts of numerous historians regarding the sincerity of popular monarchist sentiment suggest that the question of monarchical devotion requires a more serious consideration than it has received thus far. Those who hold the traditional point of view for the most part continue to write about the high degree of authority that the tsar commanded in the consciousness of the people as if it were a self-evident truth requiring no proof. Even when evidence of this attitude is provided (more on this below), it is hardly enough to fully allay the doubts of those who are skeptical of the sincerity of popular monarchism. In this article I attempt, at least partially, to fill this gap. Naturally, it is impossible to analyze the full scope of Russians' relationship to their monarchy across the history of tsarist rule in a single, relatively small study. For this reason, I focus here on one relatively short period when the complexity of the relationship stood in sharp relief: the end of the 17th and first quarter of the 18th centuries, more specifically, the reign of Peter I. Based on evidence from the period, I argue that even in this complicated time, the monarchy commanded high, and at times exclusive, authority in popular consciousness.

Many scholars consider discontent with Peter I, particularly among the common people, to be a mass if not universal phenomenon.[8] Grievances were brought forth by adverse socioeconomic conditions, in which a large portion of the Russian population found itself as a result of Peter's reforms, as well as by the many new ideas that were seen as a threat to the Orthodox faith (the shaving of beards, replacing Russian dress with "German"—i.e., European—fashion, etc.). Peter's personal life was also a cause of discontent: his interactions with foreigners and his divorce from his first wife, Evdokiia, among other complaints.[9]

Given that these criticisms were directed at the sovereign himself rather than his entourage, it is not surprising that historians have repeatedly argued that Peter's activities dealt a serious blow to the authority of the monarchy itself. For example, the famous imperial Russian historian Vasilii Kliuchevskii wrote that Peter "ceased being the mythical political figure to the people that previous tsars had been."[10] For Anisimov, "Peter I with his 'plebian' behavior,

[8] N. V. Golikova presents a vast amount of factual material on this topic in *Politicheskie protsessy pri Petre I: Po materialam Preobrazhenskogo prikaza* (Moscow: Izdatel´stvo Moskovskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta, 1957). On discontent with Peter in Anglophone scholarship, see Paul Avrich, *Russian Rebels, 1600–1800* (London: Allen Lane, 1973), 139–47.

[9] For an overview of Peter I and his reign, see Lindsey Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); and Hughes, *Peter the Great: A Biography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

[10] V. O. Kliuchevskii, *Sochineniia* (Moscow: Mysl´, 1987), 4:208–9.

unprecedented reforms, and contemptible—in the eyes of the people—adulterous affairs largely destroyed the sanctity of the autocracy."[11]

At first glance, the behavior of common people in Peter's time largely conforms to the characterization of popular monarchism in the scholarly literature. On the one hand, common people, as before, did not skimp on their proclamations of loyalty and allegiance in their petitions to the tsar, but on the other hand, in their private conversations they denounced the sovereign. The discrepancy in these attitudes was particularly pronounced in the Moscow *strel´tsy* uprising of 1698. In documents addressed to the authorities, the strel´tsy proclaimed loyalty to Peter, while during their trials they confessed to planning to do away with the tsar and place either the disgraced Tsarevna Sophia or Tsarevich Alexei on the throne.[12] Nevertheless, one cannot categorically claim that all insults directed at the tsar carried a general antimonarchical character or that all statements of loyalty were insincere.

Sources and Methodology

What are the sources that might help us understand the relationship of the lower classes to the authorities in Peter's time, and how can we differentiate sincere proclamations of monarchism from insincere ones? Perhaps the most reliable material supporting the existence of authentic popular monarchism comes from testimonies in which witnesses report sincere monarchist statements from persons that they otherwise distrust or see as suspicious. Such statements might appear in a variety of sources received by the government. For example, as strange as it may seem, they may appear in reports on anti-Petrine sentiments written by government spies sent to infiltrate rebellious groups. I attempt to show that at times, common sentiments of loyalty to the tsar were passed on by accident, but more often monarchist sentiments and loyalties were reported deliberately (at least, in the sources I have seen) because from the point of view of the authorities even a statement contrasting the "good" tsar with his would-be "wicked" boyars was seen as antigovernmental and did not correlate to official reverence for the sovereign. Moreover, those who reported any antigovernmental attitudes certainly had no reason to conceal any existing defamatory statements about the sovereign from the authorities.

Information of this kind can be retrieved from legal and investigative materials, which serve as the most important source for studying popular monarchism in Peter's time. Here we have in mind the legal and investigative materials born out of investigations of *lèse-majesté* (*neprigozhaia rech´*)—that

[11] Anisimov, *Dyba i knut*, 66.

[12] A. N. Kazakevich, ed., *Vosstanie moskovskikh strel´tsov: 1698 god (materialy sledstvennogo dela). Sbornik dokumentov.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1980).

is, defamatory or insulting statements about Peter and other members of the royal family. Moreover, records from inquisitorial trials of participants in popular rebellions can be an invaluable source. As a rule, these trials were held by the government's political chancelleries such as the Preobrazhenskii prikaz and the Secret Chancellery. For a whole host of reasons, on which I have more to say below, it was not always possible to shed light on popular monarchism among the common folk by using denunciations by their enemies. For this reason, we must consider other methods to glean this information.

Among the materials documenting instances of *lèse-majesté* we are most concerned with denunciations (*izvetnye chelobitnye*)—testimonies of the denouncers, witnesses, and the accused. Here we face a problem, however, given that in the period under discussion, many such testimonies were extracted through torture. Consequently, "unable to withstand torture," an accused might confess to any slanderous charge being made against him, while a denouncer might retract an otherwise truthful accusation.[13] However, as the Russian historian Mikhail Bogoslovskii rightly noted, the truthfulness of the denunciations and other statements is not as important as the simple fact that these various defamations occurred—that is, the defamations themselves "reflect the mindset and attitude of the society from which they emerged. The points of view they contained were thus possible and were likely to be found within that milieu, even if they were not uttered by the particular persons they were attributed to by the denouncers."[14]

Bogoslovskii's remark is especially important in light of the fact that many denouncers in Peter's time, with no connection to one another and without any external pressure, often reported similar defamatory statements to the authorities. Not infrequently statements about the tsar were blatantly negative, but this does not necessarily mean that they should be considered antimonarchical. They would take on that character only when maligners of the tsar negated the very institution of the monarchy or spoke of him in a disparaging fashion. Even when individuals reproached the tsar for not acting as previous tsars had or denied his royal heritage, such statements still do not

[13] On the investigation and trial of political crimes in the 17th and 18th centuries, see G. G. Tel´berg, *Ocherki politicheskogo suda i politicheskikh prestuplenii v Moskovskom gosudarstve XVII veka* (Moscow: Tipografiia Imperatorskogo moskovskogo universiteta, 1912); Anisimov, *Dyba i knut*; and Nancy Shields Kollmann, *Crime and Punishment in Early Modern Russia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[14] M. M. Bogoslovskii, *Petr I: Materialy dlia biografii* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe sotsial´no-ekonomicheskoe izdatel´stvo, 1940), 177–78, 192. Similar ideas, without attribution to Bogoslovskii, were expressed by contemporary Russian historians. See A. S. Lavrov, *Koldovstvo i religiia v Rossii, 1700–1740 gg.* (Moscow: Drevlekhranilishche, 2000), 32–33; and Lukin, *Narodnye predstavleniia o gosudarstvennoi vlasti*, 15.

necessarily imply a lack of or decline in esteem for the monarchy per se. On the contrary, they highlight faith in the idea that there is such a thing as a "true" or "rightful" tsar and that such a tsar would never act in such a fashion.

However, Bogoslovskii's method cannot be applied to all interrogations without exception. Indeed, the weakness of this approach emerges when analyzing materials from inquisitorial trials of participants in popular rebellions. If investigations in cases of *lèse-majesté* began when somebody filed a denunciation—and denunciations frequently came from a member of the same social group as the accused[15]—then in the case of the rebellions, investigations were initiated by the authorities,[16] meaning that witness testimony presented as evidence might not have reflected the mindset of the social group to which the suspects belonged. Either voluntarily or involuntarily, the interrogators might pin damaging statements on the defendants or, at the very least, skew their words. Nevertheless, in some instances, we can, in fact, hear the thoughts—or sometimes, even words—of the defendants.

We should, perhaps, begin with the fact that defendants did not always provide the kind of testimony that the investigators hoped to hear. For example, as we will see, not all participants in the Moscow strel´tsy revolt of 1698 confessed to having any connection with the disgraced Tsarevna Sophia even though the investigators generally claimed this was the case for all the defendants. Moreover, some of the strel´tsy even proclaimed their loyalty to Peter, which the tsar was unlikely to have believed. But we can hardly be certain of the sincerity of these statements. Such declarations might have been intended to lessen the charges brought against the defendant, in an effort to escape a harsher punishment. More reliable are the statements that, on the one hand, contradict the wishes of the authorities but, on the other, do not ameliorate the fate of the defendant. We examine examples of these below.

Working with materials from the inquisitorial trials, one must pay special attention to inadvertent revelations provided by defendants in their statements (that is, inadvertent statements that could not have been elicited by pressuring the accused). In fact, the value of such statements comes from the fact that they were not only not elicited by the investigators, but the authorities had not even paid them any attention. The presence of peculiar ideas, characteristic of common people but unlikely to resemble ideas held by government officials, might provide additional assurance that testimonies were not, in fact, manipulated by the authorities.

[15] On the denouncers and the accused in the Secret chancellery and Secret expedition, see I. V. Kurukin and E. A. Nikulina, *Povsednevnaia zhizn´ Tainoi kantseliarii* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 2008), 175–203.

[16] Anisimov, *Dyba i knut*, 148.

In this article, I turn first not to the investigative materials but to documents that came from the quills of the common folk, as these sources reflect their unmediated views toward authority. Documents scripted by participants in popular rebellions deserve particular attention because, as we will see, they expressed the views of both the document's author and his social milieu. Expressions of loyalty to the monarch contained in these documents should raise few doubts. However, this is far from the case. Rebels composed petitions and other missives to the tsar using conventional expressions of subservience and loyalty, which, as I stated above, would have been dictated by accepted norms. As for proclamations of loyalty contained in documents that were not intended for the eyes of the tsar and his counselors (for instance, in the correspondence between rebel commanders), they too might have been dictated by epistolary conventions.[17] Nevertheless, these sources are extremely valuable. By considering these letters alongside other sources, we can extract the information that interests us. In one case, a document written by the rebels serves as proof of sincere popular monarchism even without additional sources. As we will see, the monarchist position of the rebels in this document emerges despite its general character. Sources of this type, as the historian Nikolai Pokrovskii rightly noted, are generally more reliable.[18]

Finally, the documents I analyze also capture actions and activities that attest to popular monarchism among the common folk. I argue that sometimes the fact that common people took particular actions, overcoming great odds, and subjected themselves to certain risks serves as proof of the sincerity of their monarchist sentiments.

Rebel Voices

From reports on antigovernmental, and particularly anti-Petrine, sentiments we can see that popular attitudes toward Peter I were not as unequivocally

[17] For published documents written by the participants of popular rebellions in the reign of Peter I, see A. I. Andreev, *Pis´ma i bumagi Imperatora Petra Velikogo* (Petrograd: Izdatel´stvo Akademii nauk, 1918), 7:191–94; *Pis´ma i bumagi Imperatora Petra Velikogo*, 2nd ed. (Moscow: Izdatel´stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1946), 7:600–2, 650–55, 659–60, 684–89, 694–98; V. I. Lebedev, *Bulavinskoe vosstanie* (Moscow: Ogiz, 1934), 93–94; *Bulavinskoe vosstanie 1707–1708* (Moscow: Politkatorzhan, 1935), 230, 450–67; Kazakevich, *Vosstanie moskovskikh strel´tsov*, 39–42; N. B. Golikova, ed., *Sotsial´nye dvizheniia v gorodakh Nizhnego Povolzh´ia v nachale XVIII veka: Sbornik dokumentov* (Moscow: Drevlekhranilishche, 2004), 123–256, 371–79. Other documents written by the Astrakhan rebels remain unpublished. See Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv drevnikh aktov (RGADA) f. 371 (Preobrazhenskii prikaz), op. 1, d. 458, ll. 14–15; d. 14302, ll. 1–5; op. 2, d. 1144, ll. 231–33, 245–48, 280–81; and d. 1146, ll. 1–8.

[18] N. N. Pokrovskii, *Tomsk, 1648–1649 gg.: Voevodskaia vlast´ i zemskie miry* (Novosibirsk: Nauka, Sibirskoe otdelenie, 1989), 39, 60, 137.

negative as the scholarly literature suggests. Not only individuals but sometimes entire groups expressed their reverence for the tsar. According to the runaway *strelets* V. Ivanov (1700), the Cossacks of Krasniansk Township on the Don reacted negatively when one of their own insulted Peter. During a feast, one of the Cossacks stated, "we do not have a sovereign now, that one is not a sovereign but a German, and if he were a true tsar, he would not do as he does, but he just believes in his German faith." Upon hearing these words, the other Cossacks "shouted at that Cossack and chased him out of the hut with their clubs [*naseki*]." The denouncer had no reason to exculpate the Cossacks because they, in Ivanov's words, beat him and banished him from the township, even planning to kill him, after he attempted to learn the name of the person who insulted the tsar.[19]

We might say that this example provides a vignette of the attitudes of the Don Hosts on the eve of the Bulavin rebellion (1707–8). Although individual Cossacks expressed their dissatisfaction with Peter I, on the whole, the Host remained loyal.[20]

As for the attitudes of the participants of the Bulavin rebellion, the evidence suggests that by the end of the uprising a significant number decided to break with the tsar. I discuss this more fully below, but for now, it is worth noting that in the months leading up to this break, Cossacks involved in the uprising expressed their loyalty to the tsar. For example, according to the "testimony" of the "spy" A. Polukhin (14 April 1708), who accused the Cossacks of Pristan Township of chasing off "the tsar's horses," they said to him that "those horses … were the *boyars'*, not the tsar's."[21] Polukhin, who was sent to "suss out the intentions of the 'thieving' cossacks [*vorovskie kazaki*]," had no intention of vindicating the rebels.[22] He did not conceal from the authorities the "defamatory words" (*nepristoinye slova*) a Bulavin ataman spoke about Peter, when the latter claimed that Peter had died long ago and that the country was ruled by "boyars, profiteers, and Germans."[23]

[19] RGADA f. 371, op. 2, d. 841, ll. 3, 5; O. G. Usenko, "Politicheskie nastroeniia na Donu v 1697–1707 gg. i povod vosstaniia K. A. Bulavina," *Klio: Mezhvuzovskii zhurnal dlia uchenykh*, no. 1 (1997): 151.

[20] On the Don Cossacks' attitude toward Peter I on the eve of the Bulavin rebellion, see Usenko, "Politicheskie nastroeniia na Donu"; E. N. Trefilov, "Osobennosti kazach´ego monarkhizma kontsa XVII–nachala XVIII vv.," *Rossiiskaia istoriia*, no. 6 (2009): 125–40; and Trefilov, "Predstavleniia o tsarskoi vlasti," 160–216; For Anglophone scholarship on the rebellion, see Avrich, *Russian Rebels,* chap. 3; and Brian J. Boeck, *Imperial Boundaries: Cossack Communities and Empire-Building in the Age of Peter the Great* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 172–86.

[21] *Bulavinskoe vosstanie 1707–1708*, 201.

[22] Ibid., 200.

[23] Ibid., 203.

Sources pertaining to another significant uprising during Peter's reign—the Astrakhan rebellion of 1705–6—show that a substantial number of participants similarly held the tsar in high regard.[24] However, according to some accounts, anti-Petrine sentiments crept into the general discontent among the Astrakhan rioters.

On 22 February 1706, Peter gave audience to the delegation sent by the Astrakhan rebels. With a charter of privileges in hand (*prostitel´naia gramota*), which did not survive among the records, they set out for Astrakhan on 1 March of that year. At the same time, government forces led by B. P. Sheremetev approached Astrakhan with instructions to take the city from the rebels. Sheremetev's demand to surrender the city before the return of the petitioners created discontent among the rioters. Their anger was directed not only at Sheremetev but, at times, at Tsar Peter himself as well.

The townsman D. Borodulin, sent to Astrakhan by Sheremetev "to survey the rebels' thieving intentions" (*vorovskoe ikh namerenie*), had been the first to testify to this. From Borodulin's testimony it appears that discontent with Peter was widespread throughout Astrakhan, and that the chief maligner was the head of the rebel leadership Iakov Nosov. It is important to note that according to Borodulin's testimony, the "blasphemous words" were spoken not privately but at a public gathering of the rebels.[25]

It is highly probable that there were anti-Petrine sentiments in Astrakhan at the time, but their scale and pervasiveness were likely greatly exaggerated by Borodulin.[26] Possibly Ia. Nosov had no qualms about either Peter or even Sheremetev, who stood outside the city demanding the surrender of Astrakhan to government forces at the time. In early March 1706, Nosov relinquished his role as ataman. Some sources suggest he did so voluntarily, while others state that he was replaced by the rebels for not supporting their

[24] For a detailed discussion of attitudes toward Peter among the rebels in Astrakhan, see E. N. Trefilov, "Slukhi i tolki o gosudare v srede uchastnikov astrakhanskogo bunta (1705–1706): Sravnitel´nyi analiz vozvanii i rassprosnykh rechei," *Vestnik Tverskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta* 53, no. 25 (2007): 49–65; and Trefilov, "Predstavleniia o tsarskoi vlasti," 115–59. On the causes and chronology of the uprising, see N. B. Golikova, *Astrakhanskoe vosstanie, 1705–1706 gg.* (Moscow: Izdatel´stvo Moskovskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta, 1975).

[25] Golikova, *Sotsial´nye dvizheniia*, 364–65. This testimony was received in the Preobrazhenskii prikaz, but I have seen it only in an excerpt composed in January 1722.

[26] When interrogated, M. Zhelezo, a soldier in the Iakhtinskii Regiment, confessed: "when the field marshal arrived in Astrakhan, he said that killing a field marshal was no big deal. Even if the Sovereign himself were there, they would knock his head off" (Golikova, *Politicheskie protsessy pri Petre I*, appendix 2, 318). Admittedly, it remains unknown how the Preobrazhenskii prikaz learned of the soldier's words or how they reacted to them. The extract from the *Gistoriia Sveiskoi voiny* (History of the Swedish War) that contains M. Zhelezo's testimony offers few clues.

resistance to government forces.[27] In the investigation, the Tersk strelets Ia. Bragin stated that after the rebels decided not to allow Sheremetev to enter the city, Nosov relinquished his ataman's powers and declared: "We sent our plea of mercy [*povinnaia*] to the tsar … and the boyar [Sheremetev] was sent to us with words of mercy, and what more is there for us to believe."[28]

However, it seems that not only Ia. Nosov but the majority of the Astrakhan rebels, including those who did not want to allow Sheremetev to enter the city, held no animus toward the tsar. If, as Borodulin insisted, anti-Petrine sentiments were so widespread that the rebels did not bother to hide their attitudes from their enemies, then why did others—the monk G. Dashkov, loyal to Sheremetev and in Astrakhan at the time, or V. Antonov, another envoy of the field marshal—not report them?[29] On the contrary, some people who were negatively disposed to the rebels mentioned the rebels' respect for the tsar to Sheremetev. On 9 March 1706, Archimandrite Antonii, the scribe I. Shchetinin, and the townsman F. Klement´ev, who fled Astrakhan to join the government forces, reported the rebels' words as "what business does he [Sheremetev] have in Astrakhan, and why is he marching troops there without orders from the tsar when we have sent our petitioners to the Great Sovereign?"[30] In this way, it seems that the proclamations of loyalty contained in the documents produced by the rebels themselves at the end of February and beginning of March 1706 were not merely empty phrases but in fact reflected the Astrakhan rebels' true feelings toward their monarch.[31]

The attitudes among the participants of the strel´tsy uprising of 1698, which most historians argue was directed entirely against Peter I, were similarly complex.[32] As stated above, in the course of the investigation some of the suspects confessed to having intentions to do away with Peter; however, there is also evidence to suggest that some of the strel´tsy not only had no intention of murdering the tsar but did not even want to rise up against him.

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[27] Golikova, *Sotsial´nye dvizheniia*, 324, also 100, 105, 111, 326, 329. See also RGADA f. 371, op. 1, d. 458, ll. 162–62 ob.; and Golikova, *Politicheskie protsessy pri Petre I*, 2, 311–12.

[28] RGADA f. 371, op. 1, d. 458, ll. 162–62 ob.

[29] Dashkov urged Sheremetev to hurry to Astrakhan because the residents, after hearing Sheremetev's ultimatum to surrender the city, were inclined to rebel once more (Golikova, *Sotsial´nye dvizheniia*, 83). Understandably, Dashkov, who was aware of the rebels' intentions, would have reported any insults to the tsar had they been widespread among the rebels. Antonov had few reasons to exculpate the rebels. As he reported, the rebels "wanted to kill him, and others to drown him" (ibid., 91).

[30] Ibid., 94.

[31] Ibid., 87, 139.

[32] For the historiography on this question, see Trefilov, "Predstavleniia o tsarskoi vlasti," 29–38.

For my argument to become clear, we must first briefly review the sequence of events leading up to the uprising and the uprising itself.[33]

Four regiments of Moscow strel´tsy—named after their commanders F. A. Kolzakov, A. A. Chubarov, I. I. Chernov, and T. Kh. Gundertmark (Hundertmark)—took part in the uprising. Like other government troops including other strel´tsy regiments from Moscow, they took part in the Azov campaigns in 1695–96. However, after Azov was taken, unlike other Moscow strel´tsy these four regiments were not returned to the capital. Instead, they were kept for a time in Azov to carry out various assignments, after which they were sent to the Don, and in the fall of 1697, they found themselves on the Lithuanian border in M. G. Romodanovskii's army. On 2 June 1698, the strel´tsy were told that their regiments would be sent to various towns across the empire. At the same time, the authorities requested from them the names of the strel´tsy who in the spring of 1698 turned up in Moscow with complaints of "food shortages" (*beskormitsa*) and insufficient pay. The strel´tsy disobeyed both orders and eventually, casting their leadership aside, marched on Moscow. If we are to believe their words—contained to a letter addressed to the leader of the tsar's forces A. S. Shein (Peter was abroad at the time)—they were heading to Moscow not in rebellion but to see their families, whom they had not seen for several years.[34] The authorities barred the strel´tsy from entering Moscow, resulting in a battle near the Voskresenskii Monastery outside Moscow on 18 June 1698, in which government forces decimated the rebels.

The Soviet historian V. I. Buganov supposes that the regiments' claims to want to visit their wives and children in Moscow in their letters to Shein were merely a ruse.[35] However, we cannot overlook the hypothesis of Buganov's student, A. N. Kazakevich, who posited that the letter to Shein reflected the positions of the strel´tsy who were either "loyal to Peter I or not particularly decisive."[36] In either case, attitudes among the strel´tsy were far from

[33] For a detailed account of the events preceding the rebellion, the rebellion itself, and the subsequent investigations, see N. G. Ustrialov, *Istoriia tsarstvovaniia Petra Velikogo* (St. Petersburg: Kantseliariia Ego Imperatorskogo Velichestva, 1858), 3:144–45, 152–78, 201–32, 235–45; S. M. Solov´ev, *Sochineniia* (Moscow: Mysl´, 1991), 7: 540–55; Bogoslovskii, *Petr I*, 3:26–126, 212–25, 228; 4:319–31; and V. I. Buganov, *Moskovskie vosstaniia kontsa semnadtsatogo veka* (Moscow: Nauka, 1969), 363–407, 414–21.

[34] Kazakevich, *Vosstanie moskovskikh strel´tsov*, 41–42. In addition to this letter, there was also a petition written by the strelets Vas´ka Zorin. Although the petition was addressed to Peter himself and filled with expressions of loyalty, it also contained defamations about Franz Lefort, one of the tsar's trusted companions. The petition also contained derogatory statements about Germans in general, suggesting that the *strel´tsy* were heading to Moscow to protect the capital from them. See Kazakevich, *Vosstanie moskovskikh strel´tsov*, 39-40.

[35] Buganov, *Moskovskie vosstaniia kontsa semnadtsatogo veka*, 394.

[36] Kazakevich, *Vosstanie moskovskikh strel´tsov*, 11.

uniform. Select representatives of the government forces—the opposition to the rebels—can attest to this as well. From a letter written on 17 June 1698 by F. Iu. Romodanovskii, head of government in the tsar's absence, to Peter I we learn that the emissaries of the estranged leaders of the strel´tsy regiments arrived in Moscow "with news and letters." Among other things, these letters stated: "and those strel´tsy who did not join them [the rebels], after much persuasion, were taken involuntarily and placed under watch."[37]

Another important piece of evidence leading to this conclusion comes from M. G. Romodanovskii, who was in charge of the strel´tsy regiments in early June 1698. In his letters from 3 and 16 June to the Muster Chancellery (Razriadnyi prikaz), Romodanovskii reported that at first the strel´tsy of the Kolzakov Regiment intended to head to the "indicated places" in accordance with the tsar's orders—that is, from the Lithuanian border to the separate locations to which they were ordered by the authorities. The regiment even provided the names of 15 of its members who had run away to Moscow that spring before being recaptured by other mutineers. It is remarkable that after freeing the deserters, the Kolzakov Regiment once more expressed its wish to head to the "indicated places" and to identify the deserters. However, it was Romodanovskii who refused to accept them, "fearing any kind of mischief from those thieves"—that is, harm.[38]

Evidently among the troops in the Kolzakov Regiment, at the very least, some had no desire to rebel. For this reason, the numerous statements from the accused that they were compelled to march on Moscow by the leaders of the rebellion or that their purpose was to see their families cannot be dismissed as an outright falsehood. For example, at his interrogation on 19 September 1698 I. Kornilov from the Kolzakov Regiment did not deny that there were rebellious intentions among the strel´tsy. However, according to his testimony, "other" strel´tsy stated: "If only to live another week and see our wives, and then we can go away for even another five years." He gave the same testimony when questioned again on 22 September 1698.[39] We can trust Kornilov's testimony for two reasons. First, Kornilov was a member of the Kolzakov Regiment—the same regiment that on the eve of the rebellion had members who did not want to revolt. Second, Kornilov himself was not one of the rebels, described in positive terms by the regiment leader F. A. Kolzakov.[40]

[37] Appendix to Ustrialov, *Istoriia tsarstvovaniia Petra Velikogo*, 3:475.
[38] RGADA f. 210 (Razriadnyii prikaz, Stolbtsy prikaznogo stola) d. 2042, ll. 5, 7, 30–31, 36–37; also ll. 9–10, 13, 15–16, 18, 20–22, 24, 26–27, 42, 46–47, 51–52, 54.
[39] Kazakevich, *Vosstanie moskovskikh strel´tsov*, 121.
[40] Ibid.

Other regiments in addition to Kolzakov's contained members who did not wish to rebel or, at the very least, wavered. From F. Iu. Romodanovskii's missive we get the sense that the leadership of all four regiments wrote of being coerced to participate in the rebellion.[41] However, it is difficult to estimate the number of these reluctant rebels.[42] In light of this evidence, we cannot exclude the fact that loyalties proclaimed in the aforementioned letter to Shein were not only a cunning ploy by the rebels, which undoubtedly was partially the case, but also expressed the sincere wishes of the strel´tsy who were not inclined toward rebellion.

Even amid the rebels there we some who, in their own way, remained loyal to Peter I.[43] One such example of loyalty emerges from the testimony of someone who can in no way be construed as being positively disposed to the person he denounced. In the summer of 1698, during the investigation near the Voskresenskii Monastery, A. Fektistov, a lieutenant (*piatidesiatnik*) in the Gundertmark Regiment, reported the words of his comrade Ia. Matveev. In early June 1698, when the latter was ordered by the nobleman Grigorii Nikulin, sent by M. G. Romodanovskii, to give up the strel´tsy who deserted to Moscow earlier that spring, he "refused him, Grigorii, with impertinence, asking who sent him. And he, Grigorii, said the boyar and *voevoda* sent him by order of the tsar. And he, Iakushka, said to him in ignorance, that the tsar knows nothing of it." Matveev, in turn, did not deny these words but said that "he uttered those words on account of his simplemindedness."[44]

Before us is a classic example of the so-called "naive monarchism"—when according to the tsar's subjects, counselors act contrary to the sovereign's will. Obviously, we cannot attribute this instance to a defensive tactic by the accused, who might use this kind of testimony to mitigate his own role in the rebellion. As we have seen, both the denouncer and the accused understood that from the point of view of the authorities, this form of monarchism was considered criminal; were it not so, the former would not have reported such an incident, and the latter would not offer his "simplemindedness" as an excuse for his statement.

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[41] Other sources point to a reluctance to rebel in the Chubarovskii regiment and others. See ibid., 214, 216, 219–21, 248–49, 254.

[42] V. Zorin from the Kolzakov regiment, comparing this revolt to the previous 1682 revolt, stated in his testimony of 26 June 1698: "this was like the year 190—there were only a few mutineers, and the good ones were gripped by fear and did nothing" (ibid., 52).

[43] A more detailed account can be found in Trefilov, "Predstavleniia o tsarskoi vlasti," 97–105.

[44] Kazakevich, *Vosstanie moskovskikh strel´tsov*, 66.

Popular Monarchism in Action

That common people traveled great distances and overcame many difficulties to present the tsar with the truth, as they understood it, further attests to the sincerity of popular monarchism in the Petrine era. It seems obvious that given the large costs and obvious dangers associated with such journeys, ordinary people would not have undertaken them had they equated the tsar's actions with those of his loathsome counselors. For instance, the Iaik Cossacks, inhabiting the farthest borders of Russia, made a concerted effort to report the petty tyrannies of the tsar's ministers to the tsar.

In Peter's time, the government actively encroached on the autonomy of various Cossack hosts. Among other infringements, the government banned Cossacks from accepting deserters and runaway serfs and tried to recover those who already lived on their lands. In 1718, the authorities sent forces to the Iaik in search of runaways. A few of the Cossacks were identified as runaways and even returned to the landowners of nearby provinces. Understandably, little of this could have appeared satisfactory to the Cossacks. Some blamed Peter I himself, while others assumed that the tsar knew nothing about the hunt for runaways, laying the blame on the local authorities of Kazan and Astrakhan instead. The Cossacks sent a delegation (*stanitsa*) headed by ataman F. Mikhailov to apprise Peter of the truth. However, in St. Petersburg, the delegation was arrested and sent to prison.[45]

Sometime later, a second delegation headed by F. Rukavishnikov was dispatched to the tsar and met the same misfortune. On the one hand, Rukavishnikov had initiated the arrest of the lieutenant and soldiers sent from Astrakhan to the Iaik in pursuit of runaways—in this way, he was obviously acting against the government. On the other hand, he assured the Cossacks that the tsar was on their side. We can hardly doubt the sincerity of his monarchism, especially since he asked to be sent to petition the tsar, implying that he had no doubt that the tsar would decide the case in favor of the Cossacks.[46]

Could One Be Unhappy with the Tsar but Still Respect His Authority?

As we already know, many Russian subjects had a dim view of Peter. How are we to interpret the stream of invective directed against him? According to some historians, popular criticism of Peter was not focused on the tsar himself but rather on the so-called "changeling tsar" or the "Tsar-Antichrist."[47] Indeed, most sources confirm this view. "What kind of tsar is he to us Christians?" a

[45] I. G. Rozner, *Iaik pered burei* (Moscow: Mysl′, 1966), 15–16.
[46] Ibid., 16–18.
[47] Cherniavsky, *Tsar and People*, 75–77; Golikova, *Politicheskie protsessy pri Petre I*, 168; Golikova, *Astrakhanskoe vosstanie*, 180, 222–23, 310–11.

monk at the Tikhvin Monastery said circa 1704. "He is not the tsar but some Catholic, who never fasts and seduces others. He is a toady, the Antichrist, born of an impure maiden."[48]

Earlier I quoted a Don Cossack who exclaimed, "We do not have a sovereign now. That one is not a sovereign but a German." However, not all subjects restricted themselves to such short outbursts, preferring to elaborate on the circumstances that brought the "German" to the throne. For example, the monk Feofilakt from the Chudov Monastery in Moscow was accused of declaring, sometime in 1702: "the sovereign was no tsar, and not of the tsar's kin, but of German descent…. When Tsaritsa Natal´ia Kirilovna [Peter's mother] bore only daughters, the sovereign, Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich became enraged with her: if you do not give me a son, I will make you take the veil. And then she, the tsaritsa, was once more with child. And when the time had come for her to give birth to a girl, then she, her highness, fearing the tsar, traded the child for a male infant from Lefort's court in the German quarter."[49]

It is important to note that even in those cases, when Peter was not called the Antichrist or a "changeling" tsar (*obmennyi tsar´*), his critics pointed to his "untsarlike" actions: "What kind of tsar is he? He is a fornicator [*babobludishko*]." Or "what a tsar he is—he dragged us all out to serve and laid the kingdom to waste."[50]

Rumors that the tsar was "imprisoned in Stockholm" or even dead also circulated among the populace. Such rumors (particularly those regarding the tsar's death) were very popular in the first months of the Astrakhan uprising of 1705–6. In the rebels' opinion, only the absence of the tsar from his throne could explain the various transgressions of the local *voevoda* T. Rzhevskii, the introduction of German dress, and the compulsory shaving of beards.[51] In this instance the rumors once more highlighted the unlikelihood of such lawlessness under the real tsar.

All the above-mentioned legends about Peter and calumnies heaped upon him mixed with one another, circulating among the different strata of Russian society: boyars, nobles, strel´tsy, clergy, Don Cossacks, and especially amid soldiers, peasants, and townspeople.[52] It is worth underscoring again

[48] Quoted in Golikova, *Politicheskie protsessy pri Petre I*, 148. See also 126–27.

[49] Quoted in ibid., 149.

[50] RGADA f. 371, op. 2, d. 1143, ll. 117–19, 213–14.

[51] Trefilov, "Predstavleniia o tsarskoi vlasti," 126–28.

[52] On the boyars, nobles, strel´tsy, and clergy, see Golikova, *Politicheskie protsessy pri Petre I*, 69–164. On the Cossacks, see RGADA f. 371, op. 1, chast´ 1, d. 291, ll. 27–29, 34–36, 43–47; op. 2, d. 841, ll. 3, 5. Also see op. 2, d. 1137, ll. 9–10, 40, 70–71. To be fair, it was not always clear that the defamations came from the Don Cossacks. On other social groups, see Golikova, *Politicheskie protsessy pri Petre I*, 165–220.

that in the majority of cases, discontent in society (especially among the commoners) arose as a result of usurpers who captured the throne, not from the lawful monarch. In the minds of the dissatisfied populace, the rightful and true tsar could simply not commit the wicked acts that were perpetrated by the Antichrist or "German" on the throne. Here monarchist sentiments cannot be explained away either by strategic calculations nor by the norms associated with petitioning the tsar.[53]

However, at times in Peter I's reign, common people nonetheless spoke out against the lawful—from their point of view—monarch. One senses these attitudes, for example, among some of the participants of the 1698 strel´tsy uprising. Several of these mutineers, as we already noted, admitted to plotting to murder Peter and place Sophia or Tsarevich Alexei on the throne. In any case, nowhere in their testimony did they declare that they intended to sidestep the unlawful sovereign, the "Antichrist" or "changeling tsar." From this point, we might move on to analyze how such attitudes toward the ruling monarch affected the prestige of the monarchy as an institution or the tsar's authority on the whole in the mindset of these strel´tsy, if not for one, very important question: to what extent did their declarations correspond to reality? To understand the importance of this unexpected question, we must first briefly illuminate the inquisitorial trials of the participants of this revolt and the circumstances surrounding them.

The first phase of the investigation took place in June 1698 under the direction of the boyar A. S. Shein (as the reader may recall, Peter was abroad at the time). At this stage of the investigation, the rebels admitted that they wanted to defeat the boyars and Germans. Some of the leaders of the rebellion (*pushchie zavotchiki*) were executed for similar intentions. However, Peter I, upon his return to Russia on 25 August 1698, was not satisfied with the results of this investigation. On 17 September, a new investigation into the rebellion began under the personal oversight of the tsar. Only in this new investigation did the confessions of the accused include intentions to get rid of the tsar himself, place the disgraced Sophia on the throne or make her regent to the underage Tsarevich Alexei.

Peter detested the strel´tsy and Tsarevna Sophia. The feeling stemmed from the memory of the earlier strel´tsy uprising of 1682, in which the rebels

[53] Interestingly, the legend of the "changeling" tsar outlived Peter I by nearly 200 years. In October 1916, a vagrant wandered around Kamyshenskii uezd, spreading rumors that Nicholas "was not a real tsar but the offspring of Yid blood (*zhidovskaia krov´*) that usurped the throne from Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandrovich." We should note that the populace was receptive to these rumors. See B. I. Kolonitskii, *"Tragicheskaia erotika": Obrazy imperatorskoi sem´i v gody Pervoi mirovoi voiny* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2010), 225.

killed members of his family and those close to him, most likely right before his eyes. In the minds of Peter and his closest allies, Sophia, along with I. M. Miloslavskii, instigated the 1682 rebellion. If we also recall the standoff between Peter and Sophia in 1689, it becomes evident why in 1698 Peter, still traveling abroad, suspected that his half-sister had a hand in the new uprising as well.[54] In the ensuing investigation the suspicions of the tsar were confirmed.

Some scholars have suggested being quite cautious about the confessions of the strel´tsy.[55] The Russian historian S. P. Orlenko has spoken especially forcefully on this point, noting that Peter "wanted to highlight connections between the rebels and his loathsome sister Sophia no matter what, insisting on hearing the strel´tsy confess to their 'actual' plans—that is, [to offer a version of events that would] confirm his darkest suspicions and fears." For this reason, Orlenko concludes, the interrogations of the strel´tsy "can hardly be seen as an investigation, as all the efforts of the authorities were directed at extracting confessions by any means necessary."[56]

Indeed, at first glance, the confessions of the strel´tsy do not elicit much confidence. First, there is the question of why the rebels, silent during the June investigation on their intent to murder the tsar and place Sophia on the throne, suddenly decided to reveal all during the interrogation headed by none other than the tsar? One might surmise that the relevant questions (*sootvetstvuiushchie voprosy*) and severe acts of torture had compelled the strel´tsy to talk.[57] The suspects were tortured several times a day, and at times, the number of blows with the knout exceeded the norms in the Petrine era, which for peasants consisted of 15 to 35–40 blows at a time.[58] Knowing of

[54] Trefilov, "Predstavleniia o tsarskoi vlasti," 42–43. For the events of 1682 and 1689, see Lindsey Hughes, *Sophia, Regent of Russia, 1657–1704* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 52–88, 221–42.

[55] See, e.g., N. A. Dobroliubov, "Pervye gody tsarstvovaniia Petra Velikogo," *Pervoe polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 4 vols. (St. Petersburg: Izdatel´stvo A. S. Panafidonoi, 1911), 2:135; N. I. Kostomarov, *Istoricheskie monografii i issledovaniia*, 2 vols. (Moscow: Kniga, 1989), 2:114–15; N. Ia. Aristov, *Moskovskie smuty v pravlenie Tsarevny Sofii Alekseevny* (Warsaw: Tipografiia Varshavskogo uchebnogo okruga, 1871), 156–58; A. G. Brikner, *Istoriia Petra Velikogo* (Moscow: Terra, 1996), 1:273; Buganov, *Moskovskie vosstaniia kontsa semnadtsatogo veka*, 4; Kazakevich, *Vosstanie moskovskikh strel´tsov*, 10.

[56] S. P. Orlenko, "Strel´tsy i 'nemtsy' v XVII veke," in *Inozemtsy v Rossii v XV–XVII vekakh: Sbornik materialov konferentsii, 2002–2004 gg.*, ed. A. K. Levykina (Moscow: Drevlekhranilishche, 2006), 89.

[57] In the inquisitorial trials the interrogators even developed a list of questions, or points, (*voprosnye stat´i)* which were used to question the accused. The first "points" of this sort emerged only several days after the beginning of the investigation. See Kazakevich, *Vosstanie moskovskikh strel´tsov*, 82–83, 148–49, 172, 245–46; RGADA f. 6, op. 1, d. 12/216, l. 4.

[58] For example, on 14 October 1698 some of the accused received 50, 60, and 70 blows. On 15 October, I. Tanaga received 100 blows across 4 torture sessions (RGADA f. 6, op. 1, d.

Peter's contempt for the strel´tsy and Sophia as well as the Tsar-Reformer's idiosyncratic sense of humor, we might conclude that it was no accident that the inquisitorial trials under his purview commenced on 17 September—that is, on Sophia's name day.[59] The confession on that very day of V. Zorin, who described the rebels' supposed intention to "stand at the walls of the Devichii Convent and prostrate themselves before Tsarevna Sophia Alekseevna, begging her to accept their humble requests and ascend to the throne" in that sense could be seen as kind of sinister joke, Peter's ironic gift to his "beloved" sister from her "loving" brother.[60]

However, some statements from the strel´tsy as well as the peculiarities of the popular mindset captured in their testimonies lead us to conclude that, most likely, the idea of placing Sophia on the throne or naming her as regent to Tsarevich Alexei came not from Peter, to be later pinned on the defendants during the interrogation, but from the rebels themselves. The first statements to this effect came from the interrogations in the Voskresenskii Monastery, before Peter took the investigation into his own hands. Mokei Nikitin from the Hundertmark Regiment spoke of a number of his regiment mates intending to stand together in Devichii Field because their homes were nearby.[61] Lieutenant Fedor Efremov provided similar testimony.[62] However, it seems that the strel´tsy had even more compelling reasons to stop at Devichii Field, as it lay adjacent to the Novodevichii Convent, where Sophia Alekseevna was confined at the time. From the testimony of Vasilii Zorin of the Kolzakov Regiment (also the author of a petition to Peter I on the eve of the battle against government troops), also taken by the Voskresenskii Monastery, we learn that Sophia was one of the princesses (*gosudaryni-devitsy*) whom the strel´tsy intended to petition.[63]

Rather than considering these statements as incidental admissions, we might regard them as evidence that in Peter's absence, the strel´tsy decided to petition the princesses with their needs and nothing more.[64] However, in light of some admissions made by the suspects in the first investigation and in

12/274, ll. 92, 126–27; *Vosstanie moskovskikh strel´tsov*, 277–78). On Petrine-era norms for knouting, see Golikova, *Politicheskie protsessy pri Petre I*, 182.

[59] See M. I. Semevskii, "Petr Velikii—kak iumorist," in *Ocherki i rasskazy iz russkoi istorii XVIII veka: Slovo i delo, 1700–1725* (St. Petersburg: V. S. Balashev, 1885), 2:277–317.

[60] Kazakevich, *Vosstanie moskovskikh strel´tsov*, 71.

[61] Ibid., 59.

[62] Ibid., 65.

[63] Ibid., 49, 51.

[64] The interrogative records (*rassprosnye rechi*) of A. Klochkov from the Kolzak Regiment from 19 September 1698 point to this explanation: "and they said that they went to Moscow, having taken the holy icons of their regiments, to stand by the Novodevichii Convent and petition the *gosudaryna-tsaritsa* and the *gosudar´-tsarevich* and *gosudaryni-tsarevny* for better service

the subsequent investigation under Peter, we must conclude just the opposite. The strel´tsy admitted to planning to hand the throne to Sophia or Alexei under the assumption that something bad had happened to the tsar while he was abroad. Peter had been out of the country since March 1697, completing his so-called Grand Embassy headed by his companion Franz Lefort. From that time there had been whispers among the strel´tsy and throughout the country claiming that the tsar had met his end "overseas."[65] Such rumors arose not only due to Peter's long absence, but more generally because the tsar's trip to foreign lands was unprecedented.[66]

The first hints of alarm about the tsar's fate were heard at the interrogation of V. Zorin on 24 June 1698. The arrival of Germans in Moscow and the "absolute destruction of virtue," of which Zorin wrote in his petition, he attributed to "Franz [Lefort] being part of the embassy; that such embassies do not exist in our times."[67]

It seems that investigators missed the insinuations in Zorin's cagey reply. Zorin was not bothered by Lefort's departure; if the "heretic Franz"—as Zorin referred to Lefort in his petition—went on his way, this would likely please the strelets.[68] Seemingly, Zorin, like the other rebels, presumed that Peter became the victim of Franz Lefort's machinations. So, for example, on 22 September 1698 Vasilii Sergeev, a lieutenant (*desiatnik*) of the Hundertmark Regiment, stated at his interrogation: "there was a bit of news about the Great Sovereign, that the foreigner Lefort took him overseas where he [the tsar] has been imprisoned." We should note that in light of these rumors the rebels decided, in Sergeev's words, "to elect [the tsarevich] to the throne" and make Sophia regent.[69]

Judging by the testimonies of the strel´tsy, the most popular rumors among them were not of the tsar's imprisonment but of his death abroad.[70] Certainly, this rumor likewise incited talk about a change of power. The first to speak of this at his interrogation on 17 September 1698 was Vasilii

conditions, because the Great Sovereign was not in Moscow. But he, Aleshka, did not hear about petitioning the Lady Tsarevna Sophia Alekseevna from anybody" (ibid., 104).

[65] One unconvincing opinion on the provenance of such rumors states that they originated with Sophia and her sister Marfa, who then spread it among the strel´tsy. On this, see Trefilov, "Predstavleniia o tsarskoi vlasti," 81–85.

[66] The same idea was expressed in the official *Daily Record* or *History of the Swedish War* created by Peter I. See T. S. Maikova, ed., *Gistoriia Sveiskoi voiny: Podennaia zapiska Petra Velikogo* (Moscow: Krug, 2004), 81, 197–98.

[67] Kazakevich, *Vosstanie moskovskikh strel´tsov*, 40, 50.

[68] For Zorin's defamatory remarks about Lefort in his petition, see ibid., 39–40.

[69] Ibid., 120. Others' testimonies show that foreigners in addition to Lefort, as well as some boyars, were accused of plotting against the tsar (ibid., 167–68).

[70] For a detailed discussion of this point, see Trefilov, "Predstavleniia o tsarskoi vlasti," 44–45, 75, 83–86, 88–89, 92, 94, 102–5, 113.

Ignat´ev. To Zorin's words, already known to us, about their intention to ask Sophia to "accept the throne," Ignat´ev added: "And if the tsarevna does not ascend to the throne, then we shall have the tsarevich because among themselves they said that the Great Sovereign was no more."[71]

We can hardly doubt that the testimonies quoted above were not ascribed to the rebels by the authorities but actually reflect the mindset of the strel´tsy themselves. First, the tsar's unprecedented travels abroad sparked various rumors about Peter, and not only among the strel´tsy. Second, the investigators did not always catch on to the fact that the statements of the defendants referred to these rumors. Finally, as evidence of the fact that these records reflect the ideas of the strel´tsy themselves are the peculiarities and idiosyncrasies they contain, which in no way resemble the mindset of the investigating authorities. A shining example of this popular mindset comes from the testimony of Aleksei Moloshnitsyn. At his interrogation on 14 October 1698, he told the following story: "A strelets in their regiment, Andriushka Danilov, arriving from Moscow to the town of Luki Velikie with Vas´ka Tumoi, told him, Aleshka, that Don Cossacks came to Moscow asking about the Great Sovereign and where he was because they searched for him, the Great Sovereign, at sea but did not find him. And to whom the Cossacks said this, he—Andriushka—did not say." To these words, Moloshnitsyn added, "after speaking among themselves, they decided to go to Moscow and stand outside the Devichii Convent, and bring Tsarevna Sophia Alekseevna to Moscow to rule because the Great Sovereign perished overseas.[72]

However, in addition to the talk of imprisonment or death abroad, which for the most part appear neutral and even loyal, the strel´tsy entertained frank anti-Petrine discussions as well.[73] From the records of their interrogations, we see that not all the rebels, by any means, believed that Peter had perished overseas, and they proposed instead to keep him from returning to Moscow or even to murder him.[74] Others claimed that the rebels wanted to do away with the tsar because he "preferred to believe in the Germans" or that he "got into bed" with them.[75]

We have no reason to believe that the investigators thought up these reasons for dissatisfaction with the tsar and then attributed them to the

[71] Kazakevich, *Vosstanie moskovskikh strel´tsov*, 72.
[72] Ibid., 170.
[73] However, if we are to believe the statements of the rebels, some talk about the tsar's death smacked of anti-Petrine sentiment. For example, S. Mikhailov from the Chernov Regiment on 20 September 1698 stated, "in the regiments they said that the Great Sovereign had been taken care of, and there was nothing to fear, so they marched [on Moscow]" (ibid., 123).
[74] Trefilov, "Predstavleniia o tsarskoi vlasti," 86–95.
[75] Kazakevich, *Vosstanie moskovskikh strel´tsov*, 93.

strel´tsy. It is evident that such thoughts among the strel´tsy were brought on by the tsar's lengthy and unprecedented stay "overseas"—that is, with the "Germans," as well as the role the "Germans," especially Franz Lefort, played in the court of the young tsar.

However, the strel´tsy seemed most distressed by the difficulties of their service and their inability to return to Moscow—for which they held Peter accountable.[76] This sentiment was most clearly expressed in the 21 September 1698 written testimony of Vasilii Ignat´ev from the Kolzakov Regiment: "While the sovereign thrives elsewhere, we will not see Moscow" (*po koikh mest gosudar´ zdravstvuet i nam de Moskvy ne vidat´*).[77]

On the one hand, there is evidence to support the idea that the investigators at times pushed the strel´tsy to make statements of this kind, including expressing their attitudes toward Peter I.[78] On the other hand, we can hardly be certain that these reasons for dissatisfaction with the tsar were hung on the accused (were it not so, then the investigators themselves would have become perpetrators of the kind of criminal talk [*nepristoinye rechi*] about the tsar). It is entirely likely that some of the rebels considered Peter the direct cause of their troubles. From the trial records, however, it is impossible to deduce whether a suspect shared these sentiments or only reported what he had heard from his comrades. Moreover, regardless of the numerous statements reflecting negative attitudes toward the tsar, we cannot say with certainty, that such attitudes were, in fact, widespread. The suspects may not have held these ideas themselves but only repeated others' confessions under pressure from interrogators.[79]

The rebels' intentions to do away with the tsar and place Tsarevna Sophia on the throne or make her regent to the young Tsarevich Alexei did not originate with Peter, to be later imputed to them at their trial. It is also doubtful that Sophia herself exerted much influence on the strel´tsy, inciting them to revolt. My analysis of the sources shows that the strel´tsy acted independently and, in the political climate that unfolded before them, saw in Sophia and Alexei candidates for the throne most suitable to their own interests.[80]

At first glance, it appears that the relationship of the strel´tsy to the institution of the monarchy underwent a substantial transformation. Although as a result of the strel´tsy rebellion of 1682 Tsarevna Sophia became the de facto ruler of the country, which, in Aleksandr Kamenskii's astute observation, "went against … the stereotypical image of the traditional place

[76] Ibid., 112, 114, 245; RGADA f. 6, d. 12/74, ll. 1, 4.
[77] RGADA f. 6, d. 12/74, l. 4.
[78] On this, see Trefilov, "Predstavleniia o tsarskoi vlasti," 87–90.
[79] Ibid., 93–95.
[80] Ibid., 73–86.

of women in medieval Russian culture," formally she never became the ruler of the land, and at the end of the day, she governed only through her brothers Ivan and Peter.[81] In this instance, some of the strel´tsy wanted to place Sophia herself on the throne. Judging by their testimonies, for some of the rebels Sophia was the preferred choice over Tsarevich Alexei, the rightful heir. For example, Vasilii Ignat´ev, and other strel´tsy in his stead, admitted that the rebels wanted to "place the young tsarevich on the throne"; however, they would opt to do so only if Sophia "did not assent to govern."[82]

To this we should add that despite the complicated relationship between the ruling monarchs and the Moscow strel´tsy, in no previous rebellion—neither the Salt Riots of 1648 nor the uprising of 1682—had they expressed a desire to dethrone, much less kill, the lawful sovereign. At the very least, we do not have even partially reliable data to suggest such a goal. Individual strel´tsy among Sophia's supporters may have entertained such ideas during the 1689 standoff between the tsarevna and Peter, but they evidently failed to gain wide support for the idea, as the majority of the strel´tsy threw their support behind the young tsar. As for the participants of the 1698 rebellion, some admitted in their interrogations that they not only planned to eliminate the reigning monarch and place Tsarevna Sophia on the throne over the lawful heir but that they intended to kill the heir as well.[83] At the same time, it remains unclear to what extent the idea of eliminating the reigning monarch (on this point, see above) enjoyed popular support, or whether the confessions of intent to murder Tsarevich Alexei reflected the rebels' true intentions.[84]

Another entirely new development, in comparison to previous rebellions, was the contemplation of dynastic change. According to the testimony of I. Konstantinov of the Chernov Regiment on 22 September 1698, the strel´tsy intended to install Prince Mikhail Iakovlevich Cherkasskii as tsar.[85] We should note, however, that this was the only interrogation in which dynastic change was explicitly mentioned. At first glance, it seems that K. Zaitsev, who served in the same regiment as Konstantinov, floated the idea on the very same day, and several other rebels after him. In Zaitsev's words, "they [the rebels] wanted to discuss with the populace whom to elect to the

[81] A. B. Kamenskii, *Ot Petra I do Pavla I: Reformy v Rossii XVIII veka. Opyt tselostnogo analiza* (Moscow: RGGU, 1999), 89.

[82] Kazakevich, *Vosstanie moskovskikh strel´tsov*, 72–73, 86, 117; RGADA f. 6, d. 12/230, ll. 65, 220, 232–34; d. 12/305, l. 43; d. 12/74, l. 4.

[83] Kazakevich, *Vosstanie moskovskikh strel´tsov*, 94, 112–13, 245; RGADA f. 6, d. 12/230, ll. 119–24.

[84] For my thoughts on this matter, see Trefilov, "Predstavleniia o tsarskoi vlasti," 107–8.

[85] Kazakevich, *Vosstanie moskovskikh strel´tsov*, 101.

throne." However, they would only pursue this course of action in the event that Tsarevna Sophia and Tsarevich Alexei "would not assent to govern."[86]

As the idea of a dynastic change did not garner broad support among the rebels, it is evident that regardless of their dissatisfaction with individual members of the house of Romanov, on the whole, the dynasty continued to command authority. Consequently, historians who conclude that dissatisfaction with a particular monarch did not lead to dissatisfaction with the monarchy in general are entirely correct, for the people's hopes were then transferred to other monarchs.[87] As the strel´tsy retained their monarchist dispositions, it should not be surprising that none of them expressed a desire for the rebels to "live independently"—that is, without a tsar—even though one of the "points" in their interrogations might have provoked just such a response.[88]

Nevertheless, we should remember that the strel´tsy's attitude toward the monarch's authority and power did change. Those changes did not affect all strel´tsy equally. Some strel´tsy did not want to rebel, and others remained loyal to Peter. Some saw Sophia only as a regent to the underage heir.[89] Still others confessed to their intent to place the tsarevich on the throne without ever mentioning Sophia as a possible ruler.[90] There is no reason to assume that these testimonies were coerced from or imposed on the rebels. On the contrary, there is a sense that the authorities on the whole ignored admissions in which the tsarevich was presented as a contender for the throne. Two elements point to this conclusion: first, such admissions did not emerge in response to the "points for questioning" (*voprosnye stat´i*), as was often the case; second, none of the judicial decisions or sentences that were issued for the rebels mentioned their intent to place Sophia on the throne and murder Peter and Tsarevich Alexei.[91]

Could Traitors Still Be Monarchists?

In Peter's time, some common folk not only protested against the lawful monarch but left the Romanov domain to become subjects of other sovereigns, as did certain participants in the Bulavin revolt of 1707–8.[92]

[86] Ibid., 103; RGADA f. 6, d. 12/230, ll. 233–34.

[87] See, e.g., Lukin, *Narodnye predstavleniia*, 249–50, 252.

[88] Kazakevich, *Vosstanie moskovskikh strel´tsov*, 83.

[89] Ibid., 72–73, 86, 102–3, 117, 120, 123, 125–26, 173; RGADA f. 6, d. 12/216, ll. 7, 9, 10–11, 14–15, 20–21, 24–25, 28; d. 12/230, ll. 65, 220, 232–34; d. 12/274, l. 18; d. 12/305, ll. 23, 43; d. 12/74, l. 4.

[90] Kazakevich, *Vosstanie moskovskikh strel´tsov*, 93, 169; RGADA f. 6, d. 12/230, ll. 66, 230, 234; d. 12/205, ll. 42, 44.

[91] Kazakevich, *Vosstanie moskovskikh strel´tsov*, 257–60.

[92] Despite their insulting statements about the tsar, the leaders of the rebellion never referred to him as a usurper. One of the passages in the letter to the Kuban Cossacks (more on

On 2 July 1708, the Cossack V. Frolov, who fled from Cherkassk to Azov, reported to Governor I. A. Tolstoi: "Bulavin ordered under threat of execution that nobody in Cherkassk should remember the name of the Great Sovereign. And should anyone speak his name, especially to plead with the Great Sovereign for mercy, he would be punished with death."[93] Moreover, on 27 May of the same year, Bulavin and his circle sent letters to the Kuban Cossacks (who at the time had fled the jurisdiction of Russian monarchs and were under the protection of the Crimean khan and Ottoman sultan),[94] asking them to mediate between the Bulavin rebels and the "Turkish tsar," and another petition to the "Turkish tsar," asking him to accept the rebels as his subjects.[95]

In these letters they accused Peter of various wicked deeds: for instance, that he "transformed [their] Christian faith in the Muscovite kingdom." In this vein, it would be logical to assume that the rebels also blamed the tsar for dispatching Iurii Dolgorukii (to scour the Don for fugitives from the central provinces), whose arrival in the fall of 1707 became the impetus for the rebellion. However, in the letter to the Kuban Cossacks we instead read the following: "in 1707, they—Luk′ian and his comrades [the former ataman L. Maksimov] conspired with the boyars for all the Russian deserters who remained here after the first Azov campaign (1695) to be sent back to where they came from. Following this correspondence between the former

this source below) reads: "and if our tsar does not reward us, as he rewarded our fathers, grandfathers, and great-grandfathers," then "our entire Host will abandon him" (*Bulavinskoe vosstanie 1707–1708*, 464). To me this is proof that the Cossacks wanted to leave a lawful tsar. For a more detailed argument, see Trefilov, "Predstavleniia o tsarskoi vlasti," 212–13.

[93] E. P. Pod″iapol′skaia, "Novoe o vosstanii K. Bulavina," *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, no. 6 (1960): 130.

[94] After the destruction of the Old Believer movement on the Don in the late 1680s–early 1690s, these Cossacks fled to the Kuban. See O. G. Usenko, "Nachal′naia istoriia kubanskogo kazachestva (1692–1708 gg.)," in *Iz arkhiva tverskikh istorikov* (Tver′: Tverskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 2000), 2:63–77; B. M. Bouk, "K istorii pervogo kubanskogo kazach′ego voiska: Poiski ubezhishcha na severnom kavkaze," *Vostok*, no. 4 (2001): 30–38; D. V. Sen′, *Kazachestvo Dona i severo-zapadnogo Kavkaza v otnosheniiakh s musul′manskimi gosudarstvami prichernomor′ia (vtoraia polovina XVII–nachalo XVIII v.)* (Rostov-on-Don: Izdatel′stvo Iuzhnogo federal′nogo universiteta, 2009), 169–203.

[95] *Bulavinskoe vosstanie 1707–1708*, 461–65; Some Soviet historians have argued that the disagreements between Bulavin and the tsar signaled a rejection of "tsarist illusions." See, e.g., V. I. Buganov and V. I. Lebedev, "Novoe issledovanie o bulavinskom vosstanii," *Voprosy istorii*, no. 12 (1963): 125; Buganov, "Ob ideologii uchastnikov v krest′ianskikh voin v Rossii," *Voprosy istorii*, no. 1 (1974): 56–57; Buganov, *Krest′ianskie voiny v Rossii XVII–XVIII vv.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1976), 141; and A. P. Pronshtein, "Reshennye i nereshennye voprosy istorii krest′ianskikh voin v Rossii," *Voprosy istorii*, no. 7 (1967): 160. The famous Soviet historian E. P. Pod″iapol′skaia argues that Bulavin's willingness to become a subject of the Ottoman sultan indicates a shift from the "wicked" tsar to a "good" tsar. See her *Vosstanie Bulavina, 1707–1709* (Moscow: Izdatel′stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1962), 109.

elders and the boyars, they sent to us the commander Prince Iurii Dolgorukii and his people so that they—the elders and the boyars—could ravage the entire river."[96] The letter continued, "and now, in this year 1708, our former elders Luk´ian and Efrem [E. Petrov, executed by the Bulavin rebels] and their comrades, after consulting with the boyars, rode around all the towns of the northern Donets, raided and destroyed the area."[97]

Why would the rebels, who expressed their discontent with Peter, blame not the tsar himself but the boyars and the Cossack elders in their missives to the Kuban Cossacks? There may have been an evolution in the rebels' outlook. The first missive to the Kuban Cossacks spoke of the conspiracy between boyars and the Cossack leadership, whereas discontent with Peter appeared only in the second note.[98] Nevertheless, we should keep in mind that regardless of the formal division in the rebels' missives, the original messages to the Kuban Cossacks and the Ottoman sultan, seemingly, were contained in a single letter.[99] We may suppose that this letter was composed over a long stretch of time, edited, then reread.[100] Therefore, the rebels had time to redact unsuitable passages from the letter. Since they did not exclude the passage about the boyars conspiring with their elders, it is likely that despite their intentions to leave Russian subjecthood, they continued to believe that Peter was not involved in this lawlessness. Irrespective of what actually happened, when they composed the missive to the Kuban Cossacks, the rebels believed that the loathsome boyars and Cossack elders acted in an arbitrary and self-serving manner; it is unlikely there was any strategic or instrumental factor that would have swayed the rebels to exculpate the tsar to an audience of Cossacks who themselves fled from Romanov sovereignty. In this way, some form of residual monarchism

[96] *Bulavinskoe vosstanie 1707–1708*, 461.

[97] Ibid., 462.

[98] The typical introductory formula for missives of this kind is repeated twice in the document, suggesting that there were two missives dispatched to the Kuban Cossacks. The first, which states the reasons for the rebellion, begins: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, save us. From the Don atamans and from Kondrat Afanas´evich Bulavin and from the entire Don Host, slaves of God and seekers of the name of the Lord, the Kuban Cossack" (ibid., 461); The second missive, which states their intention to abandon Russian subjecthood, begins: "Our Lord Jesus Christ son of God, spare us. Amen. We beg for your mercy for our lords, elders, atamans, from Savel´ii Pafomovich and for our ataman Kondratei Afanas´ev and for the entire Don Host we beg you in tears" (ibid., 463).

[99] Pod″iapol´skaia, "Novoe o vosstanii K. Bulavina," 127. Historians have been able to examine only a facsimile of this document.

[100] This argument is based on the fact that already on 18 May 1708 the commander of the government forces, Vasilii Dolgorukii, knew of Bulavin's plan to dispatch couriers to the Kuban with these letters (Lebedev, *Bulavinskoe vosstanie 1707–1708*, 244). The letters were sent only on 27 May of that year.

involuntarily expressed itself even among persons who no longer wanted to remain subjects of the Russian tsar.

On Disrespectful Attitudes toward the Monarchy

We can interpret some statements as directed not solely at Peter but at the institution of the monarchy as a whole. In the denunciation of the landless (*zakhrebetnik*) boarder A. Kharin, when one Don Cossack in the Kardail township proposed firing a salutation to the sovereign's health (this took place on 29 June 1703, the tsar's name day), the Cossack Ia. Stepanov responded: "The tsar's name day is a curiosity, but I would not want to waste my gunpowder [on it]; I do not care for it." Although Kharin subsequently recanted his denunciation, we should acknowledge that somebody, perhaps even the *zakhrebetnik* himself, entertained such disrespectful thoughts. In the end, the Cossacks did fire ceremonial salvos "to the tsar's health," ignoring Ia. Stepanov's grumbling.[101]

Conclusion

In Peter the Great's time there were no sociological surveys of the population, and all our data on commoner attitudes toward the monarchy, no matter how seemingly abundant, are in fact purely incidental. With some exception, we learn of attitudes toward power only from those either involved in investigations or put on trial. For this reason, it is impossible to come to a conclusion about the relationship to authority—whether skeptical, indifferent, or reverential—that prevailed within either different social groups or the population as a whole. Nevertheless, there is evidence to suggest that a significant portion of the common folk treated the tsar's authority with great respect. I hope that I have successfully shown that such respect was not superficial or just for show but sincere. In any case, these sources do not support the conclusion that Peter's politics dealt a deathblow to popular veneration of the monarch.

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[101] For details, see RGADA f. 371, op. 1, *chast´* 1, d. 122.