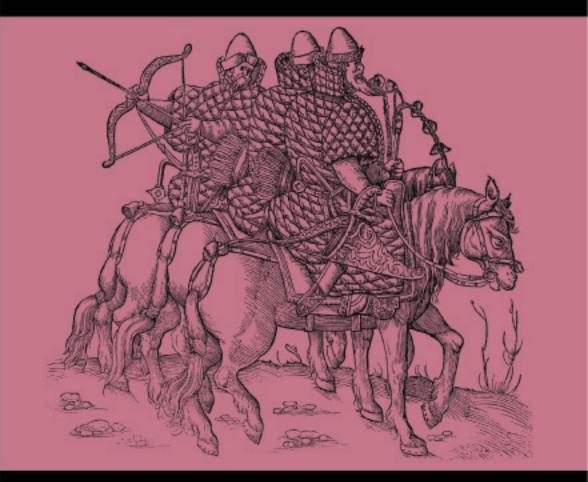
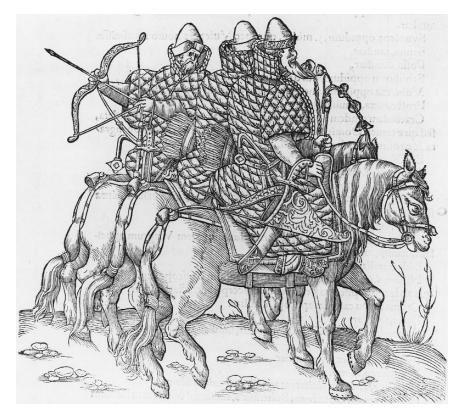
A Short History of RUSSIA'S FIRST CIVIL WAR

The Time of Troubles and the Founding of the Romanov Dynasty



CHESTER S. L. DUNNING

A SHORT HISTORY Of Russia's first civil war



Frontispiece "Three Russian Cavalrymen." Published in Sigismund von Herberstein, Rerum Moscovitcarum commentarij Sigismundi liberi baronis in Herberstein, Neyperg, & Guettenhag (Basileae: per Ionnem Oporinum, 1556). Courtesy of the James Ford Bell Library, University of Minnesota.

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Chester S. L. Dunning

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Since the formation of the unified Russian state nearly five hundred years ago, its unhappy subjects have rebelled in large numbers surprisingly few times. Besides the well-known 1905 and 1917 Revolutions, the short list of major uprisings in Russia includes famous early modern revolts led by Stepan Razin in 1670–71 and Emilian Pugachev in 1773–74. A much less well known but extremely powerful uprising was the so-called Bolotnikov rebellion of 1606–7, which occurred during Russia's catastrophic and confusing "Time of Troubles" or "Troubles." That rebellion was the highpoint of Russia's first civil war, the largest and most powerful uprising in Russian history before the twentieth century and the first time the Russian people rose against their tsar.

By the end of the sixteenth century the newly formed Russian state faced its first severe crisis, known ever since as the Time of Troubles (1598–1613). The Troubles began when the ancient ruling dynasty died out and Boris Godunov defeated rival aristocrats to become tsar. Many questioned the legitimacy of the new ruler, whose sins supposedly included having Ivan the Terrible's youngest son Dmitrii killed in 1591 in order to clear a path to the throne for himself. During Tsar Boris's reign Russia suffered a horrible famine (1601-3) that wiped out up to a third of the population. The effects of the famine, coupled with serious long-term economic, social, demographic, fiscal, and political problems, contributed to the delegitimization of the new ruler in the eyes of many Russians. Then in 1604 the country was invaded by a small army headed by a man who claimed to be Tsarevich Dmitrii, miraculously saved from Godunov's plot. Many towns, fortresses, soldiers, and cossacks of the southern frontier quickly joined Dmitrii's forces in the first popular uprising against a tsar. When Tsar Boris died suddenly in April 1605, resistance to the "pretender Dmitrii" (also known as "False Dmitrii") broke down and he became tsar-the only tsar ever raised to the throne by means of a military campaign and popular uprisings. Tsar Dmitrii ruled for about a year before he was assassinated by a small group of aristocrats, triggering a powerful civil war. The usurper Tsar Vasilii Shuiskii denounced the dead Dmitrii as an impostor, but the former tsar's supporters successfully put forward the story that Dmitrii had once again miraculously escaped death and would soon return to punish the traitors. So energetic was the response to the call to arms against Shuiskii that civil war raged for many years and produced about a dozen more pretenders claiming to be Dmitrii or other members of the old ruling dynasty. Russia's internal disorder prompted Polish and Swedish military intervention, resulting in even greater misery and

chaos. Eventually, an uneasy alliance was forged among Russian factions and the Time of Troubles ended with the establishment of the Romanov dynasty in 1613. Tsarist Russia's first great state crisis, its worst before the twentieth century, had been so severe that it nearly destroyed the country and left very deep scars.

The Time of Troubles, coming as it did about midway between the unification of Russia and the reign of Peter the Great, has long fascinated and puzzled the Russian people as well as many scholars, poets, and even musicians. To many Russians who lived through the Troubles, it was nothing more or less than divine retribution for the sins of Russia's rulers or its people. Others studying the period sought more secular explanations, noting that at the center of the Time of Troubles was the so-called Bolotnikov rebellion, named after the principal rebel commander, Ivan Bolotnikov. Claiming that Tsar Dmitrii had escaped assassination, Bolotnikov's forces occupied nearly half of the country and were able to lay siege to Moscow in the fall of 1606 before being driven back and temporarily defeated in 1607. In terms of threats to the existing regime, Bolotnikov achieved far more than the later and much better known Razin and Pugachev. The Bolotnikov rebellion struck terror into the hearts of the usurper Shuiskii and his supporters, whose desperate propaganda campaign against the rebels painted them in the darkest colors as lower-class rabble intent upon social revolution.

Unfortunately, the traditional interpretation of the Time of Troubles was derived primarily from the usurper Tsar Vasilii Shuiskii's misleading propaganda campaign against his opponents. Because of confusion in sources and disarray in scholarship, such false assessments by a terrified elite were accepted at face value by many Russian historians, who long ago concluded that at the heart of the Troubles was Russia's first social revolution of the oppressed masses against serfdom. The rather frightening notion that rebels in the early seventeenth century were fighting against serfdom was, over the years, also greatly reinforced by elite fear of later rebellions led by Razin and, especially, Pugachev. Likening the Bolotnikov rebellion to those smaller and less successful uprisings, Russian and Soviet scholars lumped them all together as social revolutions or "peasant wars." In the Soviet era, the entire period of the Time of Troubles became known as the "First Peasant War." In studying its causes, Marxist scholars emphasized the subjection and radicalization of Russian peasants and slaves by the beginning of the seventeenth century and focused on long-term social causes—usually linking the Time of Troubles back to the tumultuous reign of Tsar Ivan IV (r. 1547-84) and the enserfment of the Russian peasants. The awkward paradox that within two generations of the Time of Troubles Russia grew to be the

largest country in the world and within three generations produced Peter the Great—all with what is generally acknowledged as a "high degree of acceptance" by the same Russian people simultaneously viewed as failed rebels against serfdom—was usually passed over in silence.

Fortunately, in recent years the traditional interpretation of the Troubles has been decisively overturned. During the last decade and a half, Ruslan Skrynnikov, the late Aleksandr Stanislavskii, and the author of this book have challenged virtually every aspect of the Marxist model of the First Peasant War. Instead of a "peasant war" or social revolution, we have found a complex civil war, Russia's first—that occurred in two phases: 1604–5 and 1606–12. That upheaval produced not horizontal class division but a vertical split through several layers of Russian society. Russia's first civil war, while destabilizing in impact, was definitely not a social revolution. It was instead a popular uprising in support of the pretender Dmitrii's claim to the throne. There is no evidence that any rebels fought against serfdom, and the abolition of serfdom was never a rebel goal. In fact, serfs did not actively participate in the civil war, and peasants-with the exception of wealthy ones from the Komaritsk district (Komaritskaia volosť)were only marginally involved. The bulk of the rebels supporting Dmitrii or later rising in his name were cossacks, petty gentry, lower status military servicemen, military slaves, and townsmen. Even though the largest and most active rebel group, the cossacks, were mostly of peasant origin, they did not think or act like peasants and were not at all interested in championing the cause of the lower classes or in establishing "cossack democracy" in rebel-held areas. Slaves participating in the civil war were not, as Soviet scholars contended, radicalized menials, but were instead elite military slaves with no interest in social revolution. Rebels in the Time of Troubles were also not, as long believed, motivated by "social utopian" legends about Dmitrii as the "returning deliverer" of the masses from serfdom. Instead, they were primarily devout Orthodox Christian subjects whose religious beliefs helped push them to risk challenging a tsar they regarded as illegitimate.

The purpose of this book is to present the real story of Russia's First Civil War—the causes, events, and consequences of which turn out to be far more interesting and instructive than anything dreamed up by Marxist scholars or apologists of the Romanov dynasty. The text presented here is an abridged version of *Russia's First Civil War: The Time of Troubles and the Founding of the Romanov Dynasty* (Penn State University Press, 2001).

A Comparative Approach to the Problem of Origins of the Civil War

Russia's first civil war (1604-5, 1606-12) was in many ways similar to other civil wars of the early modern period. Of all the forms of early modern collective violence, civil wars were notable for plunging states into the lengthiest and most severe conflicts, for splitting the traditional political order most deeply, and for producing rebel forces capable of defying or defeating temporarily even the most powerful monarchies. Social participation in them was very broad, involving to some extent all social strata and at least enough elite participation to signify serious defection from the regime. Goals and targets of the insurrectionists often revealed a massive societal reaction to the growth of state power and the burdens it imposed on its subjects. Early modern civil wars generally produced broad movements creating well-developed ideologies and political and military organizations to facilitate resistance. They were long-lasting primarily because of the participation of a significant percentage of the elite, who provided essential political and social leadership capable of legitimizing revolt and drawing the masses into rebellion against royal authority. In fact, the strength of early modern civil wars was significantly enhanced by the *absence* of radical demands for alteration of the social structure or for significant redistribution of power and wealth. Early modern civil wars often included strong elements of both agrarian and urban rebellion, which were usually characterized by cooperation among social groups against an unpopular regime rather than by class antagonism and were provoked by conjunctures of circumstances rather than simply by social inequality. Early modern civil wars also often included, grew out of, and were profoundly affected by provincial rebellions-uprisings in newly acquired territories not yet fully integrated into the state structure. Provincial rebellions themselves were usually characterized by broad social participation, including local elites in leadership roles, and by fierce resistance to the growth and intrusion of state power in the region that violated traditional liberties and customary lifestyles.

Equally complex were the causes of early modern civil wars. Comparative study of those popular upheavals quickly yields the insight that no monocausal

explanation is satisfactory and that it may be impossible to develop a general causal theory for such complex phenomena in which so many major and minor variables are at work. Instead, a multicausal explanation is called for. Several different factors operated simultaneously and sometimes synergistically to increase the likelihood of revolt or revolution.

It turns out that many of the tasks and dilemmas facing post-Marxist historians of the Time of Troubles are, not surprisingly, the same as those facing revisionist scholars studying early modern Western revolutions. There is currently a certain degree of disarray in the historiography of the French and English Revolutions produced by the decline of traditional interpretations that focused on long-term social, economic, and structural processes and that emphasized the primacy of "absolutism," capitalism, and class conflict as explanatory factors. Revisionist scholars studying those early modern revolutions now emphasize such things as short-term causes, historical contingencies, ideas, belief systems, and other unique social, cultural, and institutional characteristics of each country. Similar approaches can help us understand some of the causes of Russia's first civil war. For example, historians have long focused on the dynastic crisis produced by the death of Tsar Fedor in 1598 as a principal cause of the Time of Troubles. That crisis sharpened the split within the ruling elite and contributed to the pretender Dmitrii's success in 1605. The terrible famine of 1601-3 was also a contributing factor to the civil war, sharpening Russia's already developing social crisis and contributing to the delegitimization of Tasr Boris Godunov. The existence and activities of the pretender Dmitrii were obviously of great significance, as was his assassination in 1606.

What about long-term causes or preconditions? Perhaps trying to avoid the pitfalls of developing comprehensive interpretive theories to replace the Marxist paradigm, some revisionist scholars of early modern Western revolutions have gone so far as to argue against searching for any long-term causes. That strikes me as too extreme, as an unfortunate and unsatisfactory leap from sociological determinism to what might be called the "contingent and unforeseen" school of history. As will be demonstrated in later chapters, there is certainly much to be gained by a focus on short-term causes or immediate triggers, but exploring long-term causes or preconditions can also be valid and useful.

Although there is no longer a consensus that the Time of Troubles was caused primarily by serfdom, there is still general agreement that a principal contributing factor was the catastrophic decline of the Russian economy by the 1570s, which led to massive flight of peasants and urban taxpayers, many of whom sold themselves as slaves, became bandits, or ran away to the southern frontier. The result was a huge loss of state revenue and a steep decline in the gentry's peasant labor force. Eventually, the Russian government (dominated by Boris Godunov) was forced to take drastic steps to shore up the declining militia and to rebuild the tax base. In the 1590s the peasants were enserfed, townspeople were bound to their taxpaying communities, and short-term contract slavery changed to real slavery. All these harsh measures failed to solve the problems of the government and the gentry, but they did help turn Russia into a rigidly stratified, caste-like society and contributed to the outbreak of civil war. A number of scholars believed that Boris Godunov was able to straighten out state finances and that Russia underwent a period of "recovery" in the 1590s. In fact, Russia did not emerge from the crisis that actually deepened in the 1590s, leading to even more empty villages and vacant land in much of central Russia. Although some peripheral areas showed signs of increased activity, continued depopulation and decline of the agricultural economy kept Russia in crisis at the end of the sixteenth century. Some so-called signs of recovery, such as a decline in grain prices, were actually because of a decline in demand and a reversion to a natural economy. That in turn proved disastrous for many already depopulated and hard-pressed towns that lost rural markets at the same time that urban taxes were rising and the taxpaying population was shrinking. Many Russian towns actually became ghost towns in the 1590s. At the same time, a sharp increase in labor demands on some serfs, the growth of land-based taxes, and the lack of innovation in agriculture acted as a brake on any possible recovery of the agricultural economy. Many more peasants fled from the tax rolls, and huge amounts of land continued to fall out of production, devastating an already failing agricultural economy. Among other things, that meant the government faced an increasingly critical shortage of land with peasants to distribute to already hard-pressed, land-hungry gentry and their sons. That in turn deepened a developing crisis of the gentry militia service system—one of the main preconditions of Russia's first civil war. The continuing economic crisis also sharply reduced state income, and the fiscal crisis lasted right into the Time of Troubles.

What caused the catastrophic decline of the Russian economy in the late sixteenth century that provoked such a severe crisis? It was due to many factors, some unique to Russia. For example, the constant threat of Tatar attacks and slave raids contributed to the militarization of Russian society and an increase in social stratification by the end of the sixteenth century. Unique characteristics of Russian autocracy and Russian Orthodox culture produced a service state that greatly imposed on its subjects and that exacerbated most of the problems common to early modern agrarian absolute monarchies. Russian autocracy certainly facilitated the culturally driven imperialism of Ivan IV, Boris Godunov, and others. That in turn produced the staggering expansion of Russia, which tripled in size during the sixteenth century. Such expansion far outstripped the country's resources and greatly overburdened its people and economy along the way. It is also well known that Ivan IV's costly and disastrous Livonian War (1558-83) contributed to the catastrophic decline of the economy and the destabilization of Russian society. Tsar Ivan's dreaded oprichnina (a state within the state, under the tsar's personal control) and the devastation associated with it also contributed to the crisis. On the other hand, too much focus on Ivan IV's personality and policies can lead to a gross underestimation of the impact on Russia of forces not unique to that society such as weather-related crop failures, famines, and terrible epidemics. It is worth noting, for example, that remarkably similar problems developed at the same time in neighboring Lithuania. Even though a case can be made for blaming Tsar Ivan for actions that helped precipitate serfdom and a severe state crisis, it is important to remember that the development of serfdom throughout Eastern Europe was due at least in part to the same destabilizing factors that were operating inside Russia: population increases, price inflation, famines and epidemics, and primitive agricultural technology and low grain yields in an era of increasingly unreliable weather. As it turns out, a number of important causes or preconditions contributing to Russia's severe crisis may be detected by comparative study of early modern Eurasian societies.

Historians have long been puzzled by the waves of revolutions, rebellions, and civil wars observable across Eurasia in the early modern period. Comparative study of those crises reveals common patterns that cannot be explained away simply as coincidences. The existence of those common patterns led in the 1950s to the development of the very popular theory of a "general crisis" of the seventeenth century. Unfortunately, proponents of the general crisis theory have been better at identifying the existence of crises than at explaining them. Nonetheless, scholarship on this topic has produced some interesting ideas about the basic and deep-seated destabilizing influences that were at work on all Eurasian societies in the early modern period. Among those influences were a doubling of the overall population of Eurasia during the sixteenth century and a correspondingly severe period of price inflation-often called a "price revolution." Some crisis theory proponents focused on the significance of a sharp increase in wars and the growth of armies and war-related taxation in a era of price inflation. Others focused on the growth of state power and the unprecedented increase in fiscal demands placed on populations, demands that could and sometimes did precipitate revolts. Still other crisis theory proponents have focused on the general cooling of the global climate in the early modern period (the "little ice age"), relating it to a widespread subsistence crisis marked by famines, mass migrations, and peasant revolts.

In Roland Mousnier's comparative study of early modern Eurasian revolts, he focused on Russia's Time of Troubles using an essentially Marxist framework and the traditional social revolutionary interpretation of the period. Nonetheless, he offered useful comments. In Mousnier's view, revolts in the Time of Troubles were directly related to the growth of state power and military expenses beyond the resources of Russian society. A later study by Peter B. Brown also emphasized the likelihood of crisis growing out of the Russian ruling elite's military ambition and the consequent growth of state power, taxes, and a royal bureaucracy. That is a good beginning, but we need to take a closer look at the issues raised by crisis theory proponents and other recent scholarship in comparative history in order to gain a better understanding of the origins of the Time of Troubles.

Michael Roberts developed the idea of a "military revolution" of the early modern period-a revolution in military technology, tactics and strategy, the size of armies, and the cost of war-that resulted in greatly increased burdens on governments and taxpayers. Subsequent scholarship on this topic has focused on its profound, even "revolutionary" impact on governments and societies. War was the single greatest expense of the early modern state and forced rulers and bureaucrats to seek revenues with zeal. It helped increase the power of central state authority and could, on occasion, trigger crises or rebellions. Acknowledging the importance of the military revolution but dubious of how its impact has been incorporated into studies of the vague concept of "absolutism," John Brewer and Nicholas Henshall have identified the growth of a "fiscal-military state" geared to war and survival. Development of such a state meant imposition and collection of more taxes, government interference in the economy in an effort to increase revenues, and the creation and development of bureaucracies independent of existing elites. The result was the same whether ruling groups wished to expand their state or were forced to build up their military forces because of international competition and the aggression of neighboring states. In either case, excessive military spending could trigger a fiscal crisis. Brian Downing developed similar ideas about military modernization and the mobilization of domestic resources leading to the emergence of what he referred to as "military-bureaucratic absolutism," a highly bureaucratized and militarized central state that in effect subjugated even the elites and pushed royal power far beyond its customary limitations.

A good case can be made that the unified Russian state that emerged in the early sixteenth century was a somewhat primitive but highly effective version of the fiscal-military state geared to war and survival. It is well known that early modern Russia was a service state in which the performance of duties that Image not available

Map I The Russian Empire in 1604.

directly or indirectly bolstered the country's security were required from virtually everyone. Nowhere else in Europe was the principle of service to the state pressed so far as in Russia. In addition, the tsar's bureaucrats were free to extract domestic revenues with no concern about or understanding of the impact of their actions on the economy. Among other things, they imposed taxes with zeal, which the lords then ruthlessly collected. For many Russians taxes rose six hundred percent (adjusted for inflation) over the course of the sixteenth century, almost all due to increases in military-related expenses. In assessing the overall impact of the development of Russian state power in the era of the military revolution, Richard Hellie concluded that it led to increasing social stratification and the emergence of a near-caste society. The process of stratification was already developing before the Time of Troubles and helped push Russia into crisis.

The growth of the fiscal-military state in an era of price inflation might have been sufficient to provoke a state crisis, but it came in conjunction with a widespread subsistence crisis caused primarily by a change in the global climate. The "little ice age," a term for the cooling trend from approximately 1550 to about 1740, has been associated with crop failures, food shortages, astronomical food prices, increasing poverty, famines, pandemics, mass migration, and even peasant revolts. It is also known that the danger of famine associated with bad weather is especially intense after periods of long, sustained population growth (such as the sixteenth century) have reduced per capita agricultural output to subsistence levels even in good years. Although historians of the French Annales school have long been fascinated by the impact of climate on history, they have been reluctant to explore the climate's connection to "surface" events such as famines. Nevertheless, by studying that connection, a number of scholars have keyed on the "little ice age" to refine their ideas about a seventeenth-century "general crisis" to a more sharply focused theory of a "crisis of the 1590s." The second half of the sixteenth century was a time of rising population, prices, taxes, state budgets, and bad weather as well as increasing crop failures, poverty, famines, plagues, mortality levels, war, banditry, mass migrations, and popular uprisings throughout much of Europe. All of these problems were strongly present in the catastrophic 1590s, which saw the conjuncture of the most severe weather, the worst food crises, and the largest number of rebellions of the entire early modern period. Glacial advances and dense volcanic dust veils also peaked at the very end of that decade. Northern Europe suffered the brunt of the crisis of the 1590s, with weather-related crop failures, epidemics, and widespread starvation occurring in England (1594–98), Scotland (1595–98), France (1597), Ireland (1601), Norway (1596-98), Sweden (1596-1603), Prussia (1602),

Livonia (1601–3), Poland-Lithuania (1602–3), and Russia on the eve of its civil war (1601–3). Under such conditions it is no surprise that the 1590s saw so many uprisings. Those rebellions peaked in the late 1590s, which were years of revolt in Austria, Hungary, Ukraine, and Finland, followed soon thereafter by the most important popular upheaval of the period, Russia's first civil war (1604–5, 1606–12).

The growth of the fiscal-military state and the "little ice age" both played important roles in destabilizing early modern agrarian absolute monarchies. Other factors were also important. Jack A. Goldstone developed a "demographic/structural" model that attempts to account for the waves of state crises that swept across Eurasia in the early modern period. Goldstone views the crises of large agrarian absolute monarchies mainly as the result of a single basic process: prolonged population growth in the context of relatively inflexible economic and social structures, eventually resulting in rapid price inflation, sudden shifts in resources, and rising social demands on a scale most agrarian-based bureaucratic states found overwhelming. Simply put, long-term population increases helped push fragile political, economic, and social institutions into crisis. A key insight Goldstone brings from demography is that the approximate doubling of the population of the temperate regions of Eurasia over the course of the sixteenth century had some surprising results. For example, younger sons of elite families (who lacked positions to inherit and who therefore sought new positions at court, in the military, or in the bureaucracy) increased much more rapidly than the increase in the overall population. That had a destabilizing effect, increasing intra-elite competition and conflict. Just as elite competition for scarce resources and suitable positions became sharpest, the state had less ability to respond to demands placed on its services because of the other result of long-term population increase-a rise in prices that, in those societies unable to cope with inflation through increased production or other economic activity, eventually precipitated a fiscal crisis. Many states were unable to overcome the traditional rigidity of their tax system and were simply overwhelmed by the combined impact of inflation, increased demands on state services, and the extraordinary increase in the cost of war and defense. They were thus unable to alleviate the growing misery of many members of a rapidly growing elite. For many, especially marginal elites, income erosion, competition with newcomers, and displacement from positions of prestige caused great frustration and intensified intra-elite competition. Competing factions fragmented the elite and led to increasing criticism of the existing regime.

Simultaneously, the impact of rising population and prices on ordinary people was also destabilizing; the combination of increases in taxes, food costs,

rents, poverty, fragmentation of landholdings, and the undermining of popular traditional rights led to rising grievances, popular agitation, and urban and rural unrest. As with elites, the impact of population growth on marginal groups such as landless peasants and the young was far out of proportion to the overall population increase, resulting in a huge increase in unhappy plebeians susceptible to anger against the injustice of the regime. Associated with that was a rise in banditry and a large-scale movement of rootless young men and entire families to the periphery or frontier, which in turn made that area more unstable. There was also a rise in folk criticism of the regime and a loosening of bonds of allegiance. All of these things together undermined the stability of society on multiple levels. Goldstone sees the likelihood of revolution or civil war growing out of the combination of financial crises, elite struggle for position and survival, and misery of the masses when they were combined with a "high potential for mobilizing popular groups." According to Goldstone, although sudden events may trigger a revolution or civil war, they are not its true causes. Instead, the key is a shift in elite and popular attitudes toward the state, which is directly related to the impact of long-term population and price increases.

Even though one may quibble with various aspects of Goldstone's model, his basic observations appear to be directly applicable to Russia. While there is no agreement among historians about the size of Russia's population, there is general agreement that it grew, and possibly doubled, during the sixteenth century. (The population may have risen from approximately 5.8 million to more than 10 million over the course of the sixteenth century.) Prices in Russia are also subject to debate, but they did rise significantly during the sixteenth century. On balance, population and price trends in Russia make Goldstone's model appear to be directly applicable. Combined with other insights from comparative history such as the growth of the fiscal-military state in an era of price inflation and the impact of the "little ice age," Goldstone's work helps explain why on so many levels things began cascading into crisis in Russia at the end of the sixteenth century. In fact, the severe fiscal crisis facing the central government on the eve of the Time of Troubles can properly be viewed as a powerful sign of the conjuncture of several long-term destabilizing forces. In order to better understand those forces and to detect additional ones contributing to Russia's serious problems by the end of the sixteenth century, the next several chapters will explore that country's unique historical experience leading up to the civil war within the context provided by comparative history. Along the way, these chapters will also provide ample evidence of the significant role played by historical contingency in early modern Russia.

2

Long-Term Origins: The Growth of Autocracy and Imperialism

In the age of the military revolution the princes of Moscow unified Russia, quickly transformed their country into a highly effective fiscal-military state geared to war and survival, and expanded their realm with dizzying speed. In the process, however, they ended up subjugating virtually all elements of Russian society and grossly overburdened the bulk of the population. That contributed to a downturn in the economy, the emergence of a highly stratified society, and the development of a serious state crisis by the beginning of the seventeenth century. It is possible, therefore, at least on some level, to regard Russia's first civil war as the first powerful (if unconscious) popular reaction against the growth of the burdensome state and the policies of its expansionist rulers.

Unified by Moscow's Grand Prince Ivan III (r. 1462–1505) and his son Vasilii III (r. 1505–33), Russia quickly emerged as a major military power, and its dramatic growth startled Europe and Asia. Over the course of the sixteenth century Russia's expansion created an empire as well as Europe's largest state. That development puzzled and frightened many contemporaries. Although early modern Russia was in reality structurally similar to other fiscal-military states then emerging, it did not appear to resemble the obviously more "modern" consolidating monarchies. Instead, even though Russia was a new and vigorous country with a rapidly developing national culture, it retained so many antique characteristics that it more closely resembled Western societies in the Middle Ages than those of the early modern period; but there was no denying that "backward" Russia had arrived on the scene with a remarkable ability to extract domestic resources and to wage war successfully against its neighbors-powers still well beyond the capabilities of some of its more "modern" counterparts in the West. How was that possible? At least a partial explanation may be found by examining the origins and nature of early modern Russia's unique political culture and the remarkable system it produced.

Students of Russian and Soviet history have long studied and debated the development of Russian "autocracy" (political authority resting on a claim of divine right and unencumbered by significant traditional or constitutional limits). Russian autocracy spawned a huge empire that for several centuries inhibited its subjects' social, economic, political, and cultural evolution by requiring onerous service from them, by tolerating no dissent from any groups or institutions, and by systematically draining the economy and society of resources in order to support the imperial ambitions of the ruling elite. That peculiar system did manage to produce the world's largest country but also, from time to time, provoked powerful uprisings against its oppression. Some writers have appropriately applied the terminology of Max Weber to prerevolutionary Russia, seeing it essentially as a "patrimonial regime" in which the political structure from the very beginning was more or less identical with the landed estate of the prince of Moscow, who regarded the entire country and all its people as part of his patrimony (and therefore completely at his disposal). Instead of rights, the prince's subjects had only duties to perform. As a result, Russian society was structured and developed in service to the autocratic state and failed to develop or liberalize along the lines of Western societies. Russian autocracy was the synergistic result of at least three powerful influences: the Mongols, Orthodox Christianity, and a "grand bargain" struck by the Rus princes after the terrible dynastic wars of the early fifteenth century.

One of the most popular and controversial explanations for the development of Russian autocracy has been to trace it back to the influence of the Mongols. The Russian monarchy founded by Ivan III was a direct outgrowth of the principality of Muscovy that grew up under the influence of the "Golden Horde" (khanate of Kipchak) during the period of Mongol domination of the Rus lands (1240-1480). Descendants of Grand Prince Aleksandr Nevskii's youngest son Daniil, the princes of Moscow gained the favor of the khans early on and by the fourteenth century managed to become grand princes of Rus, which in practical terms meant chief tax collectors and enforcers of Mongol policies in the conquered Rus lands. The Moscow princes quickly introduced certain successful Mongol administrative and military institutions into Muscovy in order to more efficiently collect tribute for the khans and to defeat Muscovy's rivals among the other Rus principalities. According to Donald Ostrowski, as early as the fourteenth century, Muscovy's tax-collection system and army were already closely modeled on those of the Mongols. The Mongol taxation system, "far more exploitative than any known in Russia before," allowed the Muscovite princes to grow immensely wealthy and powerful. Even after they stopped paying tribute to the Golden Horde, they continued "to collect the full amount of tribute from Russia," keeping it for themselves. The Mongols also provided Muscovy with numerous other administrative, bureaucratic, and diplomatic tools-including a rapid postal communication system. Most important, perhaps,

was the Mongol contribution to Muscovy's military forces. Not only was the Muscovite army modeled directly on the effective Mongol cavalry—down to its tactics, maneuvers, and organization on campaigns; but the Muscovite, and later Russian, cavalry force used Mongol horses, helmets, saddles, sabres, quivers, and bows well into the seventeenth century.

So successful at war, diplomacy, and statecraft were the Moscow princes that their tiny principality grew rapidly in size and prestige, even becoming the home of the metropolitan-the spiritual leader of the Russian Orthodox Church. As Mongol power waned, the Moscow princes, with built-in advantages, successfully struggled with their rivals for undisputed leadership of the northeast Rus lands, eventually taking the lead in overthrowing the "Tatar yoke" (Mongol domination) itself. Service at the Muscovite grand prince's court or in his army came to carry more prestige and access to wealth for noble warriors than service for any other Rus prince. Finally, in a major turning point in Russian history, Grand Prince Vasilii II of Moscow (r. 1425-62) decisively defeated his opponents in bitter dynastic wars. He was able to eradicate the old, dysfunctional political system of Rus and to lay the foundation for the unification of Russia and the establishment of autocracy by his son, Ivan III, and grandson, Vasilii III. The rise of Muscovy obviously owed much to the Mongols. Among other things, Mongol imperialism and the awesome power of the khan, who was called "tsar" by the Russians, certainly influenced the Muscovite rulers as they created their own autocracy and empire. A trace of Mongol-style political organization and leadership can be detected in Muscovite Russia; after the Golden Horde collapsed, Russia's rulers were certainly eager to assert their own claims to the vast territories formerly ruled by their onetime masters. Nevertheless, Mongol influence did not on its own produce Russian autocracy.

Without doubt, an extremely important source of Russian autocracy and the imperial ambition of the tsars was Orthodox Christianity itself. During Grand Prince Vasilii II's reign, the fall of the Byzantine empire left Muscovy as the only significant remaining Eastern Orthodox state. The now-autocephalous Russian Orthodox Church quite naturally looked to the grand prince for protection and began to consider him as a possible successor to the Byzantine emperors and as the only truly Orthodox prince remaining on earth. Recognizing that the fate of their church was now closely tied to the fate of Muscovy, Russian ecclesiastics began to refer to Vasilii II as "tsar" and "autocrat." In the next generation, Vasilii's son, Ivan III, the founder of the Russian monarchy, worked tirelessly to promote an image of himself as the sovereign of Russia and as the champion of Orthodox Christianity. Formally ending the "Tatar yoke" in 1480, he went on to claim, at

least tentatively, the role of successor to the Byzantine emperors. Ivan was occasionally called "tsar" and regarded his status as similar to that of the Holy Roman emperor. Ivan's son, Grand Prince Vasilii III, was also exalted as the protector of Orthodox Christianity and was even more frequently referred to as "tsar." In 1547, his son, Ivan IV, became the first ruler formally crowned as tsar of Russia. Throughout the process of unification, the Russian Orthodox Church actively supported the pretensions of the grand princes, making use of Byzantine political theory to justify the absolute power of Russia's "divinely-appointed" rulers. Despite the introduction of superficial Byzantine trappings, however, Russia's rulers were not particularly interested in the prospect of becoming universal emperors responsible for the welfare of all Orthodox Christians. Instead, they were content to be sovereigns and autocrats of Russia.

In Russia's traditional society, where there was simply no concept of a secular state, the ruler and the church were just about the only concrete expressions of the Russian nation. The power of the ruler came to be seen as an extension of the power of God. The grand princes and tsars claimed to be protectors of the one true faith, and the Russian Orthodox Church actively promoted the idea that it was the duty of all Russians to obey and serve their pious, divinelyappointed rulers. What emerged by the sixteenth century was a somewhat typical medieval European version of sacred kingship. To the Russians, the title "tsar," although derived from "Caesar" and associated with both "emperor" and "khan," really meant divinely-appointed king. It is true that some efforts were made to trace the lineage of Russia's rulers back to Rome and the emperor Augustus; however, it was really the Old Testament kingdom of Israel that stirred the imagination of early modern Russian statesmen and ecclesiastical writers. Within the context of the fall of the Byzantine empire and the widespread expectation of the Apocalypse sometime soon after the Orthodox calender came to an end in the year 7000 (A.D. 1492), the image of Russia as the New Israel and of Moscow as the New Jerusalem became far more powerful than any notion of Moscow as the Third Rome. The idea of the Russians as God's chosen people and of the tsars as the spiritual descendants of Abraham, whose mission it was to lead the faithful to salvation in an uncertain future, became an important element in the development of Russian autocracy in the sixteenth century. In addition to exalting the tsar, that idea promised divine protection and a unique role in world history for Russia. The imagery of the tsar's army as a heavenly host (or as the reembodiment of the army of ancient Israel) appealed to the religiously-oriented military elite at the same time that it sanctified Russian expansion. Metropolitan Makarii specifically cited King David as a model for Tsar Ivan IV (r. 1547-84) during his lavish coronation ceremony. According to the metropolitan, it was Tsar Ivan's duty not only to rule Russia piously but also to lead a crusade against Islam, Catholicism, and other enemies of the true faith. Partly as a result, the young tsar soon came to see himself and his country as destined to carry out a divinely-ordained conquest of the khanates of Kazan and Astrakhan (successors of the Golden Horde). In a heady mix, Ivan the Terrible's Russia was envisioned simultaneously as a sanctified Christian empire and as the New Israel.

It is clear that the religious aspect of the Russian monarchy was extremely important in legitimizing the new state and its rulers. In fact, defense of the faith and loyalty to the tsar became synonymous. Service to the monarch became not only the prerequisite for advancement but also the sacred duty of all subjects. Even the highest ranking princes and boyars made a great show of humble service to "God's viceroy on earth" and carefully fostered the image of the all-powerful, pious tsar. It is possible that the ruling elite itself may not have believed all the religious rhetoric associated with autocracy, merely finding it useful in cementing their own privileges and promoting social control. Many ordinary Russians, however, came to believe that the tsar truly was God's viceroy on earth and their protector in a hostile world.

The third important source for Russian autocracy was a grand bargain struck by many of the Rus princes in the aftermath of the destructive dynastic conflicts of the early fifteenth century. The new political system erected by Grand Prince Vasilii II and his allies was based on a widely perceived need for a single, undisputed royal dynasty (and the principle of primogeniture) in the Rus lands in order to fend off Tatars and other aggressive neighbors and to avoid slipping back into the chaos and nightmare of dynastic wars. The idea of a strong ruler and of the concentration of administrative and military authority in Moscow was also widely regarded as essential in order to govern and garrison the thinly populated and far-flung Russian lands. In this important matter, the pretensions of the princes of Moscow were supported not only by their own nontitled boyars (aristocratic servitors) and the Russian Orthodox Church, but also by several important princely clans who came to Moscow to share the glory and profit of service to the "sovereign" of Russia. As additional Rus territories were added to the state, their ruling elites were in turn usually integrated into the court and army command of Muscovy. Princely clan leaders settled down to live in Moscow and joined the ranks of the Muscovite boyars who were already informally organized as the grand prince's main advisers in his *sinklit* (sometimes called the "boyar council" or the "boyar duma"). Those men became a truly national Russian aristocracy actively involved in running the country and commanding the ruler's powerful army.

Boyars and princes, along with the church, exalted the grand prince of Moscow as a sovereign and an autocrat, but the actual political system they invented may have been, at least in the beginning, far more collegial and oligarchic than any of them ever admitted to foreigners or even to Russians outside the highest court circles. Whether or not the Russian autocrat's power was a facade to the ruling elite, however, it certainly presented itself as an incredibly absolute and overbearing force to the Russian people and to Russia's neighbors. Contemporary observers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries regarded the tsar of Russia as the most absolute ruler of Europe, with the possible exception of the sultan of the Ottoman empire.

The potent combination of ingredients that went into the creation of Russian autocracy resulted in the rapid development of a service state (or "liturgical state") in which the performance of duties that directly or indirectly bolstered the country's security were required from virtually everyone. Russia's tsarist system became "one of the most compulsory in Europe," and there existed "no autonomous social estates or other public bodies" to act as a check on its onerous demands. To protect the tsar and to satisfy his military ambitions, all elements of Russian society were harnessed, and royal power was pushed far beyond its customary limits. In no way did Ivan the Terrible's creation of the zemskii sobor (Assembly of the Land), a kind of sounding board composed of various social strata and convened at the government's pleasure, represent a limit on Russian autocracy—even though that "rubber stamp" assembly came to play an important role in choosing a new tsar in 1613. In fact, no group or institution was capable of challenging Russian autocracy. Even with high status, most of the aristocracy actually functioned as an "unfree" group of elite servitors. Peasants and townspeople found their obligations increasing dramatically, and the whole national economy was subordinated to the needs of the state (and suffered badly as a result). Even the Russian Orthodox Church came to be dominated by and put to work for the tsar. What emerged was a highly militarized society primarily dedicated to the service and greater glory of its autocratic and imperialistic ruler. Or to put it another way, the early modern Russian service state quickly became a highly effective fiscal-military state.

A key element in the development of Russian autocracy and its success in military expansion was the creation of a loyal, centralized, and coercive state administration capable of mobilizing domestic resources and directing the complex tasks of administering a large army and a newly unified country. Starting with a small, Mongol-influenced rudimentary bureaucracy, Ivan III and Vasilii III placed a premium on developing an administrative apparatus capable of bringing newly annexed regions under firm control and making sure that all subjects fulfilled their duties as servitors or taxpayers. The result was the rapid development of a system of centralized administrative offices, or *prikazy* (singular: *prikaz*), and the rise of a hereditary "service bureaucracy" dedicated to meeting the needs of the growing state. By the mid-sixteenth century, the service bureaucracy had made great strides in centralization and rationalization of the tsar's regime, and by the 1570s Russia's prikaz system was largely in place. It was staffed by incredibly loyal and hardworking "secretaries" (*d'iaki*; singular: *d'iak*). High ranking state secretaries (*dumnye d'iaki*), ordinary secretaries (*d'iaki*), and even lowly clerks (*pod'iachie*) received generous rewards for lifelong service. Their families tended to intermarry, and their offices were usually passed down to their sons. They emerged as a powerful caste of bureaucrats who succeeded admirably at imposing the tsar's will. From the very beginning, the bureaucracy was primarily oriented to the task of raising, financing, and supplying the army; and the prikaz system expanded sharply in response to the military revolution and Russia's territorial expansion.

The tsar's bureaucrats were not hampered by the concerns of bankers, merchants, or industrialists (a problem for Western monarchies) and were, therefore, basically free to extract resources from the Russian economy in order to pay for the costs of war. They performed that task with zeal-introducing new taxes, increasing existing ones, and eliminating exemptions. Military construction fees, gunpowder fees, harquebusier (an early version of the musketeer) fees, frontier defense fees, and very heavy communication and postal fees were levied. Nonmilitary taxes changed very little over the course of the sixteenth century, but there was a dramatic rise in the overall level of taxation (a six hundred percent increase, adjusted for inflation) due to the increase in military-related taxation-which rose from approximately thirty percent of all taxes collected in 1500 to more than eighty percent by the 1580s. In addition to taxation, the tsar's government aggressively sought revenue by establishing crown monopolies on many profitable commodities. Overall, the service bureaucracy provided the funds necessary to support the tsar's military ambitions with little or no concern about the impact of their actions on individuals or the country's economy. Although the Russian empire expanded rapidly as a result, that shortsighted fiscal policy ended up contributing to serious problems by the end of the sixteenth century.

The creation of large armies owing loyalty directly to their kings was an essential ingredient in the growth of royal power in early modern Europe, and Russia was no exception. The unification of Russia and the growth of autocracy depended to a significant degree on the development and use of a loyal military force. Funding and fielding that army became the main activity of the country. It is no exaggeration to say that, more than any other contemporary European society, early modern Russia was "organized for warfare." War had been the principal activity of Muscovy; after unification, it continued to be the main activity of the new Russian monarchy. With the longest frontiers in Europe and an ambitious ruling elite, Russia quickly developed one of the largest and most powerful armies of northeastern Europe. During the sixteenth century that army was at war with at least one of Russia's western neighbors, on and off, for nearly fifty years; on the Tatar front, to the south and east, warfare was almost constant. All that military activity helped Russia emerge as a major power by the time Vasilii III died in 1533. It also led to the rapid expansion of Russia, which tripled in size over the course of the sixteenth century. The formation of the Russian empire, which almost instantly became the largest country in Europe, greatly enhanced the prestige of the tsars even as it grossly overburdened their subjects.

Because Russia's military forces played the dominant role in creating the empire and a crucial role in its first civil war, it will be useful to examine briefly the nature and development of those military forces. During the process of unifying Russia, Ivan III built up Muscovy's own strong army and converted it into something like a national army. In part due to the existing Rus tradition of lifetime service for aristocratic warriors, Ivan was also remarkably successful at subordinating and putting to use the ruling elites of the principalities he annexed, incorporating them into his own growing administrative and military structure. Together with his own boyars, this expanded group became the "crucial nucleus" of Russia's military force. An informal boyar council advised the monarch on all important matters related to war and foreign policy. Its members, often collectively referred to as "boyars," actually consisted of three distinct ranks. These very high-status aristocratic servitors (in descending rank: boyars, okol'nichie, and *dumnye dvoriane*) also functioned as commanders (*voevody*) of royal armies and as military governors of important towns. Just below the boyars were highranking courtiers who held similar but somewhat less prestigious posts in the military and administration, and below them were lesser courtiers who functioned as the tsar's entourage. Between two and three thousand courtiers lived in Moscow; they were highly paid and held hereditary and service estates near the capital. Altogether, this group of courtiers (the "sovereign's court") constituted the power elite of early modern Russia; when called upon to do so, they formed part of the tsar's personal regiment on military campaigns.

The bulk of early modern Russia's military forces consisted of most of the secular landholding class mobilized as cavalry. Already strongly imbued with a commitment to serve their various princes, hereditary noble warriors of Rus

were enticed or coerced along with their masters into Muscovite service, thereby swelling the ranks of Ivan III's military forces and speeding up Russia's unification. Service to the new Russian monarch soon became the duty, the very reason for being, for Russia's hereditary military servitors. In addition to creating something like a national army, Ivan III launched what Richard Hellie has called Russia's "first service class revolution" when he annexed Novgorod in 1478—a "revolution" that created a much larger army and that had a profound effect on the stratification of Russian society. In order to garrison Novgorod's extensive territories, Ivan settled over two thousand loyal military servitors there. Individual plots of land were assigned to support each warrior. Peasants on those lands then paid rent to keep the cavalrymen in military service.

Unlike a hereditary estate (votchina), which was the closest thing to private property in early modern Russia, the Novgoradian land assigned to support each warrior was given as a conditional service grant (pomest'e) and could be confiscated if the cavalryman failed to show up for service. The pomeste system reduced the costs to the royal court of maintaining its military forces and allowed great expansion of an army dependent upon and extremely loyal to the crown. The pomeste system worked so well, in fact, that it quickly became the basic form of landholding for Russia's cavalry force, spreading from Novgorod throughout most of the country. Lands converted into pomeste estates came largely from newly annexed territories, property confiscated from traitors, and land cultivated by unfortunate free peasants. The pomeste system enabled Ivan III to field an army three or four times the size of his father's and allowed him eventually to move beyond focusing on the unification of Russia to successful military expansion at the expense of neighboring Lithuania. Thus, in 1505 the founder of the pomeste system was able to pass on to Vasilii III a large army and a realm four times the size of the one he had inherited. In similar fashion, Vasilii III used his large army of *pomeshchiki* (holders of pomeste estates) to complete the unification of Russia and, in 1514, to capture the mighty Lithuanian fortress of Smolensk, which firmly secured Russia's western flank. By the time Ivan the Terrible came to power, the pomeste-based cavalry force had become the "backbone of the Russian army." Following in the footsteps of his father and grandfather, Tsar Ivan quickly put his cavalrymen to work to create the Russian empire.

The tsar's gentry cavalry force was based in the provinces in which they held pomeste lands. Many of them lived in the countryside in log cabins, much like peasants; but most of them also maintained a residence in the town that was their district headquarters. In addition to their land grants, which on average were inhabited by five or six peasant households, the gentry received modest Image not available

Map 2 The Growth of Russia in the 16th Century.

(and irregular) salaries from the central government. They did not constitute a standing army, but their part-time service was mandatory for life. Starting at about age fifteen and ending only when death, illness, wounds, or old age prevented service, pomeshchiki had to report fully equipped for an annual muster in order to determine their readiness for combat and to correct any shortcomings. Fines were exacted if they did not show up properly mounted or outfitted, and failure to appear at muster could result in the loss of part or all of one's pomeste. By the second half of the sixteenth century, a pomeshchik could pass his status and service lands to his son (or other relative) provided that the recipient was then available for annual military service. Because there was constant conflict on the Tatar front, which was Russia's most dangerous frontier until the seventeenth century, the Russian cavalry force was largely oriented to steppe warfare. Except during emergencies or major military campaigns, about half of the pomeshchiki served along the southern frontier each year from the beginning of April to the beginning of July. Then they went home and were replaced by the other half who guarded against Tatar raids until the beginning of October. During emergencies both halves of the gentry cavalry force were summoned to duty simultaneously. Military service on the frontier was tedious and onerous even for generals, and many soldiers tried to avoid it. Absenteeism was a serious and chronic problem, and commanders often used brutal means, including beatings, to enforce service.

The bulk of the pomeshchiki, or gentry cavalry force, were called *deti boiarskie* (singular: syn boiarskii). By the mid-sixteenth century these men occupied the bottom rung of the hereditary military service ladder. Significantly higher in status than the deti boiarskie were the *dvoriane* (singular: *dvorianin*), the provincial elite. Only a few fortunate dvoriane were selected for the top category of provincial service. These vybornye dvoriane (chosen dvoriane) could expect to serve for three years in Moscow. While there the vybornye dvoriane were called *zhiltsy* (singular: *zhilets*), or "residents." There were two or three hundred zhiltsy in the capital at any given time. They did not serve at court but did perform some ceremonial duties and occasionally acted as the tsar's bodyguards. They also served in the tsar's regiment if that elite unit was mobilized for military action. After three years, most zhiltsy returned to their provinces to make way for a new group of vybornye dvoriane rotating to Moscow; but a few of them who had impressed their superiors were instead permanently stationed in the capital as Moskovskie dvoriane (Moscow dvoriane). This was a really big step for members of the provincial elite. There were several hundred Moscow dvoriane, including courtiers' sons just starting out in service. Although they did not hold court rank, they had high status, performed many important military and

administrative duties, and served in the tsar's regiment. Overall, Russia's gentry cavalry force (or gentry militia) consisted of approximately twenty to twentyfive thousand men in the sixteenth century.

The military revolution itself was responsible for the introduction of several new types of specialists and warriors into the Russian army. Ivan III and his successors faced the daunting task of responding to the early stages of the military modernization of their European neighbors. Russia's first steps in response to the gunpowder revolution included rebuilding and strengthening Western border fortifications against possible artillery attacks and the full-scale introduction of artillery into fortresses and military operations in general. An incredible amount of fortress construction occurred in Russia over the course of the sixteenth century; more than thirty major fortresses were completed. During the reign of Ivan the Terrible alone, more than one hundred fifty fortresses or forts were built and equipped, although many of them were nothing more than small, wooden outposts on the southern frontier. Refortification of Smolensk, Russia's largest fortress and the key to the entire western defense system, was undertaken at great expense by Boris Godunov and became "the greatest construction project in the world in the sixteenth century." The Russians also produced a huge quantity of good artillery, quickly mastering the skills taught to them by Westerners. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, Russia had approximately thirty-five hundred artillery weapons, including siege guns and lighter field artillery. Some lead and gunpowder was still imported, along with a few weapons; but Russia was well on its way toward military self-sufficiency. Among the new groups of military specialists emerging in Russia were artillerymen. Like most other lower status military servitors, artillerymen were a relatively closed corps of privileged townsmen who received a cash salary and often lived in special settlements outside the towns in which they served. They also collectively received lands for gardens, pasture, and hay production. Drawn from the ranks of townsmen and peasants, artillerymen had no right to peasant labor and tilled the land for themselves. They performed their military duties part-time for life, often supplementing their meager income by engaging in commerce or handicraft production. Their officers were drawn from the hereditary service nobility.

Starting in the late fifteenth century, some Russian soldiers began using harquebuses (heavy matchlock guns fired from a stand). By the early sixteenth century there were as many as a thousand harquebusiers in the Russian army who were able to deliver massed firepower in combat. The utility of infantry armed with firearms as a complement to the gentry cavalry force was increasingly recognized as the Russian army clashed with Polish and Swedish troops. Infantry

Russlandh, des wager, pass meds fastningar och brantzer (Stockholm: Generalstabens Litografiska Anstalt, Fig. 1 "Russian Artillery and Artillerymen." Drawn circa 1674 by a Swedish ambassador. Published in Erich Palmquist, Någre widh sidste Kongl: Ambassaden till Tzaren Muskou giorde observationer öfuer 1898). Courtesy of the James Ford Bell Library, University of Minnesota.

Image not available

with guns were, in fact, far superior to cavalry in conducting siege warfare. Soon the idea took hold of having a regular standing infantry force that could be called into service on short notice to go on campaign or to protect the tsar. In 1550 Ivan IV established Russia's first standing infantry corps of three thousand experienced volunteers, who came to be called *streltsy* (singular: *strelets*). Although the term is derived from the Russian word for "arrow" and literally means "shooters," the original streltsy were harquebusiers and became "musketeers" only with the introduction of the musket in the seventeenth century. The streltsy wore special red uniforms and were initially settled as a group in their own community just outside Moscow. There they built homes, planted gardens, and supplemented their irregular salaries by engaging in tax-exempt commercial or artisanal activity. They typically ran shops and stables or worked as blacksmiths, butchers, or cobblers. Like other lower status military servitors, the streltsy were a somewhat closed corps who served for life and whose replacements often came from their own families. They were privileged townsmen whose duties were not too onerous in peacetime. They were called upon to perform ceremonial duties, escort ambassadors, fight fires, chase fugitives, stand guard for twenty-four hours at a time, and run errands for their commanders. Streltsy were usually organized in units of five hundred, headed by a golova (head or colonel), and subdivided into units of one hundred, headed by a sotnik (centurion). Their officers were drawn from the hereditary nobility. The service provided by the streltsy proved to be extremely useful both on campaigns and in garrison duty. As a result, streltsy units were gradually set up in many towns. By 1600 there were approximately twenty to twenty-five thousand streltsy in Russia. The seven to ten thousand settled in Moscow were considered elite, in part because about two hundred of them at a time served as a mounted bodyguard for the tsar.

The development of autocracy, an energetic bureaucracy, and powerful military forces led to the rapid growth of early modern Russia and the formation of an impressive empire. Yet the costs associated with Russia's survival and expansion in the age of the military revolution were astronomical. In fact, although the zealous subordination of the entire economy and all social classes to the needs of the fiscal-military state successfully fueled the imperial expansion of Ivan the Terrible and his successors, it also led to a downturn in the economy and increasing stratification of society. That in turn helped produce a serious and destabilizing state crisis out of which emerged the Time and Troubles and Russia's first civil war.

Ivan the Terrible and Russia's Slide into Crisis

During the reign of Russia's first tsar, Ivan IV (d. 1584), his military forces decisively defeated their fierce Tatar rivals and created the Russian empire; but Ivan's reign also saw the development of an internal crisis that helped prepare Russia for its first civil war. The traditional view of the period and of Ivan the Terrible has been that the erratic and cruel policies of the tsar were largely responsible for the catastrophic decline of his country. Yet, upon close inspection, it turns out that many of the problems facing Russia during Ivan's reign were shared by its neighbors and cannot reasonably be blamed solely on the "half-mad" tsar. Among other things, Ivan's reign saw the beginnings of a conjuncture of the effects of the development of the fiscal-military state, sustained upward population and price pressures, and the "little ice age."

War and the appropriation of domestic resources needed to meet Russia's international challenges and to satisfy the imperial dreams of its ruling elite played crucial roles in Russia's slide into crisis during Ivan the Terrible's reign. Although Ivan III and Vasilii III, by acquiring Novgorod and Smolensk and by building up Russia's military power, had managed to secure Russia's western flank, the greatest danger to the country until the seventeenth century came from remnants of the Golden Horde to the east and south. Tatar slave and booty raids had long been a terrifying feature of life in Russia, and hundreds of thousands of Russians were captured and sold into slavery by the Tatars during the course of the sixteenth century alone. As a consequence, Russia's military forces were primarily designed to meet the Tatar threat, and low-intensity warfare was almost continuous on the country's southern and eastern frontiers.

Tsar Ivan initially pursued an extremely active policy of military expansion against the Tatars. From the beginning of his reign, he focused on what many believed to be his divinely-ordained mission, a crusade against those tormentors of Russia. Making good use of the gentry militia and his new streltsy units, Ivan conquered the khanate of Kazan in 1552 and the khanate of Astrakhan in 1556. As a result of those campaigns, the tsar gained control of the entire Volga River, which opened up Caspian Sea trade to the Russians, secured Russia's eastern flank, and paved the way for the rapid colonization of Siberia and the somewhat slower colonization of the southern frontier. Overall, Russia doubled in size during Ivan's reign. Conquest of the Tatar realms increased the prestige of the tsar enormously and created the Russian empire. It gave the tsar control over tens of thousands of non-Slavic peoples—not just the Islamic Tatars but also many of the native tribes of the Volga region, including the Cheremis (Mari) and the Mordvians (Mordva), both of Finnish origin. All these new subjects were quickly put to work either as laborers and taxpayers or as military servitors. Many of them resented the loss of independence and the ever-increasing pressure from Moscow, and they periodically caused trouble for their new masters. On the other hand, many Tatars, Cheremis, and Mordvians willingly joined the Russian army. As many as twenty-seven thousand of them served the tsar by the early seventeenth century.

In the context of Tsar Ivan's great victories over the Tatars, a number of important reforms were implemented to improve the effectiveness of Russia's fighting forces. Ivan in 1556 issued a new military service code that formally extended the requirement to serve to all landowners. Privileged owners of votchina (hereditary) estates were now required to show up for military service alongside the pomeste-based gentry. In addition, holders of both votchina and pomeste lands were now required to provide an additional cavalryman (fully equipped) for approximately every four hundred acres of land they held. That significantly increased the size of the tsar's army, but the additional burden on the gentry militiamen was not easily met even in good times by the poorer ones; in times of hardship, the requirement proved ruinous to many. Tsar Ivan's reforms at that time also focused on developing local self-government. Among other things, tax collectors were now to be drawn from the local population. Carefully supervised by the tsar's bureaucrats, these new and more honest tax collectors significantly increased the revenues flowing to Moscow. Another reason for the increase in revenue was that in return for the "privilege of taxing themselves," Ivan's subjects were now required to pay taxes at "twice the previous rate." As a result of his reforms, the tsar's enlarged and better-funded army was well prepared to further extend his realm.

After Tsar Ivan's triumph over the khanates of Kazan and Astrakhan, his subjects expected him to follow up those victories with an assault on the last major remnant of the Golden Horde, the Crimean Tatars—who were then vassals of the Turkish sultan. Just as Russians were being encouraged to colonize newly acquired and pacified lands to the east and the south, however, Ivan rather suddenly changed his mind. Against the advice of many people, instead of invading Crimea, he chose to turn west to seek an outlet to the Baltic Sea, which was then blocked by Russia's western neighbors. In 1558, the Russians invaded Livonia, quickly captured the port of Narva, and began trading directly with Western merchants. Eventually, however, Poland and Sweden intervened to drive Russia back from the Baltic. For Tsar Ivan the long and drawn-out Livonian War (1558–83) proved to be a humiliating disaster. Not only was Russia forced to wait until Peter the Great to regain its position as a Baltic power, but the impact of the Livonian War and its very high costs contributed significantly to the catastrophic decline of Russia's economy and the serious dislocation of its society.

In the midst of the unfortunate Livonian War, Tsar Ivan established his dreaded oprichnina (1565-72) by splitting Russia into two parts-one ruled by the traditional, Moscow-based administration (including the boyar council), and the other under Ivan's personal control. The result was one of the most traumatic episodes in early modern Russian history. The oprichnina contributed to the sharp decline in Russia's economy "which led to the establishment of serfdom" and was a significant factor in the development of the Time of Troubles. During the oprichnina the tsar unleashed overwhelming coercive force with great brutality on many of his subjects with absolutely no regard for their rightsa type of abuse of power that some scholars associate with the emergence of the fiscal-military state. In an apparent effort to create a new, more loyal and subservient elite, Tsar Ivan coopted some nobles into the oprichnina and promoted many men of undistinguished birth into its leadership. The resulting split in the nobility, coupled with the privileges received by the hated oprichniki (Ivan's new courtiers and his private army based in the oprichnina) and Ivan's erratic use of violence against his aristocrats, created a long-lasting factional struggle among the boyars.

Most magnates, even before the oprichnina, had been locked in fierce competition with one another for status, appointments, and rewards; starting in the 1560s, that competition became much more fierce and deadly. Moreover, it did not end with the oprichnina or even with Tsar Ivan's death. The split in the administration and nobility destabilized Russia's political structure for many years, as did the use of terror by the bloodthirsty tsar. Ivan actively encouraged denunciations by rivals and underlings of persons he wished to destroy, and he ruthlessly cut down any real or perceived opposition within the nobility, the church, and the bureaucracy. The resulting horror and dislocation traumatized the elite and increased the nobility's dependence on the monarch. Ominously, it also promoted popular distrust of boyars and other officials as potential enemies of the tsar. There was, surprisingly, actually very little elite resistance to Ivan's tyranny, and many of the survivors profited from the downfall of others. Nonetheless, the oprichnina was long remembered with horror by the nobility. After all, the tsar was supposed to preserve the general order and traditional hierarchy of the realm, not upset the system. Ivan the Terrible severely shook elite faith in the crown. That was undoubtedly an important precondition of Russia's first civil war.

Tsar Ivan's oprichniki not only terrorized his opponents and many innocent bystanders, but they also ruthlessly exploited their pomeste estates and the peasants living on those lands. Many peasants, already facing increasing taxes, fled from these "locusts" to boyar or monastic estates where they were treated somewhat better, or to the new frontier lands beckoning to the south and east. The resulting loss of labor undermined the ability of the oprichniki and others to provide military service, seriously weakening Russia's defenses during a time of war on two fronts. When the Crimean Tatars launched a devastating invasion of Russia in 1571, the oprichniki performed miserably. Partly as a result, Tatar forces reached Moscow, burned much of the capital, and returned to the Crimea with more than one hundred thousand prisoners. The somewhat chagrined tsar immediately began making plans to abolish the oprichnina, which he did in 1572. Even so, Ivan's leading oprichnina courtiers who had survived were merely integrated into the old administration and boyar council, an action that did nothing to promote elite stability. In fact, Tsar Ivan managed to sow much hatred among the nobility in his realm. That certainly was one of the causes of the Time of Troubles.

There is no doubt that the oprichnina did great damage. Nonetheless, it is impossible to determine just exactly where damage caused by the oprichnina stopped and that caused by such things as war, taxes, population and price pressures, disease, and climate began. All were factors in the downturn of Russia's economy and the development of its state crisis. Quite apart from the oprichnina, for example, Tsar Ivan imposed much heavier taxes on his people than his predecessors and was not at all concerned about the impact of his exactions. Oprichnina terror also coincided with terrible famines and plagues that killed hundreds of thousands of Russians. Upon close inspection, it is also clear that the Russian economy was already beginning to experience severe shocks when the oprichnina came along, and it only made things worse. Russia's slide into crisis, therefore, cannot simply be attributed to the oprichnina and the personality of the "terrible" tsar.

By the 1570s Russia began to show unmistakable signs of economic decline and social dislocation. Basic reasons for the developing crisis included long-term population growth, increasing price inflation, and the "little ice age." Goldstone has shown that in the early modern period the rapid multiplication of younger sons of the elite put increasing pressure on the government to find them lands and good jobs just as the government was beginning to face a fiscal crisis due to price inflation and the astronomical costs of war. That was certainly true for Russia, both for the aristocracy and the gentry. Over the course of the sixteenth century, elite holders of votchina estates divided their lands among their children again and again until those ancestral holdings were subdivided into units too small to support all the inheritors, forcing subsequent generations to seek additional land and peasant labor through state service in order to survive. The tsarist regime took advantage of the situation by requiring service from votchina estates and by keeping the elite in a constant state of rivalry with one another and with newly promoted parvenues-all feverishly competing for status, positions, and scarce resources. Russian autocracy came to be supported by a more numerous but increasingly weak aristocracy who fought among themselves for the privilege of advising the tsar or commanding his armies and who never seriously contemplated resistance to the arbitrary and demanding regime. In some ways, Ivan's oprichnina is a particularly striking example of this phenomenon.

Dvoriane and deti boiarskie families also multiplied at a high rate during the sixteenth century, and their sons expected positions in the militia as well as pomeste estates with peasants to support them. At first, there was plenty of land for all pomeshchiki, but during the second half of the sixteenth century, the growth in the reserves of service lands slowed down while the gentry birth rate remained very high. Tsar Ivan could meet only about half of the demand he faced for inhabited service lands, so the average size of a pomeste grant (and the income it produced) began to decline drastically. The result was fierce competition among the gentry for survival, with the government gaining even more control over them as a result. There was a rapid turnover of pomeste estates in the second half of the sixteenth century as many pomeshchiki, unable to adjust to declining income, simply dropped out of the gentry militia and were quickly replaced by new men. Increasingly, pomeshchiki were also forced to provide for their landless kinsmen, which increased the pressure on their modest resources and on the peasants living on their service lands. As matters grew worse, in many cases no lands were available for younger members of gentry families until their landholding relative died. For its part, the government did seek new estates for the pomeshchiki, often by massive expropriation of state lands occupied by heavily taxed but otherwise free peasants. Such lands virtually disappeared in central Russia during the second half of the sixteenth century as taxes on them more than doubled and as they were increasingly and arbitrarily converted into pomeste estates. Quite naturally, peasants who lived on those lands and had regarded them as their own property were extremely upset at suddenly being forced to work for a lord, especially a pomeshchik.

Peasants paid dearly for the tsar's wars and to support his military servitors. Originally free agriculturalists, by the beginning of the sixteenth century many Russian peasants found themselves on newly created pomeste estates granted to gentry warriors. In addition to paying ordinary taxes, those peasants were now required to help provide resources to outfit their local pomeshchik and to maintain him in the field for several months each year. Because pomeshchiki were often not paid their annual salary by the state, they came to depend totally on the labor of their peasants in order to continue to perform military service. In a subsistence farming economy such as Russia's, as such pressures increased (along with taxes), it became difficult even in reasonably good years for peasants to meet them; in years of crop failure or other disasters it was virtually impossible. Ivan III introduced the first broad restriction on the peasants' right to move probably in order to keep the tax base stable and to assure that peasants completed the harvest needed to sustain their masters in the army. Starting in 1497, peasant movement was restricted to a two-week period around St. George's Day (November 26). At first, however, peasants did not strenuously object to the burdens placed on them, probably because Russia prospered in the early sixteenth century and the burdens-kept at traditional levels-were not too onerous. Pomeshchiki were not allowed to interfere with their peasants' lives and instead received their rent from the government. Labor obligations for peasants on pomeste lands in the early sixteenth century may have averaged no more than one or two days a week, and many who wished to do so paid the St. George's Day exit fee and moved in search of a better life. Even though burdens on Russian peasants steadily increased, they remained free for most of the century. Starting in the reign of Ivan the Terrible, however, large-scale peasant abandonment of pomeste lands in response to rapidly increasing taxes, poor harvests, famines, exploitation by lords, and the attraction of newly acquired territories to the south and east became a severe problem for the state and for the gentry-ultimately with drastic consequences for the peasants.

A principal explanation for the decline of the Russian economy in the second half of the sixteenth century centers on the peasantry whose labor was so essential to the gentry militia. As already noted, by the time of Tsar Ivan's reign there was not enough land inhabited by peasants to meet the needs of the rapidly growing warrior class. Sharp competition for land and peasant labor became the norm, and many pomeshchiki bitterly complained about the loss of income and peasants needed to sustain their military service. In this context, during the time of the oprichnina Tsar Ivan began permitting pomeshchiki to Image not available

Fig. 2 "Russian Peasants." Published in Adam Olearius, Voyages très-curieux & tres-renommez faits en Moscovie, Tartarie et Perse (Leide, 1719). Courtesy of Special Collections, University of Washington Libraries.

control their service lands directly and to collect rent from peasants in person. Giving the gentry direct control over their lands proved to be an unmitigated disaster for the peasants, who now faced increased exploitation or outright plunder from lords desperately trying to squeeze additional revenue from their estates. Peasants came to regard the pomeshchiki as greedy parasites, and many peasants simply ran away from increasingly intolerable conditions. That, of course, placed an even greater burden on those peasants who remained on pomeste estates. Hellie correctly assessed the tsar's policy change as "one of the greatest mistakes Ivan made in his long reign."

In addition to increasing exploitation at the hands of the pomeshchiki, Russian peasants faced significant price inflation and a rapid rise in militaryrelated taxation during the second half of the sixteenth century. Taxes increased three hundred percent over the course of Ivan the Terrible's reign and grossly overburdened his subjects. Such fiscal demands contributed significantly to increasing peasant flight from taxpaying communities. Because taxes were assessed collectively in each district, the remaining peasants were initially forced to pay taxes for the fugitives and for land no longer in production. Such a heavy and unrealistic burden was more than many peasants were able or willing to bear and led to even more peasant flight and a spiraling down of production, peasant income, tax revenues, and the overall economy. The loss of even one peasant was a serious setback for most members of the increasingly impoverished gentry who were already being asked to make do with smaller holdings and fewer peasants. Often not paid by the government for years at a time and facing significant price inflation, many poor pomeshchiki could no longer afford to show up for military service or showed up lacking the required weapons, armor, and horses. An increasing number preferred to stay at home in order to manage their fragile economies and tried to escape military service altogether. The number of pomeshchiki showing up for service began to decline in the 1560s, and that decline became a serious problem by the 1570s.

An additional source of misery for the overburdened Russian peasants and others was the rising tide of bad weather, crop failures, famines, and epidemics associated with the "little ice age"—made even worse by a growing population and chronically low agricultural productivity. Starting in the 1550s, unusually cold, wet weather and a series of crop failures, famines, and epidemics hit Russia. By the early 1570s, famine and epidemics spread over much of Russia, and the scale of the disaster was huge. Loss of life was very high, much land was abandoned, and agricultural production declined significantly as a result. The country teetered on the brink of a severe crisis.

Russia's steep decline during the 1570s was due to the conjuncture of many factors. The most striking feature as well as a major cause of the decline was the massive depopulation of Russia's heartland. That demographic disaster led to a severe crisis for both government and society. In some areas (including the Moscow region), population and land under cultivation declined as much as ninety percent by the end of the decade. Where did all those people go? Some of them moved north of the Volga River, but many overtaxed and disgruntled Russians headed to the southern or eastern frontier. At first, the government itself had actively sponsored colonization of newly acquired territories, and tales of the high productivity of steppe soil brought many eager settlers. Soon they were joined by a steady stream of escapees from famine, plague, war, high taxes, and exploitation by lords. Less adventurous souls simply moved to nearby church, boyar, or crown lands where conditions were often much better than on pomeste estates; or they became landless peasants or sold themselves into slavery in order to pay their debts. Significant numbers of desperate men became outlaws and roamed the countryside in gangs. They tended to receive some sympathy from ordinary Russians and fit the general pattern of "social bandits" described by Eric Hobsbawm.

Central Russia's demographic disaster also led to the rapid rise of the cossacks-large bands of social bandits and part-time mercenary soldiers who roamed the southern frontier. (They will be discussed in Chapter 5.) The overall impact of the developing crisis was enormous. Many peasants who had remained on the land were ruined economically, which led to even more peasant flight. Most of the already financially distressed pomeshchiki lost peasants, and, at least in the Moscow district, the pomeste-based economic system collapsed completely. A large number of deti boiarskie were utterly ruined and were no longer able to show up for military service. The morale and fighting ability of the tsar's cavalry force declined seriously, and the crisis threatened the very existence of the entire gentry militia system. Tax revenues shrank precipitously just as the tsar came under increasing pressure to rescue the gentry. Unable to offer significant amounts of money or land with peasants, the beleaguered government did try to aid impoverished pomeshchiki with numerous small remedies, including tax concessions. Such measures, however, failed to halt the decline of the militiamen. Many of them ended up with no peasants and no income. Some desperate pomeshchiki simply gave up and headed to the frontier; others instead took the drastic step of selling themselves as elite military slaves to magnates and rich dvoriane.

Slavery had a long history in Russia. In the sixteenth century about ten percent of the population were slaves. Most were household lackeys, but about five

percent of agricultural workers were also slaves. About one percent of the population sold itself into slavery in any given year; but in famine years that number increased to five or even ten percent. During the perilous late sixteenth century, Russian peasants increasingly resorted to selling themselves as slaves in order to survive the declining agricultural economy and to escape the crushing burden of taxes. Vast numbers of peasants sold themselves into slavery during the demographic disaster and the famines of the 1570s and 1580s. Meanwhile, the loss of their labor contributed significantly to the impoverishment of the pomeshchiki while the loss of their taxes contributed to the state's growing fiscal problems. During the late sixteenth century, all too many impoverished townsmen also sold themselves into slavery, contributing to the decline of both the economy and the tsar's tax receipts. During the same period, large numbers of distressed pomeshchiki, usually to repay debts, sold themselves as elite military slaves—who had much higher status than agricultural slaves or household lackeys, and who often received privileges, land, and other assistance from their owners.

The enslavement of militiamen was, understandably, officially discouraged. Starting in the 1550s, Ivan the Terrible attempted to prohibit his petty gentry from selling themselves into slavery; but self-sale by impoverished warriors remained a serious problem until the late seventeenth century. Tsar Ivan's own policies inadvertently boosted the enslavement of poor pomeshchiki. His 1556 decree, which required holders of pomeste and votchina estates to bring additional soldiers with them on campaigns, resulted in a significant number of combat slaves being added to the gentry militia. Especially prized were competent warriors, including impoverished deti boiarskie. A down-and-out pomeshchik or the son of a poor syn boiarskii who reached age fifteen could now sell himself into slavery and remain in military service as a well-equipped and well-fed retainer of some prosperous magnate or *dvorianin* (singular form of *dvoriane*). The price for such an elite slave was five times higher than for an agricultural or household slave. As the tsar's government became increasingly concerned about the number of impoverished militiamen selling themselves or being forced into slavery, several measures were taken to stop it. Those measures, however, failed to halt the practice.

There are varying estimates of the number and duties of military slaves serving in the gentry militia. Aleksandr Zimin believed that by the late 1550s up to two-thirds of the entire militia force were slaves; but that figure is too high. Richard Hellie studied Russian slavery carefully and distinguished between elite combat slaves who fought on horseback alongside their owners and "baggage train" slaves who took care of the militiamen's horses and supplies but did not

fight. The latter group probably consisted mostly of self-sold peasants whose price was far lower than that of combat slaves. Many military slaves were not only combat slaves but were also "armed better than their owners." By the late 1570s, many combat slaves carried harquebuses. Hellie estimated that in the 1550s, almost every militiaman had a slave with him while on duty. Obviously, the impoverishment of the pomeshchiki by the 1570s changed the picture somewhat. In some devastated regions, only twenty percent of the gentry were still able to appear for service with mounted slaves. Overall, by the late 1570s the percentage of militiamen owning any kind of slave had slipped to about seventy percent. Of those slave owners, almost all had a baggage train slave but only about half still had a combat slave. That means that in the late sixteenth century approximately one fourth of the entire gentry militia force consisted of combat slaves. Many of them were excellent, courageous soldiers. Hellie estimated that the total number of military slaves (baggage train and combat) by the beginning of the seventeenth century was about twenty-five thousand. In other words, there were just about as many slaves as militiamen in the tsar's army.

Toward the end of the sixteenth century, the many different forms of Russian slavery declined to two basic types: hereditary slavery and "limited service contract slavery" (kabal'noe kholopstvo). It was limited service contract slavery that became increasingly popular among the petty gentry as a survival tool during hard times-at least in part because it appeared to be slavery for only one year in return for a loan. Distressed peasants and townsmen also gravitated toward contract slavery as a temporary tax dodge. Failure to repay the loan at the end of the year, however, resulted in default and doomed the contract slave (and his offspring) to perpetual, hereditary slavery. In spite of that ominous prospect, Russia's economic and social crisis pushed more and more unfortunate deti boiarskie, peasants, and townsmen to take the drastic step of becoming contract slaves. In fact, so many of them sold themselves into slavery that, starting in the 1580s, slave prices dropped and remained depressed right into the Time of Trouble. Because slave ownership carried high status in early modern Russia, rich magnates took advantage of the situation and glutted themselves on relatively cheap slaves—especially during the reign of Ivan the Terrible's son, Tsar Fedor (r. 1584-98). The government became so alarmed at the loss of militiamen and taxpayers to slavery, however, that it began to contemplate drastic steps to stop the hemorrhage.

Russian towns, echoing the mounting problems of peasants and pomeshchiki, also suffered a catastrophic decline in the late sixteenth century. During the first half of the century, the towns had grown rapidly along with a general rise in Russia's internal trade and manufacturing. The number of towns also

grew—from about one hundred sixty in 1500 to about two hundred thirty by 1600. Russia's urban population peaked at about two percent of the overall population in the mid-sixteenth century, and they were heavily taxed. Ordinary townspeople lived in a town's *posad*, the taxpaying suburb spreading out from the walls of the gorod (inner fortress). The posad included dwellings, the marketplace, warehouses, bakeries, and shops where merchants, traders, craftsmen, artisan manufacturers, apprentices, and laborers lived and worked. During the reign of Ivan the Terrible, Russian towns suffered just as much as the countryside from war, taxes, famine, plagues, Tatar raids, and the erratic policies of the tsar. Trade declined catastrophically, and a number of towns disintegrated. Famine struck several Russian towns in the 1560s, and by the early 1570s epidemics and famine combined to depopulate many more. The loss of life was staggering, but the sharp population decline was also because many townspeople simply ran away to avoid natural disasters and high taxes. Because taxes were assessed collectively in each posad, the remaining townspeople were forced to pay taxes even for those who had fled. That grossly overburdened the urban economy, which declined sharply as tax rates increased. The number of urban poor also increased dramatically as more and more financially distressed townsmen disappeared from the posad tax rolls. Overall, there was a huge decline in the number of urban taxpayers by the 1580s (up to ninety percent in some towns). Many townspeople moved to nearby nontaxed lands; others sold themselves into slavery or headed to the southern frontier.

With such a drastic decline in the number of peasant and urban taxpayers, revenues shrank dramatically and the tsar's treasury suffered huge shortfalls. Sharp price inflation in the 1570s and 1580s made matters worse for everyone. The fiscal crisis became so acute and the decline in the size and readiness of the gentry militia so steep that Tsar Ivan could no longer afford to fight the Livonian War, which finally ended in 1583 on terms unfavorable to Russia. In spite of the end of the war and the death of the "terrible" tsar in 1584, however, the crisis deepened in many parts of the country. As discussed in Chapter 1, by the 1590s, a few peripheral areas recovered somewhat, but much of Russia—especially the heartland—remained in deep crisis. The economic "depression" continued to reduce state revenue and the size of the tsar's army, and an unrealistic tax policy continued to hinder any possible recovery of either the rural or the urban economy. That dangerous situation eventually forced Tsar Ivan's successor to make dramatic policy changes on the eve of the Time of Troubles that actually made things much worse.

4

The Rise of Boris Godunov, the Uglich Tragedy, and Enserfment

Boris Godunov (1552–1605) stands out as one of the most famous or infamous characters of early modern Russian history. He has been portrayed as a brilliant statesman and one of Russia's first tragic heroes; more often, he has been described as an evil tyrant whose ambition and crimes were largely responsible for the Time of Troubles. In fact, Godunov came to dominate Russia at an unfortunate time. As Tsar Fedor's regent, he faced the thankless task of trying to cope with the country's developing crisis. The harsh policies he came up with were controversial and failed to solve Russia's problems; instead, they made matters worse and helped ruin the reputation of the tsar's ruthless brother-in-law.

Boris Godunov's enemies rather unfairly accused him of being low-born. In fact, Boris's ancestors had been boyars at the Muscovite court in the fourteenth century. Family fortunes declined over the years, however; Boris's father was a mere provincial pomeshchik when his son was born in 1552. It was Boris's uncle, Dmitrii Godunov, who helped establish his nephew's career after the boy's father died prematurely. Dmitrii Godunov joined Ivan the Terrible's oprichnina guard as soon as it was formed and quickly became one of Ivan's courtiers. He also brought his family to the oprichnina court. As a result, Boris Godunov grew up in the tsar's palace, and his sister Irina became the playmate of Tsar Ivan's mentally retarded son, Fedor. Maliuta Skuratov, then the all-powerful oprichnina boss, formed an alliance with Dmitrii Godunov and arranged for his daughter Mariia to marry Boris, who was then serving as a member of the oprichnina guard. That marriage made the young Godunov the son-in-law of the most hated and feared man in Russia. When Tsar Ivan abolished the oprichnina, surviving members of its elite became members of the tsar's personal "court"including the Godunovs. Dmitrii Godunov was quickly promoted to the rank of okolnichii, and Ivan even allowed Boris's sister to marry Tsarevich Fedor. The tsar came to regard Boris as one of his own sons and promoted him to the rank of boyar by 1581. Nonetheless, as long as Ivan's eldest son and heir, Ivan Ivanovich, lived, Boris could only hope to be a relatively minor courtier. When the tsar accidentally killed Ivan Ivanovich in the fall of 1581, however, that tragic event opened up a path to power for Boris Godunov, the brother-in-law of Ivan's new heir.

Tsar Ivan knew perfectly well that Fedor could not rule on his own; before his own death in 1584, he set up a council of regents to govern in his son's name. Ivan named as regents two leading boyars: Fedor's uncle, Nikita Romanovich Zakharin-Iurev (head of the Romanov clan), and Prince Ivan F. Mstislavskii; he also named two leading members of his own court: a premier prince of the blood, the popular and heroic Prince Ivan Petrovich Shuiskii, and Fedor's brother-in-law, Boris Godunov. On the day of the coronation, Boris was named *koniushii boiarin* (master of the horse or equery)—a title that immediately identified him as the most powerful member of the boyar council. In the early years of Tsar Fedor's reign there occurred a series of sharp conflicts within the ruling elite; in those struggles for power, Boris Godunov triumphed over all his enemies.

At the outset of Tsar Fedor's reign, Boris Godunov and other regents moved against a threat emanating from the court faction supporting Ivan the Terrible's youngest son, Dmitrii—the child of Ivan's sixth and last wife, Mariia Nagaia. The Nagoi clan and its supporters were agitating to have little Dmitrii (born in 1582) recognized as the heir apparent of the incapable Fedor, and they may even have been making plans to thrust Dmitrii onto the throne. As a result, Mariia, her brothers, and little Dmitrii were unceremoniously shipped off to Dmitrii's inheritance, the small principality of Uglich, which was far from Moscow. At about the same time, Dmitrii's guardian and godfather, the notorious former oprichnik Bogdan Belskii (Tsar Ivan's last favorite), made a desperate bid for power in Dmitrii's name, but he was easily forestalled by the regents and temporarily exiled from the capital.

Trouble soon developed within the council of regents itself. Prince Ivan Mstislavskii made a bid for power in 1585. He was stopped by the other regents and was forced to become a monk—which in Russia was an irreversible step. Mstislavskii's son-in-law, Simeon Bekbulatovich (Tsar Ivan's one-time puppet ruler of Russia), was deprived of his "independent" principality and exiled. Mstislavskii's son, Fedor, was not allowed to marry but was allowed to inherit his father's estates as well as his position as senior member of the boyar council. Real power, however, continued to rest in the hands of the remaining three regents. Out of this episode grew a tacit alliance between the Godunovs and the Romanovs to protect their families' interests. When old Nikita Romanovich died he may even have entrusted care of his children to his "ally" Boris. Soon thereafter, the two remaining regents fought it out. Ivan Petrovich Shuiskii, who regarded himself as the most high-born prince in Russia, deeply resented the power of the "low-born" Boris Godunov and intrigued against him. In 1586, Shuiskii took the lead in staging an anti-Godunov riot in Moscow and organized a powerful group of boyars, the metropolitan, and some Moscow merchants who boldly demanded that Tsar Fedor divorce the "barren" Irina. In this matter, however, Shuiskii grossly miscalculated. Fedor loved his wife, refused to divorce her, and authorized Boris to suppress the opposition. Godunov struck hard at his enemies. He had several merchants executed and arranged for the metropolitan to be dethroned, replacing him with Boris's own candidate, his friend Iov. Ivan Petrovich Shuiskii and his son Andrei were formally disgraced, had their property confiscated, and were exiled from Moscow. Aged Prince Ivan Shuiskii was forced to become a monk and kept under heavy guard. Also temporarily banished from the capital were Prince Vasilii Ivanovich Shuiskii and his three younger brothers-Dmitrii, Aleksandr, and Ivan-the sons of Ivan Petrovich's cousin, Prince Ivan Andreevich Shuiskii (d. 1573). With the downfall of Ivan Petrovich and his son Andrei, Vasilii Shuiskii emerged as the senior member of the temporarily eclipsed clan.

Boris Godunov was now Tsar Fedor's sole regent and the most powerful man in Russia. By 1588, he openly accused the Shuiskii and Nagoi clans of making common cause in a conspiracy against him. A general purge of Godunov's enemies was launched, with the tsar's brother-in-law using techniques reminiscent of Ivan the Terrible's oprichnina. Ivan Petrovich Shuiskii (d. 1588) and his son Andrei (d. 1589) both died while in confinement, probably murdered quietly on Godunov's orders. Many people at the time blamed Boris for those very convenient deaths. Such suspicions, coupled with Godunov's active persecution of several other opponents, seriously hurt the regent's reputation. Any more mysterious deaths of his enemies would automatically be blamed on Boris by many nobles. The Nagoi clan, sensing Godunov's temporary vulnerability, began circulating rumors that he was planning to murder Tsarevich Dmitrii in Uglich. In response, the regent increased security around members of the Nagoi clan already in exile, and he had the church prohibit priests from mentioning the "illegitimate" tsarevich during services (in Orthodox canon law, the child of a man's fourth marriage, let alone his sixth, was not considered to be legitimate). Godunov did not, however, make any immediate move against Dmitrii. In fact, just when many feared that the regent would unleash a new oprichnina, he managed to defeat all his rivals and then relaxed the pressure on them. And why not? As the unchallenged ruler of his brother-in-law's realm, Godunov could now afford to try to repair his reputation among the elite by appearing as a clement prince.

Another reason for Godunov to relax the political struggle was the serious, multidimensional crisis descending on Russia at that time. In addition to the cascading effects of the demographic disaster, the "little ice age" produced increasingly severe weather and a terrible famine in 1588. Hunger and the high cost of food pushed more and more desperate peasants and townsmen to depart for the southern frontier, to sell themselves as slaves, or to turn to begging or banditry. That in turn forced many more impoverished pomeshchiki to abandon their estates either to become slaves or to strike out for the frontier. On top of everything else, during the 1580s taxes more than doubled on the tsar's already overburdened subjects, further contributing to the depopulation of villages and towns. Many blamed Boris Godunov personally for Russia's intolerable taxes, regarding him as "an oppressor of the entire country." In spite of steep tax increases, however, state revenues continued to shrink, resulting in a serious fiscal crisis-made much worse by the government's ambitious construction projects and relentless efforts to expand the state to the south. By the late 1580s, the tsar's treasury had been hit hard and the number and quality of gentry militia units had declined sharply. The crisis deepened going into the 1590s. Throughout this period, there were a number of minor outbreaks of rural and urban violence which had to be suppressed, and periodic military action was also required to stop roving gangs of bandits. Moscow itself witnessed several incidents of unrest caused by high taxes, the cost of food, and the machinations of Godunov's political opponents. Such tensions, added to a genuine fear of foreign invasion, caused the regent to place Moscow on military alert in the spring of 1591. Under such circumstances, Godunov may have felt that, temporarily at least, he could not afford to struggle openly with any remaining opponents.

Just about the time Godunov placed Moscow on military alert, disturbing news arrived from Uglich. In May, 1591, Tsarevich Dmitrii was reported to be dead. The Nagoi clan openly accused Godunov's hand-picked Uglich administrator of murder and incited a riot, during which Godunov's agent and his young son were lynched, offices and homes of certain officials hated by the Nagoi clan were plundered, and numerous people were terrorized. Moscow immediately responded by sending a detachment of streltsy to restore order in Uglich and a commission of inquiry to find out what had actually happened. The commission was headed by Prince Vasilii Ivanovich Shuiskii, recently returned from exile and now back in the boyar council. Choosing an able adversary of the unpopular Godunov to head the investigation was done, at least in part, to assure that the commission's findings would not be dismissed as a cover-up of the notorious regent's alleged crimes. On the basis of testimony from several eyewitnesses, the commission concluded that Dmitrii had accidentally slit his own throat during an epileptic seizure that came on while he was playing with a knife. The commission further determined that members of the Nagoi clan were responsible for inciting the riots and lynchings, planting evidence against Godunov, and even torturing individuals in order to force them to say that the tsarevich had been murdered. Dmitrii was hastily buried without fanfare in Uglich. Neither Tsar Fedor nor the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Iov (Russia's first patriarch, elevated in 1589), attended the funeral service or even bothered to visit the grave of the illegitimate tsarevich who was believed to have technically committed the sin of suicide. Two days after Dmitrii was buried, a terrible fire broke out in Moscow, leaving thousands of people homeless. Agents of the Nagoi clan, trying to take advantage of tensions in Moscow and the unpopularity of Boris Godunov, spread rumors that the regent had ordered the capital set on fire in order to distract the tsar and others from the murder of Dmitrii. When the arsonists were caught, however, they confessed (under torture) that the Nagoi clan had put them up to it. On the basis of an investigation into the Moscow fire and the Uglich commission's report, Patriarch Iov and leading boyars convinced Tsar Fedor to order the arrest of the entire Nagoi clan. Tsaritsa Mariia was immediately forced to become the nun Marfa, and she and her relatives were held in close confinement in exile. At this time the Uglich rioters were also punished. Many of them were exiled to Pelym in Siberia where they continued to circulate the story that Boris Godunov was responsible for Dmitrii's death. Such stories had little immediate effect, however. Instead, Dmitrii was quickly forgotten as Boris Godunov consolidated his power.

It was only after Tsar Fedor died without an heir in 1598, triggering a dynastic crisis, that people recalled the Uglich tragedy. Boris Godunov's rivals for the crown quickly revived the rumor that he had been responsible for killing Tsarevich Dmitrii in order to clear a path to the throne for himself, and many people were quite willing to credit the rumor. The regent, of course, managed to overcome his enemies' efforts to deny him the throne, but many Russians continued to believe that he had been responsible for Dmitrii's death. Tsar Boris's reputation suffered even more when a "resurrected" Tsarevich Dmitrii appeared in Poland-Lithuania in 1603, claiming to have miraculously escaped from Godunov's henchmen in 1591. When the pretender Dmitrii then launched an invasion of Russia to overthrow the "usurper" Boris Godunov and even managed to become tsar in 1605, that seemed to prove to many observers that Tsar Boris must have been guilty as charged of attempted assassination in 1591. When Tsar Dmitrii was himself assassinated in 1606 and Vasilii Shuiskii seized power, the new ruler desperately needed to "prove" that the real Dmitrii had died in 1591 and that the dead tsar had been an impostor, so he arranged to elevate Tsarevich Dmitrii of Uglich to sainthood as a "martyr" at the hands of the evil Boris Godunov—forever locking into official Russian government and church views the fixed idea of Godunov as the murderer of little Dmitrii. Contemporaries who lived through Russia's first civil war often recalled the Uglich tragedy, and many of them pointed to Godunov's assassination of the tsarevich as one of the most important causes of the Time of Troubles. For many generations following the Troubles, the image of an evil Boris Godunov continued to grow, and it strongly influenced scholarship on the subject. All things considered, however, it is highly probable that Boris Godunov did not order the death of Dmitrii. Instead, the Uglich affair was most likely part of a botched Nagoi plot to get rid of the regent.

During the 1590s, Boris Godunov faced no serious opposition from his rivals; he remained unchallenged until the death of Tsar Fedor. Boris's alliance with the Romanovs remained intact, and he helped advance the career of Nikita's eldest son, Fedor Nikitch Romanov, the new head of the Romanov clan. At the same time, Godunov made peace with the Shuiskii family, and Vasilii Shuiskii and his brothers emerged as powerful and fairly cooperative members of Tsar Fedor's boyar council. Calm was at least temporarily restored at court, and Boris Godunov ran the government so efficiently that even many of his critics praised the regent's excellent administrative skills. Those skills were certainly put to the test by Russia's deepening crisis. The continuing disappearance of urban and rural taxpayers, coupled with the obvious failure of Godunov's heavy taxes either to resolve the state's fiscal problems or to shore up the declining militia, eventually forced the regent to take drastic action that was guaranteed to make him even more unpopular in the eyes of the Russian people. He made plans to restrict the mobility of the shrinking taxpaying population.

The development of serfdom is one of the most controversial topics in Russian history, but there is no doubt that it was due to state action in response to the crisis of the late sixteenth century. Sometime during the 1580s, the government began occasionally issuing decrees temporarily suspending the peasants' right of departure in certain regions. After some experimentation, in 1592 the St. George's Day privilege was finally suspended for all peasants in Russia, who were "temporarily" bound to the land where they had been registered as taxpayers. That drastic step effectively enserfed millions of peasants, many of whom blamed Boris Godunov for their fate. Not surprisingly, the "forbidden years" provoked some minor peasant unrest. Far more serious, the government's harsh new policy caused many peasants to run away from already sparsely populated villages, and since the children of serfs had not yet been tied to the land and could still legally move, many of them also departed. The resulting depopulation, on top of the demographic disaster of the previous two decades, became an extremely serious problem for the state and for the gentry. The government initially established a five-year time limit for the recovery of runaway peasants, after which the fugitives became free. That was probably done to reduce the workload of bureaucrats handling disputes over ownership of peasants. Such a policy also definitely favored rich magnates who could afford to search for runaways. Petty pomeshchiki, by contrast, favored no time limit for the recovery of peasants, but they had to wait until 1649 to gain that privilege.

At about the same time Boris Godunov enserfed the peasants, he also took steps to bind the taxpaying population of Russian towns. His goal was to rebuild the tax base of depopulated towns and to build up the taxpaying population in new towns being constructed on the southern frontier. In addition to prohibiting the movement of townspeople away from taxpaying districts, Godunov launched investigations in order to recover former townsmen from lay and clerical estates and to force virtually all persons involved in trade and manufacturing onto posad tax rolls. That greatly angered those lords who, as a result, lost profits and valuable labor, and it undermined elite support for the regent. Godunov's policy also greatly angered many townsmen, both long-term residents and recent conscripts who were new to the posad tax rolls and the occasional labor duties demanded of townsmen by the state. The regent's decision to place lower status military servitors (sluzhilie liudi po priboru) such as streltsy, gatekeepers, fortification specialists, and artillerymen on the urban tax rolls at this time was a particularly drastic step. Those formerly somewhat privileged men were extremely displeased to find themselves, in effect, enserfed. Their morale and fighting spirit suffered badly as a result. In fact, their sudden loss of status made them begin to think more and more like other heavily taxed townsmen; during the civil war those two groups often acted together in support of the rebel cause. On the other hand, Godunov's drastic move undoubtedly pleased the beleaguered gentry, whose superior status to taxpaying low status military servitors was thereby enhanced. In similar fashion, Godunov's generosity to Russia's leading merchants, the gosti, prompted by a sincere desire to restore the economy, served to widen the gulf between elite merchants and ordinary, heavily taxed townsmen. In addition to increasing the stratification of Russian society, such favoritism on the part of the regent helped lead to increasing plebeian resentment of the privileged gosti-resentment that was periodically displayed during the civil war.

Because of the severe economic crisis of the late sixteenth century, there was a significant rise in the number of peasants, townsmen, and ruined pomeshchiki who sold themselves as contract slaves. Ominously, increasingly large numbers of them were unable to repay their loans after a year and were, as a result, converted into permanent, hereditary slaves. That so alarmed the government that it finally took dramatic steps to halt the resulting loss of taxpayers and warriors. In 1597, a new slave law was issued that changed contract slavery completely. From then on, a contract slave was forbidden to repay his loan and was thereby legally converted from a slave for a year into a slave for life. Immediately following the death of his owner, however, that same slave was to be set free and returned to the tax rolls. The new law instantly reduced many marginally employed artisans and craftsmen to slavery. As intended, it also slowed down the disturbing practice of distressed pomeshchiki surviving a bad year by selling themselves as military slaves. Those former deti boiarskie who were unfortunate enough to be serving as contract slaves in 1597, however, suddenly found themselves forced to remain slaves for life. Boris Godunov had chosen to sacrifice the interests of ruined pomeshchiki and other contract slaves in pursuit of fiscal stability and military security (and possibly to please slavehungry magnates). When one recalls that there were significant numbers of former pomeshchiki among the thousands of military slaves serving in Russia at the end of the sixteenth century, the law of 1597 seems just as drastic and potentially dangerous as the "enserfment" of low status military servitors had been in 1592. Military slaves, formerly a somewhat privileged group, now found themselves trapped forever in low status. It should be no surprise, therefore, that they became increasingly unreliable soldiers—a development that played an important role in Russia's first civil war.

Collectively, all the harsh, enserfing measures taken by the Russian government at the end of the sixteenth century failed to end Russia's fiscal and gentry militia crises. As Richard Hellie observed, those measures did, however, help produce a highly stratified, near-caste society. Serfdom, for example, increased the status of the gentry cavalry force who emerged as something like a warrior caste. Boris Godunov took measures to limit access to the ranks of the gentry solely to the heirs of existing pomeshchiki. In theory, at least, no longer would the children of slaves, peasants, or the clergy be allowed into the warrior caste. In Russia's very status-conscious society, such a measure no doubt pleased the pomeshchiki almost as much as serfdom did. Autocracy itself provided some legitimization for the increasing stratification of Russian society; however, it did not stop some of the tsar's subjects from grumbling about being perpetually stuck in their home town or village and in their inherited rank or status. Even more galling to many Russians, in order to overcome their own economic problems, the gentry quickly increased the labor obligations on their newly enserfed peasants. As a direct result, there were some minor peasant disturbances in the decade before the Time of Troubles. Many more Russians registered their protests by simply running away—either hiding out, joining bandit gangs, or heading to the frontier. Such flight was both a symptom of Russia's continuing crisis and a further cause of the downward spiral of the economy.

The draconian measures of Boris Godunov helped to ossify Russia's economy as well as its society. In spite of claims to the contrary, Russia did not "recover" in the 1590s. Instead, its crisis continued to deepen, leading to even more empty villages and vacant land in much of central Russia. In many hardhit areas, there was a reversion to a natural economy and a sharp decline in market demand; that, in turn, depressed the economies of already depopulated and overtaxed towns. Hit by lost markets and increasing taxation, most towns continued to see their taxpaying population shrink; many, in fact, became virtual ghost towns by the end of the century. Meanwhile, the potent combination of sharply increased labor demands on serfs, growing taxation, and lack of innovation in agriculture acted as a powerful brake on any possible recovery of Russia's economy. Instead, as many more peasants abandoned the tax rolls, huge amounts of land continued to fall out of production, and the agricultural economy, like the urban economy, remained in steep decline right into the Time of Troubles. Among other things, that meant the government faced an increasingly critical shortage of land with peasants to distribute to already hard-pressed pomeshchiki and their sons. That, in turn, deepened the developing crisis within the gentry militia, one of the main preconditions of the civil war. Russia's severe economic problems also sharply reduced already declining state revenues, and the fiscal crisis continued to worsen right into the Time of Troubles. All things considered, Boris Godunov's tax policy and the drastic step of effectively enserfing most of the tsars' subjects not only failed to solve Russia's problems but greatly aggravated the situation and helped prepare the country for civil war.

5

The Southern Frontier and the Cossacks

Russia's steppe frontier played a unique and important role in that country's early history; it produced the cossacks and was the launchpoint for all the great popular rebellions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Early modern Russia's southern frontier was populated mainly by overworked and underpaid military garrisons and by people who were drawn to its rich soil or who had been forced to flee from serfdom, taxes, or other hardships. With all of its dangers and its simultaneous allure of freedom, the frontier differed from the older, central part of Russia in many ways—not the least of which were the predominance of steppe grassland over forests, the constant threat of Tatar attacks, and the existence of something like a genuine "frontier spirit."

Russia's first civil war began on the southern frontier, and that region provided the strongest support and the main fighting force for the rebel cause. At the height of the civil war (1606–7), virtually the entire southern frontier fought on the rebel side. In fact, during much of the civil war, rebel front lines did not penetrate very far north into the forest zone. For the purpose of analysis, therefore, one may consider Russia's first civil war as a provincial rebellion that quickly grew into a much wider conflict. As discussed in Chapter 1, provincial rebellions were not at all uncommon in early modern Europe. Newly acquired regions imperfectly integrated into the developing fiscal-military state where local traditions and solidarities still predominated often proved to be potentially explosive and capable of fiercely resisting the intrusion of state power into the area. Cooperation among diverse social elements in resisting the government was typical of early modern provincial rebellions, and revolts were often endemic to certain regions—especially military borderlands. Early modern Russia's steppe frontier fits this pattern very well. Moreover, according to Goldstone's model, as population and price pressures overwhelmed state finances and provoked a crisis, there was a rise in the number of rootless young men (and banditry) and a marked increase in migration away from the center of the state to the periphery-which, as a result, became less stable and more susceptible to anger directed against the government. Russia on the eve of the Time of Troubles also fits that model very well. Its southern frontier grew rapidly in the sixteenth century as the state expanded to the south and east against the Tatars. When the heartland fell into deep economic and social crisis during the second half of the sixteenth century, many Russians made their way to the frontier, which offered the possibility of prosperity and less onerous demands. The frontier population grew steadily while the population of the older part of the country shrank alarmingly. As a result, by the end of the sixteenth century, Russia's southern frontier was seething with energetic, armed and dangerous men who were unhappy with the policies of Boris Godunov.

As noted earlier, the greatest danger to Russia until the seventeenth century came from remnants of the Golden Horde. Even after the conquests of Kazan and Astrakhan, the southern frontier continued to be the focus of an almost never-ending struggle with the Crimean Tatars. Throughout the sixteenth century, Russian military forces made strenuous efforts to protect that frontier from Tatar slave raids—in part by relentlessly advancing Russia's southern border farther into the steppe. The annexation by Vasilii III of the old frontier principalities of Riazan in 1521 and Severia (or Seversk) in 1523 greatly extended the newly unified Russia's borders south and brought the country's entire southern frontier under a single political authority. The inhabitants of both of those old frontier regions had long been accustomed to fighting Tatars and had gained reputations as fierce and warlike defenders of their lands. In order to better protect Russia's forest heartland from Tatar raids, new frontier towns were built and a series of fortified lines linking those towns was constructed out of a combination of natural obstacles such as rivers and forests and man-made earthworks, trenches, felled trees, and palisades. Each of those fortified lines was known as a zasechnaia cherta or zaseka. Over the course of the sixteenth century, hundreds of kilometers of these zaseka lines were constructed to block the usual Tatar invasion routes, and special taxes were levied to pay for them. The old town of Tula, located about 180 kilometers south of Moscow on the southern boundary of Russia's more densely settled central region and guarding it from the Tatars' most direct raiding route, was built up as the major southern frontier defense coordinating center. The zaseka line at Tula came to be seen as the dividing line between the southern frontier and the heartland. Starting in the 1550s, in the context of the struggle against Kazan and Astrakhan, Ivan the Terrible had work begun on zaseka lines farther to the south and east. On the southwest frontier, Seversk towns such as Putivl, Novgorod Severskii, and Rylsk were linked up to new south-central frontier towns such as Orel and Novosil, which had been constructed specifically to protect the approaches to central Russia. Those south-central towns were, in turn, linked up with the southeastern Image not available

Map 3 Russia's Steppe Frontier.

towns, rivers, and forests of Riazan. The resulting new zaseka line, over one thousand kilometers long, blocked many major and secondary Tatar invasion routes. Regular patrolling along that new fortified frontier and annual mustering of the gentry militia at Serpukhov or other places along the Oka river (only eighty kilometers south of Moscow and long considered the capital's principal line of defense against the Tatars) slowed down slave and booty raids into Russia's central, forested provinces but did not stop them entirely.

It was the devastating Crimean Tatar raid on Moscow in 1571 that prompted Tsar Ivan and his advisers to completely reorganize the southern defense system. More frequent patrols along the entire southern frontier, improvements in defenses, a reorganization of the personnel and duties of southern military servitors, and efforts to attract more people into southern military service combined to make the frontier defense system much more effective in the 1570s, in spite of Tatar raids almost every year. In the southeast, Riazan militiamen were freed from static guard duty and incorporated into regular militia service. In their place were settled "fortress cossacks" (also known as "town cossacks" or "service cossacks"), to be discussed below. In the southwest, the old defense system based upon hiring the warlike local peasant population (*muzhiki-sevriuki*) was abolished. They were replaced by fortress cossacks settled in towns such as Putivl, Rylsk, and Starodub. Tsar Ivan also promoted the settlement of the steppe by pomeshchiki. Throughout the 1570s and 1580s, many peasants also moved to the now-somewhat-safer frontier zone-fleeing from taxes, lords, or economic distress and hoping for a better life. The population shift helped extend the frontier farther south but its impact on the rest of the country (especially on the pomeshchiki) eventually forced the government to try to halt peasant movement to the frontier.

Tsar Ivan attempted to extend Russia's pomeste system to the southern frontier, in part to find land and labor for his economically distressed pomeshchiki and in part to push the frontier farther south; however, he ran into serious problems. First of all, service on the southern frontier carried less status than service in the regular gentry cavalry force, so it was difficult to attract sufficient numbers of militiamen to guard the frontier. Throughout this period, the frontier zone lacked the stabilizing influence of boyars and rich dvoriane; instead, poorer, more desperate deti boiarskie predominated. Service lands on the southern frontier tended to be small and to have few, if any, peasants living on them. Southern militiamen also usually had trouble obtaining their full land allotments, were often not paid any salary at all, and seldom received opportunities for advancement. Many southern "lords," with no serfs or slaves, were actually forced to work the land themselves in order to survive. Their morale was low, and they often failed to report for duty. Many of them could not afford to show up for service fully equipped and were, therefore, forced to serve as deti boiarskie infantry armed with harquebuses—a militarily useful new type of pomeshchiki who still rode to battle but had to dismount in order to fire their weapons. The advent of deti boiarskie infantry represented a serious loss of status for the petty gentry, dampened their enthusiasm for joining frontier service, and was another sign of the developing gentry militia crisis. Deti boiarskie infantry soon came to greatly outnumber traditional pomeshchik cavalrymen in frontier service and by the end of the sixteenth century were often the largest single group of warriors stationed in frontier towns and forts. In many ways, the hybrid military service system developing on the southern frontier differed radically from that of central Russia, failed to yield the results desired by the ruling elite, and played an important role in preparing the region for civil war.

Although the government had trouble recruiting pomeshchiki into southern military service, the pacification of the steppe and the economic crisis in central Russia drove many peasants, slaves, and townsmen to the frontier. Usually careful to avoid settling on the estates of desperate pomeshchiki, these men found immediate employment as farmers, hunters, and honey gatherers. More important, they were also recruited by labor-hungry officials into the ranks of lower status military servitors stationed in southern towns and forts. Grateful commanders asked few questions about their background. Instead, these new arrivals were offered small land allotments and immediately put to work as streltsy, artillerymen, gatekeepers, guards, blacksmiths, stoneworkers, and carpenters. Lower status military servitors were often the single largest group in southern towns, and sometimes they were almost the only inhabitants. Life was hard for these men, and they were especially unhappy with Boris Godunov's decision to bind them to the tax rolls. On the other hand, for many runaways, lower status military service was still preferable to the available alternatives in crisis-struck Russia and occasionally even offered a few of them unique opportunities for advancement. Meanwhile, a significant percentage of runaways from central Russia did not seek employment in southern towns; instead, large numbers of fugitive peasants, slaves, townsmen, and bandits made their way even farther south and joined the cossacks, whose numbers increased dramatically in the late sixteenth century.

The Russian term for cossack (*kazak*) was borrowed from an Arabic and Turkic term for "adventurer," "nomad soldier," "free and independent person," "guard," or even "vagrant."²⁷ The first cossacks in Russia were Tatars who, during the fifteenth century, roamed the steppe as robber bands and occasionally served in the cavalry of the grand prince of Moscow. Some of them settled down

permanently to help the Russians guard the Oka River frontier line against Tatar attacks. Slavic cossacks, students of the Tatar freebooters, also began to appear in the dangerous no-man's land between the forests of Russia and the steppe during the fifteenth century. Gathering together in gangs for self-protection, these wandering soldier-adventurers often spent part of the year "cossacking" (hunting, fishing, and banditry) and part of the year living in Russian border towns. By the early sixteenth century, Slavic cossacks began to greatly outnumber their Tatar brethren on the steppe, but one's nationality was basically of little interest to the cossacks. Over the course of the sixteenth century, Ukrainian cossacks developed the earliest and largest predominantly Slavic cossack settlements on the steppe, eventually forming the famous Zaporozhian cossack community on the lower Dnepr River. By the end of the sixteenth century, up to four thousand Ukrainian cossacks were regularly employed in the tsar's service; and many of them also joined rebel forces during Russia's first civil war. Russian cossacks began operating between the Don and Volga Rivers in the early sixteenth century and their numbers grew rapidly in the second half of the century. As Russia expanded south and east, some of these native cossacks were recruited as frontier guards. They settled down as permanent, stateemployed border guards or "fortress cossacks." These warriors were much sought after as guardians of the frontier because they showed more initiative and combativeness than many of the sullen pomeshchiki posted there.

During the second half of the sixteenth century, large numbers of mostly Russian "free" cossacks, who admitted no lord over them, lived in bands of up to one hundred on the steppe beyond Russia's southern frontier. Each separate free cossack band had its own *stanitsa* (settlement), usually located in an easily defended place hidden away in one of the river valleys of the steppe. Inside the cossack stanitsa, most important decisions were made by a quasi-democratic assembly known as a krug (circle); however once an ataman (chieftain) was chosen by the krug, his fellow cossacks would obey him scrupulously on campaigns. Cossack stanitsas maintained strong contact with one another and frequently joined together in emergencies or to carry out daring booty raids. According to Aleksandr Stanislavskii, cossacks were a new social phenomenon: a new military class in the process of formation. They were a communistic brotherhood of social bandits and part-time mercenary soldiers whose organizational model was that of an army. Hardships and booty were shared equally among all members of the community. The free cossacks were superb horsemen and ferocious warriors; they were extremely bold and brave, often displaying great martial skill. They quickly adapted to gunpowder technology and became expert marksmen. Cossacks preferred attacking to defending and would frequently

leave even safe defensive positions in order to fight an enemy. They were skilled at moving and attacking at night, at quick retreats, and at psychological warfare. They frequently unnerved potential adversaries by shrieking and ululating, and they had a well-deserved reputation for cruelty. Cossacks consistently emphasized their uniqueness and separation from other groups in Russian society and were basically indifferent to class origin. New arrivals among the cossacks usually gave up their old names and swore an oath that signified their transfer to a new social order. Cossacks were fiercely proud and protective of their independence and status as "free" men, sharply contrasting themselves to the "unfree" pomeshchiki in the tsar's service. Cossacks came to be associated with the concept of freedom itself, and that attracted many newcomers to their ranks as the Russian state placed increasing burdens on its subjects in the late sixteenth century. Most of the Russians who joined the cossacks were fugitive peasants, slaves, bandits, or escaped convicts, but there were also destitute former pomeshchiki in cossack ranks as well. The rowdy free cossacks were often a nuisance to the Russian government; but in the struggle against the Crimean Tatars they proved useful. They effectively acted as the leading edge of Russian pacification of the southern frontier, and by the 1570s Tsar Ivan began to encourage free cossacks from the Don and Volga to send contingents to serve as scouts and cavalry in the Russian army. Service to the tsar quickly became an extremely important-perhaps the most important-source of income for the free cossacks. When not directly sanctioned by the government, cossack harassment of the Crimean Tatars could always be disavowed by the tsar. For that very reason, relations with the free cossacks were handled by Russia's Foreign Affairs Office (Posolskii prikaz)-a useful ruse that, of course, fooled no one.

A serious problem for the Russian government in dealing with its cossack "allies" was that in the late sixteenth century more and more Russians "went cossack." The southern frontier (and cossack freedom) acted as a magnet to paupers, soldiers, dispossessed landowners, and runaway peasants and slaves. Displeased by this development, Tsar Ivan tried to stop the flow of his dwindling human capital to the cossacks by closing the borders and prohibiting cossacks from visiting border towns on pain of death (thereby ending "seasonal cossacking"). Free cossacks were pressed by the government to give up their nomadic ways and to settle down as fortress cossacks. Many free cossacks chose instead to strike out even farther into the "wild steppe." Since even the closed border was a sieve, large numbers of Russians followed them and soon there were thriving cossack communities on the Don and the Volga; by 1600, cossack stanitsas were also established on the Terek and Iaik Rivers. During the 1590s, free cossack ranks grew rapidly due to increasing flight from Russia's

Image not available

Fig. 3 "A Cossack with a Harquebus." Woodcut circa 1622. Published in D. A. Rovinskii, *Materialy dlia Russkoi Ikonografii*, part 3 (St. Petersburg, 1884). Courtesy of Houghton Library, Harvard University.

central provinces by escapees from enserfment and slavery. At the same time, many of the sons of newly enserfed peasants legally left their unfree parents' homes and, if they managed to avoid being stopped by the border authorities, made their way to cossack stanitsas and freedom. On the eve of the Time of Troubles there were at least eight to ten thousand free cossacks operating on Russia's southern frontier.

The rapid growth of cossack forces in the late sixteenth century was similar to developments all along the no-man's land between Christian Europe and the Islamic world. For example, Habsburg military frontier settlers called *Grenzer* were remarkably similar to the cossacks. So were the *haiduks* of Hungary and the Balkan peninsula. The *uskoks* of Senj, operating on the shores of the Adriatic Sea, were also strikingly similar to the cossacks. Many of these hardy, freedomloving adventurers regarded themselves as free Christian knights helping the Christian world by plundering the Islamic world. That romantic self-image captured the imagination of many people, and in Russia it contributed to the idealization of the cossacks in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—a view that has been emphatically rejected as hopelessly unrealistic by many scholars. Nevertheless, most cossacks on Russia's southern frontier considered themselves to be at least nominally Orthodox, and they were always willing to fight as allies of the tsar against the Islamic Tatars and Turks if the pay was good.

Those cossacks who were enticed into Russian service and became fortress cossacks did not retain the autonomy of the free cossacks. Sometimes they lost their ataman and came under the command of a pomeshchik. Sometimes their ataman was settled with them as their commander. In that case, he was usually treated as a member of the gentry, was granted pomeste lands with peasants and slaves, and received a salary. The majority of fortress cossacks, on the other hand, were regarded as lower status military servitors akin to streltsy and artillerymen. They were paid a small salary, given land to work collectively, and were usually exempt from taxes. Their duties were hard and dangerous. Tsar Ivan and his successors occasionally allowed exiled criminals to join the ranks of the versatile and effective fortress cossacks, whose service was becoming increasingly indispensable. At the same time, the beleaguered frontier pomeshchiki were becoming so poor and vulnerable that in many places fortress cossacks were doing just about as well as those "lords" with respect to pay and workload. In fact, there was considerable overlapping between the two groups and more than a few cases of wholesale promotions of fortress cossacks into the ranks of the deti boiarskie-events that must have deeply disturbed "real" pomeshchiki stuck in frontier service. Such blurring of the distinctions among southern military servitors was potentially destabilizing and was yet another sign of the

gentry militia crisis. There were inevitable conflicts and rivalries between the pomeshchiki and the fortress cossacks, but they shared discomfort, poor morale, and a general dissatisfaction with their situation.

The use of fortress cossacks intensified in the 1580s after Russia extricated itself from the Livonian War and began a bold imperial thrust to the south and east. Because of the exhaustion of Russian society and the severe crisis developing at the time, such a strenuous effort to expand the state was certainly unwise. It proved to be extremely burdensome to the country's already overloaded taxpaying population and contributed to the decline of the economy, increasing stratification, and enserfment. It was also very hard on the frontiersmen harnessed to the task of pushing Russia's borders farther into the steppe and helped to create an explosive situation there by the end of the sixteenth century. Russia's energetic expansion at that time was driven in part by the strong desire to prevent any future devastating raids into the heartland, in part by the desire to provide more land for needy pomeshchiki, and in part by a strong impulse to overtake as many Russians as possible who had fled to the frontier in order to put them back to work either directly or indirectly in support of the imperial ambition of the ruling elite.

The man responsible for the expansion of Russia at the end of the sixteenth century was Boris Godunov. To the east, he sent forces, including cossacks, to build and garrison fortresses in strategic locations such as Tiumen (1586) and Tobolsk (1587), thereby gaining control of the Ob River and its tributary, the Irtysh River, which effectively gave the tsar control of western Siberia and set the stage for Russian expansion all the way to the Pacific Ocean by the midseventeenth century. Native Siberian peoples such as the Ostiaks were quickly subjugated but remained restless and actually rebelled against their new masters during Russia's first civil war. To the southeast, the Russians consolidated their control over the Volga River basin by constructing new towns and by putting the native population to work. Cheremis, Chuvashi, and Tatars who converted to Christianity were accepted into frontier military service on the same terms as Russian warriors. Many became pomeshchiki and were settled in the Middle Volga region on lands inhabited by their own kinsmen who were now required to support these new "lords." In this way enserfment, then being implemented in central Russia, was extended to the natives of the Volga basin. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that large numbers of Tatars, Cheremis, and Chuvashi eventually fought, at least indirectly, against Russian imperialism by joining rebel forces during Russia's first civil war.

Farther south down the Volga, construction of several new strategically located towns was ordered by Boris Godunov in order to protect Volga River commerce from cossack pirates and the Nogai Tatars (a powerful remnant of the Mongols who lived east of the Volga River). At the mouth of the Volga, the city of Astrakhan's defenses were greatly strengthened by the construction of a new stone fortress. Upstream from Astrakhan, Samara was founded in 1586, Tsaritsyn in 1588, and Saratov in 1590. The founding of Ufa farther to the east in 1586 directly threatened the Nogai Tatars, who repeatedly but unsuccessfully protested against growing pressure from the Russians. In fact, Boris Godunov even managed to intervene successfully in the turbulent internal affairs of the Nogai horde and temporarily gained the upper hand in dealing with them. By 1600, he was actually able to put his own candidate, Prince Ishterek, in power among the Nogai Tatars. Nevertheless, turmoil continued within the Nogai horde right into the Time of Troubles, and many Nogai Tatars displayed their unhappiness with Godunov's meddling and Russian imperialism during the civil war.

At the same time Russia was expanding rapidly to the east, on the southern frontier there was literally a frenzy of town and fortress construction. Between 1584 and 1599, the border of Russia moved south more than five hundred kilometers. Towns were built in strategic locations in the valleys of the Seversk Donets, the Oskol, and the Don Rivers (as well as their tributaries). They were quickly surrounded with palisades and earthworks and became formidable guardians of the frontier. New towns such as Voronezh (1585-86) and Livny (1586-87) pushed the frontier far south and became very important military outposts. After the Crimean Tatars raided the Moscow suburbs again in 1591, Tsar Fedor and Boris Godunov speeded up construction on the southern frontier. In a burst of activity, the ancient town of Elets was refounded and Belgorod, Kromy, Kursk, and Valuiki were founded. Finally, in 1599, Tsarev-Borisov was boldly constructed over seven hundred kilometers south of Moscow. Many of these new "towns" were, of course, nothing more than forts populated almost exclusively by military servitors. Nevertheless, the Russians managed by this activity to complete most of a third zaseka line protecting the country's central provinces from invasion from the south. Overall, Godunov's frontier construction program proved to be highly effective against the Crimean Tatars.

The rapid development of southern frontier defenses and the construction of so many new towns had as its main purpose making the border safe from Crimean Tatars; but the impact of the construction program on the free cossacks was also great and conscious. The mass spontaneous migration of peasants, slaves, and others to the frontier had certainly helped push the border south, but the government was determined to recapture the labor of those individuals. Among other things, Boris Godunov knew that serfdom could not triumph completely in central Russia while the free frontier existed. Therefore, toward the end of the sixteenth century, Godunov moved beyond trying to entice free cossacks into becoming fortress cossacks and tried instead to outflank and subordinate the free cossack lands. By then, the rapid expansion of Russia south and east had already had a profound impact on the Volga cossacks. The conquest of Kazan and Astrakhan and the development of a fortified line across the Volga seriously disrupted cossack pirate activity. Many Volga cossacks were forced to retreat to the Don or to move into the Caucasus Mountains (settling on the Terek River) or farther east (settling on the Iaik River). In the meantime, construction and fortification of Saratov, Samara, and Tsaritsyn cut in two the lands of the Volga cossacks and harassed their communications with the Don. Fortress construction on Russia's southern frontier simultaneously advanced deep into the heart of cossack territory and truly alarmed the Don cossacks. Within just a few years, free cossack territory began slipping behind Russia's zaseka lines and border towns. The frontier was rapidly shrinking, and the cossacks were not at all happy about it.

The free cossacks were well aware that Boris Godunov was their enemy. His periodic withholding of grain from them and his on-again, off-again attempts to cut off their contact with frontier towns by forbidding all trade with them may have been intended to force the free cossacks into government service, but instead it made them more stubborn and angry with him. Godunov's stern measures to stop destitute pomeshchiki from joining the free cossacks also failed, and many of those experienced warriors became cossack leaders. Former military slaves who managed to slip past border guards to join the cossacks also brought valuable military skills and weapons with them and ended up playing a leading role in the ranks of the cossacks. In 1597, Boris Godunov ordered the torture and execution of many free cossacks, ostensibly for harming his Nogai Tatar allies. Such a harsh measure reflected Moscow's growing frustration in dealing with the "cossack menace," but it only served to harden cossack hatred of the tsar's brother-in-law. When Godunov became tsar in 1598, he continued to harass the free cossacks. For example, in the context of the construction of Tsarev-Borisov in 1599, the new tsar's commander there ordered all free cossacks from the Seversk Donets, the Oskol, and other nearby rivers to gather at the new town. There they were informed that Tsar Boris would generously permit them to retain their lands without being taxed and that they could continue to serve under their own atamans; however, they were now to consider themselves servants of the tsar. The free cossacks were not pleased by this development, and they stoutly resisted the government's subsequent efforts to carry out a census of the cossack stanitsas. The cossacks were certainly not going to give up their freedom voluntarily and were more than ready to fight to defend it.

Boris Godonov's cossack policy stirred up bitter resentment on the southern frontier and was an important precondition of the civil war. In addition to alienating the Don, Volga, Terek, and Iaik cossacks, Godunov also managed to stir the hatred of many Ukrainian cossacks who had fled to Russia's southern frontier in the aftermath of the failure of their rebellions in Poland-Lithuania during the 1590s. Godunov ordered the Don cossacks to drive all the newly arriving Ukrainian cossacks away from their own rivers, woods, and grasslands. That policy was not popular on the Don, where Russian cossacks regarded Ukrainian cossacks as their brothers, and it contributed to the later willingness of many Ukrainian cossacks to fight against Tsar Boris during Russia's first civil war.

At least in part because of Boris Godunov's stormy relationship with the free cossacks, the Russian government faced increasing difficulty recruiting themeven with generous offers-into the ranks of the extremely useful fortress cossacks. In order to recruit more of them into service associated with the rapid construction program on the southern frontier in the 1590s, proclamations were issued declaring that anyone who wished to join the ranks of the fortress cossacks would be allowed to do so. As a direct result, runaways from enserfment, sons of poor peasants, and exiled criminals moved to the frontier to become fortress cossacks. Godunov's new policy inevitably brought howls of protest from the pomeshchiki of central Russia who lost income and labor as serfs ran away to seek employment and higher status as fortress cossacks. Some gentry beat, withheld food from, or even imprisoned peasants in order to prevent their departure to the southern frontier. They also put pressure on the reluctant government to carefully scrutinize the background of newly recruited fortress cossacks. In fact, pressure from militiamen and tax collectors was strong enough to force occasional and half-hearted official investigations that resulted in the return of some fortress cossacks to serfdom and the tax rolls. Such investigations quite naturally stirred up fear and resentment among many southern military servitors. The conditions and morale of fortress cossacks soon became poor enough that their use in large numbers on the southern frontier posed a high risk for the government. If pressed too hard, they might flee to the free cossacks, or-as often occurred during Russia's first civil war-they might make common cause with the cossacks and with fellow low status military servitors in resisting Moscow. Beatings, imprisonment, and even executions to prevent fortress cossacks from running away to the Don only embittered these men even more. Boris Godunov's frightening investigations and occasional harsh treatment of the fortress cossacks had another unintended effect as well; many runaways from central Russia now knew that they would no longer be safe working as fortress cossacks. To avoid the possibility of being returned to bondage, those desperate men had to ride farther south to the free cossack stanitsas, where they were welcomed as brothers and swelled the ranks of Boris Godunov's foes.

Overall, Boris Godunov's frontier policy resulted in very large numbers of unhappy military servitors and free cossacks as well as a blurring of the line between hereditary military service and lower status military service. Further blurring that line, Godunov imposed yet another onerous burden on southern frontier military servitors in the 1590s that made them furious-plowing additional land for the state in order to produce enough grain to feed those servicemen busy constructing new towns and fortresses, those stationed in places where they were unable to produce enough food for themselves, and cossack atamans the government regarded as friendly. That labor obligation was known as gosudareva desiatinnaia pashnia, which may be loosely translated as "the tsar's tenth." The financially strapped government had often imposed the same obligation on peasants living on crown lands during the sixteenth century, especially in wartime; but now, in order to continue the government's ambitious imperial drive south in the midst of Russia's severe crisis, Godunov resorted to the extremely drastic step of imposing that onerous burden not only on lower status frontier military servitors but also on frontier pomeshchiki. Suddenly, in addition to all their regular duties, disgruntled lower status military servitors (who had only recently been bound to their towns as taxpayers) and poor pomeshchiki (who already worked their own land without the help of serfs) found themselves being treated like ordinary peasants-forced to labor long and hard for the state on large tracts of land for no pay. Godunov's new policy provoked widespread indignation among frontier military servitors; it showed contempt for their status and the vital contributions they were already making. There is no doubt that it contributed significantly to the overwhelming tendency on the part of southern frontier military servitors of all kinds to support the rebel cause once civil war broke out.

6

The Beginning of the Time of Troubles and the Great Famine

By the 1590s, Russia's developing crisis was severe enough to cause many people to fear for the future of their country even before Tsar Fedor passed away; but the "Time of Troubles" as such was regarded by contemporaries as being caused by and beginning with Fedor's death in January 1598. The tsar's death without an heir brought to an end the only ruling dynasty Moscow had ever known. The grand princes who unified Russia had generally practiced primogeniture but did not bother to develop any law of succession. As a result, the extinction of the ruling dynasty precipitated an immediate political crisis; but it also set in motion a more profound cultural and psychological crisis. During the process of unifying Russia and forming a Russian national culture, the ruling elite had actively fostered the myth of the divine ordination of the dynasty of Moscow princes. Over the course of the sixteenth century, the concept of sacred kingship grew rapidly in Russia, and the Daniilovich dynasty (descendants of Aleksandr Nevskii's youngest son Daniil who founded the line of Moscow princes) was increasingly seen as chosen by God to lead the Russian Orthodox population to salvation in an era of uncertainty about His plan for the future of the world. In fact, the God-chosen tsar became the one essential element in early modern Russia's completely religious political culture. Tsar Fedor, despite his mental incapacity, was loved and venerated for his piety and for his legitimacy as a member of the sacred ruling dynasty. His death without an heir was a severe shock to pious Russians, many of whom wondered why God had apparently withdrawn His favor from Russia. In all likelihood, even in the midst of its developing crisis, Russia would not have faced either the Time of Troubles or its first civil war without Fedor's demise. It was the tsar's death that ushered in an era of sharp political conflicts, succession crises, and tsars who had great difficulty establishing their legitimacy-starting with Boris Godunov.

In the political struggle unleashed by the extinction of the old dynasty, Boris Godunov's critics accused him of aspiring to the throne from the very beginning of Tsar Fedor's reign, or from 1591 at the latest. In fact, Boris Godunov began to contemplate the crown for himself only after it became obvious that Fedor would not produce an heir. By 1597, that point had been reached, and relations between Boris Godunov and Fedor Romanov quickly deteriorated as both men began maneuvering to succeed the ailing, childless tsar.

By the time Fedor died, Boris Godunov had accumulated enormous advantages over any potential rivals for the throne. The bureaucracy was basically loyal to him; the Russian Orthodox Church was headed by his protégé, Patriarch Iov, who—along with much of the clergy—was devoted to him; and Godunov was one of the richest men in Russia. The regent had earned the gratitude of much of the gentry by enserfing the peasants and freeing the lords' personal estates from taxation. He also worked tirelessly to gain the support of other key groups. He actively sought the support of many boyar clans and carried out a number of policies strongly favored by aristocrats that were decidedly not in the interests of the pomeshchiki. He had the support of a majority of the boyars, which was a clear reflection of his predominance in government and his clever use of resources and patronage. Nonetheless, he did have to fight for the throne.

When Tsar Fedor died, so did the legitimate dynasty. According to a Russian proverb, "Without the tsar the land is a widow; without the tsar the people are an orphan." In that profoundly troubling moment, Boris Godunov was forced to play a cautious game. Patriarch Iov declared that Tsar Fedor had intended for Tsaritsa Irina to rule after him, and the Russian people quickly swore allegiance to her. She immediately proclaimed a general amnesty for all prisoners. Within a few days, however, Irina entered a convent and abdicated the throne in favor of the boyar council. She was working in support of her brother but could not simply transfer the mantle of legitimacy directly to him. At that point, the boyars decided to convene a zemskii sobor as soon as possible for the important and unprecedented task of choosing a new tsar, but Godunov temporarily prevented that from happening. He faced serious opposition from a small number of boyars and could not yet control the outcome of an election.

Godunov's principal rival for the throne from the very outset of the struggle was Fedor Romanov. The Romanovs and their allies (including Belskii) tried to discredit Godunov by way of a rumor campaign denouncing him for the Uglich tragedy and accusing him of poisoning Tsar Fedor. That strategy put Godunov on the defensive, and he had to maneuver for the throne with extreme caution for several months. Eventually, Fedor Romanov, Bogdan Belskii, and others were forced to seek a compromise candidate to oppose Godunov; they settled on Fedor Mstislavskii's brother-in-law, old and blind Simeon Bekbulatovich. Nonetheless, Godunov outmaneuvered his opponents in the context of a massive military build-up against an alleged Crimean Tatar invasion threat. With strong support in many quarters, Godunov soon prevailed over all his opponents and was crowned at the beginning of September, 1598. The new tsar still had enemies, of course; but his opponents were acutely aware of the potential danger of an open, protracted struggle for the throne. According to Edward L. Keenan, Russia's political culture ultimately obliged them to end at least their open conflict and to join the other boyars in publicly conferring legitimacy on Tsar Boris. Even so, Godunov had a very difficult time establishing his legitimacy in the eyes of many Russians.

To help calm any discontent and to cement his claim to the throne, the new tsar had himself "elected" after the fact by a sham zemskii sobor. Documents were also falsified to indicate that Tsar Fedor had chosen Boris to be his successor. For many Russians those assertions were good enough to make Godunov appear legitimate; however, if God stopped smiling on Tsar Boris's realm, the question of legitimacy would inevitably return. For other Russians, the crisis caused by the extinction of the sanctified ruling dynasty was not so easily resolved. No matter how hard he tried, an elected tsar simply could not command as much reverence and respect as the Daniilovichi; and his election would be regarded as unnatural by many Russians. Furthermore, Russian political culture sharply differentiated between boyars and tsars; boyars were supposed to advise tsars, not become tsars. By 1598, there were probably very few Russians who had not heard at least some of the terrible rumors spread about Godunov by his enemies, and few, if any, could forget that the new tsar had been responsible for very high taxes and enserfment. Suffice it to say, not all of Tsar Boris's subjects were cheered by his accession. Nonetheless, in spite of lingering rumors and resentment, Tsar Boris had no real difficulty consolidating his power as Russia's first "elected" ruler.

Boris Godunov has been called one of Russia's greatest rulers. Handsome, eloquent, energetic, and extremely bright, he brought greater skill and experience to the tasks of governing than any of his predecessors and was an excellent administrator. Tsar Boris was respected in international diplomacy and managed to make peace with Russia's neighbors, temporarily putting an end to ruinous and costly wars. At home, he was a zealous protector of the Russian Orthodox Church, a great builder and beautifier of Russian towns, and extremely generous to the needy. He devoted himself to the task of restoring the country's battered economy, especially to reviving towns and trade.

For most Russians, the reign of Tsar Boris was not a happy one. At that time the developing state crisis reached its deepest stage, and a sharp political struggle within the ruling elite undermined Tsar Boris's legitimacy in the eyes of many of his subjects and set the stage for civil war. Of course, most of the forces at work destabilizing Russia at the beginning of the seventeenth century were not well understood by contemporaries. That is one of the reasons why they placed so much emphasis on the political struggle between Tsar Boris and his enemies as the principal cause of Russia's descent into nightmare. Nonetheless, that political struggle did contribute significantly to the outbreak of civil war. In spite of his coronation promise to make peace with his opponents, Tsar Boris began harassing some of them by 1599. That deeply disturbed an already troubled situation. Many members of the boyar council were already unhappy with Tsar Boris's promotion of "unsuitable" people and his failure to heed their own advice. Soon, the new tsar was being secretly condemned by contemporaries for openly persecuting the aristocracy. Boris's tactics reminded some of Ivan the Terrible's oprichnina, but Godunov was actually mild by comparison. He exiled his erstwhile opponent for the throne, old Simeon Bekbulatovich. He also prohibited certain leading boyars from marrying, including Fedor Mstislavskii and Vasilii Shuiskii.

Far more alarming to contemporaries, Tsar Boris revived the time-honored technique of encouraging the denunciation of his political foes by their relatives, associates, servants, and even slaves. Ever since Ivan III, the "duty to denounce" enemies of the ruler had been growing in Russian political culture. Ivan the Terrible used it repeatedly against his opponents, terrifying his elite by rewarding slaves who denounced their masters. The boyars had been so upset by that dangerous tactic that they successfully petitioned Tsar Ivan to halt the practice in 1582. In fact, it had encouraged popular hostility against the boyars as potential traitors to the tsar. Tsar Boris's revival of the practice greatly embittered many aristocrats who regarded it as a grave threat to the social hierarchy as well as a potent technique for destroying Godunov's political foes. The tsar also revived Ivan the Terrible's use of the charge of witchcraft against his opponents.

Tsar Boris's harshest measures were taken against the Romanovs. In 1600, the tsar fell ill, and many people expected him to die. His political opponents began making plans to supplant his dynasty as soon as Boris died; the tsar's son, Fedor, was only eleven years old at the time. As soon as Tsar Boris began to recover and found out what was happening, he struck back hard at his enemies. Some scholars believed he did so in order to protect his son; others saw it as revenge against Boris's chief opponents in the struggle for the throne. It may very well have been the former; the Romanovs really had begun concentrating large numbers of their own military retainers (mostly elite slaves) in the capital, thereby alarming Godunov's agents.

In October 1600, Aleksandr Nikitich Romanov (Fedor Romanov's brother) was accused by an employee of using witchcraft against the tsar's family. Tsar Boris ordered one of the Romanov residences in Moscow burned, and all four Romanov brothers were seized and eventually charged with attempted regicide. The entire Romanov faction was purged from court, and the failure of the boyars to prevent that from happening was seen by some contemporaries as a major cause of the Troubles. The Romanov brothers and their relatives were exiled to remote places, their estates were confiscated, and their military retainers were dispersed. Fedor Romanov, the eldest brother, was forcibly tonsured, becoming the monk Filaret. Two of his younger brothers soon died under mysterious circumstances. Also arrested at about the same time was Bogdan Belskii, who had worked with Fedor Romanov against Godunov in 1598 and may also have been involved in the Romanov conspiracy in 1600. Tsar Boris had Belskii's beard torn out; then he confiscated his estates, freed his slaves, and exiled him in disgrace to Siberia.

After the fall of the Romanovs, the political struggle against Tsar Boris seemed to recede. The rest of the boyars remained at least publicly loyal to the new dynasty. Nonetheless, Tsar Boris grew increasingly isolated and fearful. He now seldom appeared in public, and when he did it was "with much more ceremony and reluctance than any of his predecessors." The reason for his change in behavior? Boris suspected that his political enemies were active behind the scenes. He was especially concerned about rumors circulating since 1600 that Tsarevich Dmitrii had escaped death in Uglich and was planning revenge against him. Tsar Boris and his agents quietly made every effort to track down the source of those rumors. As a precautionary measure, Dmitrii's mother, the nun Marfa, was exiled to Vologda in the far north. Widespread use of torture, denunciations by slaves, exile, and even threats of death by poisoning or drowning failed to uncover the source of the stories about Dmitrii; but such measures made the boyars and others increasingly nervous about the tsar's tyranny.

In fact, Godunov's heavy hand in dealing with his political foes had disastrous consequences for his dynasty and for Russia. It apparently drove the remaining Romanovs, Bogdan Belskii, and possibly the Nagoi clan into a secret alliance against him—an alliance that soon produced a "resurrected" Tsarevich Dmitrii prepared to challenge the "regicide" and "usurper" who sat on the tsarist throne. The end result was civil war. At the end of 1600, however, that civil war certainly did not appear to be imminent. By then, Tsar Boris appeared to have triumphed over all his political rivals. Feared and respected at home and abroad, he applied himself diligently to the tasks of trying to restore Russia's economy and state finances and trying to shore up the gentry militia. At the same time, however, he continued Russia's imperial expansion to the south and east and attempted to tame the cossacks, in the process grossly overstraining his resources and creating serious unrest on the frontier. All of Tsar Boris's activities and ambitions were soon overwhelmed by a terrible famine—perhaps the worst one in all of Russian history—that wiped out up to a third of Russia's population and left much of the country in ruins. By the time the famine was over, Tsar Boris's reputation was ruined in the eyes of many Russians. The famine contributed significantly to the delegitimization of the new dynasty, deepened Russia's developing crisis, and was one of the major causes of the civil war.

We have already seen how the "little ice age" contributed to Russia's developing crisis during the second half of the sixteenth century. Coming on top of chronically low yields in cereal grains and growing population pressure on food supplies, the increasingly cool and unreliable weather depressed agricultural production to subsistence levels and led to increasingly frequent food shortages and famines. The development of serfdom in the 1590s further complicated the situation by significantly reducing any agricultural surplus remaining in the hands of the peasants, thereby giving them less margin of safety to survive lean years. At the very end of the sixteenth century, the most severe weather descended on northern Europe and—as noted earlier—was closely associated with the worst food crises and the largest number of rebellions in all of early modern history. Russia at the dawn of the seventeenth century suffered more than any of its neighbors from the impact of the "little ice age."

During the summer of 1601, across much of Russia there was abnormally cool and rainy weather for more than two months, preventing grain from ripening. As early as late July, parts of Russia were hit by serious frosts; by mid-August, a severe frost killed many still-unripe crops. Winter came early that year, and much of the fall planting, done with frozen or immature seeds, failed to germinate. By the end of 1601, food shortages began to occur, and Tsar Boris's government was forced to take some emergency measures to relieve the suffering. Making things worse, the winter of 1601–2 was extremely cold and severe. Then real catastrophe struck; much of the spring grain crop was destroyed by terrible frosts before it could mature. By that point, many peasants lacked enough old grain to resow their fields, and mid-summer frosts and snow in central Russia ruined most of what little grain had been replanted.

Terrible famine descended on the land in 1602. Food prices skyrocketed to twenty-five times prefamine levels or even higher, and many hungry people could no longer afford the price. They were quickly reduced to eating horses, dogs, cats, and other food proscribed by the church as "unclean." Many of them also ate hay, grass, bark, and roots. The horror of the famine was overwhelming; there was massive starvation and widespread reports of cannibalism. Bodies piled up along the roadsides and were gnawed by wild animals. Prolonged famine destroyed family ties; men abandoned their wives and mothers abandoned their children. Banditry and other crimes increased to epidemic levels. Many peasants and struggling pomeshchiki were forced to sell themselves into slavery in order to survive. Peasants on crown lands were allowed to indenture themselves in return for grain. Not surprisingly, slave sales increased to approximately nine times that of normal years. Although some lords were generous to their dependents, many slaves and military retainers were turned out by their masters to fend for themselves. As a result, large numbers of homeless, unemployed people starved to death. Many peasants, slaves, and other desperate and hungry people migrated to the southern frontier where famine was not as severe as in northern and central Russia.

In the fall of 1602, attempts to plant damaged seeds failed; most of the grain did not grow. Because of that, severe famine continued into 1603. Spring and summer weather in that year was satisfactory for cereal grain production, but many peasants no longer had any seed grain left to plant, so widespread hunger continued. Epidemic diseases spread rapidly among the famine-weakened population. By the time good harvests in 1604 put an end to the famine, much of Russia had been devastated. Contemporaries estimated that famine deaths in the north reached two-thirds of the total population, whereas contemporary estimates put the loss in the south at about one third of the total population. Overall, the famine multiplied the effects of the country's developing crisis and was especially cruel to rural inhabitants and the poor. It delivered a shattering blow to peasant agriculture, contributed to the severe problems already facing Russia's declining towns and villages, reduced already dwindling tax revenues, and sharpened the gentry militia crisis. The famine greatly weakened the Russian empire.

Throughout the famine, Tsar Boris tried desperately to help his suffering people, but the dimensions of the disaster were such that he could not actually do very much. As hunger began to spread across the land, the tsar declared that the poor had a right to eat. He took unprecedented steps to aid the starving and to control food prices. Tsar Boris tried unsuccessfully to end speculation and profiteering in the grain market by officially setting grain prices at low rates and by threatening grain hoarders with fines, beatings, and imprisonment. During the famine, he opened up tsarist grain reserves, selling his surplus at half the market price and giving small loaves of bread away to the poor. Much of the grain the tsar sold at low prices, however, ended up in the hands of speculators, and soon even the tsar's reserves were depleted. The greed and dishonesty of officials supervising grain sales and distribution aggravated the problem, as did hoarding by the public. A few petty traders were beaten or executed for profiteering, but such measures did not end the practice or bring any relief.

In fact, there was no way to provide meaningful relief to millions of Russian peasants. That was one reason why Tsar Boris concentrated his efforts on the towns. He spent huge amounts of money providing coins and small loaves of bread daily to the Moscow poor. Similar programs were set up in Smolensk, Novgorod, and Pskov. The problem with such a program was that many hungry people in the countryside heard of the tsar's generosity and flocked to the towns, especially to Moscow. Tens of thousands of people crowded into the capital, depopulating the countryside for more than two hundred kilometers in all directions. Whole families that might have survived in the country now wandered the streets of Moscow where price inflation and scarcity made even the tsar's alms inadequate to live on. Each day in the capital alone, Tsar Boris's agents distributed food and money to about seventy thousand people (nearly equal to the capital's prefamine population), but that was still not enough. Because of the length of the famine, price inflation, dishonesty, greed, and the continued arrival of more and more people in Moscow, the situation grew steadily worse. Starving people died in the streets and on the roads to the capital every day. More than one hundred thousand people died in Moscow during the famine and were buried in three huge common graves. Tsar Boris paid for shrouds for each one of them.

Eventually, the tsar was forced to stop distributing alms because of the depopulation of the countryside, severe overcrowding in Moscow, and a depleted treasury. That made the situation temporarily much worse. Hunger riots became commonplace. The market almost ceased functioning because it became dangerous for merchants to try to sell their goods. It also became dangerous just to walk the streets, and anyone foolish enough to be seen giving anything away in public ran the serious risk of being trampled to death by a hungry mob. The situation in Moscow became extremely tense, worse than in the provinces. It was not unusual in the capital to see hungry people grab food or accost lords, speculators, the rich, or anyone who looked well-fed. Many homes were pillaged, and many wealthy individuals were terrorized by desperately poor people. The government tried to control the streets with streltsy units; during the worst days of 1602 and the spring of 1603, boyars personally took command of streltsy units throughout Moscow in order to prevent starving people from robbing the homes of the well-to-do. Robbers were summarily executed when caught, but it became extremely difficult to maintain public order in the midst of such misery. Ugly rumors circulated that rich merchants, lords, monks, bishops, and even Patriarch Iov had huge amounts of grain but refused to release it in hopes of making an even higher profit as prices soared. In fact, the patriarch and bishops gave away much of their grain. Nonetheless, the perception grew

that rich lords and monks were withholding grain and making the famine much worse. That eroded the reputation of the patriarch and other church leaders and generally undermined the authority of all well-fed leaders of famine-struck Russia.

During the famine brigands infested the roads approaching Moscow and periodically seized food shipments headed to the capital-thereby intensifying the misery of many people. In order to assure Moscow's food supply from the provinces, it was frequently necessary to send out small gentry detachments to cleanse the main roads of those desperate men. Ordinarily, that was easily and quickly accomplished. On occasion, however, large bands of brigands fought fiercely against government forces. The problem became serious enough to prompt a tsarist decree in August 1603, promising freedom to those slaves who had been turned out by their masters during the famine. That decree was specifically intended to pacify desperate, unemployed military slaves-the most dangerous of all the brigands infesting the countryside. Every effort was made to spread the word about the decree to all towns and villages, and it is known that a number of slaves were freed under its terms. In spite of those efforts, however, by September 1603, a large band of robbers menaced the Moscow area and proved to be extremely difficult to suppress. Their activity became known as the socalled "Khlopko rebellion"-named after the leader of the bandits. The largest group with Khlopko were former elite military slaves-that is to say professional soldiers. Most had been turned out by their masters during the famine, but among the brigands were also some slaves who had been dismissed from the service of such disgraced boyars as the Romanovs.

Virtually nothing is known about the bandit leader Khlopko. According to Richard Hellie his name meant "slave," and it is probably correct to assume that he had been an elite military slave. Khlopko may have come from the southwestern frontier province of Severia (or Seversk), but the bulk of Khlopko's forces were probably from the Moscow region. Khlopko's band of approximately five hundred brigands menaced the roads west of the capital. In September 1603, okolnichii Ivan F. Basmanov was dispatched from Moscow with one hundred streltsy to suppress the bandits; no gentry cavalry were deemed necessary for the operation. Forewarned and greatly outnumbering Basmanov's force, Khlopko set up an ambush in a narrow pass between two groves of trees. His men managed to kill Basmanov and most of the streltsy. Tsar Boris immediately dispatched a much larger force that defeated the bandits in bitter fighting. Khlopko was wounded several times before being captured. Some of the bandits were immediately hanged from trees near the site of the battle; others were secretly hanged at a later time. Many of the brigands escaped, fleeing south to the frontier.

Overall, the famine had a devastating impact, delivering a severe blow to an already weakened economy. It shattered peasant agriculture and Russia's already dwindling urban trade, and it greatly increased the poverty of the Russian people. The number of taxpayers declined sharply, as did the income of the lords, the church, and the state. The famine depleted Tsar Boris's treasury, weakened his already traumatized military classes, and reduced the military power of Russia. The famine also caused massive demographic disruption. Beyond the high mortality, there was widespread migration away from famine-struck areas by landless workers and slaves turned out by their masters. Large numbers of desperate people headed south and southwest in search of food. They crowded into southern towns and districts, competing with locals for jobs and resources and disrupting the lives of already unhappy southern military servitors. They also joined the cossacks in large numbers. The famine actually led to a dramatic increase in the number of military slaves—with their weapons and skills—who became cossacks. One contemporary estimated that twenty thousand slaves fled south during the famine, and many of them soon swelled the ranks of the cossacks. The resulting sharp rise in the number of free cossacks led to their consolidation into larger units of up to five or even six hundred. During the famine, those larger, better armed, and better led cossack hosts (armies) launched powerful raids on merchants that seriously disrupted trade on the Volga and other rivers. Such increased cossack activities prompted a redoubling of Tsar Boris's efforts to subordinate the free cossacks even in the midst of the famine, efforts that stirred great animosity among the now larger and better armed hosts. The sharp rise in food prices during the famine had hit the cossacks hard, and many of them were by then already dependent on Russian grain supplies. In 1602, when Tsar Boris once again outlawed trade with all free cossacks not cooperating with his officials, his decision cut many of those men off from vital supplies of Russian grain, gunpowder, lead, and weapons. Under those circumstances, it should be no surprise that by 1604 many cossacks were willing and eager to fight against their old nemesis, Boris Godunov.

The famine seriously weakened Russia's military strength. Nonetheless, Tsar Boris continued his aggressive imperial expansion in spite of inadequate funding and a crisis-stricken gentry. During the famine, Godunov had good success to the east; the population of Siberia, also hard hit by the famine, was unable to resist Russian expansion. Unwise expeditions against the Turks and Tatars in the Caucasus Mountains, however, failed miserably—with heavy losses. Eventually, Russia's severe crisis slowed down its imperial drive. As one might expect, the tsar's already weakened military forces had been badly hurt by the famine especially the petty pomeshchiki who were vulnerable because of their chronic shortage of land with peasant labor and chronic arrears in their salaries. Increasing numbers of petty gentry were so impoverished that they were unable to report for duty. Others became so desperate that they sold themselves as slaves or ran away to join the cossacks. Rising pomeshchik resentment focused not just on wealthy magnates who took advantage of them, but increasingly on the tsar himself. In light of this, it is not surprising that so many of the tsar's militiamen joined the rebel cause during the civil war. The conjuncture of the developing state crisis, Boris Godunov's policies, and the famine made the situation on the southern frontier especially volatile. More and more of the tsar's southern military forces now consisted of unhappy fortress cossacks and large numbers of impoverished pomeshchiki forced to serve as deti boiarskie infantry. Such demoralized forces became the predominant, often the only, military personnel in many southern towns. They got along reasonably well with the free cossacks and, not surprisingly, were quick to cooperate with them when civil war broke out in 1604.

Probably the most serious impact of the famine was the decline in the legitimacy of the oppressive state, predatory Russian elites, the church, and the elected tsar in the eyes of many desperate and miserable people. In Russia's Godcentered, tsar-centered political culture, the tsar was supposed to be the protector of his Orthodox flock. The fact that Boris Godunov had been a boyar and was held responsible for enserfment, heavy taxes, the 1597 slave law, and the harassment of cossacks combined with ugly rumors circulating about his rise to power and contributed to his problems after 1598; but it was really the magnitude, horror, and duration of the famine that caused many Russians to begin wondering about Tsar Boris's legitimacy.

In general, famines and the horrible sights and experiences associated with them have historically produced similar results: terror, confusion, hallucinations, hysteria, fear of divine punishment, revival of religiosity, and the search for scapegoats. In particular, famines associated with the "little ice age" often produced the belief that God was angry with secular politics, and such ideas contributed to riots, rebellions, and civil wars. Also closely linked to those famines and increasing social stress during the late sixteenth century was a growing fear of witchcraft and increased persecution of "witches." All of this is highly relevant to Russia in the early seventeenth century when famine killed up to a third of the population and seriously disrupted the lives of most people.

In his coronation activities and after, Tsar Boris made every effort to transfer the mantle of legitimacy from Russia's extinct sanctified dynasty to himself and to reinforce the idea that he too had been chosen by God to rule and protect the Russian people. That was an important step in Godunov's consolidation of power within a political culture in which God was seen to be actively involved in the fate of Orthodox Christians and in which the Godchosen tsar was to be obeyed and honored almost as a god himself. It was generally believed that as long as the tsar was good, pious, and legitimate, he and Russia would flourish. It was also widely believed, however, that if the tsar was evil and illegitimate, God would inevitably punish the ruler and Russia. Many people came to view the famine as a clear sign of God's anger with the Russian people and their ruler. It was then just a short leap for them to conclude that Tsar Boris (already suspect in the eyes of many) was an illegitimate and evil ruler who brought down God's punishment in the form of the famine. If Tsar Boris was not favored by God, many famine-weary and sometimes hysterical people reasoned, then he must be in league with the devil. The Russian people were already rather superstitious, and fear of witchcraft had grown in Russia during the sixteenth century and increased strongly during the Time of Troubles. Even the tsars were superstitious (especially Tsar Boris) and took precautions against sorcerers and witches. The fear that witches caused natural calamities was widespread and very old in Russia, so when suspicion increased that Tsar Boris was not favored by God and rumors circulated that he was actually a sorcerer, the tsar's legitimacy was seriously undermined. If Godunov had been a member of the old sacred ruling dynasty, he might not have been so badly damaged by the famine; but, as his divine aura dissipated, Tsar Boris was increasingly held responsible for the misery of his people. Such a decline in the ruler's legitimacy was an important factor in preparing Russia for civil war.

7

What Triggered the Civil War?

By 1604, in spite of moderate weather and prospects for good harvests, Russia and the Russians had been badly traumatized by the two-year famine and a profound state crisis. Tsar Boris faced many groups alienated by his policies and politics, and a significant number of Russians doubted his legitimacy. However, those things were not sufficient to trigger a rebellion against the sitting ruler of Europe's largest country. Something more was needed. In previous chapters, we have reviewed the long-term and intermediate destabilizing forces that helped push Russia into crisis and brought it to the threshold of civil war. What were the immediate preconditions or causes that triggered the conflict?

Social scientists and comparative historians have identified a number of immediate preconditions that were common to most early modern upheavals. They include times of great hardship; a severe fiscal crisis facing the state; a short-term decline in the revenue and power of the government; the recent imposition of onerous obligations on the ruler's subjects; elites in crisis and decline; intra-elite conflict; elite disaffection with the crown; a discredited regime perceived by many as illegitimate and held responsible for crisis and misery; mobilized, disgruntled elite groups with resources; large numbers of impoverished, landless minor nobles, disbanded soldiers, and young men; and the existence of a militarized frontier zone with a recently-annexed population resentful of the central government's infringement on their land and autonomy. All of those immediate preconditions existed in Russia by 1604. Nonetheless, as serious as the situation was, Tsar Boris was not personally threatened until the arrival on the scene of a charismatic and credible claimant to the throne. In the political culture of early modern Russia, Tsar Boris's enemies would never have dared to risk confrontation with him without the existence of the pretender Dmitrii. It took Dmitrii's invasion of Russia and his campaign for the throne to trigger the civil war.

Russia's first civil war came about as a direct result of the bold invasion of the country by a man claiming to be Tsarevich Dmitrii, somehow "miraculously" rescued from the "usurper" Boris Godunov's alleged assassination attempt in 1591 and now returning to claim the throne from the illegitimate "false tsar" Boris. The pretender Dmitrii quickly generated a broad coalition of supporters from all social strata. The fanatical, quasi-religious support he received and the unprecedented intrusion of the masses into high politics during his military campaign seriously frightened Dmitrii's opponents and have puzzled historians ever since.

As noted earlier, for a long time historians assumed that the outbreak of rebellion against Tsar Boris in 1604 was a spontaneous rising of the Russian people against serfdom. As a result, relatively little attention was paid to Dmitrii or his campaign for the throne as possible triggers. That approach to the topic corresponded with traditional social science theories about popular uprisings that basically ignored "incidental triggers" as mere indicators of deeper social conflicts. Unfortunately, such an interpretation of the beginning of Russia's first civil war ignored much important evidence and was based almost exclusively upon the misleading propaganda generated by Dmitrii's enemies during his lifetime and after his assassination. Starting even before Dmitrii's invasion, Tsar Boris's regime launched an unsuccessful propaganda campaign identifying the "false tsarevich" as a debauched runaway monk who was a tool of the Catholic Poles and the devil. Dmitrii's supporters were simultaneously portrayed as hopelessly naïve or as having darker motives. After Dmitrii's victory, short reign and murder, the usurper Tsar Vasilii Shuiskii faced a powerful civil war against him in Tsar Dmitrii's name that raged for years and nearly destroyed the country. Just like Tsar Boris, a surprised and frightened Shuiskii felt compelled to launch a major propaganda campaign against the unworthy "false Dmitrii" he had assassinated and against Dmitrii's angry supporters who were taking the field against him in large numbers. The Shuiskii regime falsely denounced the rebels as brigands and social revolutionaries determined to overthrow the ruling elite and to seize their property, wives, and daughters.

The combination of the Godunov and Shuiskii propaganda campaigns strongly influenced later historical assessments of Dmitrii and rebels in the Time of Troubles. Historians generally came to regard Dmitrii as a fraud and had difficulty crediting him with the ability to generate powerful popular support. Instead, they looked elsewhere for explanations of popular uprisings during the Troubles. Some writers concluded that rebellions in Dmitrii's name were nothing more than "senseless," elemental outbursts of the suffering masses entirely devoid of political content but cleverly manipulated by the evil monk or his henchmen. Others focused on Shuiskii's propaganda against Dmitrii's supporters, concluding that the rebellions may have lacked true political content but had a definite social goal—revolution of the masses. Proponents of both

the "senseless" and social revolutionary interpretations often tried to explain Dmitrii's popular support with the same vague concept of "naïve monarchism" (strong faith in the benevolence of the ruler toward the common people). But Daniel Field has argued that the concept of naïve monarchism itself is not only rather condescending but artificially distinguishes the nature of popular veneration of monarchs from that of literate elites, and Robert Crummey has noted that many of Dmitrii's supporters were far from naïve and had their own agenda. Maureen Perrie rightly preferred the term "popular monarchism" to characterize the remarkably strong faith in the benevolence of the tsar on the part of Russians of all social classes. Far more useful than "naïve monarchism," Perrie's term has the virtue of not excluding elites from consideration and not automatically passing anachronistic judgment on the level of sophistication of early modern monarchists. In previous chapters, we have seen that by 1604 many groups at all levels of Russian society had serious grievances against Tsar Boris that made them more receptive to Dmitrii. For example, seeking relief from taxation, the burdens of southern military service, or hated local officials have been plausibly cited as possible motives for joining Dmitrii's cause. Many cossacks may have supported Dmitrii in order to oppose the state's encroachment on their territory and freedom; others may have been naïve monarchists simply seeking status and salary from the "good tsar." None of those possible motives, however, can really explain the dramatic and dangerous step taken by so many different social groups of breaking with the existing tsarist regime-backed as it was by shrill church propaganda denouncing all rebels as tools of a foreign power and Satan. Neither can those possible motives explain the fervor of Dmitrii's diverse supporters, many of whom were willing to fight for years and to endure horrible fates in the name of the "good tsar." The rapid formation of a broad coalition of rebels and the enduring, quasi-religious fanaticism of Dmitrii's supporters are crucial facts that traditional interpretations have failed to explain but that must be accounted for if we are to understand the true nature of Russia's first civil war.

In a very useful study of what caused popular upheavals, Charles Tilly emphasized that, despite attempts to "psychologize" or "sociologize" the subject, the factors that hold up under close scrutiny are political ones. Michael Kimmel has also keyed on the political motivation of coalitions of social groups involved in rebellions. According to several researchers, those coalitions needed the participation of alienated members of the elite, and they did not need to propose any radical alteration of the social structure. What those rebel coalitions did need, however, was awareness of a possible alternative to the existing regime and to their own unhappy conditions; in short, they needed hope. That was

provided by the arrival on the scene of a credible challenger to the existing, discredited ruler. The charismatic authority of such a rebel leader could rest on his heroism and ability to inspire and sustain loyalty and devotion among his followers, his hereditary connection to the old ruling dynasty, or his sense of mission. According to Deborah Stone, the success of such a rebel leader depended upon the communication of a credible "causal story" that demonstrated that the people's problems were due to an evil ruler and that the rebel leader had the right to challenge that person. The successful rebel leader portrayed not just the people but also himself as a victim of the bad ruler's conspiracy and carefully avoided any radical prescription involving the redistribution of power or wealth. In this way, the causal story created new political alliances among a wide variety of victims. The causal story could be especially powerful if the rebel leader was able to portray himself as the long-hidden, innocent hereditary heir to the throne returning to challenge a usurper. His legitimacy could also be significantly enhanced by the widespread belief that God had abandoned the existing ruler and favored the rebel leader. In fact, the strength of any rebel movement was directly related to its sense of religious as well as political mission. All of the most powerful and memorable revolts in which rebel fighting spirit was very high contained a religious element-a sense of the purifying function of rebellion. Whatever the long-term causes were, in the final analysis it was ideas, political culture, and religion that played important roles in triggering rebellion.

The above insights apply directly to Russia's first civil war and can help us do a better job analyzing the pretender Dmitrii and the poorly understood popular support generated by his invasion of Russia. Dmitrii's campaign for the throne triggered a powerful rebellion that had a genuine political and religious purpose—to purify the realm polluted by the evil usurper, Boris Godunov, and to restore the old sacred ruling dynasty to the throne in the person of Ivan the Terrible's youngest son. As we shall see, Dmitrii played his part very well, managing to create a broad and lasting coalition of supporters by a combination of determination, personal charisma, heroism, modest behavior in victory, and especially his remarkable story of divinely-aided escape from Godunov's plot to assassinate him in 1591. For the remainder of this chapter, we shall take a closer look at the forces that helped shape the political and religious consciousness of Dmitrii's supporters and that triggered the civil war; then in the next chapter we shall take a closer look at the remarkable pretender Dmitrii himself.

What often gets overlooked in assessing popular support for Dmitrii is that, to a great extent, the rebels were operating within an entirely religious political culture shaped by Russian Orthodox Christianity. An identifiably popular Orthodox Christian consciousness developed in Russia by the sixteenth century and was closely associated with the emergence of the unified Russian state. Most Russians of all classes in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries lacked a clear concept of a secular state and regarded the tsar as nothing less than the sacred ruler chosen by God to lead and protect his flock of faithful Christians. As a result, religiously-based popular monarchism was remarkably strong in early modern Russia. The religious aspect of the Russian monarchy was important in legitimizing the new state, its ruling dynasty, and the crushing burdens being placed on the Russian people. Ideally, the tsar ruled and there was no room for the masses to participate in politics; instead, they were supposed to be "as mute as fish." At the same time, however, early modern Russian popular religion was characterized by the assumption of a personal connection between each individual and God, by a surprising degree of independent thinking, and by a belief in personal responsibility for the avoidance of sin. Therefore, when things went wrong, as they surely did in the Time of Troubles, the Russian people could not sit idly by; instead, they were forced to make choices, sometimes dangerous choices, during the civil war years. In that context, the almost cultlike popular veneration of the tsar proved to be politically destabilizing. The extinction of the sacred ruling dynasty in 1598 shocked many Russians who were understandably uncertain about the possible legitimacy of an elected tsar in general and a certain boyar-tsar specifically. In fact, the Time of Troubles forced the issue on the Russians of how to tell a legitimate tsar from a false tsar, and the absence of an unquestionably legitimate ruler allowed discontent to get out of control.

It is now possible, thanks especially to the stimulating research of Daniel Rowland and Valerie Kivelson, to discern that in the God-centered, tsar-centered political culture of early modern Russia, pious Orthodox subjects could legitimately (in their own minds at least) reject a tsar perceived as evil—that is to say, one who violated his obligations to God and his people and destroyed the holy mission of the state. Indeed, the removal of such a "tsar-tormentor" (*tsar'muchitel*') was apparently encouraged, and many God-fearing Russians took the matter seriously enough to be willing to risk rebellion against an "evil" tsar. To many of his subjects Boris Godunov appeared to be just such an evil "false tsar" and tool of Satan. When given the opportunity, many pious Orthodox Russians rejected Tsar Boris and turned to Dmitrii in the hope that he was the true tsar—the legitimate, hereditary ruler who could restore Russia to God's grace. When Dmitrii invaded Russia and accused Godunov of being a usurper, he gave Tsar Boris's wavering subjects an alternative who represented at the same time a living rebuke to Godunov as a failed regicide and a miraculous return to the old sacred ruling family. Dmitrii gained rapid support not only because Tsar Boris was unpopular, but also because Dmitrii's claim to be the legitimate, Godchosen ruler of Russia appeared strong. By representing himself as the living link to the extinct dynasty, Dmitrii was able to provoke just about the only type of rebellion possible in early modern Russia—rebellion in the name of the "true tsar" against an illegitimate "false tsar." In such an uprising, the rebels saw themselves as crusaders in a holy war to restore divine order and as Christ's legions fighting against the forces of Satan. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that Dmitrii was regarded by many of his adherents as a sacred figure and as the defender of the true faith. The popular monarchist support he generated had fanatical religious overtones.

There were at least two additional factors operating in the Time of Troubles to enhance popular monarchist support for Dmitrii: the reputation of Ivan the Terrible and the remarkable "causal story" of Dmitrii's miraculous rescue and return to claim the throne of his father.

A characteristic of early modern Russian popular monarchism and popularmonarchist inspired rebellions was the idealization of certain sacred rulers as "good tsars." Dmitrii benefited from just such a popular retrospective idealization of Russia's first tsar. Ivan the Terrible was, believe it or not, regarded as the first "good tsar" in Russian folklore. This idealization was due to many factors: nostalgia for the old dynasty; nostalgia for, if not a golden age, then at least better times (before enserfment, extinction of the Daniilovichi, and the famine); and the memory of a glorious reign when the empire was founded and ruled by a fully legitimate, God-chosen tsar. Ivan IV, in spite of his historical reputation, was strongly supported by most of his subjects and, in general, had a good popular image as a pious Christian ruler. In fact, Ivan was actually an "image monger" who consciously promoted his own reputation among his subjects. His stern and highly public punishment of boyars and bureaucrats who had been found guilty of treason or corruption enhanced his own reputation as a champion of the common people against members of the elite widely regarded as oppressors. Tsar Ivan's propensity for encouraging slaves to denounce their traitorous masters also reinforced popular monarchist hostility toward greedy and corrupt boyars as potential enemies of the tsar. That in turn later aided Dmitrii's cause against the "usurper" and "boyar-tsar" Boris Godunov. Dmitrii actively cultivated and capitalized on the positive image of "good tsar" Ivan IV in his struggle against the "false tsar" Boris. Dmitrii was able to stimulate and put to good use the popular monarchist idealization of his putative father among many Russians-including soldiers, townspeople, and cossacks. In this context, it is worth noting that the positive memory of Tsar Ivan was

especially strong in the same southern provinces that rose for Dmitrii in 1604–5 and rose again in his name in 1606.

In the Time of Troubles, when many people worried about God's anger and punishment of Russia, Dmitrii's causal story about the role of divine providence in rescuing him from Boris Godunov's assassins in 1591 was highly effective at generating popular support. Dmitrii began to circulate that story months before he launched his invasion of Russia. To the Orthodox Christian population Dmitrii consistently emphasized the religious and miraculous element in his escape from death in Uglich. God saved him, he told the Russians, in order to topple the evil usurper, Godunov. His assertion, it should be pointed out, came within the context of a rapidly growing and widespread belief in miracles in early modern Russia. Many of Dmitrii's supporters believed that he had indeed been saved by a miracle of providence in order to help them return to God's grace. Their strong faith in the pretender as God-chosen emboldened them on the battlefield and even gave them the strength to endure torture at the hands of Boris Godunov's agents. In fact, popular support for Dmitrii assumed the form of a "quasi-religious" movement. Dmitrii was well aware of this, so it should come as no surprise that he was careful to demonstrate his piety, humility, and religiosity while campaigning for the throne.

For some Russians, Dmitrii's story was probably reminiscent of ancient stories about the first famously innocent political martyrs of early Rus, Saints Boris and Gleb, who were killed by their half-brother, Sviatopolk the Accursed, in his lust for the throne of Kiev. For many others, however, the "resurrection" of Dmitriilong assumed to have died or been killed in 1591-was probably more reminiscent of Jesus Christ, the prototypical "returning king." Maureen Perrie has effectively demonstrated that the sacralization of the Russian monarchy in the sixteenth century facilitated the acceptance of Dmitrii as "the true tsarevich, miraculously risen, Christ-like, from the grave." From the outset of his campaign for the throne, Dmitrii's supporters used solar imagery associated with Jesus Christ to describe the tsarevich—the same imagery that had been applied earlier to Russian rulers. According to Perrie, much of Russia's southern and southwestern frontier population-including townspeople, nobles, and monks-quickly came to accept the idea of the resurrection of the tsarevich; and the quasi-religious, popular monarchist rebellion in Dmitrii's name spread rapidly. According to Isaac Massa, a Dutch merchant who lived in Russia during the Time of Troubles, the Russian rebels believed they were "getting back their lawful hereditary ruler, and so the undertaking could not fail; it was bound to succeed." Sure enough, Dmitrii was eventually welcomed to Moscow by joyful crowds who truly believed he was their miraculously preserved, hereditary tsar and that once again God was smiling on Russia.

Far from being a mere figurehead under whom Russian rebels could pursue their own agenda, Dmitrii turns out to have been a remarkable character who seems to have truly believed he was the son of Ivan the Terrible and would, with God's help, win the throne of Russia. He proved to be an intelligent, charismatic, pious, brave warrior-prince who inspired fierce courage in others and amazed the Russian people by his generosity in victory and his genuine concern for their welfare. Dmitrii really did seem to loom larger than life, and his sense of personal mission inspired many people to fight for him with religious zeal. As one astonished and exasperated contemporary foe of Dmitrii observed, he somehow managed to draw "all hearts to himself."

In the final analysis, the pretender Dmitrii himself provided the crucial trigger for Russia's first civil war. His causal story and personal conduct and character had profound effects upon his contemporaries, on the course of the Time of Troubles, and on early modern Russian history. To many people, the Christlike resurrection of Tsarevich Dmitrii "proved" that miracles do occur and that God was on his side. That belief not only stimulated fanatical support for Dmitrii in his struggle against Boris Godunov, but it also resulted in the rapid and widespread belief in a second "resurrection" of Tsar Dmitrii after his assassination in 1606-a development that instantly rekindled the civil war in which the rebels, certain that they were once again struggling against Satanic forces, fought with zeal for the "true tsar." The startling resurrections of Dmitrii were directly responsible for the emergence of about a dozen more pretenders in the later years of the Troubles and were also largely responsible for the development of the tradition of pretenderism in the decades following the Time of Troubles. Famous rebel leaders and pretenders such as Stepan Razin and Emilian Pugachev also came to be regarded as immortal, Christ-like champions of the faithful Orthodox masses-for which reason they commanded zealous, quasi-religious support. The real source of that popular image of Russian rebel leaders was not, as long suspected, millenarianism or social utopian yearnings of the masses. Instead, it was the remarkable story of Tsar Dmitrii.

8

The Pretender Dmitrii Ivanovich

The young man who launched an invasion of Russia in 1604 claiming to be Tsarevich Dmitrii Ivanovich became the first and only tsar ever raised to the throne by means of a military campaign and popular uprisings. In spite of all the propaganda against Dmitrii, both before and after his death, and in spite of historians' prejudices against him as an impostor, tool of the Poles and Jesuits, evil monk, or sorcerer, he brilliantly acted the part of the true tsarevich determined to topple the evil usurper Godunov. Far from being a tool of others, Dmitrii proved to be a very charismatic twenty-two year old who could inspire his followers. He was not impressive to look at: mediocre height, dark complexion with a wart next to his nose under his right eye, and one arm slightly longer than the other. However, he was strong and agile, a skilled horseman, and a courageous warrior. He was also intelligent and resourceful, well-read, reform-minded, and advanced in his thinking for a Russian lord. His eloquence was an incredibly important asset, along with his magnanimous disposition, forgiving nature, and boldness. He was an attractive, dynamic character who inspired confidence in his claim to the throne and in his ability to fight his way to power.

Who was the man who claimed to be Ivan the Terrible's youngest son? At the time of his appearance in the early seventeenth century most people believed that the real Tsarevich Dmitrii had died or been killed in 1591. The traditional view of the pretender was that he was an impostor—most commonly identified as a runaway defrocked monk named Grigorii (Grishka) Otrepev. He has also generally been regarded as a political adventurer and tool of Polish Catholic intervention in Russia. Some contemporaries believed he might have been a sorcerer. Because of Tsar Boris's propaganda denouncing him and the massive campaign to discredit him after his assassination, it is still difficult to get at the truth about the strange person who fought his way to power and became one of the only truly enlightened rulers Russia ever had. Complicating the task even further, the Russian Orthodox Church and the Romanov dynasty locked in an official view of the pretender that for centuries was politically unwise for scholars to challenge. Russians investigating Tsar Dmitrii were also repelled by his connection to Poland-Lithuania and his secret "conversion" to Catholicism. For these reasons, most historians of the Time of Troubles adopted a negative view of Dmitrii, a view strongly reinforced by the behavior of other men pretending to be Tsar Dmitrii after his assassination in 1606.

Because of the conjectures of some contemporary foreigners, for a long time there was a heated debate over whether or not the pretender was even a Russian; in fact, he was. It is well known that Tsar Dmitrii maintained good relations with the Zaporozhian cossacks who had a history of supporting pretenders to the throne in Moldavia and elsewhere in Eastern Europe. Because of that, some believed Dmitrii was originally a low-born cossack.

In spite of many long-held assumptions about Dmitrii, he was not the product of a Polish plot or a Jesuit conspiracy. Although Dmitrii launched his campaign for the Russian throne from Poland-Lithuania, King Sigismund III, the Jesuits, and self-serving Polish lords were not the source of the pretender scheme; they merely took advantage of it. The source of the pretender scheme was a conspiracy among Russian lords. When Dmitrii finally revealed himself in Poland-Lithuania in 1603, Tsar Boris openly accused the boyars of organizing the pretender scheme. There is, in fact, quite a bit of evidence linking the pretender to the Romanov clan. There is also some evidence of a link between the pretender scheme and Bogdan Belskii, and the Nagoi clan may also have been involved. All of those boyar families had suffered at the hands of Boris Godunov, and surviving members probably entered into some kind of secret alliance against Tsar Boris. It was, of course, extremely dangerous to challenge the tsar. Denunciations, trials, torture, exile, and death awaited those suspected of harboring ill will toward the Godunov dynasty. Therefore, another method to oppose Tsar Boris was needed, and secrecy was extremely important. Because of the conservative nature of Russian Orthodox culture, the only way the conspirators could hope to challenge Godunov was by demonstrating that he was a false tsar and that there was a legitimate alternative. By resurrecting Dmitrii, the tsar's opponents hoped simultaneously to "prove" that Tsar Boris was a usurper and to provide an acceptable alternative in the person of the "miraculously preserved" tsarevich.

Who was chosen to play the role of Dmitrii? Tsar Boris and Patriarch Iov sought maximum impact for their propaganda campaign against the pretender by loudly denouncing him as a notorious runaway defrocked monk and dabbler in the black arts named Grigorii Otrepev. (In Orthodox Russia, defrocked monks had an extremely odious reputation.) Dmitrii's opponents before and after his death took up Godunov's accusation that the pretender was Otrepev, and to this day, the most common view of the pretender is that he was the unsavory monk. Recent scholarship has demonstrated, however, that whoever Tsar Dmitrii really was, he was definitely not Otrepev.

Many contemporary observers noted that the pretender played the role of Dmitrii so convincingly that he must have been raised from childhood to believe that he was the tsarevich. But when was he chosen to play the role? A later date is unlikely because the pretender would have been old enough to be conscious of his deception, which does not appear to have been the case. An early date also presents problems. If, as seems likely, he was raised to believe he was Dmitrii, how can that be explained? Few were interested in Dmitrii in the 1590s, and no one could have predicted that Tsar Fedor would die without an heir.

There is a possible solution to this mystery: the powerful historical image of Boris Godunov as a regicide and usurper has distracted scholars from the fact that the Uglich affair was part of a Nagoi clan plot against the regent. Perhaps the Nagois, failing to topple Godunov in 1591, secretly raised a child to believe he was the tsarevich in the hope that there would eventually be an opportunity to use him to regain their position at court. That may help to explain how the Romanovs and others came up with a well-trained pretender on such short notice; the Nagois may have had a candidate waiting in the wings.

The possibility that the tsarevich survived and later came to the throne has over the years been supported by a small number of investigators of the subject. There is actually some evidence to back up that astonishing claim. For example, there were suspicious irregularities associated with the Uglich affair (including an uncanonical delay in burying the tsarevich, a four-day watch over the body by the Nagois who would not allow anyone else to approach it, and the investigating commission's inability to recognize the body as that of Dmitrii). Several sources claimed that another boy was substituted for Dmitrii before the tsarevich's "death." Captain Margeret specifically suggested that the Nagois and the Romanovs were responsible for the switch. A contemporary English source claimed that the Nagois and Bogdan Belskii were involved. Belskii, who was Tsarevich Dmitrii's godfather, had tried to seize power in the name of Dmitrii shortly after Tsar Ivan died. Later, in 1605, Belskii swore on a cross that the pretender was truly his godson and that he and others had known about the tsarevich's survival in 1591 and had sheltered him from Boris Godunov for years.

Whoever the pretender was, he played his part convincingly in Poland-Lithuania, on his campaign for the throne, and as tsar. Tsar Dmitrii may have been the real son of Ivan the Terrible; at least he was convinced that he was. Dmitrii probably fled to Poland-Lithuania in 1602, disguised as a monk and accompanied by Otrepev and others. Fearing a developing boyar plot against him, Tsar Boris unsuccessfully tried to stop Dmitrii's departure by closing the border. The pretender's activities at this point are not well-known and have often been confused with Otrepev's. By late 1602, local Lithuanian authorities became aware of a man claiming to be Dmitrii. The pretender or his boyar supporters chose wisely in seeking patrons for Dmitrii in Poland-Lithuania; the young man developed ties with Orthodox Christians, Antitrinitarians (Arians), and Calvinists, not just Catholics.

In 1603, Dmitrii revealed his identity to Prince Adam Vishnevetskii-a powerful Ukrainian magnate, adventurer, and champion of Orthodox Christianity in Poland-Lithuania who was a distant relative of Ivan the Terrible and the son of the largest landowner in the Dnepr region bordering the Russian province of Severia. Prince Adam was at that time involved in a nasty border dispute with Tsar Boris, whose troops had recently burned some of Vishnevetskii's towns near the Seversk frontier. Significantly, the Vishnevetskii clan already had a well-known history of involvement in pretender affairs in Eastern Europe during the sixteenth century. At first, Prince Adam had been skeptical, but when many Russians showed up who "recognized" Tsarevich Dmitrii he began to show interest. Prince Adam was also influenced by Tsar Boris's strenuous efforts to denounce the pretender or to have him killed; Godunov even offered Vishnevetskii land, money, and a truce if he would turn the "traitor" over to Russian authorities. Because of the tsar's interest and threats to use force to get hold of the pretender, Vishnevetskii moved Dmitrii away from the border zone and began treating him as an honored guest. Together, they began making plans to put Dmitrii on the Russian throne.

The Vishnevetskii clan had strong ties to Ukrainian cossack leaders, and Prince Adam felt confident enough about Dmitrii's ability to plead his own case to send him to negotiate directly with the Zaporozhian cossacks for military assistance. Dmitrii was honorably and favorably received by them. Dmitrii also made efforts in this period to appeal to the Don cossacks, sending messages promising them the freedom Boris Godunov had taken away. The result was not at all surprising. The Don cossacks quickly recognized Tsarevich Dmitrii "resurrected like Lazarus;" and in November 1603, they sent ataman Andrei Korela and others to Lithuania to cement their alliance with Dmitrii and to make war plans. By January 1604, Prince Adam began gathering small numbers of troops on his own estates for possible service in Dmitrii's campaign for the throne. The activities of Vishnevetskii, the pretender, and the cossacks quickly came to the attention of Polish and Lithuanian officials who became concerned about the possibility of a private war against Russia that might hurt Image not available

Fig. 4 "The Pretender Dmitrii Ivanovich." Woodcut by Franciszek Sniadecki. Printed in Stanislaw Grochowski's Wedding Brochure, 1605. From D. A. Rovinskii, *Materialy dlia Russkoi Ikonografii*, part 2 (St. Petersburg, 1884). Courtesy of Houghton Library, Harvard University. their government's interests and that might even trigger another major cossack rebellion in Ukraine. Prince Adam was first urged, then ordered, to explain what was going on to King Sigismund and to send the putative tsarevich to court. Sigismund was initially somewhat enthusiastic about the pretender scheme as a way to secure eventual Russian assistance for his plans to regain the throne of Sweden. Most of the powerful Polish lords, including Chancellor Jan Zamoyski, however, were hostile to the idea of supporting Dmitrii, arguing that it could bring disaster to Poland-Lithuania. In the end, they managed to force the king to retreat from any official recognition of the pretender.

In the meantime, the Vishnevetskii clan sought help from a relative by marriage, the powerful Catholic lord, Jerzy Mniszech, who was the palatine of Sandomierz—commander of both Lvov and Sambor. From the outset, Mniszech was enthusiastic because he saw in the pretender affair an opportunity to end his own serious financial problems. Dmitrii was moved to Mniszech's home in Sambor, and the palatine helped him gain the important, if temporary, support of the Lithuanian Chancellor Leo Sapieha. Together, Mniszech and Sapieha soon produced a number of "witnesses" who swore that the pretender was indeed Tsarevich Dmitrii. That development favorably impressed King Sigismund, but the continuing opposition of Polish lords limited the king's options. Mniszech was only able to secure a small sum from him for Dmitrii's expenses.

King Sigismund, Polish Catholic leaders, and the Jesuits soon took great interest in reports that Dmitrii was considering conversion to Catholicism. They dreamed, among other things, of converting all of Russia and of then using the Russians against Sweden. Dmitrii was brought before the king for an audience, during which Sigismund made very stiff demands for territorial concessions once Dmitrii became tsar in return for nothing more than informal recognition and extremely limited support. Sigismund insisted that Dmitrii cede the rich Chernigov-Seversk lands and half of the rich border province of Smolenskterritories formerly belonging to Lithuania. During his audience, Dmitrii may have promised the king that once he became tsar, he would eventually convert Russia to Catholicism and provide an army to aid Sigismund's war against Sweden. Dmitrii soon thereafter met with Catholic leaders and promised them that he would lead a crusade against the Turks. He then secretly "converted" to Catholicism. Dmitrii's "conversion" was, when discovered, used by his enemies after his assassination to "prove" that he had been an evil tool of Polish Catholic intervention in Russia. In fact, Dmitrii's conversion was simply a necessary political ploy in order to secure even limited support in his struggle against the powerful Boris Godunov. His conversion was probably insincere. This "secret Catholic" continued to maintain an outward appearance of being Orthodox on

his campaign and once he became tsar. As tsar, he also maintained close ties to radical Protestants (Arians) and Calvinists, preferring them to the Jesuits and other Catholics and completely frustrating all Catholic hopes for the conversion of Russia. In the spring of 1604, however, King Sigismund and the Jesuits were still hopeful. Despite their enthusiasm, though, skeptical Polish lords prevented the king from actively supporting Dmitrii's campaign for the throne. That forced Sigismund to work behind the scenes, secretly encouraging Mniszech, the Vishnevetskiis, and others to pursue the pretender affair as a private venture while the king publicly remained silent. Probably the most important thing the king really did, apart from turning a blind eye, was to order the release of ataman Korela and his Don cossack associates, who had been arrested by Lithuanian officials, and to allow them to visit Dmitrii and cement their alliance with him.

In the meantime, Jerzy Mniszech had been busy making plans to put Dmitrii on the Russian throne and to personally become immensely wealthy in the process. The palatine had no difficulty securing Dmitrii's promise to marry his daughter Marina, pay him a huge sum of money, and cede border territories to him. Again, as in the case of the pretender's conversion, his willingness to cede Russian-held territory to his future father-in-law and the king of Poland was used by his enemies after his assassination to "prove" that he had been an evil tool of Polish intervention. In fact, his agreement with Mniszech was a necessary political ploy in order to secure much-needed support. Tsar Dmitrii never took a single step to dismember Russia in order to fulfill that insincere bargain, frustrating the palatine and Sigismund alike.

Because the king and the Jesuits did not provide much assistance to Dmitrii, those Polish lords hoping for gain by championing his cause were forced to use their own money and men. Mniszech, always broke, gathered a small force of unemployed, rather seedy veteran mercenary soldiers by the summer of 1604, but he was unable to pay them. As a result, they terrorized and robbed Lvov merchants. The palatine, coming under increasing pressure from officials, contemplated bowing out of the campaign; but the rowdy mercenaries threatened to ransack his own estates if he did not lead them into Russia. Mniszech then reluctantly agreed to continue as commander-in-chief of the planned invasion force.

By September 1604, Mniszech and his associates managed to gather together a force of approximately twenty-five hundred men, about eleven hundred of whom were cavalry and infantry forces drawn from men in service to the magnates and approximately fourteen hundred of whom were so-called "cossacks." About two-thirds of the latter group were, in fact, Ukrainians; but the Zaporozhian cossacks declined to participate at this time, and only about five hundred of

Dmitrii's "cossacks" were true Ukrainian cossacks. The rest were either fortress cossacks or were simply peasants and others dressed as cossacks. There were also a few Don cossacks in Dmitrii's invasion force and about two hundred or so Russians who had crossed the border to join his cause. By the time Dmitrii's small army invaded Russia, Don cossack arrivals had increased the number of cossacks to at least three thousand and brought the army's overall size up to more than four thousand. That army was obviously too small to succeed on its own, but Dmitrii also counted on cossacks all along Russia's southern frontier to support his campaign in force. He sent his banner to his new Don cossack allies and coordinated military planning with a delegation from the Don that arrived in his camp during August 1604. The Don cossacks were instructed to bring their forces as soon as possible to the Russian southwestern border province of Severia (or Seversk), which was to be the starting point of Dmitrii's invasion. The palatine and the pretender had long been aware of the potential for strong support from Tsar Boris's subjects in Severia, and they sent numerous letters to Seversk towns that were very effective at convincing people that Dmitrii was genuine and deserved their support. The time to strike was at hand.

Before invading Russia, Dmitrii's small army first had to make its way east to the Dnepr River, cross it, and reach the border. That proved to be somewhat tricky. Mniszech received several warnings from Polish-Lithuanian officials that his private army was illegal and would not be allowed to cross the Dnepr. All ferry boats were also ordered away from Dnepr crossings in the region, temporarily stranding Dmitrii's army. At that point, a remarkable thing happened. Simple Orthodox Christian subjects of King Sigismund who lived in the Kiev area, no doubt fascinated by all the news and stories about Dmitrii, showed up without authorization from anyone to ferry the tsarevich and his men across the Dnepr, for which Dmitrii was extremely grateful. Such a spontaneous popular response to the resurrected "true tsar" was a good omen. Once Dmitrii and his men were across the mighty Dnepr, Mniszech led them to the banks of the Desna River, the border between Russia and Poland-Lithuania. In October 1604, Dmitrii boldly crossed that border to claim the throne of his father.

9

Dmitrii's Invasion and the Beginning of the Civil War

Dmitrii's invasion in October 1604 triggered the first phase of Russia's first civil war—a massive rebellion of southwestern and southern frontier provinces, towns, garrisons, and cossacks that grew into a much wider conflict that toppled the Godunov dynasty. In launching his invasion, Dmitrii counted on the hostility toward Tsar Boris of the frontier population and the cossacks. In the months before his invasion, he sent countless messages to cossack stanitsas and Russian frontier towns urging them to take up his just cause, and he was greatly encouraged by the responses he received. The Don cossacks enthusiastically spread news of the return of the "true tsar" far and wide along the southern frontier all the way east to the Ural Mountains, managing to generate much support for Dmitrii. They also gathered together a potent military force eager to link up with his small army. Reports received by Dmitrii from Russia's western border provinces also showed strong potential support from townspeople, garrisons, and the local population.

In choosing their invasion route, Dmitrii and Jerzy Mniszech avoided the most obvious roads to Moscow such as the one via Smolensk. They had neither the manpower nor the ordnance to attempt an assault on Russia's strongest fortress, and they could not afford to leave strong points still loyal to Tsar Boris behind them. Dmitrii and his commander-in-chief looked for a route with plenty of available provisions and one that would be difficult for Tsar Boris's army to block. They also needed to achieve some quick victories in order to gain momentum and to give the cossacks time to link up with them. For those reasons, they chose to invade Russia's large and vulnerable southwestern woodedsteppe province of Severia (or Seversk). In addition to its convenient location near the place Dmitrii's forces had been organized, Severia shared the same general grievances and misery common across Russia's southern frontier.

One of the first regions to be incorporated into ancient Kievan Rus, Severia was a relatively wealthy province with reasonably fertile soil, some cereal grain production, and an abundance of natural products such as honey, wax, fish, and small animal furs. For centuries, Severians fought almost continuously Image not available

Map 4 Arena of the Civil War.

Image not available

against steppe nomads, and for that reason the Seversk frontiersmen developed a well-deserved reputation as fierce warriors. The ferocity of the Severians, who were predominantly Ukrainians, and the region's unbroken woodlands and river networks made it hard even for the powerful Crimean Tatars to invade. Severia long enjoyed semiautonomy under Lithuanian administration until it was acquired by Grand Prince Ivan III of Moscow at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The region was not fully incorporated into Russia until 1523, however, and even after that its prosperous free peasant population continued to enjoy considerable autonomy while they guarded Russia's southwestern frontier. The region's wealth and relative freedom gradually attracted many Russians searching for a better life or fleeing from taxes, lords, or the law. New arrivals were quickly infected by the "free" spirit of Severia, and the populous region and its rowdy inhabitants were difficult for Moscow to govern.

In addition to several important towns with glorious histories such as Putivl, Novgorod Severskii, and Chernigov, Severia contained large districts of palace lands in which state peasants occupied a relatively favorable position, even having the privilege of electing their own canton administrators. The most important of those palace land districts was the rich and populous Komaritsk district, located on the divide between the Desna-Dnepr and Oka-Volga basins. There were more than a thousand taxpaying households in the Komaritsk district by the beginning of the seventeenth century. The district's inhabitants were relatively prosperous, fiercely independent, and accustomed to defending themselves. Those muzhiki-sevriuki were extremely displeased by Tsar Ivan IV's decision after the devastating Crimean Tatar invasion of 1571 to reorganize the Seversk frontier's defenses by replacing locals with relocated low status military servitors (mostly fortress cossacks) and pomeshchiki. Some of those new arrivals were pardoned criminals; others were militiamen sent to perform low-status frontier duty as punishment. Even worse, at the end of the sixteenth century, Boris Godunov imposed very unpopular mandatory plowing for the state (gosudareva desiatinnaia pashnia, or the tsar's tenth) on the population of Severia in order to feed newly arriving servicemen; he even began sporadically assigning palace lands to pomeshchiki and to groups of lower status military servitors. Thus, by the beginning of the seventeenth century, many Seversk peasants found themselves being enserfed or displaced. That was a heavy blow to relatively wealthy individuals who were fiercely proud of their freedom and who considered the land they worked and paid taxes on to be essentially their own property. In fact, Russian peasants living on taxable state land were accustomed to buying, selling, and inheriting those properties-which the government had long tolerated. When such state land was suddenly assigned to a lord, unhappy

peasant occupants understandably regarded it as confiscation. In Severia, growing popular anger increasingly focused directly against Boris Godunov, who had not only been responsible for the local inhabitants' misery through his enserfment and frontier policies but, when he was regent, had also been given huge tracts of land in the Komaritsk district and elsewhere in the province by Tsar Fedor. When Godunov became tsar, many Seversk peasants naturally expected nothing good to come from the new ruler who was their personal, greedy local lord.

Most Komaritsk district peasants were free and prosperous palace land peasants whose declining position was far superior to that of ordinary serfs. Nonetheless, during the famine, Tsar Boris's 1601 and 1602 decrees allowing the movement of some peasants from one pomeste estate to another specifically excluded from movement all peasants living on state and crown lands. That meant large numbers of peasants in Severia—especially in the Komaritsk district—found themselves, in effect, temporarily bound to the land. In addition, desperate people arriving from central Russia during the famine who sought food on crown lands in Severia and elsewhere received grain only if they were willing to indenture themselves. As a result, a very tense situation developed in the region. The discontent of the native Seversk population and new arrivals to the region was well known to Dmitrii, and he counted on being able to exploit it.

Surprisingly enough, despite the numerous reports Tsar Boris received about Dmitrii's activities, the Russian government was not expecting his invasion when it finally came. No measures had been taken to fortify western border garrisons, and the tsar did not place his army in the field in anticipation of Dmitrii. Had he done so, Tsar Boris's forces could easily have crushed Dmitrii's invasion at the border, and Russia might not have been forced to endure its first civil war.

On October 13, 1604, Dmitrii crossed the Russian border with more than four thousand men. So began the civil war. While Dmitrii's main force trekked though heavily wooded terrain in order to maintain the element of surprise and to avoid open battle with larger Russian armies, a detachment of cossacks under ataman Beleshko headed straight to a small Russian border fortress, Moravsk, carrying a letter from Dmitrii addressed not to the fortress' *voevodas* (commanders) but to the streltsy sotnik (centurion). That letter warned of Dmitrii's approach with a large army and urged recognition of his claim to the throne. After brief negotiations the fortress declared for him without a fight. The inhabitants of Moravsk, almost all military servitors, simply took their voevodas captive and turned them over to Dmitrii's cossacks. On October 21, the fortress formally surrendered when a delegation went to pay homage to the "true tsar" carrying the traditional Russian hospitality gifts of bread and salt. The Moravsk voevodas were treated honorably as prisoners of war. News of Dmitrii's first victory spread like wildfire. Throughout the region the tsarevich was hailed as the "rising sun." Not just Seversk peasants but military garrisons and Severians of all social classes were prepared to believe Dmitrii really was the true tsar fighting against an evil usurper.

News of Dmitrii's progress spread quickly to the ancient town of Chernigov, located approximately 70 kilometers northeast of Moravsk. Chernigov had a sizable garrison and a small but significant civilian population living in its posad and actively engaged in trade. The excited townspeople and much of the garrison immediately wished to submit to Dmitrii; but one of the voevodas, Prince I. A. Tatev, and some trusted streltsy retreated to the citadel to resist. Immediately upon arriving before the town walls, ataman Beleshko's cossacks tried to storm it, but they were driven back by streltsy gunfire. Soon Mniszech's mercenary forces arrived before Chernigov, whereupon the townsmen and mutinous fortress cossacks, streltsy, and other low status military servitors threw open the gates in the name of Dmitrii. Mniszech's men then entered the town and began to plunder it. In the meantime, the Chernigovites themselves captured their commanders. When Dmitrii arrived the next day to receive the oath of obedience from the town's inhabitants, the voevodas were turned over to him. Two of them readily agreed to recognize Dmitrii as their lawful ruler and were taken into honorable captivity, but the third refused and was immediately put to death as a traitor to the true tsar. It was at this point that Dmitrii publicly expressed great indignation that his soldiers had plundered the loyal population of Chernigov. Demanding recognition of his claim to the throne but also posing as the protector of the Russian people instead of an angry conqueror proved to be a very successful strategy for Dmitrii. His commander-in-chief, Jerzy Mniszech, was very impressed by the reception the clement tsarevich received during the campaign. Throughout Severia rose the cry: "God save Dmitrii Ivanovich, Tsar of all the Russias."

As Dmitrii's army was approaching Chernigov, the Don cossack ataman Korela arrived as planned with reinforcements. Korela's cossack detachment had only about five hundred men in it, but it was a very significant addition to Dmitrii's army. Those superb horsemen and extremely brave and stubborn warriors, many armed with harquebuses, were true heroes in the cause of Dmitrii and made an extraordinary contribution to his success.

Because of the ease of their initial victories and the arrival of Korela's reinforcements, Dmitrii and Mniszech altered their original plan and decided to proceed straight up the Desna River to the ancient town of Novgorod Severskii, located approximately 150 kilometers east northeast of Chernigov. Novgorod Severskii, after Putivl, was the most important fortress in Severia. Strategically located on a direct road north to Moscow, the town had a significant civilian population as well as a sizable garrison. If Dmitrii could win it over, Novgorod Severskii would be a great prize. Two hundred cossacks rode ahead of Dmitrii's army and attempted to negotiate with the residents of the town, threatening the voevodas if they failed to surrender. This time, however, that tactic failed to work, primarily because of the energetic defense preparations made by one of Tsar Boris's best voevodas, okolnichii Petr F. Basmanov.

Under orders from Moscow to stop Dmitrii, Basmanov quickly surrounded the town with solid defense works and reinforced its garrison. Fortunately for Basmanov, Novgorod Severskii already had more than twenty artillerymen tending its cannons at this time. To the town's three hundred or so deti boiarskie, fortress cossacks, streltsy, and other servicemen, Basmanov added a detachment of Moscow streltsy and ordered the quick transfer of troops from other fortresses. Tsar Boris's commander also ordered the conscription of recruits (*datochnye liudi*) from the local population to aid in the defense of Novgorod Severskii. About five hundred peasants from the nearby Komaritsk district, located about 50 kilometers to the northeast, were quickly added to Basmanov's forces.

Now reasonably well fortified and reinforced, Basmanov was able to drive back Mniszech's initial attempts to storm the fortress. Dmitrii's army then settled down to invest the town. A full-scale storming was attempted on the night of November 17–18, complete with the use of a moveable siege tower made of prefabricated log panels and filled with straw and brush, which Dmitrii's men intended to use to set fire to the wooden walls of the fortress. Basmanov was well informed about the enemy's plans, however, and succeeded in driving the besiegers back. This first major failure of Dmitrii's army provoked a near-mutiny among Mniszech's mercenaries, who now wished to return home; but, just as they were making plans to abandon the siege and leave Dmitrii in the lurch, exciting news arrived in camp: the great fortress of Putivl had voluntarily declared for Dmitrii. That development quieted down Mniszech's men and immediately changed the strategic situation in Severia.

Stone-walled Putivl, located on the Seim River (a tributary of the Desna) approximately 100 kilometers south southeast of Novgorod Severskii, was a large, rich city—the most important and most heavily fortified town in Severia. It was the key point in the defense of the entire southwestern frontier. Dmitrii knew full well that possession of Putivl would greatly aid his cause, but he had harbored no illusions about capturing it with his small army—which did not even have any siege guns. Now Putivl fell into his lap. Why? Putivl had a long and glorious past and a truculent frontier spirit. Unlike most southern frontier towns, Putivl had a sizable civilian population; by 1600, Putivl had a relatively large posad with seven hundred taxpaying households. Its inhabitants did not particularly welcome Moscow's expansion into the region or its policies of enserfment, binding townsmen, high taxes, and plowing for the tsar. Even though it was the deti boiarskie of Putivl who initiated the rebellion in favor of Dmitrii, the townspeople quickly made common cause with the militiamen.

As elsewhere on the frontier, the garrison and townspeople of Putivl had maintained close ties to the free cossack stanitsas located nearby. They all shared a common discontent with the policies of Tsar Boris, and most were willing to believe Dmitrii was indeed the true tsar. When news of Dmitrii's presence in Severia and his early victories reached Putivl in mid-November, most of the garrison—led by two local deti boiarskie, Iurii Bezzubtsev and S. Bulgakov—joined the townspeople in declaring for Dmitrii. Also taking up Dmitrii's cause at that time were Putivl's two voevodas, okolnichii Mikhail M. Saltykov and Prince V. M. Mosalskii, along with a Moscow treasury official, B. I. Sutupov, who had just arrived in town with a large sum of money intended as the payroll for the Seversk garrisons. The only active resistance to the town's break with Tsar Boris came from about two hundred Moscow streltsy stationed there; they held out for two days before surrendering to the rebels. Even the monks at the local monastery showed enthusiasm for Dmitrii, for which reason he later granted them additional land as a reward.

The rebellion of Putivl was of immense importance to Dmitrii's cause and helped trigger many more rebellions in his favor. Putivl soon became the temporary "capital" of Dmitrii's government, hosting his war council and judiciary. Not only was Putivl a strong fortress, but its citizens and its garrison significantly augmented Dmitrii's forces; Putivl's abundance of food and munitions was also extremely important to his war effort. As soon as the town surrendered, secretary Sutupov personally delivered the payroll he brought to Putivl to Dmitrii, who used part of it to pay Mniszech's disgruntled mercenaries. Voevodas M. M. Saltykov and V. M. Mosalskii also swore oaths to Dmitrii and became important courtiers of the "true tsar." The transfer of allegiance by the high-ranking, prestigious okolnichii Saltykov—a member of Tsar Boris's boyar council was an especially significant boost to Dmitrii's cause. In fact, Dmitrii's conscious policy of treating gently those voevodas and others surrendering to him became another important magnet that attracted more towns and garrisons to his cause.

Soon after Putivl declared for Dmitrii, agitation on his behalf and rebellions in his name spread rapidly throughout the southwestern frontier. In addition to towns and fortresses, many peasant villages in Severia rose in the name of Dmitrii in the fall of 1604. Those uprisings constituted the first massive peasant rebellion in Russian history. The muzhiki-sevriuki, even though they were relatively wealthy state peasants, already had reasons to resent the policies of Tsar Boris, and conscription of those proud Seversk peasants as recruits in order to shore up fortress defenses against Dmitrii led to even greater resentment. The first to rise against Tsar Boris were inhabitants of the huge, populous Komaritsk district. At the end of November, the entire district—including the town of Sevsk and its small garrison—declared for Dmitrii. The Sevsk garrison delivered its two voevodas to Dmitrii as prisoners on December 1, 1604.

The Komaritsk uprising quickly spilled into other nearby palace and state land districts and helped trigger a rebellion in early December of the small garrison in Kromy, a strategically important fortress located just northeast of the Komaritsk district. When Kromy rebelled, the garrison commander joined his men in declaring for Dmitrii. The inhabitants of the Kromy region then quickly pushed the rebellion toward Karachev, a little more than 50 kilometers to the northwest, and toward Orel, about 30 kilometers to the northeast. In response, Tsar Boris's alarmed commanders rushed reinforcements to Karachev, but they were too late; the town declared for Dmitrii anyway, soon followed by the nearby town of Briansk and several villages and towns in the Orel region. The loss of Kromy was a severe blow, but Tsar Boris's commanders could not afford to lose Orel. If they did, a clear path to Moscow would open up for Dmitrii's army. For that reason, enough sturdy dvoriane and deti boiarskie cavalry were transferred to Orel to keep the fortress loyal and to drive away rebels operating nearby. Nevertheless, widespread rebellion throughout Severia and the acquisition of many towns there secured Dmitrii's grip on the region. As a result, he was able to turn his attention back to the siege of Novgorod Severskii.

News of the surrender of Putivl and of uprisings throughout Severia quickly reached Novgorod Severskii and set off a week-long struggle between townspeople wishing to surrender to Dmitrii, and Basmanov's troops who were determined to resist. Basmanov ordered the burning of Novgorod Severskii's posad and herded all willing inhabitants into the palisaded and fortified town center. Many inhabitants fled instead—some straight to Dmitrii. Valiant Basmanov, five hundred streltsy, and others, however, offered such a spirited defense that they managed to prevent capture of the town. In early December 1604, Dmitrii's forces were augmented by the arrival of eight siege guns and six light cannons from Putivl that immediately began an almost continuous bombardment of Novgorod Severskii, inflicting heavy losses on Basmanov's garrison and destroying much of what was left of the town. Basmanov and his men were soon reduced to eating their horses but continued stubbornly to hold out. In a play for time, Basmanov began negotiations with Dmitrii and requested a two-week truce. To Basmanov's surprise and relief, Dmitrii and Mniszech readily agreed to the truce, having already tried by every means at their disposal to capture the town and by then facing increasingly disgruntled Polish mercenaries among their own forces. As it turned out, the two-week delay gave Tsar Boris's army time to approach Novgorod Severskii.

Even though Russia's western border had not been reinforced prior to Dmitrii's invasion, Tsar Boris responded quickly to the threat once Dmitrii's army crossed the border. Boris ordered an immediate emergency mobilization of all available forces; boyars, gentry, low status military servitors, non-Russian troops, and all others trained in fighting were required—on pain of death—to report to Moscow within two weeks (by October 28, 1604). But, of course, the gentry militia was not a standing army, and mobilization actually took well over a month. Among other things, rainy fall weather turned many roads to mud and slowed down the movement of troops. Far more serious, successful mobilization of the tsar's cavalry force was directly dependent upon the condition of the gentry's agricultural economy. By 1604, the gentry militia was, as we have seen, in severe crisis. In addition to all their chronic problems, the famine had reduced the numbers and effectiveness of the pomeshchiki and prevented many of the poorer ones from showing up for service. Since militiamen were required to provide their own weapons and food for campaigns, many of the deti boiarskie who did manage to show up were poorly equipped and hungry. Even on short campaigns the provisions of those impoverished cavalrymen usually ran out very quickly. As a result, large numbers of pomeshchiki were typically forced to fast for days at a time while on active duty. Their salaries, often in arrears even when they were outfitting for a campaign and desperately needed money, were also completely inadequate to purchase additional provisions while on duty-especially in war zones where prices were always inflated.

In 1604, Tsar Boris's cash-strapped government could do very little to alleviate the severe problems of his miserable pomeshchiki. Since Russian commanders, even in good years, ordinarily did not have the means to provide for their men, campaigns often outlasted supplies and resulted in pomeshchiki being distracted from their duties while foraging for food—usually seizing it from local villages and doing much harm in the process. Eventually, the desertion of hungry soldiers would force the dismissal of the army. In fact, it was almost impossible, even in times of affluence, to keep the militia on campaign for many months, and 1604 was by no means a good year, although the famine had abated. The half of the militia that had already been mobilized for routine service during the spring and early summer of 1604 proved to be so miserable hungry that their commanders had been forced to let them return home early. In the fall there were serious problems getting them to return to active duty. It was also not easy getting the other half of the militia mobilized. Absenteeism was very high, forcing Tsar Boris to adopt harsh measures to insure adequate numbers of troops. He ordered those pomeshchiki who failed to report for duty to be tracked down and delivered to their muster points under guard. He threatened no-shows with death and ordered confiscation of pomeste and votchina estates, prison terms, and public beatings in order to frighten his reluctant soldiers into showing up for duty. Ordinarily, the size of the gentry militia in this era was somewhere between twenty and twenty-five thousand men. Because of the militia crisis, the famine, and many other factors, however, Tsar Boris was able to mobilize fewer than fifteen thousand militiamen to fight against Dmitrii, and many of them were forced to serve as low-status infantry rather than as cavalry.

Tsar Boris was realistic enough to know that his pomeshchiki were having a hard time meeting their obligations. Earlier in 1604, he had reduced by half the number of mounted slaves armed with harquebuses that holders of pomeste estates and owners of votchinas were required to field during emergencies (from approximately one man per 400 acres held to one man per 800 acres). Although many militiamen had great difficulty meeting even that reduced obligation, it did result in large numbers of combat slaves being mobilized in the fall of 1604. Tsar Boris also decreed that old or sick pomeshchiki, or those with important duties, could send in their place a mounted, armed, and fully supplied military slave substitute for every 800 acres of land they held. Many took the tsar up on his offer, which resulted in a significant increase in the number of military slaves being mobilized compared to previous years. Ordinarily, the ratio of combat slaves to pomeshchiki was about 1:3; therefore, when they were combined with baggage train slaves, the overall number of slaves in the army was usually about the same as the number of gentry cavalrymen. However, even though the numbers of pomeshchiki mobilized in 1604 was lower than usual, the policy of allowing masters to send combat slaves as substitutes resulted in a higher than normal numbers of combat slaves in the emergency mobilization-at least fifteen thousand men, perhaps as many as twenty thousand. That means there were more combat slaves than pomeshchiki being mobilized, and the total number of slaves in the army (combat and noncombatant) greatly outnumbered the gentry cavalry force in the fall of 1604. In addition, since combat slaves were required to be outfitted with harquebuses, they also commanded far more firepower than the gentry militia. Many of the combat slaves were former

Image not available

Fig. 5 "A Russian Cavalryman." Drawn circa 1674 by a Swedish ambassador. Published in Erich Palmquist, *Någre widh sidste Kongl: Ambassaden till Tzaren Muskou giorde observationer öfwer Russlandh, des wager, pass meds fastningar och brantzer* (Stockholm: Generalstabens Litografiska Anstalt, 1898). Courtesy of the James Ford Bell Library, University of Minnesota. pomeshchiki who were excellent soldiers, and no doubt some of them were still angry about Boris Godunov's 1597 slave law. On the other hand, in the midst of the militia crisis, many pomeshchiki could no longer afford to field relatively expensive combat slaves, so they sent armed peasants, household lackeys, old slaves, and day laborers instead. Thus, among the very large group of slaves mobilized in 1604, many were demoralized former deti boiarskie and many more were poorly trained peasants lacking discipline or any kind of fighting spirit. Those military slaves often had even less to eat than the hungry cavalrymen. Under such circumstances, it should be no surprise that slaves proved to be the most unreliable element in Tsar Boris's army.

Streltsy units were also mobilized at this time, and—like the pomeshchiki were expected to provide food for themselves while on campaign. Their salaries were really too low to afford that even in peacetime and were certainly inadequate to sustain them on long campaigns. Most streltsy simply could not afford the high-priced food available in a war zone. In 1604, there were between seven and ten thousand elite Moscow streltsy and anywhere between twelve and twenty thousand regular streltsy who served primarily in town and fortress garrisons. Not all of them were available for duty against Dmitrii, however. Other low status military servitors were also mobilized for service against Dmitrii. By 1604, Russia had up to thirty-five hundred artillerymen; many of them were mobilized for the campaign, but many others remained at their posts on other frontiers. Tsar Boris had between five and six thousand fortress cossacks; some were sent to the western border in 1604, but others remained at their posts guarding against Crimean Tatar invasions.

Ordinarily, the tsar could also count on up to ten thousand free cossacks being willing to fight in his campaigns, but the free cossacks hated Boris Godunov and few were willing to serve him. Tsar Boris was also unable to attract the usual three or four thousand Ukrainian cossacks into his service in the fall of 1604 because of their interest in Dmitrii. The tsar could usually count on large detachments of fierce Asian and other non-Russian native troops drawn from the Tatars, Mordvians, Cheremis, and Chuvashi—sometimes up to twenty-seven thousand or more. Because of the famine and resentment against Tsar Boris's imperial policies, however, the number of those exotic troops in his army was significantly lower in 1604. Finally, by the beginning of the seventeenth century, the tsar's forces also regularly included small numbers of Western foreign troops. Primarily Germans, Livonians, and Poles, those mercenary forces included Swedes, Danes, Greeks, Flemings, Dutch, French, English, and Scots as well. Tsar Boris had about twenty-five hundred of them available for service against Dmitrii. Those soldiers were often the best fighters in the tsar's army and were usually well-provisioned. Overall, however, Russia's military servitors of all types had great difficulty enduring long campaigns or conducting protracted sieges. It is no exaggeration to state that the average soldier in Tsar Boris's army sent against Dmitrii was malnourished while on active duty.

In addition to all the regular military forces available to the tsar, in emergencies virtually all segments of Russian society were required to provide recruits to serve as a labor force for military construction work; for transportation of supplies, artillery, and munitions; and for many other tasks. Those recruits— primarily peasants—were required to bring carts, digging tools, and draft animals furnished by their own communities, which was a heavy burden for many of the tsar's subjects. One of the more important tasks recruits performed on campaigns was service in engineering battalions that preceded the tsar's army in order to prepare roads and river crossings for easier passage.

In extreme emergencies, as in the case of Dmitrii's invasion, all landholders in Russia were also required to provide, in addition to combat slaves, a recruit for every 400 acres of land they held. In 1604, of course, not all militiamen could afford that extra burden, but many did provide recruits. In addition, monasteries were also required to provide recruits at the same rate of one man per 400 acres, although church officials sometimes provided horses and wagons or sleds instead. Merchants were also required to furnish recruits during emergency mobilizations. Most recruits performed manual labor, but some were outfitted for combat. Purposely dressed to resemble cossacks, many combat recruits were equipped with harquebuses; others were outfitted with bow and arrows, a scimitar, or a boar spear. Combat recruits drawn from the peasantry and lacking any training were not very effective militarily, but that did not stop Tsar Boris from using them against Dmitrii. There is no way to accurately estimate the number of recruits mobilized by the tsar in 1604, but there were certainly more than ten thousand of them, perhaps many more. Not surprisingly, recruits were treated poorly by Russian commanders, and they suffered even more privation than most other elements in the tsar's army. Armed, hungry, and demoralized combat slaves and peasant recruits often mixed with each other on campaigns. Many of them did not remain under the watchful eye of their own lords but instead served in separate detachments. That foolish policy created a potentially dangerous situation for the outnumbered and to some extent outgunned gentry militia and Tsar Boris's loyal commanders.

Estimating the overall size of the forces mobilized against Dmitrii is not easy. By the end of the sixteenth century, the tsar theoretically had a total of about 110,000 soldiers available for service—including frontier garrisons and hired cossacks, but not counting recruits. That represented approximately two percent Image not available

Fig. 6 "A Russian Infantryman." Drawn circa 1674 by a Swedish ambassador. Published in Erich Palmquist, Någre widh sidste Kongl: Ambassaden till Tzaren Muskou giorde observationer öfwer Russlandh, des wager, pass meds fastningar och brantzer (Stockholm: Generalstabens Litografiska Anstalt, 1898). Courtesy of the James Ford Bell Library, University of Minnesota. of the male population of Russia before the famine or about three percent by 1604, a not unexpected figure in such a highly mobilized and militarized early modern state. When recruits are added in, the size of the army could be much larger. Because of the gentry militia crisis and the famine, in 1604 there were undoubtedly fewer men in Tsar Boris's army than usual—perhaps only about ninety thousand men—not counting recruits. Reducing that figure by the numbers necessary to account for men remaining in garrison duty or campaigning in the Caucasus yields a number that is still more than fifty thousand, and by adding recruits to that number, the overall size of the army opposing Dmitrii comes to more than seventy thousand men.

In time of war, senior Russian field commanders were chosen from members of the boyar council. Technically, all aristocrats had to have field command experience before being promoted into the council, but only a small percentage of the boyars concentrated on military duties and had any real expertise in military affairs. Unfortunately for Tsar Boris, those few experts were not always chosen to command the army. Instead, voevodas were usually chosen on the basis of family background rather than competence. Such officers often became more preoccupied with maintaining their family's honor and their place in the service hierarchy's pecking order than with their military duties. Their mestnichestvo (precedenceranking system) disputes with one another frequently caused serious problems on campaigns. Further complicating matters, in 1604 Tsar Boris was forced to carefully choose only boyars he considered loyal to his dynasty or, at least, those he believed were not secretly involved in the conspiracy to put Dmitrii on the throne. As a result, to fight against Dmitrii, Godunov chose two of his highestranking boyars, Fedor Mstislavskii and Dmitrii I. Shuiskii, neither one a good field commander. The Military Affairs Office mobilized two armies for Mstislavskii and Shuiskii. One of the regiments formed in Moscow was immediately placed under Shuiskii's command and began marching to Severia by November 12. Shuiskii's intention was to gather additional forces on the way, to bypass Dmitrii's army, and to concentrate on recapturing rebel-held Chernigov. Meanwhile, even before being brought up to full strength, the main army-commanded by Mstislavskii-moved forward to Briansk, through which a major road connected Severia to Moscow. Pomeshchiki continuing to drift into Moscow from outlying areas were quickly sent forward to beef up those forces. Fedor Mstislavskii served as the senior commander for the entire campaign against Dmitrii, and his basic instructions were simple: attack the army besieging Novgorod Severskii as soon as possible.

Tsar Boris was extremely concerned about Dmitrii's progress in Severia. At first, he tried to hide the invasion from his subjects and his soldiers, claiming

that the emergency mobilization was due only to a cossack mutiny and incursion into Severia. No one was fooled; almost everyone knew that Tsarevich Dmitrii's campaign for the throne was the real cause of the mobilization. When that fact became obvious to the ruling elite, they shifted tactics and began loudly denouncing Dmitrii as an evil runaway monk and notorious sorcerer. Tsar Boris also employed informers to report any and all mention of Dmitrii's name by his subjects; if caught, the punishment was death, sometimes of entire families. "Constantly, night and day, they gave victims to torture, burning them alive on slow fires, or pushing them under the ice." No one dared to speak the truth, and a dark and fearful mood settled over Moscow. Tsar Boris withdrew even farther from public view.

By December 1604, Mstislavskii had assembled an army of forty to fifty thousand men near Briansk, about 180 kilometers northeast of his objective-Novgorod Severskii. Mstislavskii's army was divided into the traditional, Mongol-inspired five regiments: advance guard, left wing, right wing, rear guard, and main regiment in the center. Each regiment was commanded by a voevoda and was usually divided into detachments of one hundred men commanded by a sotnik (centurion). Senior voevoda Mstislavskii led the main regiment. While on the march, the five regiments traveled separately but maintained close contact with the senior voevoda; each regimental commander had to be prepared on very short notice to quickly join forces with the main regiment. Secretaries and clerks from the Military Affairs Office accompanied the army and provided centralized logistical support, military intelligence, and overall strategy-leaving very few key decisions to field commanders. Because the campaign against Dmitrii was conducted during the winter, travel was actually easier than it would have been during the fall or spring. Mstislavskii's army moved toward Dmitrii's at approximately 15 kilometers per day.

On December 20, 1604, Tsar Boris's army approached Dmitrii's much smaller army, which was forced to abandon the siege of Novgorod Severskii in order to face the approaching enemy. Even though Dmitrii's forces had been growing as more and more towns and villages of Severia took up his cause, he probably still had fewer than ten thousand men at this point. To make matters worse, as soon as Mstislavskii's army approached Novgorod Severskii, Basmanov ordered the continuous bombardment of Dmitrii's forces with all of his remaining artillery and dispatched frequent sorties to harass and tie down some of Dmitrii's cossacks. Isaac Massa, a Dutch merchant who lived in Moscow at the time, described Basmanov's clever ruse of pretending to surrender the fortress only to unleash a terrible artillery salvo from hidden positions as Dmitrii's soldiers came rushing through an open gate. Basmanov's men inflicted heavy casualties and, in the resulting confusion, were even able to make a bold sortie to capture some of Dmitrii's supplies. Caught between Mstislavskii and Basmanov, Dmitrii was in a very difficult position. Fortunately for him, Mstislavskii did not seize the initiative.

The battle between Dmitrii's army and Mstislavskii's occurred on December 21, 1604. On the surface, it appeared to be a complete mismatch, with Dmitrii's forces outnumbered by more than three to one. However, there were several factors working in the pretender's favor: In addition to the lack of military skill and constant squabbling over rank and status on the part of Tsar Boris's commanders, the tsar's gentry cavalry force suffered from serious problems related not only to the militia crisis and the famine but also to outdated military organization and tactics. Even though Russian soldiers were extremely hardy, the severe conditions of camping in wintertime with inadequate shelter and meager rations inevitably produced sullen and demoralized troops. Rich noblemen, of course, kept warmer and ate well. They wore fine armor with chain mail shirts and conic helmets and carried good lances or costly sabres in addition to their bows and arrows; they also rode on good horses. Much of the militia, on the other hand, suffered from exposure, could barely afford to provide its own food, and had to cut costs wherever possible. As a result, many pomeshchiki wore poor armor or, more often, cheap and ineffective quilted hemp or flax clothing with sewn-in iron plates and a poor cloth hat with a metal nosepiece. They usually carried a scimitar in addition to bows and arrows, and they rode sturdy small horses that were remarkably inexpensive. Militiamen strongly preferred bows and arrows to harquebuses. In addition to higher status, the bow was also still superior in accuracy and rate of fire to gunpowder weapons-and it was cheaper.

The tsar's gentry cavalry force consisted of excellent horsemen able to shoot arrows accurately from the saddle, but they had no formal military training. Among militiamen, there was little pretension to expertise and almost no specialization. In general, they suffered from poor morale and lacked discipline and courage on the battlefield. Organized for steppe warfare, the gentry cavalry force operated in a relatively unsophisticated way. There were no officers below the rank of sotnik, and detachments did relatively little coordinated maneuvering together. Instead, the militia was somewhat horde-like, trusting in sheer numbers to overwhelm an opposing force. Pomeshchiki were supposed to keep an eye on their voevoda's large battle standard during any conflict and to listen for signals. One brass kettle drum gave the signal to mount up or to dismount. Several other drums, trumpets, and shawms signaled attacks and retreats. There was little actual planning or order in attacks or in defense. The militia was generally poor at offensive warfare and quick to retreat in the face of stiff opposition. Even after winning a battle, they usually had trouble following up their victory by pursuing the retreating enemy. Instead, disorder and looting by hungry and miserable militiamen often reduced the value of battlefield successes. Overall, the gentry militia, despite its size, was increasingly anachronistic in the age of the gunpowder revolution and could not be counted upon to overwhelm even much smaller forces of highly motivated opponents. One of Tsar Boris's most senior Western officers, Captain Margeret, referred to the pomeshchiki as "a multitude of men badly mounted, without order, courage, or discipline" who "often do more damage to the army than good."

The battle before Novgorod Severskii lasted only three hours and consisted mostly of minor skirmishing. Because of Mstislavskii's timidity, Dmitrii's commander-in-chief, Jerzy Mniszech, was able to seize the initiative. He sent three Polish cavalry companies on a lightning-quick strike against the enemy's right wing regiment, which wavered and began to retreat in disorder into the main regiment, which in turn began to waver and retreat. During all this time, the tsar's commanders made no effort to turn the tide of battle against the small attacking force. Captain Margeret, an eyewitness, remarked famously: "In fact, one might have said that the Russians had no arms to strike with, although there were forty or fifty thousand of them." The immobility of the tsar's army was due at least in part to one of the Polish cavalry companies accidentally stumbling across senior voevoda Mstislavskii himself, who was thrown from his horse and wounded, receiving several blows to his head. Mstislavskii would have been captured except for the timely arrival of a dozen Russian harquebusiers who forced the Poles to retreat and even managed to capture an impetuous Polish captain. Nonetheless, with the tsar's entire army except the left wing beginning to retreat in disorder, Mstislavskii's subordinate voevodas ordered a full retreat from the battlefield. That left Dmitrii's men holding the field and able to declare victory.

News of that victory quickly spread throughout the frontier and convinced many more of Tsar Boris's subjects to join the cause of the "true tsar." During the battle, Dmitrii had personally inspired courage in his troops, and his bravery was noted by many people. His overall losses that day were minimal, perhaps as few as one hundred twenty Polish cavalrymen. In fact, had Dmitrii's commanders been more experienced and struck at the tsar's retreating forces, the victory could have been decisive. Instead, the tsar's army remained intact and continued to block the path to Moscow. Mstislavskii's forces did suffer a few thousand casualties, but only a small number of pomeshchiki had been killed. Large numbers of wounded soldiers were sent to Moscow, and medical teams were sent from the capital to Severia to care for the remaining sick and wounded. The tsar's army avoided any further contact with Dmitrii's forces and, for the time being, withdrew north about 65 kilometers to Starodub to await reinforcements and a new senior voevoda to assist the wounded Mstislavskii.

Tsar Boris was, of course, shocked and disappointed by his army's setback, which was not revealed to the public partly out of fear that it might lead some of them to take up Dmitrii's cause. Instead, the first of several fake "victory" parades was held in the capital, and Tsar Boris sent congratulations to Mstislavskii for his efforts. In fact, in strictly military terms, Dmitrii's victory before Novgorod Severskii had not really changed the strategic situation very much. Although some southern frontier deti boiarskie switched to Dmitrii's side after the battle, he still faced a large Russian army. He also faced increasing unrest among his Polish mercenaries, who grew tired of losing men in repeated failures to storm Novgorod Severskii and did not relish another encounter with Tsar Boris's much larger army. Even the welcome arrival of up to four thousand Zaporozhian cossacks in Dmitrii's camp on the day after the battle with Mstislavskii's forces did not really alter the situation much. In spite of heroic efforts, Basmanov's stubborn garrison could not be dislodged from the smoldering town. As a result, Dmitrii reluctantly lifted the siege on December 28-withdrawing his army east, deeper into Russia and toward the fertile and friendly Komaritsk district where he hoped to find rest, provisions, and additional men before his next confrontation with Tsar Boris's army.

10

Tsar Boris Strikes Back and the Civil War Widens

By the end of 1604, Dmitrii's forces were growing, were better supplied, and were operating in friendly territory. In spite of that, serious unrest broke out again among the Polish mercenaries in his army, who continued to complain loudly about Dmitrii's policy against looting. Tired of campaigning, they demanded all money that had been promised to them, and by January 1, 1605, they openly mutinied and plundered their own army's baggage train. Mniszech and Dmitrii were powerless to stop them. Some of the Polish mercenaries even tore up Dmitrii's banner and cursed him before departing for the border on January 2. Two days later, the deserting Poles were joined by Dmitrii's commander-in-chief; Mniszech had also decided that the campaign was hopeless and too dangerous to continue. Claiming poor health and pressing business in Warsaw, he and his two principal lieutenants crossed the border with about eight hundred Polish soldiers. Dmitrii did manage to retain the support of a few of his Polish captains and their men, but his army was now no longer dominated by Polish troops or officers. Instead, faithful cossacks and Russians came to predominate. The decline of the Polish presence in his army actually aided Dmitrii's cause. As he advanced into the Komaritsk district, more and more Russians flocked to his banner and more towns and fortresses of the southwestern and southern frontier declared for him.

Dmitrii set up his winter camp in the Komaritsk district about 10 kilometers from Sevsk. The local townspeople and villagers welcomed him with open arms, the peal of church bells, and the traditional offerings of bread and salt. They were truly astonished by the extraordinary behavior of Tsarevich Dmitrii and his army. Instead of seizing supplies from local peasants (the usual practice of a Russian army), Dmitrii took only what was offered by the generous and friendly population. He did not allow his army to plunder any villages and kept his soldiers from causing harm to civilians. The impact of that strategy was enormous. Local legends about Dmitrii's humanity, kindness, informality, and sense of humor survived for centuries. Severians and other subjects of Tsar Boris flocked to his banner in large numbers. Despite the desertion of the Polish mercenaries, Dmitrii's army grew larger every day. By the beginning of 1605 Dmitrii's forces had been augmented by at least four thousand Zaporozhian cossacks and hundreds of Don cossacks, who even brought some light field artillery with them. Dmitrii's forces had also been growing steadily because of the stream of Severians and Russian deti boiarskie and low status military servitors joining his army. The deti boiarskie of Putivl and other towns provided new leadership and élan for Dmitrii's cause, and Seversk townsmen and peasants practiced at arms (muzhiki-sevriuki) formed numerous detachments. Arming Seversk peasants stirred indignation and lasting resentment among Tsar Boris's commanders and helped produce the faulty view of Dmitrii's campaign as a social revolution or peasant war. In fact, every day more and more of Tsar Boris' subjects of all social classes, anxious to join the cause of the true tsar, made their way toward Dmitrii's camp.

For several weeks following the battle before Novgorod Severskii in December 1604, the commanders of Tsar Boris's army carefully avoided approaching Dmitrii's growing forces for a decisive battle. That was due in part to Mstislavskii's wounds, the timid and poor generalship of his subordinates, and a wait for reinforcements. Eventually, however, news of Dmitrii's growing forces prodded Tsar Boris's main army to advance against Dmitrii before the entire frontier rose up in his name.

By early January 1605, significant reinforcements arrived in the camp of Mstislavskii's army from Briansk and Moscow, including three regiments commanded by Dmitrii Shuiskii. Prince Vasilii Shuiskii also arrived from Moscow to serve as Mstislavskii's second-in-command, bringing with him many elite warriors from court—members of the "tsar's regiment." By the time of the Shuiskii brothers' arrival in camp, Mstislavskii's army—including slaves and recruits—had approximately forty thousand men. It dwarfed Dmitrii's forces. Once the bulk of the reinforcements arrived, senior voevodas Mstislavskii and Vasilii Shuiskii decided to advance into the Komaritsk district. While the main army prepared to confront Dmitrii, a smaller one—with siege guns—was sent under the command of Fedor Sheremetev to invest rebel-held Kromy. That action was deemed necessary because of the strategic significance of Kromy, which guarded the route to Moscow.

Tsar Boris's main army advanced into the Komaritsk district at slow pace, unsure of the size or location of Dmitrii's army but fully aware of the sympathies of the local population, who strongly supported the pretender and acted as spies for him. By this time, the tsar's army had been on campaign for months and was growing increasingly hungry as supplies dwindled. That prompted the tsar's commanders to dispatch a force of at least four thousand horsemen on a foraging expedition within the Komaritsk district. Such authorized expropriations by hungry soldiers were ordinary in early modern Russia but contrasted sharply with the behavior of Dmitrii's army. At the time, Mstislavskii and Shuiskii believed Dmitrii was encamped about 45 kilometers away. In fact, his army was much closer to them than they suspected, and Dmitrii was well informed about the movements of their foraging expedition. He sent his remaining Polish cavalry to fall on those forces in a surprise attack. They succeeded brilliantly, inflicting more than five hundred casualties. The routing of the foraging force struck fear into the tsar's army. That defeat also provoked deep and lasting anger among Tsar Boris's commanders toward the population of Komaritsk district.

On January 20, 1605, the tsar's army pitched camp in the large village of Dobrynichi, located on a flat plain surrounded by many hills, approximately 18 kilometers northwest of Sevsk and quite near Dmitrii's headquarters. The tsar's forces crowded into the village until they were barely able to move; they were completely unaware that Dmitrii's army had advanced to within 5 kilometers of them. Dmitrii, assured of the support of the region's population, decided to strike boldly before the enemy became aware of his presence. By this time, Dmitrii's army had swollen to as many as fifteen thousand soldiers. Still outnumbered by more than three to one, Dmitrii's men were overconfident after their success before Novgorod Severskii. The few remaining Polish officers urged caution, even negotiations; but Dmitrii listened instead to his cossack atamans who favored an immediate attack.

During the night of January 20–21, local peasants loyal to Dmitrii were sent forward to Dobrynichi with the intention of setting fire to the crowded camp of the tsar's army. They were detected by guards, however, and Mstislavskii ordered the entire army to remain on alert all night. Just after dawn, the two armies began to approach each other, and battle began with skirmishing and cannon play on both sides. Dmitrii and his new commander-in-chief, Hetman Adam Dworzicki, decided to repeat the successful flanking maneuver employed at Novgorod Severskii. About six thousand men—Dmitrii's Polish cavalry units, bolstered by Ukrainian, Belorussian, and Russian cavalry forces—attacked the right wing of Mstislavskii's army. Their intention was to cut between the tsar's army and Dobrynichi; then Dmitrii's cossack cavalry was supposed to hit Mstislavskii's main force, with infantry being held in reserve to screen Dmitrii's artillery and to mop up after the expected victory.

Mstislavskii, warned of the enemy's approach, sent forward his right wing regiment, commanded by Vasilii Shuiskii, and two companies of foreign mercenaries under Captain Margeret and Walther von Rosen to engage the noisy and overconfident Polish cavalry. As those forces converged, from behind nearby hills came many more Polish and cossack cavalry units, catching Shuiskii completely by surprise. The Poles led such a furious and brave attack on the right wing of the tsar's army that, after brief resistance, the tsar's troops—seized with fear—broke ranks and scattered, dissolving the right wing entirely. As usual, Mstislavskii's main force did not quickly come to the aid of their comrades. Instead, according to Captain Margeret, they "stood there as if in a trance, as motionless as if dead," giving Dmitrii's Polish cavalry access to the village, at the entrance to which were located most of Mstislavskii's infantry and some cannon. Meanwhile, the rest of Dmitrii's army, especially the cossacks, seeing the breach being made in the enemy's lines, rushed forward to claim victory. Instead, they met a rude surprise.

It was customary for the tsar's commanders to concentrate artillery and streltsy units within the main regiment. That was certainly the case at Dobrynichi. The streltsy were, of course, the tsar's best infantrymen. Dressed in bright red uniforms and wearing no armor, the streltsy's task was not to engage in hand-tohand combat but to deliver massed firepower from their harquebuses while being protected by cavalry units. Streltsy often took up position behind a guliai gorod, a wall or screen composed of prefabricated panels made of logs and mounted on carts or sleds for quick and easy positioning. Each panel was about 1.5 meters wide and 2 meters high and joined to adjacent panels by iron chains. The guliai gorod, with small openings for shooting through, provided very good cover and was virtually impossible for cavalry to break through. Such protection was essential for the vulnerable streltsy with their unwieldy weapons. Harquebuses weighed about 10 kilograms and had to rest on a stand when fired. Loading and firing those guns was slow work, so streltsy units were usually positioned in deep echelons. After the first row fired a volley and retreated to reload, the second row would move forward to shoot. Their harquebuses had a range of about 300 meters, but volleys were so imprecise that their effective range was closer to 50 meters.

In addition to approximately six thousand streltsy, many of whom were stationed behind the guliai gorod, Mstislavskii had five or six thousand other less-skilled harquebusiers at Dobrynichi—deti boiarskie infantry, some fortress cossacks, military slaves, and recruits. Those men were not positioned in the traditional manner but instead in a long line, which made them vulnerable but also increased their firepower significantly. That excellent defensive tactic, a recent innovation in the West, was first seen in Russia at the battle of Dobrynichi and may have been introduced to the Russians by Captain Margeret, cocommander of the tsar's mercenary forces. Wherever the new idea came from, it was a wise precaution in case Dmitrii's army attempted to repeat the tactics they had employed at Novgorod Severskii—which, of course, they did. Just as Dmitrii's forces approached Dobrynichi at top speed, Mstislavskii's men let loose a general volley from more than ten thousand harquebuses and three hundred cannon. Scores of Dmitrii's men were killed or wounded. Even worse, the noise and the smoke so startled and unnerved Dmitrii's cavalry and horses that they turned back in confusion, creating great disorder as they retreated right into Dmitrii's other advancing cavalry units. The result was chaos. Dmitrii's entire army was forced to flee from the battlefield, hotly pursued by the tsar's foreign cavalry, led by Captain Margeret, who cut down as many of the fleeing rebels as possible. In the meantime, the tsar's army advanced across the battlefield, and discipline broke down as soldiers fought like dogs over booty. The breakdown of discipline in Mstislavskii's army may have influenced the decision to recall the cavalry pursuing Dmitrii, although the official reason given was to celebrate the great victory. Each soldier participating in the battle received a gold coin as a reward; the foreign mercenaries were especially rewarded, receiving many rubles in cash, salary increases, and larger land allotments.

Not surprisingly, after the battle of Dobrynichi, Dmitrii's Polish officers falsely blamed the catastrophe on the Zaporozhian cossacks, claiming that they had been frightened by the great clouds of smoke drifting across the battlefield and ran away. In reality, it was the Polish cavalry leading the forces that encountered the tsar's streltsy who were the first to turn back in confusion. During the retreat, several hundred cossack infantry had actually refused to leave their posts, choosing instead stubbornly and heroically to guard Dmitrii's artillery until they were finally overwhelmed and cut down by Mstislavskii's advancing cavalry. Despite the self-serving comments of Polish officers, the cossacks were excellent fighters and ferociously loyal to Dmitrii; they never contemplated abandoning him in battle. Because of the disorderly retreat, however, Dmitrii himself barely escaped capture. His horse was shot out from under him, and only the quick thinking and bravery of Dmitrii's new ally, the Putivl voevoda Vasilii M. Mosalskii, saved him from certain death. As it turned out, Dmitrii lost nearly all his infantry and more than a dozen junior officers at Dobrynichi; he also lost all his artillery. At least five thousand of his soldiers, mostly cossacks and Komaritsk peasants, had been killed; and many thousand were taken prisoner. The tsar's commanders divided the prisoners into two groups: Poles, whose lives were spared and who were sent to Moscow to be displayed in a victory parade; and all others who were immediately executed. Military Affairs Office records show a total of eleven thousand five hundred rebels killed or executed at Dobrynichi. Mstislavskii's own losses during the battle had been surprisingly high, perhaps as many as six thousand casualties; but he had achieved an important victory.

After the battle of Dobrynichi, the tsar's commanders believed that Dmitrii would not be able to recover and that the campaign was almost over, so Mstislavskii's army began an unhurried pursuit of the enemy. Vasilii Shuiskii and a smaller army were left behind in the Komaritsk district to rest and to punish the local population for supporting Dmitrii. For his part, Dmitrii fled south to Rylsk and then to Putivl. Had Mstislavskii and his associates pursued him with vigor, Dmitrii might easily have been expelled from Russia at this point; but, as usual, the tsar's commanders did not take full advantage of their success. Instead, even when they periodically caught up with Dmitrii's retreating forces, Mstislavskii's troops were more interested in booty than battle and repeatedly failed to deliver the final blow to the enemy. Those lost opportunities were due to the lack of talented commanders and to the exhaustion of the tsar's militiamen after campaigning for several months. Many of the soldiers were sullen, cold, and hungry. At the same time, Tsar Boris's voevodas were slow and timid, fearful of operating in a region with an openly hostile civilian population. They were, in fact, far more interested in harshly punishing the Seversk population, especially the inhabitants of the Komaritsk district, for having dared to support Dmitrii. Once Dmitrii had been defeated, it was deemed necessary to neutralize the region and to make an object lesson out of the first group of the tsar's subjects who rose against him. With Tsar Boris's approval, a terror campaign was launched against the Komaritsk district and adjacent lands.

The army that carried out the punitive campaign in Severia was commanded by Mstislavskii's second-in-command, Prince Vasilii Shuiskii. The Komaritsk district was singled out for the most cruel treatment. About four hundred fifty Kasimov Tatars, extremely loyal supporters of the tsars and masters at such reprisals, led the assault on the local population—soon followed by large numbers of other soldiers (mostly Tatars) "who ravaged the country to such an extent that not a hedge or a stalk was left standing." The region was completely plundered and burnt; everything possible was destroyed—homes, barns, crops, livestock, and humans. Shuiskii's men killed thousands of people by the most despicable means. Men were hanged by one foot from trees, then burned alive or used for target practice. Women were raped, tortured, and then impaled. Little boys and babies were drowned, and older girls and young women were sexually assaulted and then carried off to be sold as slaves. Other areas of Severia were subjected to similar treatment.

Because of the wealth of the region and the fact that Dmitrii had seized nothing from the local population, the booty gained by Shuiskii's troops was enormous. His men glutted themselves by theft and pillage for many days, enraging the surviving local population but accomplishing nothing significant militarily. In fact, the immediate impact of Shuiskii's terror campaign was to galvanize fanatical, quasi-religious support for Dmitrii throughout the entire region. The local population now openly repudiated the "false tsar" Boris Godunov and looked to Dmitrii as their only salvation. Support for Dmitrii grew rapidly among those who had previously stayed on the sidelines, and even Severians who were tortured by Shuiskii's men stubbornly refused to their dying breath to denounce Dmitrii as an impostor. A contemporary was "amazed by the joyful manner in which innocent people endured torment and torture for the sake of Dmitrii, whom they had never seen, considering death itself a blessing if they perished for his sake!"

News of the atrocities being committed by Tsar Boris's army spread rapidly throughout the region and beyond, and it had a serious impact. Neighboring populations, learning of those horrors, felt they had no recourse but to throw themselves into the arms of the pretender; according to a contemporary, "all those who could reach Dmitrii or join his army hurried to swear allegiance to him." Severians headed in large numbers to Putivl to join Dmitrii's forces. Even more alarming to the tsar's commanders was the rapid spread of rebellion along the southern frontier during early 1605, opening up a new front, adding large numbers of soldiers to Dmitrii's cause, and changing the entire strategic situation in the country. One after another important steppe frontier fortress declared for Dmitrii. During the first months of 1605, the overwhelming majority of southern military servicemen rose in the name of Dmitrii, and they were joined by large numbers of free cossacks. Local commanders who resisted were overthrown as traitors to the true tsar, but the majority of frontier town and fortress commanders also declared for Dmitrii.

What triggered the rebellions in those southern frontier towns that widened the civil war? Throughout the fall of 1604 and during the winter months, cossacks spread news of Dmitrii's progress and agitated on his behalf all along the frontier. Dmitrii's victory before Novgorod Severskii also had an impact. In addition to stirring more support for the pretender among the frontier population, Mstislavskii's defeat prompted the tsar's commanders to transfer significant numbers of military servitors from southern towns and fortresses to Severia, which weakened those frontier garrisons. Recognizing that such transfers would weaken their southern defenses generally, Tsar Boris's commanders simultaneously ordered the reinforcement of the most important southern fortress, Tsarev-Borisov, a strongpoint located very far south (more than 400 kilometers southeast of Putivl). To accomplish that, they transferred troops there from Belgorod, a town located 260 kilometers east southeast of Putivl. That transfer seems to have triggered the rebellion of Belgorod in January 1605, during which at least one stubborn dvorianin was killed by his companions for refusing to kiss the cross for Tsar Dmitrii. The reinforcement of Tsarev-Borisov also failed to have its intended effect. To that large garrison were transferred five hundred elite Moscow streltsy who became indignant at being forced to serve indefinitely on the low-status southern frontier. Early in 1605, along with a large number of deti boiarskie and low status military servitors, the Moscow streltsy in Tsarev-Borisov declared for Tsar Dmitrii. That was a major blow to Boris Godunov, and by late winter streltsy units and deti boiarskie from Tsarev-Borisov began to appear among Dmitrii's forces in Putivl.

As news of rebellions in Tsarev-Borisov and Belgorod spread, it triggered uprisings in other southern frontier towns. Soon, the new fortresses of Oskol and Valuiki—both located not far from Belgorod—declared for Dmitrii. Even more alarming to Tsar Boris, uprisings began to spread north to important fortresses that had only recently been stripped of many soldiers in order to reinforce Mstislavskii's army. The strong fortress of Voronezh (only 140 kilometers south of Elets) rose for Dmitrii next. Then the very important fortress of Elets (located 200 kilometers east of Kromy and only 200 kilometers south of Tula) declared for Dmitrii. That was soon followed by the rebellion of Livny (located just 80 kilometers downstream from Elets). The rebellion of the bulk of Russia's southern military servitors and a majority of frontier fortress commanders abruptly changed the strategic situation and widened the civil war. As rebellion spread rapidly across a very large area and added many more troops to Dmitrii's army, it forced a sharp change in the strategy of the tsar's commanders who had been pursuing Dmitrii with little success.

After the disaster at Dobrynichi, Dmitrii retreated to Rylsk, some 70 kilometers northeast of Putivl, followed slowly by Mstislavskii's forces. Having lost most of his army, Dmitrii was almost in despair by then. Rylsk, which had declared for him just after Putivl did, was an important rebel stronghold. However, even though its garrison strongly supported Dmitrii, the town did not appear to be capable of resisting Mstislavskii's large army. For that reason, Dmitrii entrusted its defense to Prince G. B. Roshcha-Dolgorukii and a few hundred streltsy and cossacks; while Dmitrii, along with his remaining men, retreated to the relative safety of well-fortified Putivl, the most important town in the region which was then serving as Dmitrii's temporary capital.

In the meantime, Tsar Boris's commanders, with more than twenty thousand troops at their disposal, thought to make short work of the siege of Rylsk. They failed to take into account, however, the fierce loyalty to Dmitrii of the town's garrison and the local population. Siege operations were also conducted sluggishly. For two weeks, Mstislavskii's artillerymen bombarded the town and tried to set its wooden walls on fire, but cannon fire from inside the fortress prevented the tsar's army from getting very close. According to Captain Margeret, Mstislavskii's army remained before Rylsk "without doing anything." Eventually, a general storming of the town was ordered, but that too failed. Large numbers of Mstislavskii's fatigued and demoralized men then began to desert—some to go home, some to join Dmitrii. Distracted by the search for food and increasingly diverted to the task of hunting down deserters, the tsar's army was unable to continue the siege of Rylsk.

Operating in hostile territory with unreliable communications and frequently losing precious supply trains to bands of local rebels, the tsar's frustrated commanders decided to break off the siege of Rylsk and to retreat back to the Komaritsk district where Vasilii Shuiskii's army was located. A major reason for that plan was the perilous situation developing at the strategically-located fortress of Kromy just northeast of the Komaritsk district. Tsar Boris's forces had been ineffectively besieging that rebel-held town on and off since early December 1604 and were in some danger of defeat, which would simultaneously open the road to Moscow to Dmitrii's supporters and bring together the two regions in rebellion-the southwestern and the southern frontiers. It was imperative, therefore, to prevent that defeat from occurring. As they were retreating from Rylsk, however, Mstislavskii's rear guard was attacked by the Rylsk garrison, which managed to put it to flight and to capture many supplies. One contemporary source put the number of Mstislavskii's men killed in that battle at two thousand, with two hundred men captured. News of the defeat of the tsar's army spread quickly, bringing joy to Dmitrii and the citizens of Putivl and inspiring still others to join Dmitrii's cause. It was at this point that Tsar Boris's commanders, seeing their army melting away, bowed to the inevitable. Admitting that their men were exhausted, they dismissed much of the army to go home and rest up for a planned summer campaign. When Tsar Boris learned about the dismissal of the army, he became very angry. He sent a delegation to his senior field commanders who upbraided them for breaking off the siege of Rylsk and warned them not to dismiss any more soldiers.

In the meantime, Dmitrii had been very active in Putivl. There he formed a war council composed of Russian commanders who had switched to his side. Together, these men made plans for a renewed military campaign. Dmitrii now held court as "Tsar Dmitrii," dropping the use of "tsarevich" to describe himself. He continued to reward generously all captured voevodas and officers being brought to him from towns and fortresses rising in his name if those men were willing to join his service. Only when spies or assassins were discovered in Putivl did Dmitrii turn them over to the townspeople—who stripped the traitors naked, tied them to a post in the main square, and shot them to death. While in Putivl, Dmitrii also gained an unexpected new ally, Prince Ishterek of the Nogai horde east of the Volga River, formerly a puppet of Tsar Boris, who now recognized Dmitrii as tsar and pledged to send men to aid his campaign for the throne.

While in Putivl, Dmitrii raised a large sum of money. Artillery from southern frontier fortresses was also concentrated in Putivl, and Dmitrii formed a new army around the remnants of his old one and the Putivl garrison—which was now headed by Iurii Bezzubtsev. The new army's ranks soon swelled with the addition of troops from towns and fortresses joining Dmitrii's cause and ordinary townsmen and well-armed Seversk peasants who flocked to Putivl in large numbers. The timely arrival of large numbers of Don cossacks greatly increased the size and effectiveness of Dmitrii's new army. The total number of cossacks of all types in Dmitrii's army now stood at between four and five thousand. Those brave and skilled warriors played a decisive role in Dmitrii's campaign for the throne.

With growing popular support, according to a contemporary, Dmitrii "took courage again" and "put a fine army back into the field." Tsar Dmitrii, as he now called himself, may have received secret letters from some of Tsar Boris's enemies at court or in the army that encouraged him to persevere. Dmitrii himself sent countless letters from Putivl all over Russia, even to Moscow, calling upon the Russian people to end their resistance to their "legitimate sovereign." He promised to reward those who surrendered and threatened those who persisted in supporting Godunov. As a result of his propaganda, Russians deserted Tsar Boris in large numbers, recognizing Dmitrii as their tsar; and many of them made their way to Putivl. As his situation improved, according to a contemporary, Dmitrii used "great modestie" instead of tyranny, terror, or vengeance—a sharp contrast to Tsar Boris. He acted the part of the clement prince very effectively. Forgiving, kind "Tsar Dmitrii" even wrote conciliatory letters to Patriarch Iov and Tsar Boris, offering them amnesty and fair treatment if they would recognize him as tsar.

In this period, Dmitrii also made a public display of his Orthodox Christian faith, probably at least in part to counter Godunov propaganda about him as the evil defrocked monk and Polish puppet, Grishka Otrepev. Overall, Dmitrii carried himself with such piety, authority, and courage that he made a strong impression on many Russians as their true, clement Orthodox tsar. By spring 1605, with growing popular support, Dmitrii had fully recovered from his winter defeat and was ready to resume active campaigning. By then, Tsar Boris's commanders were busy concentrating all their efforts on capturing strategically-located Kromy at any cost. As it turned out, that strategy proved to be the undoing of Godunov dynasty.

The long siege of Kromy had begun in December 1604, right after its garrison declared for Dmitrii. The strategic location of that ancient town (founded in 1147), situated just northeast of the Komaritsk district near the source of the Oka River, was the main reason it had been fortified with a new outer oak palisade in 1595. Kromy's fortress was situated on a hill, with its narrow approach protected for much of the year by marshes. Several roads from the south joined at Kromy, which guarded the route to Moscow from the south and southwest. The small rebel garrison holding the town fiercely defended it and interfered with communications between Moscow and Tsar Boris's forces arrayed against Dmitrii; they also constituted a menacing forward base for an assault on Moscow should rebel forces sweep north and converge on Kromy. So strategic was the town's location that in January 1605, voevoda Fedor Sheremetev was sent with siege guns to speed up its capture at the same time Mstislavskii engaged Dmitrii's army at Dobrynichi. Sheremetev's forces, however, were not able to dislodge the small rebel garrison. A principal reason for that was the timely arrival of a Don cossack detachment led by the brilliant and energetic ataman Korela.

Korela reached Kromy just after Dmitrii's defeat at Dobrynichi (January 21, 1605). There are various estimates of the size of his cossack detachment, but it was probably only between four and five hundred men. Because Kromy was then under siege, Korela had to fight his way past Tsar Boris's forces to reach the town. To do so, the ataman employed a typical cossack mobile defense formation known as a *tabor*. Fortifying his supply sleds and arranging them in a rectangle (with its open side facing Kromy) so that his flanks and rear were covered, Korela stationed half his men inside the moving rectangle with the other half-carrying harquebuses-acting as an escort while the sleds moved rapidly up the hill toward the fortress. Gunfire and arrows from the tsar's army besieging the town had almost no impact, and Korela's detachment quickly reached the fortress. Ataman Korela's men immediately set to work to dig a series of interconnected trenches all around and within the battered fortifications of Kromy, throwing up earthworks in front of the trenches with many small openings through which to shoot at the enemy. Thus, according to a contemporary, they were soon able to advance and retreat "like mice" in stealth and relative safety while under fire. Once they were ensconced in Kromy, Korela's men feared no force arrayed against them. Cossacks were not only excellent and brave soldiers, but they were extremely skilled at fortifications and defense. Ataman Korela was described by a contemporary as a "mangy little man, all covered with scars" whose "great bravery" led to his selection as a cossack chieftain. Korela's men energetically defended

Kromy, and—according to a contemporary—the mere mention of the ataman's name made his enemies besieging the fortress "tremble."

In February 1605, Mstislavskii sent several hundred men from his army to reinforce Sheremetev's as yet unsuccessful siege of Kromy. That force proved inadequate, and Sheremetev continued to suffer heavy losses at the hands of Korela. In despair, he appealed to Moscow for additional reinforcements. Tsar Boris and his commanders were well aware of the danger to Moscow that would be posed by a rebel victory at Kromy. Therefore, no further thought was given to laying siege to Dmitrii in Putivl. Instead, Mstislavskii's army retreated north into the Komaritsk district, linked up with Shuiskii's army, and proceeded directly to Kromy, arriving at Sheremetev's siege camp on March 4, 1605. To supplement the forces besieging Kromy, Tsar Boris also managed to raise large numbers of additional troops from the monasteries and towns of north Russia. Thus was assembled a siege army "formidable" in size if not in fighting spirit or capability. One contemporary estimated that by April 1605, the siege force contained about sixty thousand men. Orders were also given that all available siege guns were to be sent as soon as possible to aid in the capture of Kromy.

Senior commanders Mstislavskii and Vasilii Shuiskii attempted to storm Kromy before most of the additional artillery arrived. An advance regiment of infantrymen under the command of boyar Mikhail G. Saltykov managed to sneak up to the outer wall of the fortress under cover of darkness and set fire to it, forcing the defenders to retreat into the palisaded inner fortress. From there Korela's well-protected men concentrated harquebus fire on the attacking force and inflicted very heavy casualties. That forced voevoda Saltykov to recall his men from the burning outer wall of the fortress. From then on, the tsar's commanders were understandably reluctant to try such a frontal attack again. The arrival of more siege guns eventually allowed the tsar's commanders to bombard Kromy day and night. By using incendiary shells, the tsar's artillerymen were soon able to burn the entire citadel to the ground. Nonetheless, the cossacks only dug in deeper, endured the constant shelling, and quickly emerged to fight whenever the tsar's commanders sent men forward to capture the ruined fortress; casualties were heavy on both sides. Korela had early on sent word to Dmitrii begging for reinforcements. Eventually, Dmitrii sent a leader of the Putivl garrison, Iurii Bezzubtsev, to relieve Kromy with about five hundred Don and fortress cossacks and about one hundred sleds filled with food, gunpowder, lead, and other supplies. In a disastrous error, Bezzubtsev's force was mistaken by Tsar Boris's soldiers as a relief column coming to their aid, so the cossacks managed to slip past the guards in broad daylight and delivered those critically important supplies to Kromy.

Reinforcements and fresh supplies greatly emboldened Korela's cossacks. They began making daily sorties in detachments of two or three hundred men with harquebuses, taking up positions near enemy lines. When the tsar's commanders sent gentry cavalry to attack the cossacks, those men met withering and accurate gunfire. Dozens of outgunned pomeshchiki were killed in each encounter; mounted pomeshchiki with bows and arrows were simply no match for the cossacks. Korela kept his men constantly active, using a new stratagem each day to catch the enemy off guard and to wear him out. Frequently, Korela's men harangued the besiegers or threw messages to them calling them traitors to the true tsar Dmitrii and listing the many crimes of Boris Godunov. If the Dutch merchant Massa is to be believed, Korela even had naked women appear on Kromy's ruined ramparts to hurl gross insults and to sing satirical ditties about the tsar's commanders. Massa claimed that constant combat and the use of such psychological warfare "pushed the besiegers to the limit." Of course, the tsar's exhausted army, with its chronic shortage of food, was also pushed to the limit by hunger and exposure to the cold weather. Attrition due to battle losses, untreated wounds, hunger, and disease soon began taking a toll. Many of the tsar's troops simply melted away in search of food or to return to their homes. Others slipped away in order to join forces loyal to Dmitrii.

The misery of the tsar's siege army was relieved briefly when ataman Korela was wounded and the cossacks stopped making sorties for awhile. Even so, the tsar's commanders made no serious effort to storm Kromy, content instead merely to continue the ineffective bombardment of the ruined fortress until they used up most of their gunpowder and shot. Soon, cossack activity inside Kromy was back to normal. The valor and endurance of Korela's men was extraordinary, while arrayed against them were hungry troops "chilled to the bone" who had little interest in risking their lives for any cause. When spring rains began to melt the ice, the resulting flooding turned the siege camp into a sea of mud, and as the marshes surrounding Kromy thawed, they turned back into a nearly impenetrable moat protecting Korela's position. The recovering cossack ataman correctly regarded the spring weather as helping to "dissipate and destroy" the besieging army. Soon, dysentary broke out in the tsar's siege camp, and many gentry units deserted for home. In the end, the tsar's army lost large numbers of men, wasted an enormous amount of powder and lead, and accomplished nothing during the long siege of Kromy. According to Captain Margeret, "they only made fools of themselves" until Tsar Boris died in April.

A number of contemporary sources mentioned treason among the tsar's troops as a factor contributing to the failure of the siege of Kromy. In addition to simple desertion to join Dmitrii's forces, Massa claimed that traitors often secretly brought gunpowder right up to Korela's position or sometimes shot arrows into Kromy with letters telling Dmitrii's ataman about what was happening in the tsar's army or in Moscow. A few fairly reliable sources spoke of treason among the tsar's commanders, some of whom may have secretly contacted Dmitrii or his representatives with information about troop movements. Dmitrii himself made a concerted effort to woo senior voevoda Mstislavskii with letters "full of benevolence and friendship," various proofs of his identity, and offers to pardon any commanders willing to recognize him as tsar. Such appeals had no effect on Mstislavskii; but reports and rumors of the treason of other commanders and the fact that Mstislavskii had received letters from Dmitrii helped undermine the Godunov regime's faith in its unlucky senior field commander.

While many of Tsar Boris's soldiers eventually became persuaded of Dmitrii's authenticity and simply bided their time or actually deserted to join the "true tsar's" service, even among Godunov's skeptical voevodas there was growing respect for Dmitrii—viewed increasingly by many of them as a "rising sun." Dmitrii's forces were, in fact, growing every day. By spring 1605, large numbers of cossacks, most southern frontier military servitors, and more than half of Tsar Boris's frontier commanders had joined Dmitrii's cause. The tsar's alarmed voevodas before Kromy informed Moscow of growing treason in the ranks, daily desertions, and a shrinking siege army at the very same time that Dmitrii's army was growing more numerous and stronger. The situation was becoming extremely perilous to the Godunovs.

Throughout the winter of 1604–5, disturbing news kept reaching Tsar Boris of growing rebellion on the frontier, failed sieges, desertions from and deterioration of his exhausted army, the loss of more and more towns, garrisons, and commanders, and the flocking of many of his soldiers and subjects to Dmitrii's banner. There were also reports that many people in Moscow were increasingly inclined to believe that Dmitrii was indeed Dmitrii. The tsar's uncle, Semen Godunov, now the head of the secret police, suspected treason everywhere, spied on everyone, and made much use of denunciation and torture in pursuit of "traitors." As a result, there was growing resentment against Semen Godunov's heavy hand and what was perceived to be the malignant influence on Tsar Boris of his suspicious wife Mariia-the daughter of one of Ivan the Terrible's most notorious oprichnina henchmen. Tsar Boris himself, who was seriously ill again, began to despair and came to believe that he was in great danger. His circle became smaller and smaller as he hid in his Kremlin palace and refused to hear petitions from his people. He sent assassins to kill Dmitrii, but they failed. He also had Patriarch Iov excommunicate everyone who favored Dmitrii, but that did not check popular enthusiasm for Godunov's nemesis.

In spite of the tsar's growing anxiety, every effort was made to make it appear that things were going well, but few people were deceived. Periodic fake "victory parades" and the frequent movement of large detachments of new military forces through Moscow barely masked the growing sense of crisis. The authentic victory parade for the heroic and popular Petr Basmanov was an exception. Never before had a voevoda been so honored by a tsar. Tsar Boris heaped treasure and honors on Basmanov and promoted him to the rank of boyar, and Basmanov very quickly emerged as a leading figure in the ailing and beleaguered tsar's court. Basmanov was a good enough general to recognize the grave danger to Tsar Boris posed by the failing siege of Kromy, and he begged to be sent there as senior commander before it was too late. The competence and even the loyalty of Mstislavskii and Shuiskii were increasingly questioned at court, and there was some discussion about replacing them; but the upstart boyar Petr Basmanov had many jealous rivals with higher mestnichestvo status, so he did not get his wish while Tsar Boris lived.

11

The Death of Tsar Boris and Dmitrii's Triumph

By early spring 1605, Tsar Boris had been gravely ill for a long time. Even so, his sudden death on April 13 came as a shock to everyone. Without doubt, the death of Tsar Boris was a principal reason for Dmitrii's success in becoming tsar. While Boris Godunov lived, most of his boyars and courtiers remained loyal to him. and immediately upon his death, the boyars moved swiftly to enthrone his son as Tsar Fedor Borisovich. Nonetheless, Tsar Boris's death also unleashed the conspirators who had been responsible for Dmitrii in the first place, and it provoked great division among the lords, many of whom had no love for the sinister figures who dominated the regime of Tsar Fedor Borisovichthe hated Semen Godunov and the dowager Tsaritsa Mariia. Boris Godunov's intelligent and able son, Fedor, was only sixteen years old at the time of his father's death, and he was unable to retain the loyalty or even the passive acceptance of the Russian elite for very long. The Godunovs by this time had become isolated from and had alienated many of the great lords, and by 1605 lots of people really did believe Tsar Boris was a regicide and usurper who had managed to bring down the wrath of God on Russia. For many of them, his death was seen as a sign of God's punishment and of Dmitrii's authenticity.

In sharp contrast to sentiment about the Godunovs or Tsar Fedor Borisovich, enthusiasm for Dmitrii was growing fast—even in Moscow. The population of the capital grew bolder each day, gathering together to demand the return of persons wrongly exiled by Tsar Boris—including Dmitrii's mother, the nun Marfa. The new tsar's hurried distribution of seventy thousand rubles in alms to the Muscovites did little to calm the populace. Even the oath of loyalty to Tsar Fedor administered to the people, which failed to denounce Dmitrii as the impostor Otrepev, gave some the impression that the court suspected Dmitrii really was the son of Ivan the Terrible. For his part, Dmitrii made every effort to attract the Russian people in general, and he sent messages specifically to the common people of Moscow urging them to overthrow the Godunovs and to recognize him as tsar. Dmitrii also wooed Tsar Boris's courtiers and commanders with offers of amnesty and high positions in his service. Within a few weeks, the combination of the rising tide of popular support for Dmitrii and the abandonment of Tsar Fedor Borisovich by many great lords and soldiers doomed the Godunov dynasty.

One of the very first decisions made by the new Tsar Fedor, his mother, and his great-uncle Semen proved to be fatal: the recall to Moscow of senior voevodas Mstislavskii and Vasilii Shuiskii from the army besieging Kromy and the dispatch of newly promoted boyar Petr Basmanov to inform the army of Tsar Boris's death, to administer the loyalty oath to the soldiers, and to help bring the siege to a successful conclusion. That decision set the stage for the defection of several boyars to Dmitrii and the rebellion of the army—a major turning point in the civil war. Ambitious Petr Basmanov was, of course, hoping to be named commander-in-chief to replace Mstislavskii at Kromy, but his mestnichestvo status was not high enough; he was forced to settle for the position of deputy commander under a higher ranking boyar, Prince Mikhail Petrovich Katyrev-Rostovskii, who was not a good general but was a loyal supporter of the Godunovs.

Senior voevodas Katyrev-Rostovskii and Basmanov arrived at the Kromy siege camp on April 17, 1605, and administered the oath of allegiance to the tired, hungry, and demoralized army. The new tsar sent a very favorable message to the soldiers assuring them of generous rewards for their continued loyalty. Basmanov and his spies quickly discovered, however, that many soldiers were reluctant to swear an oath to Tsar Fedor and were favorably inclined toward Dmitrii. A contemporary described the situation in the siege army this way: "they held to their oath as long as a hungry dog keeps a fast." The crisis developing in the tsar's army was brought to a head by the arrival on April 20 of new orders from Moscow, promoting Mstislavskii's former deputy commander, boyar Prince Andrei Teliatevskii, to the position held by Basmanov-thereby lowering the status of the latter. A precedence quarrel erupted immediately, and it proved to be fatal to the young Tsar Fedor. Basmanov loudly protested that the sinister Semen Godunov, Teliatevskii's son-in-law, was responsible for the outrage of making him a "slave to Teliatevskii." According to a contemporary, the demoted boyar "wept for an hour" claiming that he preferred death to dishonor; he then secretly joined a developing conspiracy against the Godunovs.

Many commanders participated in the conspiracy to transfer the army's loyalty to Dmitrii. Even before Basmanov's dispute with Teliatevskii pushed him to betray Tsar Fedor Borisovich, there were several other voevodas waiting for the opportunity to switch sides. Among them were two very high-ranking brothers, Princes Vasilii and Ivan V. Golitsyn. It is probable that Vasilii Golitsyn was the ringleader of the conspiracy developing among the officers in the Kromy siege camp. Also active in the developing conspiracy were the prestigious and influential Liapunov brothers, vybornye dvoriane from the old southeastern frontier province of Riazan. When the moment for rebellion came, they brought virtually all of the Riazan nobility and gentry with them in the transfer of loyalty to Dmitrii. In effect, they led a rebellion of the militiamen and towns of that province that essentially duplicated the earlier transfer of loyalty to Dmitrii of the commanders, garrisons, and townspeople of the southwestern and southern frontiers. Their movement against the Godunovs also immediately triggered rebellions of townspeople and gentry in areas neighboring Riazan province all along the old frontier region south of the Oka River—including Tula, the most important southern defense coordinating center (180 kilometers south of Moscow), and Kashira, located right on the Oka (the "border of the frontier") only 110 kilometers south of the capital. Thus, the rebellion led by the Liapunovs constituted in many ways a huge provincial rebellion and completed the uprising of the entire southern frontier against the Godunovs.

The conspiracy among Tsar Fedor Borisovich's commanders was greatly facilitated by low morale, hunger, disease, breakdown of discipline, and rising sentiment in favor of Dmitrii among the soldiers in the Kromy siege camp. Many of the remaining gentry units were still bitter that Tsar Boris had forbidden them to go home to rest; and by spring 1605, in small groups and large they simply deserted and went home. Others secretly defected, carrying messages to Korela or to Putivl about how strong the sentiment in favor of Dmitrii was among Tsar Fedor's troops. Enthusiasm for Dmitrii was growing throughout the siege camp, but especially among Riazan gentry units and detachments from Tula, Aleksin, Kashira, and other old frontier towns; by April 1605, it just so happens that those forces constituted a dangerously high percentage of the troops remaining in the Kromy siege camp. Even though high-ranking commanders organized the rebellion, it was the participation by the siege army's poor and dispirited pomeshchiki that played the decisive role in the uprising.

Needless to say, among the ranks of military slaves and recruits at Kromy were many oppressed and unhappy men who played a significant role in the success of the rebellion in the tsar's army. Among the recruits in the Kromy siege camp, of particular interest are those from the Komaritsk district. At least five hundred, maybe many more, of them had been added to the tsar's army during the winter of 1604–5. Astonishingly, many of those same recruits were retained in service even after Vasilii Shuiskii's sickening punitive raids on their relatives, neighbors, and friends. In fact, they were still in the Kromy siege camp when Tsar Boris died. It is safe to assume that many of these men became active supporters of the rebellion of the tsar's army.

Conspirators among the officers in the Kromy siege camp secretly coordinated plans with ataman Korela's men and agreed to act on May 7. The rebellion began by a prearranged signal at dawn. By then the conspirators had already managed to halt the usual posting of combat-ready guards units. Conspirators set fire to several places in the siege camp, and Korela's cossacks swiftly and silently infiltrated the tsar's army without firing any weapons. Their plan was to sow panic and chaos and to join with mutineers to quickly capture those voevodas still loyal to Tsar Fedor. At the same time, the Liapunovs and their companions led a rebellion of all the gentry detachments from Riazan province, Tula, Aleksin, Kashira, and several other towns of the old frontier—the troops of which were spread throughout the siege army. As a result of so many things happening everywhere simultaneously, there was immediate panic and confusion throughout the siege camp. Soldiers fled in all directions, leaving behind their clothes and weapons.

In spite of the stubborn loyalty to Tsar Fedor of senior commander Katyrev-Rostovskii, voevoda Teliatevskii, and others who eluded capture, the panic and confusion within the siege army prevented the loyalists from organizing effective opposition to the rebellion. In fact, those commanders had no way of telling trustworthy troops from the mutineers, who in general refrained from firing their weapons or killing anyone. In the midst of the chaos, a large number of soldiers tried to cross a makeshift bridge spanning the Kroma River, either to escape the siege camp or to link up with Korela's forces in order to demonstrate their loyalty to Dmitrii. The weight of the crowd broke the bridge, plunging hundreds of men into the river; some drowned but most made it to shore and fled to their homes.

The insurrection in the Kromy siege camp was basically bloodless, which is truly remarkable. That shows just how weak the loyalty of the tsar's soldiers to the Godunov dynasty really was, but it is also testimony to good planning and restraint on the part of the conspirators and Korela's men. Panic-struck troops still loyal to Tsar Fedor hastily abandoned the siege camp in complete disorder, throwing down their weapons and leaving all their artillery, munitions, and other supplies behind. The Don cossacks chased them for many kilometers not to kill them but to humiliate them, whipping the fleeing soldiers and shouting insults at them. Several thousand of those defeated and demoralized men passed through Moscow on their way home, unwilling or unable to explain why they had abandoned the siege of Kromy.

It is no exaggeration to say that the mutiny of the tsar's army before Kromy was the decisive event in Dmitrii's campaign for the throne. At Kromy, the revolt of the southern frontier reached its zenith, and when several of Tsar Fedor's boyars and their men joined that powerful regional rebellion it represented a sharp expansion of the civil war and doomed the Godunov dynasty. As Charles Tilly has reminded us, when substantial coalitions develop between well-armed challengers and defecting members of an existing regime's elite, and when mass defections from that regime's army effectively neutralize its military forces, a rapid transfer of power is likely to occur. In fact, the shock of news about the rebellion of the tsar's army and the momentum that gave to Dmitrii's cause proved overwhelming to the Godunovs, who were soon swept from power.

Immediately following the rebellion in the tsar's army, Basmanov, the Golitsyns, and other mutinous commanders contacted Dmitrii and made plans to hasten the overthrow of Tsar Fedor. They sent secret messages to boyar opponents of the Godunovs in Moscow and dispatched several prominent individuals to help persuade the capital's population to recognize Dmitrii. At this point, Dmitrii sent Prince Boris Lykov (a Golitsyn cousin) ahead to administer the oath of loyalty to former members of the Kromy siege army, to thank the soldiers for their loyalty, and to dismiss from service for a month's refreshment all those pomeshchiki who held lands south of Moscow and wished to go home. Many streltsy and cossacks were also allowed to go home at this time. A large number of men, perhaps half of the remainder of the army, took advantage of the offer and returned home singing the praises of Tsar Dmitrii. When those exhausted soldiers got home, many of them triggered rebellions in favor of Dmitrii in their own towns; that happened almost immediately in Aleksin, Kashira, Shatsk, and Pereiaslavl-Riazanskii (later known as Riazan). The archbishop of Riazan, Ignatii, became the first bishop to recognize Dmitrii as tsar. He was probably influenced by the Liapunovs and other Riazan gentry returning home from Kromy. Soon there was a stream of fortress commanders, officers, and leading townsmen making their way toward Kromy to pay homage to Tsar Dmitrii. As usual, he graciously received his new subjects and immediately pressed them into service. Dmitrii's willingness to appoint former opponents to his war council and as his voevodas went a long way toward lowering elite anxiety about him. Rumors and news of his trust in the Russian people spread rapidly.

As Dmitrii advanced from Kromy to Orel, huge crowds gathered along the route to see the new tsar. They greeted him as the true son of Tsar Ivan and as the "rising sun" of Russia. Voevodas and prominent townsmen from as far away as Tsaritsyn on the lower Volga came to pay homage to him. By the time Dmitrii reached Orel, its obstinate voevoda, boyar Fedor Sheremetev—now surrounded by the remnant of the Kromy siege army—transferred the town's allegiance to Dmitrii without any bloodshed. The commanders of the rebellious army, Petr Basmanov and Vasilii Golitsyn, thereupon greeted Dmitrii on the road before Orel with an entourage of two hundred dvoriane. An informal delegation from Moscow also apparently met with Dmitrii at this time and assured him that many in the capital were ready to recognize him as tsar. From Orel, Dmitrii sent the old Kromy siege force north, under the command of Vasilii Golitsyn, to cut off Moscow's supply routes. Units of that army proceeded to strategically located Tula, whose dvoriane had already switched to Dmitrii's side at Kromy. Tula's voevoda, Prince Ivan S. Kurakin, and the townspeople opened the towns's gates to Dmitrii's men without incident. Other units of Golitsyn's army advanced to the important town of Kaluga, which immediately surrendered, and then on to strategically located Serpukhov, located on the Oka River only 90 kilometers south of Moscow.

Dmitrii and his two thousand troops advanced north slowly, pausing in Krapivna, about 40 kilometers southwest of Tula. By the time he reached Krapivna, his small army received reinforcements from the Volga cossacks and from Prince Ishterek's Nogai Tatars. At this point, Dmitrii sent proclamations to most towns and villages throughout Russia announcing his success and urging his subjects to recognize his lawful authority. Many, but not all, towns wavered; in only a few places were Dmitrii's couriers put to death. While some lower Volga towns and many Volga and Terek cossacks rushed to join Dmitrii's cause, Astrakhan's voevoda, Mikhail Saburov, remained loyal to Tsar Fedor and bravely fought off numerous cossack assaults and efforts to stir the town's inhabitants to rebel in the name of Dmitrii. In June 1605, once it became apparent that Dmitrii would succeed in becoming tsar, Astrakhan's population rose in his name. In doing so, they openly defied their archbishop but managed to convince voevoda Saburov to join them-for which reason Tsar Dmitrii later not only forgave him for holding out so long but even promoted him. While in Krapivna Dmitrii on several occasions sent couriers with letters to Moscow, both to the boyars and to the common people, assuring them of his clemency if they would recognize him as tsar and, according to a contemporary, "admonishing them that God first and then he would punish them for their obstinacy and rebellion if they should continue to resist."

Moscow had, of course, been in turmoil ever since the death of Tsar Boris, but the rebellion of the tsar's army before Kromy provoked panic at the court of Tsar Fedor. It emboldened the opponents of the Godunovs and brought the young tsar's short reign to a quick end. At about the same time the Godunovs made the fatal error of offending Petr Basmanov's honor by demoting him, they also foolishly yielded to popular demands and pressure from the boyars to recall from exile Tsar Boris's old enemy, Bogdan Belskii. Upon his return to Moscow, Belskii immediately began to intrigue against Tsar Fedor among the boyars. By then many of them were already in contact with Vasilii Golitsyn and other turncoat voevodas in Dmitrii's camp. Such disarray and treason among the boyars in Moscow effectively paralyzed the Godunov regime.

Tsar Fedor did manage to dispatch several thousand loyal Moscow streltsy to Serpukhov to block the advance of Dmitrii's men before they could cross the Oka River. Those streltsy units beat back Golitsyn's attempt to cross the river on May 28. That incident showed Dmitrii just how exhausted his newly-acquired gentry militiamen from the old Kromy siege army really were. Even though Dmitrii's overall strength now stood at approximately thirty thousand men, many of his soldiers were tired, hungry, or ill. Altering his plans somewhat, Dmitrii now advanced with his own small force to Tula and ordered ataman Korela and his Don cossacks to bypass Tsar Fedor's Oka defense line and to make haste to Moscow. By May 31, Korela's men were camped only 10 kilometers from the capital.

The approach of Korela's cossacks provoked widespread panic in the capital. According to a contemporary, crowds ran about like a "swarm of bees." Some immediately made ready to open the gates to Korela. Although that effort was temporarily stopped, defense preparations in general were haphazard and minimal. Meanwhile, the rich took time to hide their valuables and others made ready to greet the new tsar with the traditional offerings of bread and salt. For his part, ataman Korela concentrated on cutting Moscow off from supplies still coming in from the northeast through Krasnoe Selo-a large village populated by wealthy merchants and goldsmiths that occupied a strategic position from which to attack the capital. Korela sent a courier to read a letter from Dmitrii to the inhabitants of Krasnoe Selo, who immediately declared for Tsar Dmitrii. Perhaps accompanied by some of Korela's cossacks, several thousand townspeople then boldly escorted two of Dmitrii's couriers to Moscow. Troops hastily sent to stop those couriers turned back in fear at the sight of such a large and determined crowd. By midmorning on June 1, 1605, as the couriers and their escort approached Red Square intending to read Dmitrii's proclamation to the people of Moscow, thousands of not-at-all unfriendly Muscovites came out to greet them and to listen to Dmitrii's words.

Dmitrii's conciliatory proclamation was read to a huge crowd drawn from all classes. In it Dmitrii addressed all ranks, from Mstislavskii and the Shuiskii brothers to lesser boyars, courtiers, bureaucrats, merchants, and ordinary townspeople. He declared his desire to claim the throne without further bloodshed. He offered a full pardon to those who had fought against him if they would immediately arrest, but not kill, the Godunovs and recognize him as their tsar. In the proclamation he recounted his escape from Uglich, giving credit to God for saving him from the traitor Boris Godunov. He forgave the Russian people for being misled and misinformed about him and listed the many crimes of Tsar Boris—including laying waste to Severia, persecution of many noble families, spilling Christian blood, allowing the gentry militiamen to be ruined economically, restricting the movement of townsmen, high taxes, and the execution of Dmitrii's couriers. Dmitrii then promised to reward his new subjects for their loyalty to him. To encourage the Muscovites to act, he reminded them that he possessed a large army and that many towns had already declared for him. If they failed to recognize him, he declared, they would feel "God's anger and his own." Dmitrii's proclamation had an immediate and powerful effect on the crowd, triggering the rebellion that overthrew the Godunov dynasty.

Some boyars-especially Belskii-were, of course, actively involved in the toppling of the Godunovs. There were, in fact, boyars on Red Square when Dmitrii's proclamation was read. Either the crowd demanded that more senior boyars appear publicly to explain the conduct of the Godunovs, or else leading boyars were sent from the Kremlin by Tsar Fedor and his mother in order to calm the crowd. In either case, Mstislavskii, Vasilii Shuiskii, Belskii, and others soon arrived on Red Square. Some boyars then apparently attempted to entice Dmitrii's couriers into the Kremlin but were forestalled by the crowd, which began to demand information about the fate of the previous messengers Dmitrii had sent to Moscow. At that moment-and the timing here appears too good to have been coincidental-unknown persons opened the Moscow jails and released all political prisoners, including Dmitrii's previous couriers. Their timely arrival on Red Square and their horrific accounts of torture at the hands of the Godunovs "inflamed the people further," according to a contemporary. The multitudes on Red Square rioted in support of Dmitrii, shouting: "God grant that the true sun will once again arise over Russia."

The crowd divided into two parts. More than a thousand people—including nobles—invaded the Kremlin, plundered the Godunov's palace, and arrested Tsar Fedor and his mother. The palace guard fled; nowhere did any guards, courtiers, troops, or boyars put up any resistance—a clear indication that the Godunovs had completely lost control of the Kremlin as well as Moscow and that high-born princes were deeply involved in the uprising. Some rebels may have wished to treat their royal captives harshly, but Dmitrii had clearly urged his supporters to arrest, not kill them. If possible, no blood was to be spilled during the rebellion. Popular leaders such as Belskii were able to prevent a bloodletting rampage by the crowds, who instead contented themselves with looting Godunov properties and arresting and roughing up members of the Godunov clan and their few remaining loyal supporters. The bulk of the rebels spent much of the day pawing through possessions taken from the residences of those "traitors" and getting drunk on the liquor they found. Although some of the "traitors" were beaten, no one was killed—just as Dmitrii had requested. In the chaos that day, many rich lords and merchants became targets of poor rebels, were roughed up, and had their property plundered; but none of them was killed. The only serious casualties were among the rioters themselves, of whom more than fifty died from overdrinking or fighting with one another over the spoils. That is nothing less than astonishing. Just like the rebellion in the Kromy siege army, the Moscow uprising was virtually bloodless.

The rebellion died down in the afternoon as boyars rode through the streets urging the restoration of order. All Godunov clan members were rounded up and held prisoner. Later the same day the boyar council, under Belskii's influence, declared Tsar Fedor deposed and proclaimed its support for Tsar Dmitrii. The council purged only Godunov clan members from its ranks. All other boyars were by then willing to support Tsar Dmitrii—at least publicly. Of course, the boyar council did not grant power to Dmitrii. Some of its members had been involved in the uprising, but the council's decision to support Dmitrii was only a confirmation of a fait accompli and a prudent act of self-protection. Dmitrii was not raised to the throne by the boyars. He was, instead, the only tsar in Russian history to come to power by means of a military campaign and popular rebellions. By the end of that fateful day, Dmitrii's putative godfather, Bogdan Belskii, had emerged as the master of Moscow and began making preparations to send a delegation to Dmitrii in order to formally surrender the city to him. So ended the first phase of Russia's first civil war.

Dmitrii was, of course, delighted to hear the news from Moscow. Advancing to Tula on June 5, he was now able to dismiss most of the remainder of the exhausted Kromy siege army to go home for much needed rest—but not before rewarding those men with money, food, and horses brought from the capital. For the final march to Moscow, Dmitrii would need only the small army (mostly cossacks and Belorussian cavalry) that had accompanied him from Putivl. At this point, another large force of about two thousand Don cossacks arrived in Dmitrii's camp and was received with honor. While in Tula, Dmitrii also sent messengers throughout the country to inform the Russian people of his victory and to receive their oaths of allegiance. Most of his new subjects willingly swore an oath to the new tsar, and many went to church to pray for him. Dmitrii also sent greetings to exiled members of the Nagoi clan, recalling his relatives to court and restoring their ranks.

In Tula, Dmitrii was presented with bread and salt by the first delegation arriving from Moscow, which was headed by several second-tier boyarsincluding Andrei Teliatevskii—and included important bureaucrats, dvoriane, and leading merchants. Probably at the urging of Petr Basmanov, Dmitrii angrily denounced Teliatevskii, allowed the cossacks to rough him up, and temporarily threw him into prison. While Dmitrii was in Tula, most members of the Godunov clan and their supporters were led from captivity in Moscow to exile in various places throughout the country. The hated Semen Godunov was imprisoned and starved to death. The boyars also ordered the removal of Tsar Boris's body from the Kremlin's Archangel Cathedral and had it reburied in a small monastery. From Tula, Dmitrii next advanced to Serpukhov accompanied by his small army and his principal advisers.

At Serpukhov Dmitrii was met with great honor by a large delegation headed by Russia's leading boyar, Fedor Mstislavksii. The delegation brought along the tsar's carriage and two hundred horses for the final stage of Dmitrii's journey, and more than five hundred people attended a banquet in Serpukhov celebrating Tsar Dmitrii's victory. A number of details concerning the transition of power were also worked out at this time—probably including negotiations over the addition of Dmitrii's supporters to the boyar council. A decision was made to send a delegation headed by Vasilii Golitsyn and Petr Basmanov to Moscow in order to receive the Muscovites' oath of allegiance to the new tsar and to prepare the capital for Dmitrii's triumphal entry.

As soon as the delegation arrived in Moscow, the deposed Tsar Fedor and his mother were strangled to death and it was falsely announced that they had committed suicide. Vasilii Golitsyn personally presided over the assassination of Fedor Borisovich Godunov. Although some propagandists angrily accused Dmitrii of the brutal murder of young Fedor Godunov, the incredibly passive response of the public to the news of his death was a clear sign that the Godunov dynasty had been delegitimized in the eyes of many. No one had been willing to defend Tsar Fedor during the rebellion of Moscow, and his assassination did not trigger a public outcry or even so much as a hint of popular resistance to the new regime. As we shall see, that was a remarkable contrast to the general reaction to Tsar Dmitrii's assassination in 1606—which rekindled the civil war.

In order to complete the relatively narrow and mild purge of Dmitrii's enemies in Moscow, Golitsyn brought with him an official letter from Dmitrii addressed to church leaders in which he denounced Patriarch Iov as a traitor and demanded his removal from office. Iov was, of course, very unpopular not just because of his close association with Boris Godunov; he was also still hated by many for allegedly failing to share his grain with hungry people during the famine. In a carefully choreographed scene in Moscow, Petr Basmanov ordered Patriarch Iov to go to Uspenskii Cathedral in the Kremlin. There the patriarch was denounced as Dmitrii's enemy before a large crowd, after which the crowd seized him while he was still inside the cathedral, roughed him up, and dragged him to Red Square. Some spoke of killing him, but Dmitrii's boyars prevented that. Instead, Iov was banished to a small, remote monastery. The crowd on Red Square was then allowed to plunder the patriarch's palace as a sort of consolation prize.

With Moscow now cleared of Dmitrii's main enemies and with his supporters in firm control, the new tsar made plans to enter the city. He advanced slowly toward the capital. Each day, huge crowds came from all directions to see and to cheer him. From Moscow came a constant stream of lords, bishops, priests, and monks with presents as well as hundreds of servants with food and drink for the tsar and his entourage. On his short journey, Dmitrii made frequent speeches to his new subjects, recounting his adventures to delighted audiences who were, in the words of one of Dmitrii's enemies, "prepared to believe everything he told them." Dmitrii advanced to a suburb of Moscow, Kolomenskoe, where a camp was set up for him in a meadow just a few kilometers from the gates of the capital. There, for three days he received large numbers of boyars, courtiers, and others who expressed joy at his safe arrival and gave him-along with the traditional gifts of bread and salt-valuable presents of gold, silver, gemstones, pearls, and fine liquor. Dmitrii repeatedly forgave his former opponents who were now willing to recognize him as tsar. Also coming to Dmitrii at this time was a delegation of the Western mercenaries who had been in Tsar Fedor's service and had fought bravely against the new tsar. Rather than scolding them, he praised their steadfastness to the oath they had sworn to Tsar Fedor and their skill and valor. He then formally accepted them into his own service, admonishing them to show the same zeal for him that they had shown for the Godunovs. In this way, Captain Margeret entered Dmitrii's service and retained his position as commander of the tsar's foreign troops.

On June 20, 1605, Moscow was at last ready for Tsar Dmitrii's formal entry into the city. The boyars first brought him beautiful garments to wear and asked him to receive his father's inheritance in the name of God. Dmitrii then made a triumphal entry into Moscow as a conquering hero. He rode with the boyars at his side and was preceded and followed by dozens of beautifully attired courtiers, hundreds of his loyal Belorussian cavalry in full armor, and several thousand cossacks and Russian troops. Up to eight thousand men participated in the parade, and the procession took hours to complete. The crowds along the path were huge and well-attired for the occasion. The incredible noise of scores of kettle drums and trumpets in the tsar's parade was matched by the ceaseless pealing of the city's church bells and deafening shouts such as: "you are the true sun shining over Russia." Dmitrii was met on Red Square by a large delegation of bishops, priests, and monks carrying crosses, icons, banners, and holy relics. Dmitrii stopped briefly, wept openly, and publicly thanked God for his success. Then the bishops led him into the Kremlin to the sound of bells and shouts of "Long live our Dmitrii Ivanovich, Tsar of all the Russias."

Once inside the Kremlin, Dmitrii was accompanied to Archangel Cathedral and wept over the coffins of his father, Ivan the Terrible, and his brother, Tsar Fedor Ivanovich. Following that, he was greeted in the Cathedral of the Assumption as the sacred ruler and defender of the Russian Orthodox Church. Archpriest Terentii lavishly praised the new tsar and admonished him "to imitate Christ in his mercy towards the people." Then the boyars led Dmitrii to the palace, seated him on the throne of his father, and paid homage to him. Once Tsar Dmitrii's spectacular entry into the capital was completed, several boyars, bureaucrats, and others emerged from the Kremlin onto Red Square. There Bogdan Belskii called upon the assembled crowd to thank God for the new ruler and to be faithful to him—the true Dmitrii Ivanovich. The crowd roared in approval. Moscow then gave itself over to celebration for the return of the "miraculously resurrected" tsar. Tsar Dmitrii was formally crowned in a traditional ceremony on July 21, 1605.

12

The Short Reign of Tsar Dmitrii

Tsar Dmitrii ruled for less than a year before he was assassinated by conspirators led by the boyar-intriguer, Prince Vasilii Shuiskii. Dmitrii's short reign is to this day still controversial and poorly understood. Unfortunately, we have few records from his reign thanks to the usurper Shuiskii's order that all documents related to it be destroyed. In addition, Shuiskii found it necessary to justify his own act of regicide by vigorously renewing Boris Godunov's propaganda campaign portraying Dmitrii as the debauched monk Otrepev.

Accurately assessing Tsar Dmitrii is incredibly difficult. Almost every wild tale about the "evil monk" has been credited by some historians, and almost every action or policy of Tsar Dmitrii has been discounted. The "impostor" has been accused of seducing or raping many women, including Boris Godunov's daughter, Kseniia. Otrepev supposedly impregnated thirty nuns and also had sex with monks and handsome young courtiers. He has been accused of profaning Orthodox Christianity, icons, and crosses, and of practicing black magic and communicating with Satan. The impostor supposedly lived in terror of being discovered, for which reason he allegedly became less and less accessible to his people. The bloodthirsty monk also supposedly ordered many secret tortures and executions of persons who could identify him as Otrepev or who opposed his evil plans. His most fiendish plot, it was claimed, was a plan to kill all the boyars and clergy in order to convert Russia to Catholicism. In short, Tsar Dmitrii was seen as the Antichrist.

It should be noted that branding an assassinated ruler as a tyrant, usurper, and heretic was a common and effective strategy employed by usurpers in early modern Europe. The demonization of Dmitrii was, of course, absolutely essential in order to legitimize Shuiskii's coup d'état in 1606 because Tsar Dmitrii was a popular ruler regarded by many of his subjects as a sacred, Christ-like figure. Due primarily to Shuiskii's efforts to discredit him, there developed a faulty historical image of Tsar Dmitrii as a frivolous, despised heretic who quickly lost the respect and support of his people and was toppled by an angry population led by a popular patriot and champion of Orthodox Christianity, Vasilii Shuiskii. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth; Tsar Dmitrii was a secure and confident ruler who was not facing rebellion at the time of his assassination.

Tsar Dmitrii's triumphal entry into Moscow in June 1605 was a joyous occasion. He was welcomed by many of his subjects as the true tsar who had been rescued by divine providence in order to restore God's favor to Russia. In fact, during Tsar Dmitrii's first days in Moscow, thousands of people came forward to swear that he was the true tsar. Despite centuries of scholarly denial, he was from the very beginning of his reign a popular ruler. That is an essential point to keep in mind when trying to make sense out of the plots against him, his assassination, and the civil war fought in his name that raged for many years and nearly destroyed Russia. Once the propaganda and legends about Dmitrii are stripped away, what is truly noteworthy was his strikingly smooth transition to power.

Contrary to the traditional interpretation, the new tsar did not seem too radical or too Westernized to most of the Russian elite. He was able to reach swift accord with most boyars, church officials, bureaucrats, voevodas, and others, and he continued many of the same general policies of his predecessors including those of Tsar Boris. There was never any discussion of convening a zemskii sobor in order to legitimize his claim to the throne, and, except for Vasilii Shuiskii's foolish plot against him in the new tsar's first days in Moscow which was quickly discovered and crushed—Dmitrii faced no rebellions during his short reign. Instead, he confidently played the part of the good, wise, and just tsar who was accessible to his subjects. Contrary to traditional interpretations, his realm was a strong absolute monarchy feared and respected by its neighbors. According to Richard Hellie, Tsar Dmitrii was actually "one of the few really enlightened rulers Russia has ever had."

Contemporaries, even some of his enemies, judged Tsar Dmitrii to be an exceptional person. The victorious young warrior-prince who "loved honor" was not only brave and bold; he was an extremely intelligent and resourceful person. He was extraordinarily well educated for a Russian tsar, well-versed in statecraft, advanced in his thinking, and very reform-minded. He was an excellent speaker who carried himself with "majesty and grandeur." He was determined to rule as a wise and clement prince, not as a tyrant, and he wished to make his subjects feel that they lived in a "free country." His manifestos displayed great care and concern for his people, and he obviously strove to gain their affection. Those efforts were more than marginally successful. Many of his subjects loved him, and he was the very first Russian ruler to be idealized as a "just tsar." He introduced the practice of receiving petitions directly from the people twice a week in order to speed up and assure justice for ordinary Russians, and he attempted

to eliminate bribery among public officials. He lowered the tax burden and labor demands on the war-torn southern provinces that had supported him during his campaign for the throne. Dmitrii also responded to his subjects' economic distress by attempting to set taxes at affordable rates. According to contemporaries, he promulgated excellent laws and planned a new law code. He also made plans for promoting education and science in Russia. Tsar Dmitrii definitely had lofty military ambition; he was also the first tsar to call himself "emperor." He worked hard to improve the effectiveness of the Russian army, and he often practiced with his soldiers—who tended to adore him. More than one scholar has seen in Tsar Dmitrii a forerunner of Peter the Great.

Nonetheless, Tsar Dmitrii must have been quite a shock to many of his subjects. Not raised in the claustrophobic and tradition-bound Russian court, he did not behave in the usual manner of the tsars. Dmitrii proved to be an unconventional ruler who challenged many court and cultural norms. He upset some conservatives by breaches of tradition and his neglect of elaborate court ceremonies and religious rites. That aroused suspicions about him which Vasilii Shuiskii and others were able to exploit.

To begin with, Tsar Dmitrii dressed and acted in informal, "Western" ways. He was also a highly literate, independent thinker who did not conceal his disdain for the low level of education among his boyars. He preferred to surround himself with educated courtiers instead of high-born aristocrats. According to Captain Margeret, Tsar Dmitrii also "sometimes showed a bit too much familiarity toward the lords" who had been "brought up in such subjection and fear that they would almost not dare to speak" in the presence of the tsar "without command." Dmitrii trusted some very intelligent and well-educated foreigners with important posts in government-especially the Polish Protestant Buczynski brothers, Jan and Stanislaw. He also failed to observe and occasionally ridiculed some Russian customs. For example, he had no interest in attending church services for many hours each day. While he was careful to observe Orthodox Christian rituals in general, Tsar Dmitrii shocked some people by riding on horseback while on pilgrimages. He also "kept a joyful table" and dispensed with some of the seemingly endless religious rituals associated with dining at court. He did not fast zealously and occasionally ate food deemed "unclean" by the Russian Orthodox Church. He did not rest after dinner, as was customary. Instead, he often wandered around the Kremlin or Moscow alone or with just one or two guards-rejecting the custom of being surrounded by a crowd of boyars and courtiers wherever he went.

More shocking to many Russians were his interactions with and toleration of Protestants, Catholics, and Jews. Especially scandalous was his decision to

allow Catholics, even Jesuits, to have a church of their own in Moscow. Although Tsar Dmitrii kept his own contact with the Jesuits in low profile, for Russians brought up to regard the "Latin faith" as a Satanic heresy, Dmitrii's religious toleration must have been a shock. The tsar's enemies never tired of trying to link him to some kind of Catholic plot to destroy the Russian Orthodox Church. In fact, the mere presence of Poles and other Westerners in Moscow and at court was so disturbing to some xenophobic Russians that they did not bother to distinguish between Tsar Dmitrii's inner circle of foreign Protestant advisers and the hated Catholics found wandering around the capital during his reign. All of them were regarded by unsophisticated Russians as suspicious heretics. It is a noteworthy aspect of early modern Russian political culture that much of the criticism leveled against Tsar Dmitrii by his enemies was remarkably similar to conservative complaints about that later "Antichrist," Peter the Great. Peter's enemies also complained that he was a tyrant, a heretic, a tool of Satan, an immoral blasphemer, and a "Latinizer" whose Western-style dress and habits, preference for foreigners who scorned the backward Russians, and mockery of sacred Orthodox Christian rituals "proved" that he was an "impostor" and "false tsar." Unlike Tsar Dmitrii, however, Peter the Great set up an elaborate and effective mechanism to detect and punish potential traitors.

Tsar Dmitrii did not face significant opposition at the outset of his reign; instead, the general atmosphere was one of celebration. There were some dark rumors, however, spread by Vasilii Shuiskii—one of the losers in the newly emerging power structure. Tsar Dmitrii's nemesis, Prince Vasilii Shuiskii, was one of the most senior and prestigious boyars whose family of Suzdal princes traced their ancestry back to Riurik, the legendary founder of the ancient Rus state. Short, stocky, balding, and unattractive, Vasilii Shuiskii was extremely nearsighted and looked vaguely ridiculous; yet he was a cunning and dangerous intriguer. Prince Vasilii firmly believed he was far more worthy to occupy the Russian throne than anyone else and was more than willing to shed blood to get it. He had dreamed of becoming tsar after Boris Godunov's death only to be forestalled by Dmitrii. In desperation at losing out, Shuiskii tried to organize a hasty conspiracy against the new tsar. Within a few days of Dmitrii's entry into the capital, Vasilii and his two younger brothers, Dmitrii and Ivan, were arrested for spreading a rumor that Dmitrii was Grishka Otrepev. The Shuiskii brothers had apparently approached some lords, merchants, priests, and others with their claims and had actually begun to assemble a small group of trusted individuals in a plot to distract the Kremlin guards by means of arson so they could assassinate Tsar Dmitrii. Because of Shuiskii's lofty status and Dmitrii's desire to appear to be a just ruler rather than a tyrant, an

extraordinary public state trial was held in which "persons chosen from all estates" listened to the evidence in the case.

During Vasilii Shuiskii's trial, Tsar Dmitrii personally acted as prosecutor. He stunned his subjects by his eloquent refutation of the traitor's lies and by his testimony about how the Shuiskii clan had always been disloyal subjects. Dmitrii's performance was so effective that the boyars immediately declared their love for the new tsar and shouted that Shuiskii deserved execution. Shuiskii thereupon made a full confession and fell to his knees, declaring that by his actions he had offended God. He was then upbraided by the new patriarch, Ignatii. Shuiskii was swiftly convicted of lese majesty and condemned to death. Not many days later he was taken to Red Square and prepared for the executioner's ax. At the last minute, Tsar Dmitrii commuted his sentence to exile, along with his brothers, in faraway Viatka. Some contemporaries noted that this was Dmitrii's greatest mistake since Shuiskii eventually did manage to assassinate him.

As noted earlier, Dmitrii had negotiated with the boyars before entering the capital about such things as the distribution of ranks and offices, the purging of the Godunovs from the boyar council, and the retention of estates. Only close relatives of Tsar Boris lost their positions and property; all others had their status and holdings—even if received from Tsar Boris—confirmed by the new tsar. Dmitrii was quite mild and generous to his boyars, preferring to woo them with rewards rather than to cow them by resorting to tyranny. Following customary practice in early modern Russia, however, a few lords who had worked closely with the Godunovs and were not considered particularly trustworthy may have been "demoted" by being shipped off to become voevodas in remote towns.

Tsar Dmitrii had many supporters on the boyar council. His initial allies included members of his own family, participants in the plot to make him tsar, other lords who had been exiled or otherwise mistreated by Tsar Boris, and those voevodas who joined his cause during his campaign for the throne. Of course, Dmitrii was especially generous to the Nagoi clan. In addition to returning his mother to exalted status in the Kremlin, Dmitrii appointed Marfa's three brothers and two cousins to high positions on the boyar council and gave them rich rewards—including former estates of Boris Godunov. Bogdan Belskii was also richly rewarded and placed on the boyar council by Dmitrii. The new tsar also brought Ivan Nikitich Romanov back from exile, richly rewarded him, restored his estates, and made him a boyar. The monk Filaret (Fedor Nikitich Romanov) could not, of course, become a boyar again; but Tsar Dmitrii did promote him to the prestigious position of metropolitan of Rostov. The Romanovs were unquestioningly loyal to Tsar Dmitrii. Other great lords who had been disgraced, exiled, and impoverished by Tsar Boris were also readmitted to the boyar council by Dmitrii.

Tsar Dmitrii went out of his way to arrange marriage alliances between those lords returning from exile and the Nagoi clan in order to secure their firm support. Dmitrii also generously rewarded and promoted those voevodas and other officers who had joined him during his campaign for the throne. From the very beginning of his reign, Dmitrii also made strenuous efforts to gain the support of the senior member of the boyar council, Fedor Mstislavskii. Dmitrii quickly forgave Mstislavskii for fighting against him and let him retain his chairmanship of the boyar council. The new tsar restored Mstislavskii's property which Boris Godunov had confiscated and heaped honors and gifts on him—including one of Tsar Boris's palaces. Dmitrii's "exaltation" of Mstislavskii included an immediate marriage alliance with the Nagoi clan. The tsar's efforts paid off; Mstislavskii became a loyal supporter of Dmitrii. Dmitrii also restored to favor Fedor Mstislavskii's brother-in-law, Simeon Bekbulatovich, who had been badly treated by Tsar Boris.

To the surprise of many, within a few months Tsar Dmitrii pardoned Vasilii Shuiskii and allowed him to return to Moscow. At about the same time Tsar Dmitrii also pardoned several members of the Godunov clan, put them back to work as voevodas, and even promoted one of Tsar Boris's relatives to the rank of boyar. Vasilii Shuiskii himself was returned to the boyar council, and Dmitrii actually arranged for him to marry a relative of the Nagoi clan. Tsar Dmitrii was certainly a clement and forgiving prince. In addition, contemporary observers of the tsar confirmed that Dmitrii dominated his boyar council, that he was much better educated in the art of government than his boyars, that his speeches were learned and wise, that his proposed policies easily prevailed, and that the tsar was personally responsible for making good laws.

No doubt some boyars grumbled about Tsar Dmitrii's unconventional behavior and contact with foreigners. More troubling to at least a few high-born princes was their inability to break into the tsar's inner circle. Some of those proud men had gladly abandoned the Godunovs, hoping to be able to dominate the new tsar's government. As it turned out, Tsar Dmitrii, by his appointments to the boyar council and by his choice of close advisers, seemed to be shoving those princes into the background in favor of the Nagoi clan and pushy, well-educated upstarts. Some aristocrats deeply resented the rise of "unworthy" and "low-born" men in Tsar Dmitrii's service. It may even have appeared to some aging survivors of Ivan the Terrible's reign that Dmitrii was reconstructing Tsar Ivan's personal court aristocracy. In fact, many of the men in the new tsar's inner circle did come from families which had been active in the hated oprichnina. Of course, Tsar Dmitrii had no intention of reinstituting his father's terror campaign, but the hatred some princes felt for the likes of Basmanov and others close to the new tsar was very real. It is likely that painful memories of the oprichnina were conjured up by Dmitrii's enemies as they quietly sought allies among the nobility.

Conspirators plotting against Tsar Dmitrii were able to find some sympathizers among the clergy. Nevertheless, Dmitrii had no trouble imposing his will on the Russian Orthodox Church. It should be remembered that in this period the church was effectively controlled by the "secular political elite" dominant in the Kremlin. Tsar Dmitrii also had allies among the church leaders who praised the new tsar, actively participated in celebrating his accession to the throne, and tried to get along with him even though many of them were scandalized by his religious toleration and contact with foreign "heretics." As noted earlier, the unpopular Patriarch Iov was removed from office and replaced by Tsar Dmitrii's choice, the well-educated Greek Cypriot, Ignatii, who (as bishop of Riazan) had been the first church leader to recognize Dmitrii as tsar. Tsar Dmitrii's enemies, of course, regarded the toppling of Iov as an arbitrary action taken in violation of church rules. They vividly portrayed the new patriarch as an evil man hated by the Russian people but forced upon them by the "false tsar" who was also busy raping nuns and ordering the secret torture and execution of monks and other clergymen every night. In fact, church leadersincluding Iov-recognized that as Boris Godunov's friend, Iov was no longer a viable patriarch. He was convinced to resign and offered as an excuse his advanced age and blindness. Iov really was nearly blind by then and certainly had no interest in trying to cling to his office against the wishes of the new tsar and the hostile population of Moscow. Apparently, some clergymen who had been very close to Patriarch Iov and were therefore considered untrustworthy also lost their positions when he left office. No doubt, they became potential recruits in the plot against Tsar Dmitrii.

Propaganda against Tsar Dmitrii made him out to be a tool of the Jesuits who planned to destroy the Russian Orthodox Church and convert the country to Catholicism. Once he became tsar, however, Dmitrii showed no interest whatsoever in converting Russia and little interest in working with or even having contact with Catholics. He clearly preferred the company of Protestants and educated Russians. (Of course, it should be noted that, to many xenophobic Orthodox Christians, Protestants were just as bad as the "heretic" Catholics.) Wild tales about "Otrepev" as an evil tool of Satan who delighted in spilling Orthodox Christian blood in order to hide his true identity have made it extremely difficult for historians to look objectively at Tsar Dmitrii's relationship to the Russian Orthodox Church. In fact, church leaders cooperated with the new tsar.

Far from being hostile to the Russian Orthodox Church, Dmitrii actually confirmed and even issued new charters of immunities to some monasteries. He also had some churches decorated. He went on pilgrimages and otherwise tried to observe the basic rituals of the Orthodox Christian faith. He did, however, encounter criticism for ordering a survey of all monastic holdings in order to gain sorely needed revenue with which to shore up his impoverished gentry militiamen in preparation for a planned crusade against the Crimean Tatars and the Turks. Dmitrii did, in fact, borrow money from rich monasteries. He also confiscated a few pieces of church property in Moscow, which resulted in the eviction of some priests from lodgings convenient to the Kremlin. It should be noted, however, that other tsars before and after Dmitrii, including Boris Godunov and Vasilii Shuiskii, occasionally imposed emergency taxes on the church and even seized church property without provoking any dramatic reaction.

What really stirred serious opposition within the Russian Orthodox Church and elsewhere was Dmitrii's decision in the fall of 1605 to marry a Polish Catholic princess, Marina Mniszech-the daughter of his one-time military commander, Jerzy Mniszech, the palatine of Sandomierz. Some fanatic church leaders flatly opposed the marriage; others, including the zealous metropolitan of Kazan, Hermogen, demanded that Marina convert to Orthodoxy before the wedding. Marina, however, insisted on remaining a Catholic, and Tsar Dmitrii backed her up. In the end, after senior clergymen made several unsuccessful attempts to talk the tsar out of the marriage, Patriarch Ignatii blessed the union and Tsar Dmitrii ordered disgrace and exile for any church leaders who refused to go along. Metropolitan Hermogen refused to bless the marriage and was immediately sent back to Kazan and shut up in a monastery. The rest of the clergy quickly quieted down and, at least publicly, bowed to the tsar's will. Except for Hermogen, all metropolitans, archbishops, bishops, abbots, and leading clergymen joined Patriarch Ignatii and Tsar Dmitrii's boyars in signing off on the marriage agreement.

The lone holdout (and future patriarch), seventy-five year old Metropolitan Hermogen, was a most atypical religious leader. He had lived among the Don cossacks for many years and had joined the clergy only at the age of fifty. He was an excellent speaker and very well educated for that era, and he managed to rise to the lofty rank of metropolitan of Kazan within just ten years. In Kazan, he displayed a "rare fanaticism" in his missionary work and was merciless to his enemies. The aged metropolitan fought against any perceived threat to the Russian Orthodox Church. He was afraid of no one and was exceedingly forthright in expressing his views. Even his friends often found him "too blunt in word and deed." Long before the issue of Dmitrii's marriage came up, Hermogen had already defied Patriarch Iov and Tsar Boris by refusing to sign Godunov's coronation charter. By late 1605, he was once again in disgrace. It is not known whether Vasilii Shuiskii, newly returned from exile himself, contacted the old metropolitan—who became his future ally and patriarch. Because of the fact that both men were known opponents of Dmitrii, a more cautious Shuiskii was probably not in a hurry to approach Hermogen.

As soon as Vasilii Shuiskii returned to Moscow in late 1605, he began secretly conspiring to assassinate Tsar Dmitrii, presenting himself to carefully chosen ultra-Orthodox individuals as the champion of the Russian Orthodox Church and the "first sufferer" for the faith at the hands of "Otrepev." He promised to halt the "flood of heresy" the false tsar had introduced to Russia. Shuiskii found some willing supporters among monks and priests, and he may have found additional recruits among resentful, lowranking courtiers who had served Tsar Boris and had then been dismissed when Dmitrii came to power. Shuiskii may also have been able to recruit a few secretaries and clerks in the tsar's bureaucracy who had been dismissed as unreliable, had opposed Dmitrii's policies, or-more likely-had been punished for corruption or had at one time or another been on the receiving end of one of the tsar's periodic outbursts against his bureaucrats for stupidity and arrogance. In any case, Shuiskii's small group of conspirators made their first feeble attempt to assassinate the tsar in the Kremlin in January 1606. Three persons were apprehended and executed without naming their accomplices. One contemporary was astonished that Shuiskii's involvement in the plot was not discovered. At that time, Moscow was filled with false rumors about secret executions of monks who opposed the "false tsar." Tsar Dmitrii responded to the incident by increasing Kremlin security. Among other things, he created an elite bodyguard of several hundred foreign mercenaries led by the intelligent and trustworthy Captain Jacques Margeret.

In the early months of 1606, Shuiskii's conspirators concocted several more assassination plots in an attempt to kill Dmitrii before his bride-to-be arrived in the country or the traitors themselves were discovered. With access to the tsar in the Kremlin now more carefully guarded, they temporarily switched tactics and planned to assassinate Dmitrii during one of the many winter military exercises in which the bold tsar took active part and exposed himself to great risk. The assassins were unable to find an opportune moment in the field, however, and were soon forced to turn to yet another strategy. By then, the conspirators had managed to gain a few supporters among the Moscow streltsy, but seven of those men were indiscreet enough to be discovered. In March 1606, before an assembly of the entire Moscow streltsy detachment, Tsar Dmitrii flanked by Petr Basmanov (who served as the head of the streltsy prikaz), Fedor Mstislavskii, and the Nagois—made an impassioned speech in which he assured his soldiers that he was indeed the son of Ivan the Terrible. His speech made a strong impression; the streltsy immediately tore the traitors in their ranks to pieces. After that dramatic and bloody incident, opposition to the tsar temporarily quieted down. The conspirators had to be extremely cautious as they made new plans and sought additional allies.

Tsar Dmitrii was a popular ruler while the conspirators represented only a relatively small group of disgruntled and ambitious individuals. Nevertheless, Shuiskii's allies busied themselves by spreading false rumors, and they were secretly joined by at least a few boyars and other lords. The motivation to commit treason at this time for princes such as the Golitsyns may simply have been the closing off of any further opportunities for advancement at Tsar Dmitrii's court. Edward Keenan has reminded us that one of the only paths to power in early modern Russia was by marriage alliances with the tsar and that sharp political struggles at court over royal marriages sometimes resulted in murder. Furthermore, according to Keenan, the tsar was not free to marry whomever he pleased but was forced to take into account the wishes of his boyars and the balance of power among the boyar clans. Conrad Bussow declared that the tsar's planned wedding displeased Russian lords because "he was disregarding the daughters of the magnates," and Isaac Massa bluntly stated after Dmitrii's assassination that he would still have been in power had he, among other things, chosen to "marry a Muscovite princess."

Vasilii Shuiskii probably gained an ally or two among the boyars and other Russians for gently rebuking the tsar for serving "unclean" veal at a banquet in April 1606. Mikhail Tatishchev, previously assumed to be greatly favored by Dmitrii, stood up for Shuiskii on that occasion and was extremely rude to the tsar. Dmitrii immediately banished him from court—much to the alarm of the conspirators. It is probable that one of the traitors, Vasilii Golitsyn, somehow managed to convince his half-brother, Petr Basmanov, to prevail upon Dmitrii to forgive Tatishchev and return him to court in time for the tsar's wedding. Captain Margeret noted that everyone suspected Tatishchev was already involved in a plot against the tsar and stated that his "recall was a mistake approaching that of recalling Shuiskii, for Tatishchev was known to have a malicious temperament and to be incapable of forgetting any injury." Tsar Dmitrii really was foolhardy not to be more cautious. In spite of the defection of a few great lords, the majority of Tsar Dmitrii's boyars remained loyal to him. Tsar Dmitrii was also very popular among his troops, and he focused much attention and resources on the pomeshchiki. It is important to remember that the tsar was a warrior-prince with military ambition. He had personally tested the mettle of the Russian army in combat and found it wanting. In order to improve the fighting capability of his military forces, he decided it was necessary to shore up the battered, demoralized gentry militiamen.

Contemporaries were struck by Dmitrii's love for and generosity to his military forces. Shortly after coming to power, he ordered a general survey of the conditions of his cavalrymen to make sure they had adequate salaries and landholdings. Many, of course, did not, so the tsar lavished resources on them. He raised their salaries and, in the process, depleted an already shrinking treasury. Dmitrii's enemies later claimed that he squandered the treasury frivolously; but the lion's share of his expenditures were made to strengthen his military forces. The tsar went out of his way to find out directly from his pomeshchiki what their problems were, and he promised to help solve them and to improve their lives. Dmitrii distributed a huge amount of land to his pomeshchiki and constantly sought more for them. He continued and refined Boris Godunov's policy of excluding the sons of the nongentry from the ranks of pomeste estate holders by adding sons of townsmen to the list of persons ineligible to join the militia. Dmitrii wanted a first-rate military force and wished to set it apart from the rest of Russian society.

In addition to shoring up the economies of the gentry, Tsar Dmitrii sharpened their martial skills by requiring his men to receive active training, especially in siege warfare. According to a contemporary, the tsar personally "took part in these exercises as a common soldier, and spared nothing to instruct the Muscovites in the science of war." He also ordered the production of a large quantity of new artillery, especially mortars built to fire grenades. Dmitrii personally tested some of the new cannons. In addition, the tsar ordered the construction of new ships for transporting his army and its supplies.

Initially, Tsar Dmitrii planned possible military action against Sweden, intending to regain the port of Narva (lost to the Swedes by Ivan the Terrible) and to aid Sigismund III in his long struggle against Karl IX. By September 1605, Petr Basmanov was reported to be gathering large forces near the Swedish border. The king of Poland was soon informed that up to forty thousand Russian troops were available for action against Sweden. Sigismund's great victory over Karl's forces at the battle of Kirkholm in September 1605, however, changed the strategic situation in Livonia; soon Dmitrii's offers of military aid to Poland turned into financial assistance instead. It has been asserted that Tsar Dmitrii changed his mind about war with Sweden because of boyar opposition at home. In fact, he really was worried about appearing to be too pro-Polish at the very same time he was making plans to marry a Polish princess. By then rumors were circulating about Dmitrii's secret promise of territorial concessions to Sigismund, and the tsar tried to scotch them by publicly quarreling over the titles the Polish king used in addressing him. At the same time, a worried King Karl was offering to recognize all of Dmitrii's titles and proposed a peace treaty with Russia. What really influenced the tsar's decision to change his military plans, however, was the arrival in Moscow late in 1605 of a group of Don cossacks with the captured commander of the strategically important Tatar fortress of Azov. Dmitrii soon became extremely enthusiastic about leading a Christian crusade against the Crimean Tatars and the Turks.

Tsar Dmitrii dreamed of achieving a great victory over Islam, undoubtedly influenced by Ivan the Terrible's conquest of Kazan and Astrakhan. He was probably also influenced by the need to find additional lands for his gentry and the desire to pacify the southern frontier-especially the Astrakhan region, where there was continuing cossack unrest. The tsar's militiamen shared his enthusiasm about the plan. Dmitrii attempted to enlist the aid of Sigismund III, the pope, and others in the crusade; he received encouraging replies but no offers of military assistance. Sigismund actually urged him to lead his army to victory over the Tatars and Turks in order to earn the title "tsar." In fact, Dmitrii did plan to personally lead his army in a major campaign against the Crimean Tatars once his wedding festivities (planned for spring 1606) were completed. During the winter of 1605–6, he had huge quantities of food, munitions, and artillery, along with siege engines and a large number of troops forward based to the strategically located southern frontier fortress of Elets. He also sent a sizable military force, including many streltsy, to Astrakhan under the command of Fedor Sheremetev. By spring 1606, Dmitrii had reportedly massed up to one hundred thousand men in the Elets region. Additional troops levied in the spring were to move south with the tsar from Moscow soon after the royal wedding. In preparation for the upcoming military campaign, Tsar Dmitrii apparently sent a letter to the Crimean khan in which he repeated an insulting message Ivan the Terrible had sent to the khan's predecessor many years earlier.

Vasilii Shuiskii and his small group of co-conspirators decided they had to act before the tsar departed on campaign, where he would be more carefully guarded and more difficult to kill than in Moscow. They chose the tsar's upcoming wedding celebration as the time to strike.

13

Assassination of the Tsar

On May 2, 1606, Tsar Dmitrii's fiancée, Marina Mniszech, arrived in Moscow in the grandest procession seen in the capital since the entry of Ivan III's brideto-be, the Byzantine princess Zoe Paleologue, in 1472. By the time of her arrival, Vasilii Shuiskii had managed to stitch together a relatively small group of conspirators who were determined to assassinate Tsar Dmitrii. By spring 1606, Shuiskii could count on the support of some individuals at court, in the church, and among the merchant elite. In fact, his allies in treason were remarkably similar to those assembled by his kinsman, Prince Ivan Petrovich Shuiskii, in the latter's unsuccessful coup against Boris Godunov during the 1580s. In addition to a few boyars, church officials, and his family's own trusted friends and servitors, Vasilii Shuiskii was able to gain the support of several disgruntled merchants.

The Shuiskiis traditionally enjoyed the support of rich merchants in Moscow and other leading towns such as Novgorod, Pskov, and Smolensk. Russia's leading merchants had, of course, sworn an oath of loyalty to Tsar Dmitrii and remained publicly loyal to him. Nonetheless, during the Time of Troubles (a period of serious economic dislocation) the nervous gosti felt compelled to become increasingly involved in political activity in order to protect their interests. Although Dmitrii was sympathetic to their needs, many Russian merchants were frightened by the tsar's active pursuit of free trade with the West. Shuiskii took note of that anxiety and arranged many secret meetings with unhappy merchants. Quietly, he managed to gain the support of several Smolensk merchants and dozens of Smolensk-based militiamen. The Shuiskii clan had long had close ties to Novgorod and Pskov, and Vasilii Shuiskii could also count on the support of several merchants and more than a hundred pomeshchiki from those two towns. Novgorod, in particular, had no fond recollections of Dmitrii's father, Ivan the Terrible. In addition to bad memories of the oprichnina and the apparent threat posed by Dmitrii's trade policy, Shuiskii benefited to a considerable extent from King Karl IX's constant bombardment of Novgorod and other northwestern Russian towns with propaganda about Dmitrii as a tool of the Jesuits who planned to hand over Novgorod, Pskov, and Smolensk to Sigismund III.

The fact that Tsar Dmitrii was marrying a Catholic princess did not settle well with many conservative Orthodox Russians, and the arrival of her large entourage provided many opportunities to spread rumors about the "false tsar's" evil plans. In the first place, among the several thousand Polish wedding guests and attendants were nearly two thousand veterans of Dmitrii's campaign for the throne who planned to join his crusade against the Crimean Tatars-for which reason they brought their weapons, armor, and provisions with them to Moscow. The sight of all those foreign soldiers and their weapons entering the capital, as if in another victory parade, made many Russians nervous and played right into the hands of conspirators who whispered about heinous Polish plots. There were also so many wedding guests arriving in Moscow that they had to be lodged all over the city and not concentrated near the Kremlin. Some were quartered in the homes of rich merchants, bishops, and courtiers who may very well have resented the imposition. A far more serious problem was the behavior of many of those guests during the two weeks of wedding festivities. In addition to being arrogant and condescending to the less sophisticated Russians, they stole things, assaulted their hosts, and destroyed property. Some drunken Poles got involved in minor quarrels with the local population, and there were even a few violent confrontations on the streets. The misbehavior of the wedding guests greatly disturbed the Muscovites, and Shuiskii was able to feed their growing anger and to make use of it. Part of the growing resentment against the "Latin heretics" was because the arrogant and unruly Polish guests received special treatment and access to the tsar during the wedding festivities, privileges not extended to most of the population of the capital. That Tsar Dmitrii actually allowed Polish Catholics into Orthodox cathedrals also must have outraged some religious conservatives.

As noted in the last chapter, Tsar Dmitrii did face some initial opposition to his plan to marry a Catholic, but in the end his boyars and all but one of his bishops signed off on the marriage agreement, including the provision for Marina to remain a Catholic. It was necessary, as a result of that agreement, to make some changes in the wedding ceremony that normally required the bride and groom to take Orthodox communion together. The issue was resolved to the satisfaction of the patriarch and others by substituting the anointment and crowning of Marina as tsaritsa for the communion ceremony. Boyars and church leaders actively participated in all parts of the wedding and coronation ceremonies. Even Vasilii Shuiskii played a prominent role, demonstrating that the clement and naïve Tsar Dmitrii had restored him to favor. The residents of Image not available

Fig. 7 "Tsaritsa Marina Mniszech." Printed in Stanislaw Grochowski's Wedding Brochure, 1605. From D. A. Rovinskii, *Materialy dlia Russkoi Ikonografii*, part 2 (St. Petersburg, 1884). Courtesy of Houghton Library, Harvard University. Moscow warmly welcomed Marina, and a large crowd applauded the bride-tobe on her wedding day. Nevertheless, Muscovites grew increasingly outraged by the continued misbehavior of some of the Polish wedding guests. Shuiskii's whispering campaign against the tsar emphasized that the impostor condoned or was at least unwilling to stop the misconduct of the "Latin heretics," and by May 12, that rumor campaign was in high gear. It culminated in the absurd claim that the tsar intended to massacre his boyars, clergy, and merchants during an artillery display being prepared for the wedding guests just outside Moscow. The fact that Dmitrii's father, Ivan the Terrible, had dealt cruelly with Novgorod, his boyars, and church officials and was reported to have once threatened to kill all the inhabitants of Moscow may have influenced the content of Shuiskii's absurd rumor and its credulous reception in certain quarters.

A serious disturbance on the night of May 14 was caused by the death of a Russian at the hands of one of the Polish wedding guests. Approximately four thousand Russians, many of them armed, descended on the residence where the death occurred and demanded the surrender of the guilty man. The alarmed Poles reacted by arming and barricading themselves and then randomly firing their weapons all night long. Upon learning of the developing confrontation, Tsar Dmitrii correctly feared the Muscovites might launch an assault on all the Polish wedding guests and quickly dispatched thousands of streltsy to restore order. He also summoned all his guards and put them on twenty-four hour duty. The potentially dangerous incident quickly passed, but the tsar's officials were now constantly besieged by complaints about the misconduct of the wedding guests. Just as Shuiskii hoped, Moscow had become a powderkeg filled with seething Russians itching to teach the Poles a lesson.

In Tsar Dmitrii's final days, he was warned repeatedly of a conspiracy against him. Dmitrii authorized the seizure of some indiscreet agitators but did not take any of the rumors seriously. His guards also rounded up a few suspicious characters who admitted that there was a plot against the tsar; but, somehow, treacherous boyars—probably the Golitsyns—successfully encouraged Dmitrii to ignore the evidence as just one more groundless rumor and to dismiss the warnings of his foreign officers as nervous overreactions. Dmitrii himself was utterly fearless and extremely confident of the devotion of his subjects. The tsar actually ordered half of his own weary foreign guard to stand down from the alert of May 14–15 in order to get some much-needed rest. No doubt Dmitrii could easily have prevented his assassination by taking the rumors circulating in Moscow seriously and by increasing his personal security. By failing to heed the repeated warnings of his closest advisers, Tsar Dmitrii committed a fatal error. On the night of May 15–16, six assassins managed to slip into the Kremlin before they were detected. Three were immediately killed; the other three were tortured but did not reveal Shuiskii's involvement or plans. Even at that point, Tsar Dmitrii still did not show much concern or take any special precautions; but after the six assassins had been caught in the Kremlin, Shuiskii and his co-conspirators could not afford to wait any longer. Instead, they devised an ingenious plan and set it in motion very early on the morning of May 17, 1606.

Who was involved in Shuiskii's conspiracy? Some members of the boyar council were participants, but not many. Vasilii Shuiskii's brothers, Dmitrii and Ivan, along with his nephew, okolnichii Mikhail Skopin-Shuiskii, were definitely involved; so too were Vasilii and Ivan Golitsyn. Vasilii Shuiskii's friend, okolnichii Ivan Kriuk-Kolychev, and the recently pardoned okolnichii Mikhail Tatishchev were also active participants. Some monks and priests were involved and possibly a few high-ranking clerics as well. A significant number of merchants from Novgorod, Pskov, Smolensk, and Moscow participated in the conspiracy. Somehow Shuiskii also managed to arrange, without causing alarm, for the convenient arrival in the Moscow suburbs of about two hundred trusted dvoriane and deti boiarskie from Novgorod, Pskov, and Smolensk—who were ostensibly on their way to join the tsar's army at Elets as soon as the royal wedding celebration was finished. Under cover of darkness during the night of May 16–17, those men were secretly brought into the city to carry out the assassination.

In a carefully coordinated operation just before dawn on Saturday, May 17, 1606, armed horsemen led by the Shuiskiis and Golitsyns approached the Kremlin's Frolov gate, which linked the Kremlin to Red Square. The streltsy on guard there recognized the powerful boyars and suspected nothing. They were taken completely by surprise in an assault led by Vasilii Golitsyn and Mikhail Tatishchev. As soon as the assassins secured the gate, they let about two hundred armed warriors and a few merchants into the Kremlin who immediately made their way to Dmitrii's palace. At that very moment, other conspirators began sounding the tocsin to rouse the population of Moscow. Bells in the district occupied by merchants from Novgorod and Pskov started the clamor, soon followed by bells in the Kremlin's Cathedral of the Assumption (Uspenskii Sobor) and then everywhere throughout the capital. At that point, Vasilii Shuiskii sent heralds out in all directions to shout the same electrifying message: "Brothers, the Poles want to assassinate the tsar! Do not let them into the Kremlin!" Shuiskii himself swiftly rode from the Frolov gate across Red Square toward a crowd of merchants and artisans who had been preparing for the day's business. Pretending to be concerned about the tsar's safety, he quickly stirred the crowd against the hated Polish wedding guests. Soon, Moscow's

streets overflowed with angry Russians who completely blocked access to the Kremlin and paralyzed attempts by the tsar's foreign guard and streltsy units to return there to protect Dmitrii. As Isaac Massa described it, "by this ruse, the Poles, seized with terror and armed in their houses, were pinned down by the multitude outside" who were "eager to pillage and murder all of them." The population of Moscow fell on the Poles and other foreigners in a blood-thirsty rage, and there was a terrible massacre. Even monks, priests, and children participated in the carnage. Foreign merchants were singled out for beatings and looting, just as they had been during the riot which helped topple Fedor Godunov the year before. Most of those men survived, but many lost their entire fortunes. During six or seven hours of rioting, the Russians killed approximately four hundred twenty Poles, mostly guards and servants. Many other foreigners also perished, and hundreds of Russians were killed by the spirited defense put up by some Poles. One Polish lord's retainers killed nearly three hundred rioters.

Meanwhile, as the tocsin first sounded, the assassins quickly made their way to Tsar Dmitrii's palace. As already noted, Dmitrii had dismissed half his guards from duty on May 15; by the morning of May 17, his bodyguard was still not back up to full strength. Instead of the usual one hundred guards, there were fewer than fifty on duty-perhaps as few as thirty-and not even a single officer. The assassins killed a few of the guards as they forced their way into Dmitrii's palace. At that point, the tsar sent Basmanov from his chambers to find out what the alarm was about, and as soon as he emerged Tatishchev killed him. Then, as the assassins crowded into the palace, the tsar and a few guards retreated to an inner room and locked the doors. While the attackers broke the doors down, Dmitrii shouted a quick warning to his bride and her ladies-in-waiting, who were in an adjacent room, and then he attempted to jump from a window to a nearby building. But he slipped and fell to the ground far below, which broke his leg. Had he made it to the other building and managed to reach the crowd pouring into the Kremlin to save him, there is little doubt that he would have survived. As Massa put it, "the townspeople would have massacred the lords and conspirators." As it turned out, the dazed tsar was temporarily rescued by a few nearby streltsy who opened fire on the assassins as they rushed forward to finish their task. The streltsy managed to kill one or two traitors before being overwhelmed by them. Tsar Dmitrii pleaded with the assassins to ask his mother if he was the real Dmitrii or to take him to Red Square and let him speak. The assassins, however, could not afford to bring him before the people. Fearing the rapid approach of crowds of Tsar Dmitrii's loyal subjects, the traitors quickly killed the tsar. Under the gaze of Vasilii Golitsyn, a merchant named

Mylnikov denounced Dmitrii as a heretic and shot him. Then the assassins hacked the tsar to death, leaving at least twenty-one wounds and smashing in his skull. So ended the life of a remarkable person.

The traitors had succeeded in killing the tsar, but their work was far from done. They were well aware of Dmitrii's popularity and of the need to quickly justify their outrageous actions. While plotting Dmitrii's murder, Shuiskii and his co-conspirators had carefully planned a whole series of maneuvers to make their victim appear odious to the people and to sever the powerful bond between him and the masses. From the very moment the assassins killed Dmitrii, they falsely shouted to the confused crowd gathering around them that the tsar had admitted that he was Otrepev before his death. Vasilii Golitsyn added another bold lie: that Dmitrii's mother had already declared him an impostor. The bodies of the tsar and Petr Basmanov were stripped naked. A cord was tied around Dmitrii's genitals, another around his feet, and a third around Basmanov's feet. Then they were dragged out of the Kremlin to Red Square. The assassins passed Marfa's residence on the way and asked her if the dead tsar was really her son. Obviously in shock, she replied that they should have asked her while he was still alive.

The principal technique Shuiskii chose to justify the assassination was an elaborate attempt to demonize Tsar Dmitrii. Since Dmitrii was widely regarded as a sacred figure who had restored God's grace to Russia, it was deemed essential to desacralize him by demonstrating that he had been an evil impostor and heretic whom Shuiskii and others had been forced to kill in order to protect the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian people. Tsar Dmitrii was denounced as a tool of the devil and as the Antichrist; but Shuiskii chose to focus primarily on a dramatic propaganda campaign asserting that the false tsar had been a sorcerer who had profaned icons and crosses and had communicated with unclean spirits. If Shuiskii could successfully demonstrate that Dmitrii had been a sorcerer in league with Satan, the Russian people would then be released from their sacred oath to him and the assassination would be justified. Shuiskii dreamed that a grateful population would then want him, their savior, to be the next tsar.

Within the context of early modern Russian culture, one of the most obvious and convenient ways for the assassins to demonstrate that Tsar Dmitrii had been a sorcerer was simply to associate him with the controversial *skomorokhi*, Russian minstrels who were then generally feared and respected as magicians. Church leaders hated the minstrels and their musical instruments, which they associated with witchcraft. During the sixteenth century, the Russian Orthodox Church had launched a major campaign against the minstrels as tools of the devil and of the Antichrist, and none other than Ivan the Terrible himself had established the precedent of humiliating an opponent by dressing him up as a minstrel, complete with bagpipes. The idea of repeating that technique to humiliate and demonize Tsar Dmitrii appealed to Shuiskii, who choreographed a most bizarre spectacle for the residents of Moscow.

Early in the afternoon of May 17, as the Muscovites' bloody assaults on the Poles were just beginning to calm down, the rioters on Red Square were dumbfounded by the horrible spectacle of the dead and naked tsar being dragged toward them from the Kremlin. Before and behind Dmitrii's corpse went conspirators carrying masks used by Russian minstrels and shouting to the crowd: "Here are the gods whom he adored!" Dmitrii's body was unceremoniously placed on a small table with his feet resting on the corpse of Petr Basmanov. One of the conspirators then placed a minstrel's bagpipe in Dmitrii's mouth and a minstrel's mask on his belly. That was done specifically to show that the tsar had been immoral and in league with the devil. Shouts about the mask being the false tsar's god were followed by a list of complaints about Tsar Dmitrii as a spendthrift and heretic who had planned to destroy the Russian Orthodox Church as well as the boyars and other innocent Orthodox Christian subjects. Among the charges leveled against the dead tsar was that minstrels' masks instead of icons hung on his walls, while holy icons were shoved under his bed; that was especially indicative of sorcery to many Russians. Another charge was that Tsar Dmitrii and Tsaritsa Marina preferred to go to the bathhouse instead of to church; bathhouses and such impious behavior were also closely associated with sorcery in early modern Russia. The assassins also referred to the dead tsar as a "pagan" and as a "Polish minstrel."

The people of Moscow were stunned by the assassination of Tsar Dmitrii and by the grotesque display of his body. The corpse lay on Red Square for three days for all to see; Dmitrii was even denied the dignity of a Christian burial. A few Shuiskii supporters came forward from time to time to curse the dead tsar, to subject his body to further humiliation, or to make lewd jokes about him. Many other puzzled and upset Russians examined Dmitrii's mutilated and dirty body and wondered what had really happened. Vasilii Shuiskii was, of course, hoping that his efforts to demonize Dmitrii would prove effective and that things would quickly calm down in the capital—just as they had after Fedor Godunov was toppled the year before. That would then allow him to concentrate on the upcoming struggle against his boyar opponents for the vacant throne. But, even as Shuiskii turned his attention to becoming tsar, his opponents were already actively spreading rumors that—once again—Dmitrii had miraculously escaped assassination and would soon return to punish the traitors. Just hours after Dmitrii's body had been placed on public display, a rumor began to circulate in Moscow that a foreigner who resembled the tsar had been killed in his place. Soon, a syn boiarskii dramatically rode up to the corpse, inspected it, and shouted: "You have not killed the true Dmitrii—he has escaped!" A French merchant well acquainted with the tsar also examined the body and expressed doubt that it was really Dmitrii. The corpse was by then not easy to identify, but several observers continued to remark on differences between it and Tsar Dmitrii. Rumors of the tsar's escape snowballed within a few days into a potent weapon against Shuiskii, fanned by members of the dead tsar's inner circle then being held prisoner—including his secretaries, his chamberlain, his widow, his father-in-law, and several Russian lords. Most sophisticated Russians and foreigners did not believe those rumors and correctly regarded them as part of a plot against Shuiskii. However, many ordinary Russians were quite willing to believe that Dmitrii had somehow managed to cheat death again—no doubt with God's help.

The assassination of Tsar Dmitrii opened the path for Vasilii Shuiskii to become tsar, but he was never able to put Dmitrii's ghost to rest. Within weeks of his seizure of power, Tsar Vasilii was confronted by a full-scale civil war once again fought in the name of the miraculously rescued "true tsar" Dmitrii. That rekindled civil war raged for years and eventually toppled Shuiskii from the throne, but it also very nearly destroyed the country.

14

Vasilii Shuiskii Seizes Power and Rekindles the Civil War

During the afternoon of May 17, 1606, as news of Tsar Dmitrii's assassination spread throughout Moscow and as rumors began to circulate that he had somehow managed to escape death once again, leading boyars rode around the capital calming people down and restoring some semblance of order to the streets. Rioting and looting gradually died down and gave way to drinking plundered liquor. Some people celebrated the day's bloody events; many others were in shock because of the tsar's assassination and wept bitter tears. That evening the boyars locked themselves in the Kremlin for a tense all-night session to deal with the crisis brought on by the assassination and riot and to begin deliberations on choosing a new tsar. Just because Vasilii Shuiskii had successfully conspired to kill Dmitrii did not automatically mean he could count on becoming tsar. In truth, many people would gladly have killed Shuiskii as a traitor, and they worked actively to prevent him from seizing power.

The boyar council was, of course, in turmoil. Tsar Dmitrii had many friends and supporters on the council who were outraged by his assassination and were resolved to seek revenge against Shuiskii, but the very fact of Tsar Dmitrii's death greatly complicated their plans. Taken by surprise, none of them felt himself to be in a strong enough position to risk immediate, open confrontation with Shuiskii and his shrill propaganda campaign against the dead tsar. In addition, since Tsar Dmitrii had no heir or powerful Russian clan of in-laws around whom to rally, his allies at first lacked a strong leader or even a coherent strategy.

In sharp contrast, Shuiskii had worked out a clear plan. He gained great tactical advantage by presenting the coup and demonization of the "false tsar" as a fait accompli to the population of Moscow and to his fellow boyars. Making it even harder for Shuiskii's opponents to object to his portrayal of Tsar Dmitrii, the assassins rather conveniently found a handful of compromising documents in the Kremlin that they declared proved that Dmitrii was a secret Catholic involved in a diabolical plot with the Poles to destroy Russia. Shuiskii made sure that "Otrepev's" alleged evil intentions were given maximum publicity. As a result, Dmitrii's supporters on the boyar council were uncertain of the outcome of an open confrontation with Shuiskii. In addition to being personally dangerous, such a breach might plunge the country into civil war. The political culture of early modern Russia's ruling elite militated strongly against such a risk and virtually dictated that some kind of compromise be worked out, at least temporarily. Reluctantly, therefore, the dead tsar's supporters among the boyars decided at least publicly to accept Shuiskii's demonization of Dmitrii as the necessary price to restore order, to avoid civil war, and to protect their own lives, property, and status at court. That did not mean, however, that they would support Shuiskii's claim to the throne. He was forced to maneuver for the crown.

All factions on the boyar council could at least agree on one thing: none of them wanted Patriarch Ignatii to play the role of kingmaker that Patriarch Iov had tried to play in 1598. Even Tsar Dmitrii's allies accepted the logic of getting rid of Ignatii once they had agreed not to publicly challenge the demonization of the dead tsar. Moreover, choosing a new patriarch presented opportunities not just for Shuiskii but also for his opponents. After meeting all night long, the boyar council announced on the morning of May 18 that Patriarch Ignatii had been deposed; he was accused of knowing that Tsar Dmitrii had been a secret Catholic. Selection of a new patriarch was then put off until a new tsar had been chosen. But how should a new tsar be chosen? Some boyars urged the convocation of a zemskii sobor in order to elect the new ruler, but that proposal was blocked by Vasilii Shuiskii, by other boyars who were not anxious to share power with any other group, and by those who believed the issue needed to be resolved quickly.

Vasilii Shuiskii was not the only candidate for tsar; other boyars also hoped for the crown. Shuiskii's challengers could count on support from Tsar Dmitrii's former allies and any boyars who had favored Shuiskii's execution in June 1605 and feared retaliation. Even some of Shuiskii's fellow conspirators, especially Vasilii Golitsyn, now dreamed of becoming tsar. Among Tsar Dmitrii's supporters, members of the Romanov clan hoped for the crown although the family's very popular leader, Filaret, was not eligible because he had been tonsured on Boris Godunov's orders. Filaret's brother Ivan did not have a realistic chance, either; he was unpopular and seriously ill in 1606. Filaret's nine-year-old son, Mikhail, however, was apparently briefly considered by the boyar council but rejected as too young. The struggle for the throne quickly came down to just two candidates-Shuiskii and Fedor Mstislavskii, chairman of the boyar council. The prestigious Mstislavskii became the reluctant candidate of the stop-Shuiskii movement and was strongly supported by the Nagoi and Romanov clans. In such a tense situation, not all opponents of Shuiskii kept their struggle inside the confines of the Kremlin. Dmitrii had many angry supporters in Moscow

who wished to take revenge against Shuiskii, and some boyars secretly became involved in plots against the regicide.

Unfortunately for Shuiskii's opponents, Prince Mstislavskii was not particularly interested in a potentially deadly struggle with Shuiskii. Contemporaries noted that had a zemskii sobor been convened, Mstislavskii would have been chosen tsar. However, he did not push for a zemskii sobor, and he did not even work actively to stop Shuiskii. In fact, Mstislavskii soon withdrew his name from consideration and threatened to become a monk if his supporters persisted in pushing his candidacy. His decision left a vacuum; most boyars still refused to vote for Shuiskii, but no alternate candidate emerged, either. With the boyars at loggerheads, Shuiskii's nervous supporters seized the initiative and bypassed the boyar council in order to elevate their candidate to the throne. They were determined to make Shuiskii tsar at any cost in order to guarantee that they would not eventually be punished for regicide. As a result, Shuiskii was not duly elected tsar but, according to contemporaries, achieved that office by means of "intrigues and scheming."

On May 19, 1606, a meeting was held at Vasilii Shuiskii's townhouse thatwas attended by his two brothers, his nephew Mikhail V. Skopin-Shuiskii, and his close friend, okolnichii Ivan F. Kriuk-Kolychev, and other coconspiratorsincluding the assassin Mylnikov and several other merchants. Very few members of the boyar council attended. Even the Golitsyns, Shuiskii's former coconspirators, did not participate. Mikhail Tatishchev took the lead in organizing the meeting and planning the announcement of Shuiskii's accession. At the meeting documents were prepared to help Shuiskii become tsar. His pedigree was slightly altered to make him a direct descendant of Aleksandr Nevskii. He also signed a pledge to respect the boyar council and not to execute courtiers or to confiscate their property without a trial before the council. In addition, he pledged not to listen to slander and to severely punish false witnesses and informers. (Such a pledge must have been difficult for Shuiskii, who loved nothing more than malicious gossip about his real or potential enemies.) The offer of these voluntary "limitations" on his autocratic powers as tsar was an election ploy. Shuiskii was trying to reassure his opponents that they and their property, especially that which had been given to them by Tsar Dmitrii, would not be in jeopardy during his reign. Such a ploy probably helped Shuiskii's cause, but it is important to remember that the boyar council was not directly involved in his accession.

Once Shuiskii's coconspirators completed their preparations at his residence, they led him to Red Square to proclaim him tsar. Bells sounded throughout Moscow, and a crowd gathered to watch the spectacle. Shuiskii propaganda claimed that at Lobnoe mesto (a platform on Red Square from which decrees were read) a broadly representative assembly of boyars, clergymen, Moscow dvoriane, and merchants presented two candidates to the assembled masses-Shuiskii and Mstislavskii. Shuiskii, it was claimed, was much more popular because he had been the leader of the struggle against the false tsar and the hated Poles. The crowd allegedly roared its approval of "Tsar Vasilii" before Shuiskii was escorted to the Cathedral of the Assumption (Uspenskii Sobor) in the Kremlin where his close confidant, Pafnutii, the metropolitan of Krutitsa, proclaimed him tsar. In fact, that is not what really happened. The assembly that presented Shuiskii to the masses at Lobnoe mesto was much narrower and less illustrious than Shuiskii supporters claimed. Most boyars did not participate in that event. The crowd was also carefully chosen to support Shuiskii. According to a contemporary, Shuiskii was chosen by his accomplices in murder and treason-merchants, pie sellers, cobblers, and a few boyars. The narrowness of the group supporting him, his reputation as a liar, his act of regicide, his hasty seizure of power without the approval of a zemskii sobor, and his lack of any serious effort to gain the support of the common people all combined to undermine Tsar Vasilii's credibility and to destabilize his reign from the outset. Hatred for the "boyar-tsar" was so great that a large percentage of the country's population soon rose against the usurper and plunged Russia into a long and terrible civil war. Tsar Vasilii was never able to exercise his authority over more than half the country, and he was eventually driven from the throne he had so brazenly seized.

Even before news of Shuiskii's seizure of power spread across Russia and galvanized opposition to him, the new tsar faced serious problems establishing his authority in Moscow. In that context, Tsar Dmitrii's corpse continued to play a macabre role. During the night after Dmitrii's assassination, a very severe frost hit the Moscow region and killed many crops and even some trees. Some people suspected that God was punishing Russia for the murder of the tsar. Shuiskii supporters, however, were quick to claim that it was proof the false tsar had been a sorcerer. Additional "proof" was provided by the wide circulation of Shuiskii-sponsored rumors about the mysterious appearance at night of fires around Dmitrii's corpse accompanied by the sounds of devilish minstrel music. One of the very first decisions made by the new Tsar Vasilii was to order Dmitrii's corpse removed to a graveyard for paupers and suicides located just outside Moscow. A story quickly circulated that as the body was being dragged from the city a great, icy wind knocked the gates down. That rumor caused further anxiety among an already upset population. Dmitrii's body was locked in the paupers' cemetery overnight but was found outside the locked doors the next

morning. Monks working for Shuiskii also reported other strange and frightening events and music associated with the corpse, including the appearance of devils at the cemetery. The troublesome body was subsequently cast into a ditch and covered with dirt.

In the meantime, the boyar council made no public objection to Shuiskii's unorthodox accession to the throne. Shuiskii's pledge to respect the boyars' lives, positions, and property slowed down any move against him. In addition, at least a few aristocrats were apparently dreaming of a devolution of power back to the provinces, princes, and boyars. It was said at the time that some wished to divide the country into principalities and expected the new tsar to share his state revenues with them. Several boyars did work behind the scenes against Shuiskii, however, and the new tsar's first days in power were very difficult for him.

Tsar Vasilii's opponents on the boyar council were able to prevent him from naming his first or even his second choice to the office of patriarch. Instead, the council voted to promote Shuiskii's rival, Metropolitan Filaret Romanov, to the rank of patriarch. Why did the boyars choose an ally of Tsar Dmitrii? It was probably because there were many former supporters of Dmitrii on the council who were anxious to prevent Shuiskii from gaining so much power that it might threaten their positions and safety. Tsar Vasilii was extremely displeased by the boyars' decision and looked for the first opportunity to get rid of Patriarch Filaret. For his part, the new patriarch seems to have immediately gotten involved in intrigues to delay the new tsar's coronation-intrigues associated with the "resurrection" of Tsar Dmitrii. On Sunday, May 25, 1606, there was a sharp popular disturbance in Moscow. Shuiskii's opponents had tacked broadsheets from "Tsar Dmitrii" on the gates of several boyar residences that declared that the tsar had escaped assassination and that Shuiskii and his coconspirators were traitors. The broadsheets provoked the appearance of a large and ugly crowd that agitated against the "regicide" Shuiskii. As a result, the unpopular new tsar was nearly toppled from his throne at the outset of his reign. Shuiskii was saved from an uncertain fate only by early warning and fast action by his supporters in calming down and dispersing the crowd. Tsar Vasilii came to believe Patriarch Filaret was behind this plot and began quietly planning to remove him from office as soon as possible.

In an attempt to put an end to the rumors about Tsar Dmitrii escaping assassination, Shuiskii came up with an ingenious plan that once again made use of Tsar Dmitrii's corpse. On May 27, Dmitrii's body mysteriously and conveniently surfaced again in a churchyard far from the ditch it had been left in the week before. News of the corpse's movement frightened many people in Moscow. On that same day, Tsar Vasilii had word put out that the reappearance of the corpse was due to the earth's refusal to receive such an evil sorcerer. Orders were given to dispose of the body as that of a sorcerer in an informal ceremony intended to drive away an agent of Satan. On May 28, Dmitrii's corpse was taken to the small Kotel River just outside Moscow and placed inside a mobile wooden fortress that, months earlier, had been constructed on Tsar Dmitrii's orders. Because of the frightening images painted on it the Russians had nicknamed the contraption the "monster from hell." Dmitrii's body, therefore, was burned in "hell," and his ashes were scattered. Legend has it that his ashes were fired from a cannon in the direction from which he had come to Moscow.

In a superbly timed announcement on the same day, the Kremlin circulated the astonishing news that the true Tsarevich Dmitrii's body had been discovered miraculously preserved in Uglich. Tsar Vasilii had decided very early on that the only way to end the "false and insane belief in Dmitrii's existence" was to send a high-profile delegation to Uglich to transfer the martyred tsarevich's remains to Moscow where the body could be canonized. Shuiskii hoped such a spectacle would simultaneously "prove" that Tsar Dmitrii had been an impostor and that Boris Godunov had the real tsarevich murdered in 1591. Patriarch Filaret was chosen to lead the delegation, but Mikhail Tatishchev and Dmitrii Shuiskii accompanied him just to make sure things worked out according to plan. Shuiskii's henchmen in Uglich, in the meantime, somehow managed to procure the body of an innocent lad who had just died or was killed for the purpose. Precisely on cue, upon reaching Uglich, the delegation reported to Moscow that the relics of the martyr Dmitrii had been discovered intact. News of that stunning discovery, along with a bold lie that miracles had been reported at the tsarevich's grave, was widely circulated throughout Russia along with long denunciations of the many crimes committed by the evil "Otrepev" and accounts of the heroism of the new tsar and his fellow patriots. Preparations were made for a highly publicized holy procession to bring the tsarevich's sacred relics back to Moscow.

On May 30, 1606, shortly after the delegation had been chosen to go to Uglich, the inhabitants of Moscow were summoned to Red Square to hear articles of condemnation of the impostor "Otrepev" and additional justifications for his assassination. Apparently, Tsar Vasilii was still nervous about popular sentiment and the maneuvering of his enemies. In any case, dangerous new plots against Shuiskii really were being hatched. At about this time, another writing appeared one night on the doors or gates of many of the nobles and foreigners living in Moscow that commanded the people in the name of Tsar Vasilii to ransack these houses because traitors lived in them. Many of the common people assembled, hoping for booty; they were appeased and dispersed only with considerable difficulty. Shuiskii thought he discerned Patriarch Filaret's hand in this plot, but he was not certain. Already on May 29, Tsar Vasilii had taken measures to protect himself from any possible conspiracy involving Mstislavskii's brother-in-law, Elder Stefan—the perennial candidate for tsar, formerly known as Simeon Bekbulatovich. Shuiskii ordered him transferred to the remote Solovetskii monastery. Probably for similar reasons, the tsar also decided not to wait for the spectacle of the return of the "true" Tsarevich Dmitrii from Uglich before having himself crowned. Instead of waiting for Patriarch Filaret to perform the ceremony, Shuiskii decided to have himself crowned on June 1.

Because of the haste in organizing Tsar Vasilii's coronation, very few lords and others from outside Moscow participated in the glum ceremony presided over by Metropolitan Isidor of Novgorod. Shuiskii claimed that he had Patriarch Filaret's blessing for the ceremony, which was a lie. Claiming that Tsar Dmitrii had looted the treasury, Tsar Vasilii did not follow the tradition of generously rewarding the participants in the coronation ceremony or his subjects generally—for which reason he quickly gained a reputation for stinginess. He did not even attempt to promote many of his own supporters to the boyar council. Shuiskii was, in fact, very wary of his fellow boyars and gathered around himself favorites of lower rank who owed everything to him. Following the precedent set by Tsar Dmitrii, the new tsar refused to live in his predecessor's luxurious mansion, claiming to be afraid of the ghost of the dead sorcerer. Instead, Shuiskii had a rather modest house built for himself.

Immediately following his coronation, Tsar Vasilii sent couriers all over the country to administer the sacred oath of loyalty to all his subjects. The couriers gathered people together in local churches where all the charges against the impostor "Otrepev" were repeated and even embellished. Finally, the couriers reassured the people that "Otrepev" had admitted that he was an impostor before he died. Then they administered the oath of allegiance to Tsar Vasilii. Shuiskii's intention was, of course, to get the population of Russia to swear an oath to him as soon as possible in order to divert his subjects from possible rebellion in the name of the "good tsar" Dmitrii. He failed to achieve his objective, however. Many people still believed Dmitrii was alive and were poised to rebel against the regicide "boyar-tsar."

In the meantime, the spectacle took place that was supposed to be Shuiskii's "master-stroke" to put an end to the maddening rumors about Tsar Dmitrii's survival. Three days after Tsar Vasilii's coronation, Patriarch Filaret returned to Moscow at the head of a grand procession conveying the body of the "martyred" Tsarevich Dmitrii from Uglich. The public was informed that the "true Dmitrii's" body had been discovered miraculously preserved and that his coffin emitted a wonderful fragrance. Tsar Vasilii's confederates even thought to put nuts in the hand of the corpse in order to counter the official story of accidental suicide that even Shuiskii had supported in 1591. As soon as the tsarevich's body was discovered, Shuiskii propaganda claimed, it performed miracles—in Uglich and along the road to Moscow. When the procession neared the capital, Tsar Vasilii, the nun Marfa, boyars, bishops, priests with icons, and a large crowd went on foot to greet the tsarevich's relics. By then Tsar Vasilii had already decreed that little Dmitrii should be declared a saint. Contrary to some interpretations, however, the crowd drawn to the procession did not all naïvely assume the body in the coffin was really that of the tsarevich. Many people knew that Vasilii Shuiskii had lied repeatedly about the subject in the past and suspected that he had ordered the murder of a child in order to perpetrate a ruse. The crowd was particularly restive that day, and Captain Margeret wrote that Tsar Vasilii came close to being stoned to death by his own subjects.

The unruly crowd was denied the opportunity to gaze upon the tsarevich's body. Instead, his sealed coffin was quickly escorted into the Kremlin to the Cathedral of the Archangel accompanied only by the highest ranking boyars and bishops. Nevertheless, the cathedral was soon surrounded by huge crowds of the curious, the sick, the lame, and others. Guards held them back and admitted only a preselected group of unfortunates-each of whom was immediately "cured," recovered his sight, or was able to walk again after touching St. Dmitrii's casket. Bells were rung throughout the Kremlin and the city each time such a "miracle" occurred. Some gullible people truly believed in St. Dmitrii's miracles; many others recognized the spectacle as a fraud. According to a contemporary, Shuiskii's enemies took immediate advantage of the situation in order "to stop this vulgar show." They arranged to have a very ill man die in the cathedral, which raised a few eyebrows despite frantic efforts by Shuiskii supporters to claim that the sick man's faith had faltered and he therefore had deserved to die. Very soon the stench of the decaying flesh of "St. Dmitrii" became a serious problem, especially since the bodies of dead saints were supposed to give off fragrant smells. In spite of burning massive quantities of incense, the cathedral had to be temporarily closed and the rotting corpse quietly interred. So ended a bizarre episode, although "miracles" associated with St. Dmitrii continued to be proclaimed in the capital's churches for several days. Even some ardent Shuiskii supporters were embarrassed by this spectacle. Isaac Massa, for example, wrote: "These miracles did not last long, and they did not end any too soon."

Tsar Vasilii had reason to believe his enemies were working actively against him. He may have suspected Mstislavskii, but he certainly suspected Patriarch Filaret, whose usefulness once he had presided over the transfer of St. Dmitrii to Moscow was at an end in any case. Things came to a head on Sunday, June 15, 1606. On that day Shuiskii's enemies once again managed to convene the common people on Red Square in the name of Tsar Vasilii. Several thousand people stood before the Kremlin carrying rocks and weapons because Shuiskii's opponents had encouraged the commoners to believe Tsar Vasilii wanted them to plunder and kill all foreigners in the city. The tsar, on his way to church when informed of the gathering of his subjects on Red Square, was astonished and fearful. He ordered an immediate investigation and the dispersal of the crowd—which proved difficult. According to Captain Margeret, who was at the tsar's side at that moment, Shuiskii might have been in grave danger had he ventured out of the Kremlin.

Shuiskii immediately accused his enemies on the boyar council of responsibility for the incident and threatened to abdicate unless the guilty ones were found and punished. Soon, five men were arrested and convicted as conspirators; then they were whipped through the streets of the capital and exiled. When their sentence was pronounced, it was publicly proclaimed that Mstislavskiiearlier accused of involvement-was innocent. Guilt fell on Petr Nikitich Sheremetev. Because he was related to the Romanov and Nagoi clans, suspicion also fell on them. The tsar demoted the Nagois and some Romanov kin who sat on the boyar council. In fact, many of Tsar Dmitrii's favorites were demoted at this time and (following the customary practice) were "banished" to minor positions as voevodas of remote towns. Tsar Vasilii took his primary revenge against Patriarch Filaret, accusing him of plotting against the Shuiskii regime by secretly declaring that Tsar Dmitrii was still alive. Filaret was driven from his palace and stripped of his holy office. In this way, Tsar Vasilii more or less gained control of the situation on the boyar council and in Moscow. Nonetheless, he made a dangerous enemy in Filaret Romanov.

As soon as Patriarch Filaret had been toppled, Tsar Vasilii swiftly arranged for Metropolitan Hermogen to become patriarch. In Hermogen he gained a strong, intelligent, and energetically who became a fanatic opponent of Shuiskii's enemies. Hermogen imposed strict discipline on the Russian Orthodox Church and turned it into an extremely useful instrument for propping up Tsar Vasilii's regime. Many clergymen had been shocked by the assassination of Tsar Dmitrii and especially by the irregular removal of Patriarchs Ignatii and Filaret, and they were also none too pleased by Vasilii Shuiskii's usurpation of the throne. Patriarch Hermogen, however, relentlessly and successfully fought against any dissension within the church, calling down curses on unruly priests or anyone else questioning Tsar Vasilii's legitimacy. Hermogen made maximum use of the story of St. Dmitrii to combat Shuiskii's foes, who were accused of great sin and sacrilege for their attachment to the "heretic Otrepev." Patriarch Hermogen's tireless efforts did help Shuiskii gain effective control of Moscow. Elsewhere in Russia the situation was dramatically different.

Outside Moscow, belief in Tsar Dmitrii's survival and opposition to Shuiskii's coup spread like wildfire. Tsar Vasilii had been well prepared for the necessary propaganda campaign against the dead tsar in order to justify his assassination, but Shuiskii was completely unprepared to fight against an enemy who would not stay dead. How did the stories of Tsar Dmitrii's escape from assassination spread so quickly and become such a potent weapon in the hands of Shuiskii's enemies? At least part of the answer lies in an extremely clever rumor campaign launched by Tsar Dmitrii's allies immediately after his assassination.

Within a few days of Dmitrii's murder, the following story circulated in Moscow and elsewhere: someone had gone to the tsar's stable around midnight before the assassination and, in the name of Tsar Dmitrii, fetched several horses. Those horses were not returned, and no one knew what became of them. Tsar Dmitrii, it was said, had secretly departed from Moscow accompanied by one of his close associates, dvorianin Mikhail Molchanov, and some others in a dangerous test of the loyalty of his subjects and in order to discover who the traitors were who had been plotting against him. There were just enough facts in this rumor to make it plausible, and Tsar Vasilii was wise to be concerned about it. For example, twenty-five horses really were missing from the tsar's stable. More important, Molchanov had been seized by the conspirators on the day of the assassination, accused of helping the false tsar practice witchcraft, and nearly beaten to death; yet he somehow managed to escape Shuiskii's clutches, stole Tsar Dmitrii's state seal and favorite Turkish horse, and fled from Moscow incognito. Tsar Vasilii had the stable hand who delivered the horses to Molchanov's accomplices tortured in order to make him confess what had really happened, but the man died without revealing anything.

Molchanov made his way to Putivl and then to Poland-Lithuania, managing to spread word far and wide that Tsar Dmitrii had escaped assassination. His technique was a bold one; Molchanov decided at least temporarily to play the role of Tsar Dmitrii himself. As he and his companions fled from the capital, Molchanov was represented as the tsar traveling in disguise to a ferryman at the Oka River and to others in Serpukhov and at several inns along the way to Putivl. Rumors quickly circulated that an innkeeper and several others recognized and spoke with Tsar Dmitrii and that the angry tsar had written a letter reproaching the traitors for the assassination attempt and promising swift revenge. Several notes and letters allegedly written by Dmitrii were also found along the roadsides. Molchanov's clever ploy had a powerful effect in the provinces and even to some extent in Moscow; it nearly toppled Tsar Vasilii. Many Russians hoped and were quite willing to believe that Dmitrii had once again miraculously escaped assassination.

Mikhail Molchanov was well suited for the task of temporarily playing the role of Tsar Dmitrii. Although he did not strongly resemble the dead tsar, he knew Dmitrii very well and could imitate him. Molchanov had been one of Tsar Dmitrii's close associates; an English merchant referred to him as Dmitrii's "speciall favorite." Molchanov was bright, energetic, and very well educated; he was fluent in Polish and could read and write some Latin. His spontaneous and timely "resurrection" of Tsar Dmitrii was extremely effective. More than any other individual, Molchanov was responsible for the immediate and widespread belief that Tsar Dmitrii was still alive—a belief that quickly mobilized a full-scale civil war against Shuiskii.

When he arrived in Putivl, Molchanov stayed out of sight and did not try to act the part of Tsar Dmitrii, probably because many people in that city were well acquainted with the tsar they had helped put on the throne. Molchanov had time to gauge the reactions of the residents of Putivl to news of the assassination of "Otrepev," Shuiskii's accession to the throne, and rumors that Tsar Dmitrii was still alive. Molchanov was heartened by the attitude of the local population and by news that some servicemen from Putivl who were in Moscow at the time of the assassination had refused to swear an oath of loyalty to Tsar Vasilii. Molchanov quickly concluded that it really was possible to fight against Shuiskii by means of the ghost of Dmitrii and that Putivl could once again serve as a base of operations for the rebels. By the time Tsar Vasilii's newly-appointed voevoda of Putivl, Grigorii Shakhovskoi, arrived from Moscow in June, Molchanov had already made secret contact with him. Those two former close associates of Tsar Dmitrii decided that Putivl was ripe for rebellion. While Shakhovskoi made plans to lead the local population in an uprising against Shuiskii, Molchanov stayed out of sight and made plans to travel to Poland-Lithuania in order to play the role of Tsar Dmitrii.

As soon as the new voevoda, Grigorii Shakhovskoi, arrived in Putivl, he assembled the townspeople and electrified them with a speech in which he denounced Shuiskii as a traitor and declared that Tsar Dmitrii had escaped assassination and was at that very moment in Poland-Lithuania gathering an army for a new campaign to restore himself to the throne. Shakhovskoi told them that Tsar Dmitrii had instructed him to ask the residents of Putivl to help raise troops for that purpose. The townspeople, in the words of a contemporary, "listened to this news with great rejoicing." Shakhovskoi also declared that Shuiskii was preparing reprisals against the inhabitants of Putivl because of their past devotion to Tsar Dmitrii. Then he led the townspeople in swearing a new sacred oath of loyalty to Tsar Dmitrii and another oath to seek vengeance against the usurper in Moscow. The old veovoda, Bakhteiarov-Rostovskii, was killed on the spot for refusing to swear an oath of loyalty to Tsar Dmitrii. In that way did "bloodthirsty" Prince Grigorii Shakhovskoi begin the civil war against Tsar Vasilii. The entire population of the town, including fortress cossacks and streltsy, stood up for Tsar Dmitrii, and the deti boiarskie of the Putivl district rose en masse against Shuiskii. It was, in fact, the deti boiarskie of the district who took the initiative in helping Shakhovskoi reignite Russia's first civil war. Those fighting men provided crucial military expertise, weapons, and leadership which turned popular anger against the usurper Shuiskii into the powerful armed struggle often referred to as the "Bolotnikov rebellion."

Putivl was swiftly joined by many other towns of the southwestern and southern frontier in declaring for Tsar Dmitrii. The events of 1604–5 seemed to be repeating themselves. Many of the same men who had fought for Dmitrii the year before quickly reorganized their old units in order to resume the struggle against Moscow. The region that had so strongly supported Dmitrii's campaign for the throne once again took the lead in fielding armies for the "true tsar." Within five months, more than eighty towns and nearly half the country stood in the rebel camp, and Tsar Vasilii found himself besieged in his own capital.

At first, the alarmed tsar tried to deny that any uprising had taken place, hiding it as best he could from his subjects in Moscow and even from the first army he sent against the rebels. When it was no longer possible to hide the fact of the rebellion, Shuiskii propaganda tried to portray it as the result of Polish meddling in Russia's internal affairs. The rebels themselves were initially dismissed as mere brigands, criminals, slaves, urban poor, and other riffraff. As the civil war rapidly spread and threatened Moscow itself, Tsar Vasilii finally tried to frighten his wavering subjects into remaining loyal by portraying the insurgents as social revolutionaries-as have-nots determined to overthrow the Russian elite and seize their property, their wives, and their daughters. Nevertheless, Russia's first civil war was definitely not a social revolution. Just as in its first phase (1604-5), the rekindled civil war (1606-12) produced not class division but a vertical split through several layers of Russian society. The bulk of the rebels were cossacks, petty gentry, lower status military servitors, and townspeople; just as in 1604-5, they were driven by their zealous support of Tsar Dmitrii as the legitimate, sacred ruler. As we shall see, however, unlike the first phase of the civil war, the second phase lasted long enough to mobilize on the rebel side significant numbers of non-Slavic native peoples from

areas only recently added to the Russian empire. Their participation was probably more anticolonial than pro-Dmitrii, although it is worth noting that Tsar Dmitrii had established a reputation for dealing fairly and sympathetically with their grievances.

Cossacks provided the largest and most important rebel military force in the renewed civil war, just as they had done during Dmitrii's campaign for the throne; but, once again, they were not interested in championing the cause of the lower classes and pursued their own nonrevolutionary agenda. According to some writers, large numbers of radical slaves participated in the Bolotnikov rebellion and played a leading role. Actually, the number of slaves involved has been greatly exaggerated, and most of those who did participate were military slaves (often former deti boiarskie who had fallen on hard times) with no interest in the abolition of serfdom. Some writers have emphasized the involvement in the rebellion against Shuiskii of low status military servitors and urban plebes, seeing that as a sign of social revolution. In fact, soldiers and townspeople of all types enthusiastically participated in the civil war in the name of Tsar Dmitrii and on occasion provided initiative and leadership, but they did not pursue a radical social agenda. In most cases, leadership in getting towns and districts to declare against Shuiskii and in organizing rebel forces was provided, just as it had been in 1604–5, by local gentry militiamen. Such elite and marginal elite participation, which resulted in broad coalitions among rebel forces and which denied Shuiskii control over a large part of his army, was the main reason his opponents were as successful as they were.

Close analysis of rebel territory and rebel forces by summer 1606 reveals that they were virtually the same as in 1604–5. Many of the same soldiers and commanders who had fought for Dmitrii just over a year earlier rose once again in support of his claim to the throne. For that reason, it should come as no surprise that, in an era of deep social, economic, and political crisis, many of the preconditions of the Bolotnikov rebellion were virtually identical to the preconditions of the first phase of the civil war. Those preconditions included intraelite conflict; elite disaffection with the crown; a discredited regime seen by many as illegitimate and responsible for the current crisis; large numbers of impoverished, landless petty nobles, disbanded soldiers, and young men; and a militarized frontier zone with a provincial population resentful of the central government's infringement on their land and freedom.

In 1606, as in 1604–5, almost all social groups had serious grievances and were represented in the ranks of rebel forces. A noteworthy exception were the boyars. Several of them sided with Dmitrii in 1604–5, but very few joined rebel forces in 1606. That was certainly not due to any radical rebel agenda. Instead,

it had more to do with the boyar tradition of residing in the capital, participating in council meetings almost daily, and believing that it was necessary to maintain a constant presence at court in order both to protect one's family status and possessions and to be in line for new rewards, assignments, and opportunities. In addition, the renewed civil war developed so quickly that it preempted the usual boyar maneuvering and involvement in plots. It is also important to remember that the boyars, like many inhabitants of Moscow, were fairly certain that Tsar Dmitrii really had been assassinated and were, therefore, uncertain about what forces or individuals were behind the dead tsar's "resurrection."

Even without boyars, the rebels in 1606 had from the outset a broad social base. One of the main reasons for that was precisely because-Shuiskii propaganda to the contrary-the insurgents did not seek radical redistribution of land, wealth, or power. Instead, they were united by their opposition to the usurper, Vasilii Shuiskii. Shuiskii brought the civil war on himself by killing Russia's charismatic and popular ruler. Of course the ambitious and wily Shuiskii had already been suspect in the eyes of many Russians even before he managed to seize the throne. Many Russians were deeply suspicious of boyars in general and regarded "boyar-tsars" as inherently illegitimate. Among other things, it was almost universally assumed that Shuiskii would rule exclusively in the interests of his fellow boyars. Considering the extent of Tsar Dmitrii's efforts to shore up his gentry militiamen, Shuiskii's coup must have been deeply offensive to many of them. Not only was Tsar Vasilii not very interested in the condition of his military forces, but it was also widely assumed that the boyar-tsar and his inner circle would cut off opportunities for advancement for men of "lesser birth" and prefer only the high-born aristocracy. In this context, it is worth noting that social scientists tell us to expect an especially violent reaction when individuals have been led to believe that the government is concerned about their condition and is about to help them only to have those hopes suddenly shattered.

The fact that Vasilii Shuiskii led the coup against Tsar Dmitrii and then seized power himself triggered a strong negative reaction from many suspicious Russians. They objected both to the overthrow of a tsar without a public inquiry into the charges against him and to the coronation of a new tsar—a regicide at that—without consulting representatives from the provinces. Southern frontiersmen, in particular, must have been disturbed by Shuiskii's seizure of power. It was widely assumed that the usurper would cancel the ten-year tax exemption Tsar Dmitrii had bestowed on the war-torn southern provinces that had propelled him to power and that Tsar Vasilii would also reinstitute the hated practice of plowing for the state (the tsar's tenth) that had not been performed since Dmitrii launched the civil war in 1604. Rebel leaders in 1606 also spread a rumor that Shuiskii planned to punish the southern provinces for having supported Dmitrii in 1604–5. That possibility must have seemed very real to the inhabitants of Severia, and especially the Komaritsk district, which had been terrorized by one of Tsar Boris's armies in 1605. To understand why those same areas were the first to rebel against Tsar Vasilii and the first to organize and fund military forces to oust the usurper, one need look no further than the region's memory of just exactly who had been the commander of Tsar Boris's punitive expeditions—none other than Vasilii Shuiskii himself. News of the despised Shuiskii's seizure of power produced energetic opposition to him on the part of many inhabitants of the southern frontier.

Vasilii Shuiskii stirred up bitter hatred and opposition on the part of many Russians, not just southerners, by what a contemporary called his "wolf-like" advance to the throne. Tsar Vasilii's apologists, of course, claimed that he was a good and pious ruler. Many sources from the period, however, painted a completely negative picture—accusing the new tsar of being a regicide, liar, usurper, complete moral failure, drunkard, fornicator, homosexual, and even a sorcerer who dissipated the state treasury, threw the country into turmoil, and was responsible for the deaths of countless innocent people. Most important, Shuiskii was widely regarded as an evil, false tsar—a "tsar-tormentor" (*tsar'-muchitel'*). All that was needed to galvanize opposition to him, therefore, was widespread awareness of a possible legitimate alternative to his discredited regime and the arrival on the scene of that credible charismatic challenger.

Tsar Dmitrii certainly qualified as a credible charismatic challenger to Vasilii Shuiskii. Dmitrii was generally regarded as a sacred ruler who had restored God's grace to Russia. His assassination, therefore, had a traumatic effect upon many faithful Orthodox Christian Russians who had trouble accepting Shuiskii's coup and his self-serving propaganda about the dead tsar. As a result, Tsar Vasilii had great difficulty establishing his own legitimacy in the eyes of many Russians. He immediately lost control over the southern part of the country and was never able to exercise authority over more than half of Russia. Rumors that Tsar Dmitrii had once again escaped assassination served to quickly unify Shuiskii's enemies and to legitimize rebellion against him. Such rumors were easy for Russians of all social classes to believe for several reasons. First, it was an age of strong belief in miracles. Second, even unloved tsars such as Boris Godunov were typically rumored to have survived their reported deaths. Third, and most important, Dmitrii's prior escape from Uglich was widely regarded as having been divinely assisted. Many Russians were therefore quite prepared to believe God had once again saved the true tsar who would soon return to punish the traitors.

Widespread belief that Tsar Dmitrii was still alive proved to be an extremely potent "causal story" which triggered a powerful rebellion against Tsar Vasilii. Not only did Dmitrii have an obvious right to challenge Shuiskii; but, once again, as in 1604–5, he appeared to be a victim along with everyone else of an illegitimate ruler's evil deeds. Furthermore, as in 1604-5, rebels championing Dmitrii's cause in 1606 were not associated with radical prescriptions for redistributing power or wealth. Rumors about Tsar Dmitrii's survival were especially potent because, once again, as in the first phase of the civil war, they portrayed him as the hidden legitimate ruler who would soon emerge to restore justice. Thus, just like the rebels who fought against Tsar Boris, the insurgents rising against Vasilii Shuiskii in the name of the "true tsar" were really conservatives, not radicals, and their goal was as much religious as political: to restore the God-chosen ruler to the throne. The strength of the rebel movement was, in fact, directly related to its religious, purifying mission. So powerful was the motivation of Ivan Bolotnikov and other crusaders in the cause of Tsar Dmitrii that they were able to quickly organize a powerful army that defeated Tsar Vasilii's military forces and laid siege to Moscow—all while waiting in vain for Tsar Dmitrii to reappear.

15

The Beginning of the "Bolotnikov Rebellion"

Civil war against the usurper Vasilii Shuiskii began in mid-June 1606 in Putivl and spread with dizzying speed to many other towns and regions of the southwestern and southern frontier. Prince Grigorii Shakhovskoi was incredibly active in organizing opposition to Shuiskii and in converting Putivl once again into the capital of an armed struggle in support of the "true tsar" Dmitrii. He sent couriers in all directions who falsely reported that Dmitrii had escaped assassination and was in Poland-Lithuania organizing an army. News filtered into Moscow by late June that the inhabitants of five or six principal towns on the southern frontier had revolted—seizing, robbing, and imprisoning their voevodas and other Shuiskii loyalists and declaring their steadfast loyalty to Tsar Dmitrii. Soon, according to a contemporary, the entire southern frontier all the way to the Volga and Astrakhan "formed a league sworn to avenge" Tsar Dmitrii. Rebel towns corresponded with one another, began to coordinate their efforts, and tried to determine just exactly where the "true tsar" was located.

Within the first month of the renewed civil war, at least fourteen southern towns and fortresses joined the rebellion. Almost all of Severia quickly and enthusiastically followed Putivl's lead, including the fertile crown peasant districts of Komaritsk and Samovsk. The Komaritsk district, in particular, became one of the main bases of the rebellion alongside Putivl and provided many soldiers, much money, and vast quantities of food for the war effort. Shakhovskoi also sent couriers to cossack stanitsas nearby and far away, which resulted in thousands of free cossacks once again joining the cause of the "true tsar." In Putivl, Shakhovskoi set up a "great council" to supervise the rebellion. While he and others organized military forces and made plans, they anxiously awaited some kind of official statement from "Tsar Dmitrii."

As noted in the last chapter, Shakhovskoi and Mikhail Molchanov had already agreed that the latter was to make his way to Poland-Lithuania to continue playing the role of Tsar Dmitrii. While Shakhovskoi set about stirring up rebellion, Molchanov crossed the border and made his way to Sambor (in Galicia), the home of Tsar Dmitrii's father-in-law, Jerzy Mniszech, who was then being held prisoner by Shuiskii. In Sambor Molchanov was very well received by Lady Mniszech. Molchanov quickly sent a letter from "Tsar Dmitrii" to Shakhovskoi that was read to the people of Putivl. The letter filled them with enthusiasm for gathering money and military forces to expel the usurper Shuiskii from Moscow. Molchanov also sent letters from "Tsar Dmitrii" elsewhere throughout Russia's southern frontier that were similarly effective, in part because they bore the authentic stamp of Dmitrii's state seal.

Meanwhile, Lady Mniszech helped Molchanov set up a "court" in Sambor and gathered approximately two hundred soldiers for the "tsar." She sent letters to Polish lords stating categorically that Dmitrii was alive. Thus, word was spread far and wide that Tsar Dmitrii was well and looking for supporters to help him reclaim his throne. Soon, veterans of Dmitrii's earlier campaign and some disgruntled Polish lords began to gravitate toward Sambor. Only a small number of people, none of whom had ever met Tsar Dmitrii before, were allowed to see "Dmitrii" in Sambor sitting on his makeshift throne. Indeed, Molchanov's lack of close resemblance to Tsar Dmitrii was a real problem in Poland where Dmitrii had been seen by many great lords. The new "Dmitrii" was understandably not presented at the Polish court, and he rarely saw visitors.

Molchanov was convinced that the rebels needed "Tsar Dmitrii" to appear at some point, but he also fully understood that he could not personally play the role of the tsar in Putivl because many people there knew Dmitrii by sight. As a result, despite Shakhovskoi's pleas, "Tsar Dmitrii" kept failing to appear in Russia. Eventually, some anxious rebels began to search for him on their own. A delegation traveled to Poland in August 1606 but could not find their tsar. Tsar Vasilii's envoys, however, were able to surmise that Molchanov was playing the role of Dmitrii in Sambor, and they denounced him to Polish authorities. The Russians described Molchanov's physical features in great detail, even down to the lash marks on his back inflicted on him in Moscow. By then, however, it really did not matter because Lady Mniszech had died and Molchanov was unable to find another protector. As a result, "Tsar Dmitrii's" court in Sambor simply disappeared. Although Molchanov's short stint as "Tsar Dmitrii" had not been especially successful, it did stimulate and help sustain belief in the resurrection of Tsar Dmitrii during the crucial opening phase of the renewed civil war. Perhaps most important, while playing the role of "Tsar Dmitrii" Molchanov found a brilliant commander for the rebel army in Ivan Bolotnikov.

Ivan Isaevich Bolotnikov has long been portrayed as a conscious social revolutionary who led the masses in a struggle against serfdom and feudal oppression. That was definitely not the case. Ivan Bolotnikov was a Russian by birth. The year of his birth and even his approximate age in 1606 are unknown, however. He was no longer a young man by the time of Tsar Dmitrii's death; a contemporary English source referred to him as an "olde Robber or borderer." The Bolotnikov family of deti boiarskie had settled on the southern frontier not far from Tula. Like so many other southern frontier militiamen in that period, Ivan seems to have fallen on hard times. No doubt due to nagging financial problems, he indentured himself as an elite military slave to boyar Prince Andrei Teliatevskii. At some point, Bolotnikov—also like so many others in his situation—ran away to join the cossacks. He was later taken prisoner by the Crimean Tatars and sold into slavery in Turkey, another all-too-common fate for Russians in that era. According to one of his own soldiers, while in Turkish slavery Bolotnikov "was chained to the galleys and for several years had to fulfil hard and menial tasks." He was eventually freed by "Germans," who defeated the Turks at sea, and he was then taken to Venice. From there he made his way back to Russia by way of Poland-Lithuania.

While traveling through Poland-Lithuania, Bolotnikov heard about Shuiskii's coup and rumors that Tsar Dmitrii had escaped assassination and was living in Sambor. He decided to go there to see if the rumors were accurate. In Sambor "Tsar Dmitrii" (Molchanov) warmly received Bolotnikov, interviewed him at length, and immediately chose him to be commander-in-chief of the rebel army being organized in Putivl. Bolotnikov was an experienced warrior with many good qualities acknowledged even by his enemies. A Shuiskii supporter referred to him as "a big, strong, and very courageous man" distinguished in war "by his bravery and boldness." Bolotnikov accepted his charge and swore a sacred oath of loyalty to "Tsar Dmitrii." In return, the "tsar" gave him a sabre, a fur coat, and a small sum of money to help him get to Putivl. More important, he also gave him a letter to Prince Shakhovskoi in what appeared to be Tsar Dmitrii's own handwriting and that was sealed in red wax by Dmitrii's state seal. The letter authorized Bolotnikov's appointment as commander-in-chief of the tsar's military forces and commanded the Putivl voevoda to give him money and control over the troops being raised to fight against Shuiskii.

Before Bolotnikov appeared on the scene, Shakhovskoi and others had already hastily organized military forces to struggle against Shuiskii. The Putivl district's large gentry detachment played a prominent role, as did the newly promoted golova (colonel) of the Putivl fortress cossacks, Iurii Bezzubtsov—the former sotnik (centurion) of the Putivl cossacks who had served Tsar Dmitrii so well during his campaign for the throne. Thousands of free cossacks joined forces with the Putivl garrison and most of the region's pomeshchiki to form "Tsar Dmitrii's" army. Many of those men were veterans of Dmitrii's campaign for the throne in 1604–5.

While awaiting the arrival of "Tsar Dmitrii's" commander-in-chief, Shakhovskoi needed an interim commander to perform a very important task: to link up with and help defend the rebels in the fortress of Elets (350 kilometers east northeast of Putivl). Elets was of enormous strategic value because Tsar Dmitrii had stored massive quantities of food, gunpowder, lead, and artillery there in preparation for his planned campaign against the Crimean Tatars. The Elets garrison of about one thousand men had rejected Shuiskii's coup from the very beginning. Thus, Elets, almost overnight, became a principal rebel stronghold. As such, its recovery by Tsar Vasilii became a high priority. If the rebels could hold onto Elets they would have enough supplies not only to sustain themselves for more than a year but also to support a large and rapid assault on Moscow itself.

Prince Shakhovskoi chose Istoma Pashkov to command the relief force. He was ordered to advance to Elets, to spread news that Tsar Dmitrii was still alive, and to capture as many towns and fortresses as possible in preparation for the march against the usurper in Moscow. Pashkov has traditionally been portrayed as a prominent nobleman. Actually, he was a mere pomeshchik with cossack connections. Pashkov had been born about 1583 into a petty pomeshchik family near the town of Epifan. After he had served seven years as a cavalryman, Tsar Dmitrii promoted Pashkov to the rank of sotnik and gave him command of one hundred Epifan deti boiarskie.

At about the same time Pashkov's army was making its way from Putivl toward Elets, exciting news about events in the great lower Volga port town of Astrakhan reached Prince Shakhovskoi. Astrakhan was one of the largest towns in Russia; the population inside its mighty stone walls probably stood at ten thousand in the early seventeenth century. The town was a critically important fortress guarding southeastern Russia and access to the Volga River from the Caspian Sea. Many of its merchants prospered by a brisk trade with Persia, the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Russian towns up the Volga. Astrakhan had a large garrison, beefed up by Tsar Dmitrii, consisting of more than a thousand men including pomeshchiki, streltsy, artillerymen, and guards. During a popular uprising most of the garrison and townspeople joined voevoda Prince Ivan D. Khvorostinin in swearing an oath of loyalty to Tsar Dmitrii.

Soon after the rebellion in Astrakhan, boyar Fedor Sheremetev and his army (which Tsar Dmitrii had sent down the Volga to prepare for military operations against the Crimean Tatars) arrived before the gates of the town. Sheremetev had been instructed by Tsar Dmitrii to replace Khvorostinin as voevoda of Astrakhan. Before reaching the town, however, he had received word of Shuiskii's coup and new instructions from Tsar Vasilii. As a result, Sheremetev arrived before Astrakhan with Tsar Vasilii's official blessing just a few days after the town had declared for Dmitrii. Because of that, Khvorostinin refused to open the gates of the town to the army of the "traitor Shuiskii." Sheremetev and his men were forced to retreat north about 15 kilometers to Balchik Island, where they constructed a wooden fort and remained for more than a year.

Sheremetev tried repeatedly to blockade Astrakhan from Volga River traffic and made occasional forays against the town. In response, Khvorostinin first had the townspeople dig new trenches outside the fortress walls to forestall possible siege operations. Then, toward the end of summer 1606, military units from Astrakhan along with Don, Volga, Terek, and Iaik cossacks began periodically attacking Sheremetev's semipermanent camp. According to Isaac Massa, almost fifteen hundred newly impoverished merchants from Astrakhan and other towns near the Caspian Sea flocked to Sheremetev's camp on Balchik Island for protection, where they endured terrible siege conditions and perished in large numbers from hunger and cold. Massa's figure for the number of merchants on Balchik Island is wildly exaggerated, but his estimate may be close to the total number of persons who sought protection from voevoda Sheremetev. Sheremetev himself stated that merchants had abandoned the dangerous Volga region altogether because it was unsafe and because they had no goods left to trade.

One of the tasks Tsar Vasilii had assigned to Fedor Sheremetev was to conduct negotiations on his behalf with the Nogai Tatar Prince Ishterek and other powerful Nogai leaders, large numbers of whose subjects ("yurt Tatars") were settled in the Astrakhan region. Unfortunately for Sheremetev, Molchanov sent a letter from "Tsar Dmitrii" to Prince Ishterek. As a result, many local Nogai Tatars joined the rebellion against Shuiskii. In fact, they took maximum advantage of the chaos produced by the civil war, mustered thousands of men, and according to a contemporary—began to "ravage all the areas they could reach." Soon, other non-Slavic native peoples of the Volga region also rebelled against Shuiskii and generally against the heavy hand of Russian imperial expansion.

For years Astrakhan itself remained an important rebel anchor and magnet for free cossacks wishing to join "Tsar Dmitrii's" service. Over the course of the civil war, voevoda Khvorostinin was able to field a total of as many as twenty thousand men for military service against the hated usurper in Moscow. During the civil war, the Astrakhan region also produced a number of copy-cat pretenders claiming to be sons of Ivan the Terrible or Tsar Fedor Ivanovich. Some of those "tsareviches" actually managed to gain the support of large numbers of Don, Volga, and Terek cossacks who actively cooperated with Astrakhan against Sheremetev's beleaguered army. Although the cossack "tsareviches" were merely attempting to legitimize their own banditry by means of such pretense, the fact that they attracted numerous supporters was yet another sign of the widespread popular rejection of Vasilii Shuiskii's legitimacy and of the power of the lingering hope for the miraculous appearance of a resurrected member of the defunct sacred ruling dynasty.

"Tsar Vasilii IV," as Shuiskii vainly hoped he would be remembered by posterity, had been truly stunned by the news reaching Moscow of the rapid revolt of town after town and garrison after garrison on the southern frontier. The widespread belief that Tsar Dmitrii had escaped assassination and the amazing speed with which the rebels fielded an army against Shuiskii, not to mention the periodic disturbances in Moscow sparked by the arrival of rumors about Dmitrii's whereabouts and activities, almost completely unnerved the shaky new tsar. A contemporary in Moscow at the time wrote: "The tsar desired with all his heart to become a monk and enter a monastery, but the magnates prevented him."

Despite rebel gains, Shuiskii held powerful advantages. Even unloved by many of his subjects, Tsar Vasilii had been accepted at least nominally by most of the central and northern parts of the country, by the court and the bureaucracy, by the top military leadership, and by much of the army. In addition to holding the capital, he could count on the support of members of the elite in the important towns of Novgorod, Smolensk, and Nizhnii Novgorod. Even though the civil war split the country in two and disrupted tax revenues and ordinary military planning, operations, and recruitment; Tsar Vasilii still had a vast area and considerable resources to draw upon. Overall, enough of the tools of governing and coercion remained intact for Shuiskii to survive for a long time despite being regarded as illegitimate by many of his subjects.

Because of Tsar Dmitrii's preparations for his planned campaign against the Crimean Tatars, Shuiskii had at his immediate disposal, on paper at least, many fully mobilized militia regiments to send against the rebels. Unfortunately for the new tsar, many of those soldiers refused to swear an oath of loyalty to him and simply melted away, heading for home or for rebel-held towns. In addition, many militiamen and streltsy who remained nominally loyal to Shuiskii were, nonetheless, regarded by him as untrustworthy. For that reason, some of them were foolishly dispatched to other towns and forts for lower status garrison duty, which many of them regarded as punishment. Not surprisingly, large numbers of these men later rebelled against Tsar Vasilii and greatly aided the cause of "Tsar Dmitrii." Because Shuiskii had demonized Tsar Dmitrii's foreign troops in his whispering campaign against "Otrepev," the new tsar felt compelled to dismiss many of the several thousand skilled mercenary troops in Russian

service. Given no severance pay, many of those men were reduced to begging and robbery by the time they reached the border. Many others, however, made their way to rebel-held towns and reentered "Tsar Dmitrii's" service. Among them, according to a contemporary, were "valiant and determined men" who performed extremely valuable service to the rebel cause as "commanders of cavalry, captains, or governors of captured towns." A number of foreign officers Tsar Vasilii tried to retain in his service, such as Captain Margeret, soon found excuses to leave Russia.

Tsar Vasilii made a concerted effort to retain the loyalty of his remaining troops and to gain additional forces and money from towns and monasteries. Fearing the effects of admitting that he was fighting against the ghost of Tsar Dmitrii, however, at first he tried to hide the fact of the rebellion. Shuiskii issued a fairly plausible emergency proclamation that the Crimean Tatars had invaded Russia with fifty thousand men. He called upon all towns to rush military recruits (datochnye liudi) to Moscow in order to resist the invaders. By July, new detachments of recruits arrived in the capital almost daily, and preparations for a possible siege of the city were begun. By then financial aid from rich monasteries was also forthcoming.

Despite all his problems, Tsar Vasilii still commanded a large army. As soon as he could, Shuiskii sent the bulk of his available military forces south to suppress the rebellion. Nervous about the loyalty of his own troops, however, the tsar's official explanation for transferring the army to the Serpukhov area was to stop the alleged Crimean Tatar invasion. Only when Tsar Vasilii's soldiers actually clashed with rebel forces near Elets did many of them learn that they were fighting against their fellow countrymen and against "Tsar Dmitrii." The shock of that discovery helps to explain many of the problems Shuiskii's commanders faced in the field.

Tsar Vasilii's offensive against the rebels began by early July 1606. Initially, the main army was once again placed under the command of senior boyar Prince Fedor Mstislavskii. Mstislavskii's forces totaled somewhere between fifty and sixty thousand men. The senior voevoda was most concerned about two towns in rebel hands, Elets and Kromy. Because of the huge supply depot in Elets, its recovery was considered a higher priority than Kromy. For that reason, Mstislavskii sent a relatively small force under the command of Prince Iurii N. Trubetskoi and Mikhail A. Nagoi against Kromy. The military significance of that fortress had, of course, been amply demonstrated during Dmitrii's campaign for the throne; it was the strategic gateway between the southwestern frontier and central Russia. Nervousness about the loyalty of their troops and bad memories of the siege of Kromy in 1605 caused Shuiskii's commanders to take the precaution

of sending against that fortress only the most loyal units from Novgorod, Pskov, and the Moscow region. Upon learning of the enemy's approach, the rebels in Kromy sent word to Prince Shakhovskoi in Putivl asking for help and then dug in to withstand the siege.

In the meantime, Mstislavskii sent a larger army under the command of Prince Ivan M. Vorotynskii toward Elets, which quickly became the focal point of bitter conflict lasting all summer. At first, voevoda Vorotynskii tried to win over the fortress garrison by diplomacy. A letter from Tsar Dmitrii's mother was presented to the fortress commander by none other than boyar Grigorii F. Nagoi, Tsar Dmitrii's uncle. In the letter, the nun Marfa denounced her putative son as Otrepev and appealed to the inhabitants of Elets to give up the struggle against the legitimate Tsar Vasilii. Grigorii Nagoi also brought along an icon depicting the newly canonized St. Dmitrii to show the rebels. Despite such an impressive display of Nagoi clan loyalty to the new tsar, Elets did not yield. Thereupon, Vorotynskii laid siege to the fortress. As already noted, Shakhovskoi quickly dispatched the first rebel army commanded by Istoma Pashkov to help defend that fortress. Pashkov led approximately seven to eight thousand men against Vorotynskii's much larger army. Vorotynskii defeated Pashkov in a major battle and then continued besieging Elets. Voevoda Vorotynskii and all his officers and men were soon rewarded with gold coins by a grateful Tsar Vasilii. They were unable, however, to make any progress in their siege operations.

Sometime during the sieges of Kromy and Elets, "Tsar Dmitrii's" commanderin-chief, Ivan Bolotnikov, arrived in Putivl from Sambor. Shakhovskoi immediately gave him command of an army of twelve thousand men and sent him north to relieve besieged Kromy. There, sometime in July, Bolotnikov was defeated in his first encounter with voevoda Mikhail Nagoi and was forced to retreat. He apparently returned briefly to Putivl after that defeat and, along with Iurii Bezzubtsev, organized new rebel military units. Bolotnikov also spent a few weeks in and around the Komaritsk district, adding new recruits, regrouping and training his men, and ousting from the region some stray supporters of Tsar Vasilii.

"Tsar Dmitrii's" commander-in-chief may have established his own temporary headquarters in the southern part of the Komaritsk district. Of course, the population of the Komaritsk district and the neighboring Samovsk district responded enthusiastically to Bolotnikov's appeals for more troops, food, supplies, and money. In fact, so many men eagerly flocked to Bolotnikov's banner that, according to a contemporary, throughout southwestern Russia "only women remained" in most towns and villages. By August, with a larger and somewhat better trained army, Bolotnikov was able to move north again to attempt to relieve Kromy.

As summer wore on, Tsar Vasilii's siege armies grew increasingly weary. The rebels were at this time generally better provided for than the tsar's forces, and they fought with much greater zeal. Shuiskii's commanders also had great difficulty operating in a region in which Tsar Dmitrii had been very popular and over which the tide of revolt was once again spreading rapidly. The lack of progress in the sieges of Elets and Kromy eventually prompted a frustrated Tsar Vasilii to order a thorough review of the campaign, his commanders, and their strategy. As a result of that strategic review, additional military units were ordered to reinforce the siege of Elets. Even with additional forces arriving before that rebel stronghold, however, voevoda Vorotynskii was unable to capture the fortress. In fact, the transfer of boyar Prince Mikhail F. Kashin's regiment from Novosil (70 kilometers northwest of Elets) unleashed a sharp struggle in that town. Novosil's garrison, composed mostly of deti boiarskie infantry, immediately led a rebellion of the townspeople in the name of Tsar Dmitrii. Shuiskii's commanders were then forced to send Kashin's regiment back to Novosil, but to no avail; the rebels would not open the town's gates to those returning soldiers. As a result, Tsar Vasilii's siege armies now found themselves facing a rebel stronghold behind them as well as in front of them.

Sometime in late August, Bolotnikov made his second attempt to relieve beleaguered Kromy. In addition to large numbers of troops from Seversk towns and a sizable force of Komaritsk peasants, his army now included detachments of Don cossacks. The wily golova (colonel) Iurii Bezzubtsev led the rebel army's main contingent of deti boiarskie infantry. Bolotnikov's forces advanced rapidly against Trubetskoi's much larger army. By then, some of Trubetskoi's troops, mobilized in the spring, had already participated in the siege of Kromy for two months and had exhausted their meager provisions. Many of Trubetskoi's men were hungry, demoralized, and distracted by foraging for provisions. Making matters worse, the cost of food in siege camps-always high-was even higher than usual in 1606 due to the severe freeze that occurred just after Tsar Dmitrii's assassination. Many of Tsar Vasilii's soldiers simply could not afford to pay for food. As a result, there was growing malnutrition and discontent in the siege camps before Kromy and Elets. In light of this, it is no real surprise that Bolotnikov's men were able, without great difficulty, to fight their way through the enemy's lines to bring badly needed supplies and reinforcements to besieged Kromy.

In an early display of his energetic tactical skills, Bolotnikov immediately ordered repeated forays from Kromy to keep up pressure on his wavering opponents. Very soon, Trubetskoi and Nagoi were forced to begin a general retreat of their exhausted forces. The retreating army very quickly began to disintegrate. Even Shuiskii's most trustworthy detachments (from the regions of Novgorod, Pskov, Smolensk, and Moscow) began to abandon Trubetskoi's army and headed for home, complaining about the spread of rebellion throughout the entire frontier. Voevoda Trubetskoi tried to keep his army together by withdrawing to nearby Orel (40 kilometers to the northeast of Kromy). There he attempted to make a stand, but his own retreat had changed the strategic situation in the area and opened a path to the heartland for the rebels. While Trubetskoi and his men tried vainly to hold the line at Orel, rebellion swept through the region. Inside Orel itself, loyal gentry units from Novgorod witnessed the wavering of the townspeople and the local garrison. Fearing the consequences of remaining there, the Novgorodians simply abandoned the town and began retreating north. That prompted the Orel garrison and the entire town to declare for Dmitrii. Almost immediately, Bolotnikov's forces occupied Orel, from which they were able to pursue and harass the remainder of the tsar's army that was now rapidly retreating north toward Kaluga-the main hub of the upper Oka defensive lines (located 70 kilometers north of Orel). The passage of Bolotnikov's army through the region triggered many more rebellions among garrisons and townspeople. Many of those new rebels also quickly signed up to help carry the struggle all the way to Moscow.

By the time Bolotnikov managed to break up the siege of Kromy, Tsar Vasilii's commanders besieging Elets were facing the very same problems that had overwhelmed Trubetskoi. The two-month siege of Elets had accomplished nothing useful, and Shuiskii's frustrated and weary troops were subjected to a constant barrage of demoralizing reports about rebel victories elsewhere and the rebellion of more and more towns. By late summer, food was becoming scarce and too expensive for many of Tsar Vasilii's militiamen. When news reached Elets about Bolotnikov's success at Kromy and about the hasty retreat of Trubetskoi's army, it had a powerful demoralizing effect on the besiegers. Some deti boiarskie began to desert the siege camp for home. Morale among the remaining troops sank even further when badly needed supplies were captured by rebel forces. Voevoda Vorotynskii himself, short on supplies and facing mounting desertions, grew increasingly afraid of being trapped behind a rapidly advancing line of rebel troops and rebellious towns. He therefore chose to break off the siege of Elets and retreated north toward the large town of Tula-a major fortress and coordinating center of southern defenses located 180 kilometers northwest of Elets. The retreat of Tsar Vasilii's siege army left Pashkov's men holding the field before Elets. News of the retreat of the tsar's forces from Elets had a similar effect to news of Trubetskoi's retreat from Kromy—inspiring the rebels and demoralizing Shuiskii's supporters. And just like Bolotnikov, Pashkov quickly pursued the retreating army and applied enough pressure on it to keep Vorotynskii from being able to regroup his forces in order to prevent the rebel tide from sweeping north.

As Vorotynskii's army retreated, his subordinate voevoda, Mikhail Kashin, still unable to retake Novosil, abandoned that effort and also retreated north to Tula. There, Vorotynskii planned to regroup his forces and to hold out in Tula's impressive fortress that guarded the road to Moscow. Unfortunately for Vorotynskii, many of his militiamen hastily abandoned him at this time. Most of those weary men went home, but some of them joined the rebel cause. Vorotynskii, faced with the disintegration of his army and unsure of the loyalty of the inhabitants of Tula, was forced to make a hasty retreat to Moscow. That drastic move opened up a direct path to the capital for the supporters of "Tsar Dmitrii." It also triggered a powerful uprising of the population of Tula and most of the region's dvoriane and deti boiarskie. This was the first time large numbers of sturdy and even prosperous gentry joined rebel forces in the renewed civil war. The shock of the loss of Tula and the retreat and disintegration of both armies sent to crush the rebellion inspired fear in the hearts of Shuiskii supporters as well as dumbfounded admiration for the valiant and successful rebel soldiers. One contemporary who lived in Moscow claimed that Tsar Vasilii's forces had been "so badly beaten by the rebels in all encounters that fewer than half returned." Repeating the pattern of Bolotnikov's advance, Pashkov's army took advantage of the situation and advanced rapidly from Elets toward Tula, triggering rebellions in several towns and fortresses along the way. Pashkov then entered and occupied Tula itself.

The rebellion of Tula marked a new phase in the renewed civil war. Up to that time, the bulk of the rebel leadership had come from petty deti boiarskie of the southern provinces. But in the older, more settled frontier zones such as the Tula and Riazan districts were settled many relatively prosperous gentry with large holdings and many serfs. When these men led the defection of Tula from Tsar Vasilii, followed by a similar rebellion of their peers in the Riazan district, it marked a significant split within the ruling elite and doomed Russia to many years of ruinous civil war. Many pomeshchiki from the old frontier region had, of course, joined Dmitrii's cause in 1605 and helped tip the balance of power decisively away from the Godunovs toward Dmitrii. Now, once again, they rejected a "boyar-tsar" who had usurped the throne.

At first, the Riazan gentry, witnessing the Tula elite's revolt against Shuiskii, merely disobeyed voevoda Vorotynskii's orders and abandoned Tula for home. Their arrival home, however, sparked rebellions in several Riazan towns. While the senior voevoda of Pereiaslavl-Riazanskii (later known as Riazan), Vasilii K. Cherkasskii, remained loyal to Shuiskii, his associate voevoda, Grigorii F. Sunbulov, threw his support to the rebels and declared himself Tsar Dmitrii's voevoda of Pereiaslavl-Riazanskii. Cherkasskii, taken by surprise, was arrested and shipped off to Putivl where he was eventually executed. One of the Riazan lords who had been most active in helping Dmitrii gain power in 1605, the prestigious dvorianin Prokofii Liapunov, once again declared for Tsar Dmitrii. In the process, he captured one of Shuiskii's voevodas and shipped him off to Putivl where he was also later executed. Soon, the entire Riazan region rose in the name of Tsar Dmitrii.

Tsar Vasilii was, of course, mortified by reports of rebel gains and the retreat and disintegration of his armies. Even before the worst news about the collapse of the sieges of Elets and Kromy reached him, Shuiskii ordered preparations for a possible siege of the capital. Tsar Vasilii was also understandably still nervous about his popularity inside Moscow. Despite the gradual decline of dangerous incidents, on or about July 22, new broadsheets from "Tsar Dmitrii" appeared on the streets of the capital and once again provoked a minor disturbance. Officials responded by carefully screening the handwriting of all bureaucrats and clerks in Moscow in an unsuccessful effort to find the forger. At about the same time, Tsar Vasilii took the extraordinary precaution of ordering the dismantling of two bridges across the moat protecting the Kremlin as well as the stationing of cannon at the Kremlin gates. In early August, there was a huge gunpowder explosion in Moscow; no serious damage was done, but it frayed nerves. At about the same time, news arrived in the capital about great rebel "victories" in the south, and still more letters from "Tsar Dmitrii" appeared that announced that he would return at the beginning of September. Shuiskii responded to these disturbing developments by staying inside the Kremlin and ordering its gates locked.

Once it became obvious that there was a powerful civil war going on, Tsar Vasilii dropped all pretense about a Crimean Tatar invasion and launched a bitter propaganda campaign against "Otrepev" and the rebel "brigands." He made a passionate, if misleading, appeal to his subjects—urging them to fight against evil, Polish-backed heretics who had "plundered churches, torn out icons, alters, and gospels, smashed holy images, murdered nobles, merchants, and townsmen, and raped their wives and daughters." Patriarch Hermogen assisted in the campaign to demonize the rebels and to portray Shuiskii as a pious, legitimate tsar. Their strategy was partially effective, but the rebellion kept growing and the belief in Tsar Dmitrii's "resurrection" continued to spread—even in Moscow. Prisoners and suspected rebels were brought into the capital almost every day; maddeningly, even under torture they swore that Dmitrii was alive. By the dozens, fanatic partisans of the dead tsar were drowned in the river, almost all claiming with their dying breath that Dmitrii was once again marching on Moscow to reclaim his throne and punish the traitors.

Tsar Vasilii did not have to wait long for Tsar Dmitrii's angry supporters to arrive in central Russia. By the end of summer 1606, the rebels had effectively expelled Shuiskii's forces from the southwestern and southern frontier. By then, virtually all towns and fortresses south of the Oka River had sworn allegiance to Tsar Dmitrii. The rebels were now rapidly advancing through the old frontier zone to directly challenge Shuiskii for control of the important fortified towns along the Oka River, towns that protected the heartland and the approaches to Moscow itself.

16

The Civil War Widens and the Rebels Advance to Moscow

By early fall 1606, as "Tsar Dmitrii's" main voevodas, Ivan Bolotnikov and Istoma Pashkov, led their armies into central Russia and approached Moscow, rebellion swept from the frontier through the central Volga region and into the heartland itself. As Tsar Vasilii and his military advisers studied the developing strategic situation, they decided to concentrate on stopping Bolotnikov's advance to Kaluga. Because that town screened the capital from the south, they feared a breakthrough there more than anywhere farther east where Pashkov was operating. Since voevoda Trubetskoi's army had fallen to pieces, it was necessary to form a new army to face the rebels at Kaluga. All available troops were to be used for this purpose. The tsar's brothers, Ivan and Dmitrii, formed the nucleus of the new army out of the "tsar's regiment" and advanced to Kaluga in early September. Many courtiers, Moscow dvoriane, zhiltsy, and some provincial gentry were in that elite force.

Bolotnikov's army attempted to cross the Ugra River at its confluence with the Oka River, about 7 kilometers west of Kaluga. The Shuiskii brothers were waiting for him. Although Ivan Shuiskii has been described as a mediocre commander, on September 23, in a bitter battle he stopped the rebels from crossing the Ugra and pushed them back. Many of Bolotnikov's men were killed in that confrontation. For this victory, Tsar Vasilii sent his commanders and soldiers hearty congratulations, pieces of gold, and notification of salary increases. However, Ivan Shuiskii was unable to profit from his victory due to the rebellion of Kaluga itself. As a result, the tsar's army began retreating toward Moscow.

After the battle at the Ugra River, Bolotnikov retreated eastward toward Aleksin. The approach of his army provoked an uprising in that town in favor of Tsar Dmitrii. Many members of the Aleksin garrison and gentry from that district immediately joined Bolotnikov's growing army. From Aleksin, Bolotnikov crossed the Oka River and returned to Kaluga where he was welcomed and where many men from the town's garrison and the district's gentry joined his forces. Operating out of Kaluga, Bolotnikov then made a serious effort to cut Moscow off from the west. According to a contemporary, "He brought every locality through which he passed back to its allegiance to Dmitry, who was about to arrive, and by this means he progressively increased his army."

While Tsar Vasilii concentrated on stopping Bolotnikov southwest of Moscow, opportunities opened up for the rebels farther east. From Tula, Pashkov sent a small force east through the Riazan district toward Riazhsk and possibly on to the central Volga region—areas then in the process of rebelling against Shuiskii. In the meantime, Pashkov and the main part of his army advanced north in hot pursuit of Vorotynskii's forces; they crossed the Oka River and by mid-September made it all the way to Serpukhov—only 90 kilometers south of Moscow. By then, Pashkov's army was swollen by the addition of new recruits from several garrisons and districts joining the rebel cause at about this time. The inhabitants of Serpukhov, seeing the approach of the large rebel army, declared for Tsar Dmitrii and opened their gates. Pashkov entered Serpukhov and immediately gained many more recruits. Like Bolotnikov, wherever Pashkov went he brought villages, towns, and fortresses back to the cause of Dmitrii with little or no resistance.

Not surprisingly, news of the rebel occupation of Serpukhov caused panic in Moscow. Many lords and their wives fled from the capital because of it. To prevent Pashkov from approaching Moscow, a small detachment under voevoda Prince Vladimir V. Koltsov-Mosalskii was hastily sent from the capital along the Serpukhov road to the Lopasnia River—the first real barrier north of Serpukhov. There Koltsov-Mosalskii tried to stop the rebels but was unsuccessful, suffering heavy losses in the process. He was forced to retreat north all the way to the Pakhra River, only 18 kilometers south of Moscow. Taking no chances, Shuiskii immediately ordered his brilliant nephew, Prince Mikhail Skopin-Shuiskii, to take command of the forces guarding the Pakhra River. Sometime after September 23, Skopin-Shuiskii's army defeated Pashkov's attacking forces in a fierce battle. Pashkov suffered heavy casualties and was forced to retreat.

The battle at the Pakhra River was a significant but fleeting victory for Tsar Vasilii. He ordered some salaries increased but sent his men no gold. Skopin-Shuiskii's victory did at least relieve the immediate threat to the capital. Nonetheless, before his defeat, Pashkov managed to send a small scouting detachment all the way to the Moscow suburbs. Those men advanced to the village of Kotly, just a few kilometers south of the capital. Only Skopin-Shuiskii's victory at the Pakhra forced them to retreat.

Pashkov retreated to Serpukhov. While there, he learned of a rebellion in the important town of Kashira, just 50 kilometers to the east, and of repeated but unsuccessful efforts by Tsar Vasilii's brother, Dmitrii, to retake that town with a small army. Pashkov immediately led his men to Kashira, which he quickly occupied and secured from the threat posed by Dmitrii Shuiskii's forces. Troops from the town's garrison and local militiamen flocked to join Pashkov's nowsizable army. From Kashira, Pashkov made his way along the Oka River northeast about 50 kilometers to the fortified town of Kolomna, a key position in the defense of Moscow. The rebel army quickly occupied Kolomna. If there was any siege at all, it was a short one. Kolomna's voevoda S. Kokhanovskii opened the gates to the rebels and swore an oath of loyalty to Tsar Dmitrii. Pashkov persecuted local gentry and merchants who remained loyal to Tsar Vasilii, allowing their property to be looted.

The fall of Kolomna (located about 100 kilometers southeast of Moscow) terrified Tsar Vasilii and his supporters. With the military situation sharply deteriorating, they gathered together all available remaining forces and planned to move them toward Kolomna in order to stop Pashkov's approach to the capital. Meanwhile, in Kolomna, Pashkov was joined by sizable units of Riazan district gentry led by Prokofii Liapunov and Grigorii Sunbulov. Despite their superior social status, those gentlemen had little choice but to recognize the incredibly successful Pashkov as the senior voevoda of their combined forces. Pashkov now advanced against Moscow with a large army. In the capital, rumors spread that Tsar Dmitrii himself was in Kolomna. Many pomeshchiki chose to desert Shuiskii, either going home or quietly joining the rebels.

Although the armies of Bolotnikov and Pashkov did not join forces at this time, Pashkov's bold thrust toward Moscow effectively screened Bolotnikov's activities west of the capital. From Kaluga Bolotnikov's men fanned out into the regions southwest, west, and even northwest of Moscow. They made a serious effort to cut the capital off from the western provinces, especially Smolensk. Those rebel units were extremely successful and met virtually no resistance. As they approached many towns, they stimulated rebellions in them in the name of Tsar Dmitrii. In short order, Bolotnikov's men brought a large territory over to the rebel side.

The two main fortresses on the Smolensk road, Viazma and Mozhaisk (110 kilometers west of Moscow) declared for Dmitrii and seriously disrupted communications between Moscow and the western provinces. Other towns southwest, west, and even northwest of the capital quickly followed suit and joined the rebel cause. So successful were Bolotnikov's troops that by the time the siege of Moscow began in late October, rebels were operating in large numbers as far north as the roads linking the capital to towns in northwest Russia. They did not succeed in their attempts to entice the important town of Tver into rebellion; but many towns, villages, and servicemen in that region did join the rebel cause, and communications between Moscow and Tver were disrupted. One monastery located west of the capital that insisted on remaining loyal to Tsar Vasilii was apparently looted and burned. Rebel forces also menaced the heavily fortified and extremely wealthy Iosifo-Volokolamsk monastery northwest of Moscow and actually managed to occupy the nearby town of Volok Lamskii (90 kilometers from Moscow) by mid-October. To prevent them from looting the monastery's well-provisioned villages, the monks paid a bribe of more than eight rubles to two of the rebel commanders.

Despite the success of Bolotnikov's forces, they failed to encircle Moscow completely. Roads connecting the capital to the northeast remained open. That meant some supplies and men could still reach Moscow from north Russia even as the rebels closed in on Shuiskii from three sides. Nonetheless, rebel victories to the southeast, south, southwest, west, and northwest of Moscow had a powerful effect. Among other things, the capital was now cut off from its usual sources of grain. Grain prices in the city rose to three or four times normal, which was beyond the ability of many to pay. While the boyars grumbled about "unlucky" Tsar Vasilii, the Muscovites were increasingly unhappy with both the tsar and his advisers. Many people expected Moscow to fall to the rebels. Panicstruck and hungry people fled from the capital, and the stream of lords and soldiers abandoning Tsar Vasilii for the rebel camp or for home became much larger. That left the tsar in Moscow with relatively few soldiers. Many servicemen were reluctant to oppose the rebels, and the tsar was unable to find enough money to pay the financially distressed ones who were still willing to fight for him. Cavalrymen in the capital could no longer find or afford fodder for their horses. In order to keep his hard-pressed soldiers from starving or abandoning their posts, Tsar Vasilii began a daily distribution of food to them and their families.

By this time Shuiskii's treasury was almost empty. Compounding the problem, the rebellion had seriously interrupted the ordinary flow of taxes to Moscow. Even some areas not directly threatened by the rebels were slow to send money to Tsar Vasilii's government. Adding insult to injury, several West Siberian tribes (Ostiaks, Voguls, and Samoeds) chose this time to resist Russian imperial pressure by menacing the town of Tobolsk and by withholding their tax payments resulting in the loss of yet another significant source of revenue for Tsar Vasilii. As a result of all these problems, Shuiskii became increasingly desperate for cash and manpower.

Any hope Tsar Vasilii may have had about getting money or soldiers from the central Volga region to the east of Moscow was also shattered by September. Probably in association with the rebellions in the Riazan region and the activities of the small military force Pashkov sent toward Riazhsk, the entire central Volga area was in turmoil. Town after town, district after district, and people of all social classes—natives and Slavs alike—rose in the name of Tsar Dmitrii. Those rebellions severed normal communications between Moscow and the strategically important city of Nizhnii Novgorod, the entire Volga region, and Sheremetev's beleaguered army bivouaced north of Astrakhan.

Why did the central Volga region join the rebel cause? Like the southern and southwestern frontier zones, the central Volga region had been the focus of intense colonization in the second half of the sixteenth century; however, unlike those other areas, the region was densely populated by non-Slavic natives, and large numbers of Russian peasants were among the early colonists. Rebellions in the central Volga region in 1606 in some ways resembled uprisings on the southern frontier but with many more peasants and large numbers of non-Russian natives joining the struggle. To some extent, participation in the second phase of the civil war by tribes such as the Cheremis (Mari), Mordvians, and Chuvashi, as well as various Tatar groups, was more of a protest against Russian imperial control, taxation, and overall pressure than a particularly strong attachment to Tsar Dmitrii; but Dmitrii did have a positive reputation among those peoples.

Many Russian peasants in the region also rose in the name of Tsar Dmitrii the first large group of peasants to rebel against Shuiskii since the inhabitants of the Komaritsk district. Some of those Russian rebels were longtime residents, formerly free peasants who had been forced to work on the lands of newly arriving pomeshchiki; many others were more recent arrivals who had crossed the Oka and entered the central Volga region to escape famine or serfdom only to find themselves quickly reenserfed and assigned to work for new lords. It is, therefore, no real surprise to find these men resisting pressure from Moscow alongside the native population. In fact, all layers of local society, Slav and non-Slav, elite and commoner, participated in the decision by the Arzamas district to rebel against Shuiskii and to send troops to support the rebel siege of Moscow. Many Arzamas pomeshchiki, like gentry militiamen throughout the central Volga region and the southern frontier, enthusiastically supported Tsar Dmitrii.

The story was much the same farther east in Alatyr, located on the Sura River about halfway between Arzamas and the Volga River. There, however, the rebels were forced to drown one voevoda and to throw the other in prison before the town declared for Dmitrii. Another major center of resistance to Shuiskii was the region surrounding Kurmysh, also located on the Sura about 150 kilometers south of Nizhnii Novgorod. In addition to Tatars and Mordvians, a large percentage of the local population there consisted of Cheremis people, another native group of Finnish extraction who often provided large numbers of cavalrymen for the tsar's army. For many of the same reasons as the Mordvians, the Cheremis resisted Russian imperialism and even rebelled against Moscow briefly in the 1590s.

In 1606, in Kurmysh the newly baptized Tatar prince Andrei B. Kazakov convinced the townspeople and the district's population to declare for Tsar Dmitrii. The rebels then incited Tatars and Cheremis in the neighboring Iadrin area to rebel against Shuiskii. They also seriously disrupted communications between Moscow and the Volga region by robbing and killing Tsar Vasilii's couriers. Some of the rebels rode off to Moscow to participate in the siege. Kazakov stayed behind and managed to stir up the whole region, helping to push yet another native central Volga tribe of settled agriculturalists, the Chuvashi, to rebel against Tsar Vasilii. Soon the town of Cheboksary, located on the Volga in the heart of Chuvash territory, declared for Dmitrii; its Shuiskii-loyalist voevoda was killed. Rebels in Cheboksary were well positioned to disrupt the already dwindling Volga trade to wealthy Nizhnii Novgorod, which was the usual starting place for the Volga boatmen and the main point of departure for the region's overland carrying trade to Moscow.

Gradually, a large and motley array of Russian pomeshchiki, honey farmers, and peasants, along with Tatars, Cheremis, Mordvians, and Chuvashi coalesced into a significant military force. They marched against Nizhnii Novgorod, which, in addition to being a major trade center, was Tsar Vasilli's main administrative and political headquarters for the entire central Volga region. Soon pomeshchiki and others from the Nizhnii Novgorod district itself joined rebel forces arriving from as far away as Murom and laid siege to the heavily fortified city. Among the rebel commanders were two wily Mordvian elders who played many "dirty tricks" on the besieged city but were unable to capture it. The besiegers of Nizhnii Novgord maintained only loose ties with the rebel armies marching on Moscow but occasionally sent captured Shuiskii supporters to Putivl.

In faraway Moscow, Tsar Vasilii was extremely upset by the news arriving from the central Volga region. He ordered his loyal voevoda in Sviazhsk (near Kazan), who had so far managed to fend off rebel attacks, to gather together local garrisons and members of the remaining loyal population in his district in order to recapture Kurmysh and Iadrin, and especially to capture the "traitor" Prince Andrei Kazakov. Shuiskii's plan failed completely, however; Kurmysh remained in rebel hands. In fact, soon after the Sviazhsk voevoda stripped his town of troops in order to carry out Tsar Vasilii's orders, rebels approached Sviazhsk with news of the siege of Moscow and triggered a rebellion of the entire population of that town, from gentry to commoners, who then immediately swore an oath to fight for Tsar Dmitrii. When Shuiskii heard of this development, all the beleaguered tsar could do to retaliate was to have church leaders place Sviazhsk under interdiction.

In spite of all the bad news coming in from the central Volga region, Tsar Vasilii could at least take heart in the fact that the rebels there were unable to sweep into the area northeast of Moscow, which would have threatened the capital's only remaining open roads and its access to vital supplies and recruits. Instead, the Moscow-Vladimir-Nizhnii Novgorod-Kazan line more or less held even as virtually all Russian territory south of that line fell into rebel hands. There are several reasons why northeastern Russia remained loyal to Tsar Vasilii. It has been plausibly argued that emigration from that area by the more desperate and restive souls who ended up on the southern frontier kept the north relatively quiet throughout the entire early modern period. Another reason offered has been the sturdiness of north Russian peasant economies and their relative independence from the pressures of greedy pomeshchiki. More important perhaps, that region had not participated in Dmitrii's campaign for the throne in 1604–5, and therefore it had no former rebel military units available for quick remobilization. In addition, no cossacks lived in the area. In another sense, though, Shuiskii was able to hold onto the region in 1606 only by default. Had rebel units penetrated into northeastern Russia, there is no reason to believe the local population would have resisted joining the cause of Tsar Dmitrii. Tsar Vasilii was not especially popular in the area, and rebel forces had been successful in turning local populations to their cause wherever they went. In the case of northeast Russia, the rebels simply ran out of time—in part because the region was protected by difficult terrain and dense forests and had relatively few towns and roads, and in part because of the stubborn resistance of Nizhnii Novgorod and Kazan.

Nizhnii Novgorod remained true to Shuiskii primarily because of the loyalty of its voevoda and garrison and because—like Novgorod, Pskov, and Smolensk—it had a strong contingent of successful and influential merchants who worked closely with Moscow merchants and were generally sympathetic to Tsar Vasilii, especially after the rebels virtually shut down Volga trade and hurt Nizhnii Novgorod's economy. Merchants in Kazan also lost money when Volga trade was disrupted, but Kazan's steadfast loyalty to Shuiskii was due more to the charisma and attitude of its voevoda, Bogdan Belskii. Belskii, Tsar Dmitrii's godfather who had been "exiled" by Tsar Vasilii to become governor of Kazan, probably could have persuaded the inhabitants of that town to declare for Dmitrii, but he was well aware that his godson was really dead and had no interest in supporting some unknown impostor.

Despite the relatively good news Tsar Vasilii received from Kazan and Nizhnii Novgorod, there was no denying that Shuiskii was in deep trouble. During the first five months of his reign, he endured staggering setbacks and lost control of nearly half of the country and its people. By the time the siege of Moscow began in late October 1606, rebels controlled at least eighty towns (more than one third of all Russian towns and about half of those significant enough to have voevodas) as well as a very large number of villages. To Shuiskii's great surprise and chagrin, what had started out as a rebellion of the southwestern and southern frontiers had rapidly developed into a potent civil war extending from the steppe across the old frontier zone right into the forests and woodlands of central Russia and even to Moscow's suburbs. Rebel territory was huge and growing larger every day. Rebel forces, including more and more of Tsar Vasilii's own gentry militiamen, were growing rapidly, were highly motivated, and were reasonably well supplied.

To rally his demoralized forces and to keep Moscow's terrified and wavering inhabitants loyal, Tsar Vasilii's propaganda now began to falsely claim that the satanic rebels wished to exterminate the entire population of the capital because the Muscovites were all guilty of murdering Tsar Dmitrii. Tsar Vasilii took the additional precaution of having the population of the capital swear another oath of loyalty to him; his officials emphasized in the process that they were all in great danger and must stick together. Patriarch Hermogen also moved his propaganda campaign into high gear. In addition to his usual tirades about the rebels intending to destroy the Russian Orthodox Church, he had Shuiskii order the inhabitants of Moscow to visit churches and to pray for divine assistance against the evil supporters of "Tsar Dmitrii."

Next, the patriarch had it announced that on October 12, 1606, a certain clergyman had a vision in which Holy Mother Mary pleaded with Jesus to spare the Russian people whom He was planning to punish for their sins by means of the heretic rebels. Hermogen immediately ordered a strict and extremely convenient six-day fast, complete with constant bell ringing and prayer throughout the hungry capital (October 14-19). Tsar Vasilii, Patriarch Hermogen, and many people went to church, wept openly, and carefully observed the fast. Since a large percentage of the capital's population was truly frightened by the approach of the rebels as a possible sign of God's anger, this cleverly staged event was regarded by many of them as a genuine miracle, and that really did help Shuiskii's cause. It turns out that Tsar Vasilii's propagandists had cynically reworked the text of a "vision tale" fortuitously produced in mid-September by a former zealous supporter of Tsar Dmitrii. Ironically, the original text was actually hostile to Shuiskii, but with only minor revisions it became a potent propaganda tool against the rebels. Not surprisingly, such "vision tales" became more and more commonplace during the dark days of the Time of Troubles.

In addition to waging psychological warfare, Tsar Vasilii and his supporters prepared militarily as best they could for a possible siege of the capital. That task was not an easy one due to the critical shortage of troops and supplies on the one hand and the problem of trying to defend a huge, sprawling city that was larger in area than Paris on the other. Ordinarily, more than seventy thousand people lived in Moscow in that era. The Kremlin and the inner city were surrounded by two rings of stone and brick walls and were further protected on the south side by the Moskva River; however, the vulnerable outer wall of the capital—which enclosed 4,600 acres and was more than 15 kilometers in circumference—was made of nothing but wood and earth. Only the roads to the north and northeast, especially the heavily used route through the suburb of Krasnoe Selo, remained open or unmenaced by rebel units.

Shuiskii's military engineers concentrated almost exclusively on reinforcing the city's weak outer wall at the southern entrance to the city because that was the direction from which the main rebel army would undoubtedly approach the capital. The banks of the Moskva River to the east and west of that approach would inevitably box in any advancing army and force it to attack the southern entrance of the city along either the Kaluga or the Serpukhov road. There Moscow's outer wooden wall, with its periodic watchtowers, offered only minimum protection to the city's trans-river district (zamoskvorech'e) known as "wooden town." Directly in front of the highly vulnerable Kaluga and Serpukhov gates, therefore, Tsar Vasilii's engineers quickly constructed an elaborate maze of temporary fortifications. They built a large guliai gorod composed of movable prefabricated panels of logs (each about 1.5 meters wide and 2 meters high) chained together to create a wall invulnerable to cavalry attacks. Openings in the panels allowed harquebusiers and archers to stand and shoot at the enemy and artillerymen to discharge their cannons without exposing themselves to enemy fire. This particular guliai gorod had a large quantity of artillery stationed behind it and was big enough to contain campgrounds for many soldiers, pens for a large number of horses, and supply depots.

In a final effort to fend off the siege, Tsar Vasilii ordered the hasty formation of five regiments to march south and stop Pashkov's advance. But the tsar's commanders were only able to field three regiments. Even that required pressing into service nearly all able-bodied men sixteen years and older who lived in or near the capital. Under the overall command of Fedor Mstislavskii, many high-ranking courtiers, members of the tsar's household staff, palace officials, and even secretaries and clerks joined the bulk of the remaining Moscow dvoriane, zhiltsy, and streltsy for the campaign. This small army departed from Moscow along the Kolomenskoe road on October 23 and advanced to the village of Troitskoe, located about 30 kilometers north of rebel-held Kolomna.

The battle of Troitskoe occurred on or about October 25. It has been alleged that by then Mstislavskii and his associates were so unhappy about Tsar Vasilii that they fought for him with little enthusiasm and that many of their soldiers were actually sympathetic to Tsar Dmitrii. Whether that is true or not, Mstislavskii's army was decisively defeated by Pashkov's men in bloody fighting. The tsar's forces then fled north in panic. Many pomeshchiki and courtiers were captured and later sent to Putivl. Some retreating soldiers spoke of seven thousand men killed and nine thousand men robbed and chased for a great distance while being taunted and beaten with knouts. In fact, Shuiskii's army disintegrated as it was retreating, and the tsar's troops hastily abandoned all their possessions. Only disorganized and demoralized remnants of the defeated army made it back to Moscow, which now braced itself for an inevitable siege. Hot pursuit of Shuiskii's retreating forces probably brought cossack units of Pashkov's army to Kolomenskoe by October 27. The opening round of the siege of Moscow began the next day.

By October 28, 1606, the day the siege began, Tsar Vasilii commanded only small, relatively weak forces and was no longer able to wage an active struggle to prevent rebel armies from approaching the capital. Instead, Shuiskii's men were forced to retreat behind the barricades of the guliai gorod just south of Moscow's Serpukhov and Kaluga gates and to a few other fortified locations east and southeast of the city. Contemporaries at this point likened the beleaguered Tsar Vasilii to an eagle that no longer had any feathers, beak, or talons a pathetic and defenseless bird now trapped in a cage.

Those believing the end was near for Tsar Vasilii failed to take into account two fundamental weaknesses of the "Bolotnikov rebellion." First, in many ways, it was not so much a centralized movement with unified leadership as it was a series of powerful local responses to false news of Tsar Dmitrii's survival or to the arrival of rebel troops in the neighborhood. In different places the renewed civil war assumed somewhat different forms. Local conditions often dictated those forms, some of which were more radical than others. Sometimes the initiators of rebellion against Tsar Vasilii were petty gentry, lower status military servitors, cossacks, or ordinary townspeople; at other times, the local voevoda or important dvoriane took the lead. The haphazard formation of rebel forces and the great distances involved also contributed to relatively limited contact or coordination among various rebel groups. Instead, the rapid retreat of Shuiskii's armies propelled the rebellion forward with dizzying speed, widening and deepening it along the way. As that occurred, the real nerve center of the rebellion quickly shifted from Putivl to the commanders of the two rebel armies, who maintained—at best—only haphazard contact with each other. The only glue that really bound them together was the burning desire to expel the usurper from Moscow. Pashkov and Bolotnikov did not have a coordinated plan to accomplish their goals, nor had they even worked out who should assume overall command of the siege of the capital. Such basic strategic weaknesses make it all the more astonishing that the rebels were able to accomplish so much so quickly with nothing more than the ghost of Tsar Dmitrii to unite them.

That brings us to the second basic weakness of the rebel movement—the fact that Tsar Dmitrii was really dead. Obviously, if he had survived the assassination attempt there would not have been any civil war in Russia in 1606; however, the dead tsar's failure to appear in the rebel camp to inspire his forces ultimately doomed the siege of Moscow.

17

The Siege of Moscow

The siege of Moscow began on October 28, 1606. The first detachments of Pashkov's army to approach the capital were the cossacks and militiamen who had chased Tsar Vasilii's army from the battlefield at Troitskoe. Up to ten thousand rebels quickly occupied the village of Zabore, located near the Danilov monastery less than two kilometers south of Moscow's Serpukhov gate. That advance guard quickly dug in and fortified Zabore cossack-style. They established a very sturdy defense perimeter by arranging hundreds of sleds in a rough circle around the village, stacking them on top of one another, and ingeniously binding them all together. Then the rebels poured water over the sleds. As soon as the water froze, they had-in the words of a contemporary-an "improvised rampart as strong as stone." In this and other acts of military engineering, the rebels received high praise even from their enemies. The advance guard was now secure, well-provisioned, and prepared to hold out for weeks, if necessary, while waiting for Pashkov's main army to arrive. Their fortified enclave, so near the Serpukhov gate, immediately became a major concern for Shuiskii's commanders because rebels in Zabore could attack at any time and, if successful, set fire to the wooden outer wall of the capital. The only thing that stood between them and Moscow was the large guliai gorod into which was crowded much of the remainder of Tsar Vasilii's army. That meant any time Shuiskii's troops wished to advance, they would have to go past Zabore and leave the enemy enclave behind their own lines and dangerously close to the city's walls.

Pashkov's main army arrived in the vicinity of Moscow within a few days and established a strong fortified camp, complete with earthworks and palisades, in the village of Kolomenskoe—about 13 kilometers south of the capital. Pashkov himself probably occupied a mansion Tsar Dmitrii had built there. From Kolomenskoe the rebel commander sent word to Moscow demanding the immediate surrender of the city to "Tsar Dmitrii's" army and the extradition of Vasilii Shuiskii and his two brothers as the instigators of the plot to kill the "true tsar." Many Muscovites at this point secretly abandoned the capital to join the rebels or simply to get out of harm's way. Within just a few days, in early November, Image not available

Map 5 Moscow.

Bolotnikov's army also arrived in Kolomenskoe. With the joining of the two rebel armies, Tsar Vasilii was in serious trouble. Since Shuiskii commanded relatively small forces at this time, it is completely understandable that his soldiers did not immediately advance to do battle with the large rebel army. Instead, those men remained encamped in the guliai gorod and other defensive positions for more than two weeks while waiting for desperately needed reinforcements. The rebels may well have been able to force the surrender of the capital at this stage, but they failed to press their advantage.

Why did the rebels delay their attack, which allowed Tsar Vasilii time to recover and to gain additional troops? It was due in part to confusion, lack of coordination, and the relative independence of the various rebel units descending on Moscow. It was also due to the conflict developing between Bolotnikov and Pashkov. When Bolotnikov arrived in Kolomenskoe, he insisted that, as Tsar Dmitrii's commander-in-chief, he should occupy the "most comfortable quarters" there-meaning Tsar Dmitrii's mansion. That forced Pashkov to evacuate Kolomenskoe. In status-conscious early modern Russia, Pashkov and his lieutenants felt deeply dishonored by this episode and began secretly plotting their revenge against Bolotnikov. That eventually led Pashkov to betray the rebel cause during the siege of Moscow. He undoubtedly believed that his victories over Shuiskii's forces and his early arrival before the capital had entitled him to better treatment; and, like Petr Basmanov at Kromy in 1605, his "honor" was more important to him than the cause he claimed to be fighting for. In the end, Bolotnikov's arrogant treatment of Pashkov had terrible consequences for the rebels. In the meantime, however, he concentrated real power in his own hands. Once Bolotnikov's army joined the siege, everyone acknowledged that he was, indeed, the commander-in-chief of all rebel forces. A sullen Pashkov was forced to move his own forces north from Kolomenskoe to the village of Kotly, only a few kilometers south of Moscow. The approach of that large rebel force alarmed residents of the capital and disheartened many of Tsar Vasilii's soldiers.

Rebel forces descending on Moscow were socially diverse. The strength of the rebel movement was, in fact, as noted earlier, its capacity to unite various strata of Russian society on the side of the "legitimate" Tsar Dmitrii. Under the loose overall command of Ivan Bolotnikov, many different groups participated in the siege of Moscow. Some of them maintained their cohesion and operated somewhat independently. That was certainly true of Istoma Pashkov's forces. As will be demonstrated, the existence of such relatively independent units proved to be a serious problem for the conduct of the siege; in the end, a few of them betrayed the rebel cause and saved Tsar Vasilii from almost certain defeat. Most rebel forces, however, remained steadfastly loyal to "Tsar Dmitrii," and Bolotnikov had extremely loyal lieutenants as well as disgruntled ones. Because of the continuous arrival of individuals and small groups joining rebel forces, Bolotnikov and Pashkov did not even know the size of their own siege army; but it was definitely very large and powerful. The rebels also had plenty of food and munitions; but they did not have much artillery, and what they did have was not adequate to lay siege to a large, fortified city. They placed their hopes instead on defeating Tsar Vasilii's army or convincing the hungry and frightened inhabitants of the capital to overthrow the usurper.

How large was the rebel army? The high estimate among contemporary sources was 187,000 men. The low contemporary estimates were between 20,000 and 30,000 men. Conrad Bussow gave an overall figure for rebel forces of 100,000 men—60,000 with Bolotnikov and 40,000 with Pashkov. That overall number is also found in another contemporary source and is worth a closer look. Isaac Massa wrote that Pashkov's advance guard amounted to 10,000 men and that his main force totaled 30,000 men. That is virtually the same as Bussow's estimate. An English eyewitness to the siege estimated rebel forces at 60,000 men. That is certainly a plausible number.

At the outset of the siege, Tsar Vasilii had a relatively small army at his disposal. Many of the tsar's militiamen had melted away, but there were still thousands available to defend the capital. Many of those miserable souls, however, had to be fed at Shuiskii's expense. There were also still hundreds of Moscow and Pskov streltsy left in the capital. Shuiskii could also count on hundreds of courtiers, Moscow dvoriane, and zhiltsy who made up the "tsar's regiment." There were probably still hundreds of military slaves remaining in Shuiskii's army. Tsar Vasilii was desperate enough to arm the population of Moscow even though he was not certain of their loyalty. All men sixteen years old and up were pressed into siege duty. They were armed with harquebuses, sabres, spears, and axes, and they probably manned the city walls whenever a battle appeared imminent. Merchant loyalists helped direct this general conscription that may have yielded more than ten thousand men. In addition, up to a thousand soldiers from the Moscow region drifted into the capital by mid-November.

Tsar Vasilii's propaganda machine worked overtime at this point to hide the weakness of his position. Whenever even modest forces arrived in the capital, their size and strength was greatly exaggerated. Many inhabitants of Moscow became quite skeptical of such reports as they noted that the tsar's army was not growing in size while the rebel army grew daily. To encourage wavering subjects, Shuiskii's recruiters in the northern provinces told the same stories about large numbers of troops rushing to Moscow to protect Tsar Vasilii. Many people did not believe those lies, however, and they were in no hurry to prove their loyalty by joining Shuiskii's army.

During the two-week period of relatively minor skirmishing between the arrival in the Moscow vicinity of Pashkov's forces and the start of large-scale fighting, Tsar Vasilii's commanders prepared as best they could for the siege. The principal siege voevodas commanded the force in the guliai gorod before the Serpukhov gate. Their task was to defend the city's vulnerable walls and, whenever possible, to harass the enemy enclave in Zabore. The tsar's brilliant nephew, the newly promoted boyar Prince Mikhail Skopin-Shuiskii, was named "sortie voevoda" and commanded a second, probably larger army stationed just east of the capital along the Iauza River. From there Skopin-Shuiskii's men could attack enemy positions, but their primary purpose was to prevent rebel forces from crossing the Iauza and making their way north to surround the capital. Skopin-Shuiskii's army included most of the "tsar's regiment." South of the Iauza River a small force of Tsar Vasilii's Moscow streltsy occupied the Simonov monastery, a strongpoint that also blocked rebel forces from being able to surround the city.

The first significant battles during the siege of Moscow occurred in early November. Over the course of three days, Tsar Vasilii's siege voevodas sent several expeditions against Zabore. Even with strong artillery support, however, those attacks failed. Zabore's improvised fortifications were too strong, and the rebels energetically defended themselves. Amazingly enough, they succeeded in quickly extinguishing fires caused by incoming incendiary mortar rounds simply by smothering them with damp hides. Toward mid-November the rebels counterattacked; they reached the wooden wall of Moscow and managed to set fire to parts of it and to several buildings in the vulnerable trans-river ("wooden town") district of the capital before being driven back. From then on, skirmishing around Zabore became a daily routine.

As the siege of the capital progressed, the inhabitants of Moscow became increasingly hungry and impatient. The city's food supply had been badly disrupted. By November, grain in Moscow—when it could be found—cost three or four times its normal price, and there was no fodder for horses anywhere to be found. During the siege, many people continued to leave the capital in search of food. Those who remained in the city faced real hardships. By mid-November, angry and hungry crowds periodically gathered before the Kremlin and shouted their disapproval of the Shuiskii regime. There was, briefly, a real possibility of insurrection.

Throughout the siege the rebels managed to send a stream of letters into the city encouraging disgruntled Muscovites to give up and declare for Tsar Dmitrii. Those letters had some effect; many in the capital were willing to surrender. As noted earlier, upon his arrival before Moscow Pashkov had demanded the extradition of the Shuiskii brothers. Once Bolotnikov showed up, both rebel commanders continued to send letters urging the surrender of the capital. According to an English contemporary, in those letters the rebels now demanded that, in addition to handing over the Shuiskiis, the inhabitants of Moscow also had to deliver up other specifically named individuals—several of Tsar Vasilii's aristocratic accomplices and "some 70 principall Cittizens" who were denounced as the "cheefe Actors" in Shuiskii's coup. Bolotnikov and Pashkov urged the Muscovites to overthrow those traitors, and Tsar Vasilii's supporters became increasingly nervous about growing sympathy for the rebel cause inside the capital.

Sometime before mid-November, a group of citizens from Moscow boldly appeared in the rebel camp with the demand that, if Tsar Dmitrii was still alive, he should show himself. The Muscovites stated that if they could see Dmitrii with their own eyes they would immediately surrender to him. Bolotnikov, of course, could not produce Tsar Dmitrii. He told the delegation that he had received his commission directly from Dmitrii, but the Muscovites flatly contradicted him. They declared that Bolotnikov must have received his command from an impostor because, in their own words, "we killed Dmitrii." The Muscovites went on to say that if Bolotnikov would stop fighting for the dead tsar and give himself up, Tsar Vasilii would "make him a great man." Bolotnikov refused their offer, citing his sacred oath to Dmitrii. Then he warned the delegation: "If you do not surrender of your own free will, I and my lord will do as we see fit and will soon visit ourselves upon you." Once the Muscovites returned to the capital, Bolotnikov dispatched an urgent plea to Prince Shakhovskoi in Putivl, begging him to convince Tsar Dmitrii to come quickly to Moscow. Bolotnikov said no additional troops were needed to gain victoryjust the presence of the tsar himself.

The failure of the negotiations with the delegation from Moscow convinced the rebel commanders that the boyars, courtiers, and leading citizens of the capital were still loyal to Shuiskii. From that point on their letters to the people of Moscow began to urge immediate action against the traitors among Shuiskii's elite supporters. Those letters so alarmed Tsar Vasilii that he apparently had all the scribes and clerks in Moscow rounded up again in order to compare their handwriting to that found on the inflammatory messages—but to no avail. At the same time, captured rebel prisoners—even under torture—kept declaring that Tsar Dmitrii was alive and ready to forgive the Muscovites if they would just surrender to his army. Many of Tsar Vasilii's supporters grew fearful of the hunger, unrest, anger, and talk about Tsar Dmitrii's survival among the common people of Moscow. Shuiskii's advisers eventually urged the tsar to risk battle soon—before scarcity and high prices brought him down internally.

Skirmishes had been occurring daily between Shuiskii's forces and the rebels entrenched in Zabore. In addition to increased fighting before the Serpukhov gate, the second theater of battle east of Moscow also heated up. There Skopin-Shuiskii's army had been skirmishing almost daily with small rebel forces attempting to cross the Iauza and surround the capital. The rebel goal was the large, rich village of Krasnoe Selo located just northeast of Moscow. That village not only controlled the only roads by which men and supplies could still reach Tsar Vasilii, but Krasnoe Selo's geographic setting would also allow the rebels to dominate the capital if they could occupy it. Sometime around mid-November, the rebels fiercely attacked Skopin-Shuiskii's forces and tried to cross the Iauza in very large numbers, but they were thrown back with great losses. As a result, Moscow remained open to a trickle of recruits and supplies.

Tsar Vasilii was facing growing unrest and a potential full-scale insurrection inside the capital by mid-November. At that critical moment, Shuiskii was saved by a combination of the timely arrival of reinforcements from north Russia and Smolensk and by the betrayal of the rebel cause by Prokofii Liapunov. Secret contact between Tsar Vasilii and the Riazan lords was established during the negotiations between the delegation from Moscow and "Tsar Dmitrii's" commander-in-chief. The Liapunovs and Sunbulovs were among the most prestigious families of the Riazan district. Shuiskii's representatives offered the proud and ambitious Prokofii Liapunov and Grigorii Sunbulov great rewards if they would switch sides. Since Tsar Dmitrii had not appeared and the prospects for rewards and high positions in the rebel camp were slight, the offer from Tsar Vasilii looked good to those gentlemen. There may well have been some element of elite distaste for his socially inferior senior commanders and rank-and file rebels involved in Liapunov's decision; it has also been claimed that he may have been influenced by reports of a developing peasant rebellion sweeping across the Riazan district. In any case, secret preparations were made to facilitate the transfer of allegiance to Shuiskii when it would have the greatest chance to cause maximum damage to the rebels-during a major battle.

On November 15, Bolotnikov and Pashkov attempted to storm the Serpukhov gate. The weather was bad and visibility was poor. Moving as separate regiments, rebel forces approached the capital. At that point, Liapunov, Sunbulov, and up to five hundred troops under the Riazan voevodas' command moved very close to Shuiskii's lines and, by prearranged signal, indicated their submission to Tsar Vasilii. Other rebel forces saw what was happening; nevertheless, they threw themselves against the guliai gorod before the Serpukhov gate. However, after skirmishing with Shuiskii's troops, most of the rebels retreated to their fortified camps.

Tsar Vasilii was, of course, delighted by news of Liapunov's defection. The next morning (Sunday, November 16) there was a loud celebration in Moscow. Bells pealed and cannon were fired as Liapunov and Sunbulov formally led their men into the city. The noise and commotion frightened some Muscovites, who grabbed their weapons and rushed to the Kremlin before they found out that it was a happy occasion. Tsar Vasilii went to great lengths to show his appreciation to Liapunov and Sunbulov, praising them highly and immediately making them voevodas in his own army. Liapunov was eventually promoted to the rank of dumnyi dvorianin and rewarded with land in the Riazan district from the tsar's own palace estates. Both men were rewarded with gold, along with their fellow defecting dvoriane and deti boiarskie. The rank-and-file streltsy who joined them were rewarded with gilded silver coins.

The next day, November 17, in the late morning Pashkov and Bolotnikov again advanced from their camps toward Moscow. Tsar Vasilii's entire army, headed by the tsar's brother Dmitrii and his nephew Skopin-Shuiskii, went out to meet the rebels. Battles occurred several kilometers south of the capital and at the Simonov monastery to the southeast of the city. During one of those engagements, about fifty Moscow streltsy deserted the rebels and switched sides. Tsar Vasilii's propagandists made the most of his army's apparent success that day and the defection of the streltsy. Soon they were telling everyone that the deserters had informed the tsar's authorities that the rebel camp was in disarray and shrinking in size and that half of the rebel forces had been forced to fight and were more than willing to switch sides. According to a contemporary, that bold lie "somewhat comforted simple people" in the capital. In fact, the battles on November 17 were inconclusive. The rebels, somewhat shaken, remained intact. Many of them, however, did wonder where Tsar Dmitrii was and when he would show himself. Meanwhile, Shuiskii's luck began to change. On November 18, up to a thousand men, mostly peasant recruits from Moscow area villages, arrived to bolster the capital's defenses. On the other hand, on the same day, the inhabitants of Moscow presented a petition to Tsar Vasilii declaring that the people could no longer afford the price of food and other goods. The petitioners begged the tsar to take immediate, decisive action against the rebels.

The rebels had, of course, more or less cut Moscow off from loyal Novgorod, Tver, and Smolensk. Communication with those towns was extremely difficult, and there did not seem to be any way for troops from their garrisons to march to the aid of Tsar Vasilii. In the early days of the siege of the capital, however, Shuiskii and his advisers boldly decided to attempt to reopen the roads to Smolensk, Tver, and other loyal towns to the west in order to gain critically important additional troops. Their strategy was risky because it involved sending away some of the precious forces then guarding Moscow; but, as it turned out, the gamble paid off.

The city of Smolensk, boasting Russia's mightiest fortress, had a population of about 20,000 at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Up to 1,200 dvoriane and deti boiarskie lived in the Smolensk district, and the fortress itself was garrisoned by 1,800 lower status military servitors. Soon after Smolensk was cut off from Moscow by Bolotnikov's army, the garrison and inhabitants of the town—with the blessing of their voevoda and archbishop—gathered forces in order to clear the rebels from nearby towns and roads and go to the aid of Tsar Vasilii. Command of the Smolensk forces sent into action at this time was given to an "ordinary" pomeshchik, Grigorii I. Poltev. Poltev led a force of 640 men while the bulk of the local soldiers remained behind to defend Smolensk.

Moscow was with some difficulty informed of Poltev's intentions, and Tsar Vasilii's commanders made their own plans accordingly. Two detachments of men were sent west from the capital to open up the roads to loyal towns and to meet with the Smolensk forces then working their way east. Since the rebelheld towns of Mozhaisk and Volok Lamskii controlled access and communications between Moscow and western and northwestern Russia, Prince Danila I. Mezetskii was ordered to lead his men from the capital along the Smolensk road directly to Mozhaisk; at the very same time, the tsar's friend, okolnichii Ivan F. Kriuk-Kolychev, was ordered to lead his forces northwest toward Volok Lamskii. Kriuk-Kolychev was instructed to clear the rebels from that town and the roads in the area, to reestablish contact with the Iosifo-Volokolamsk monastery, and then—if all went well—to unite with Mezetskii's men and Poltev's Smolensk detachment at Mozhaisk. That combined force was then to hurry back to Moscow. Until those men returned to the capital, Tsar Vasilii's commanders planned to refrain from risking a major battle with the large rebel army.

Poltev's Smolensk detachment quickly cleared the rebels out of Dorogobuzh and Viazma. Then they advanced to the fortress of Mozhaisk, arriving there by mid-November—at about the same time Prince Mezetskii's detachment reached the town from Moscow. The siege of Mozhaisk lasted about a week. The fortress was manned by local servicemen who had declared for Tsar Dmitrii and cossacks led by ataman Ivan Goremykin. During the course of the siege, Mezetskii entered into negotiations with the rebel leaders. Goremykin gathered his men in a cossack circle, discussed the matter, and agreed to Mezetskii's terms. The ataman's willingness to surrender was strongly influenced by the bribe he was paid and by the land, salary, and employment in Tsar Vasilii's service also promised to him.

During the time Kriuk-Kolychev's detachment was marching to Volok Lamskii from Moscow, the monks of the Iosifo-Volokolamsk monastery helped Tsar Vasilii's cause by means of a strategem. Elder Dionisii invited the rebel commander Soloma Kazak, who was then holding Volok Lamskii, to the monastery and gave him a large sum of money. At the monastery, Dionisii managed to get the rebel ataman and his associates drunk, had the monks seize them, and later sent them as prisoners to Moscow. When the rebels learned of their ataman's fate, they attacked the monastery furiously, but its fortifications were much too strong for them. Kriuk-Kolychev's detachment arrived in time to defeat the rebels and put an end to the siege of the monastery. At that point, Kriuk-Kolychev then raced to Mozhaisk just in time to accept the surrender of ataman Goremykin. With the western blockade of the capital now broken, Kriuk-Kolychev combined the forces of Poltev, Mezetskii, and his own men with servicemen from Viazma. He then headed back to Moscow with 1,500 more men than he and Mezetskii had started out with. Kriuk-Kolychev had been ordered to return to the capital no later than November 29; he managed to return by November 28.

At about the same time the Smolensk road was being cleared of rebels, the archbishop of Tver was conducting an active struggle against them in the Tver region. The archbishop gathered together deti boiarskie and other servicemen from his own estates and elsewhere, combined them with volunteers from Tver itself, and attacked rebel forces vigorously. According to Patriarch Hermogen, those loyal forces defeated the "damned traitors" and "heretics," cleared the roads (including the one to Novgorod), and sent rebel prisoners to Moscow. In addition to that good news coming from the northwest, by November 24 Tsar Vasilii received word that the gentry, posad leaders, and "better" people of Kolomna, 100 kilometers southeast of the capital, had decided to transfer their allegiance back to him. The revolt in favor of Shuiskii was led by dvorianin Vladimir T. Dolgorukii, and a grateful tsar later rewarded the Kolomna loyalists with a gift of furs. Further cheering Tsar Vasilii's supporters, by late November small groups of soldiers began drifting into the capital from the northeastern towns of Iaroslavl, Rostov, and Vladimir by way of the open road through Krasnoe Selo.

In late November, Bolotnikov and Pashkov decided to try one more time to force their way across the Iauza River in order to seize Krasnoe Selo. On November 26, rebel infantry numbering some 2,000 men crossed the Moskva River southeast of the capital and headed north. Long before they could reach the Iauza River, however, they were detected by voevoda Skopin-Shuiskii who sent two or three regiments forward to stop them. A battle soon developed east of the capital in and around the villages of Karacharovo and Rogozhskaia gonnaia sloboda. Skopin-Shuiskii's men forced many of the rebels to take cover in Karacharovo, where under the command of the former Kolomna voevoda S. Kokhanovskii—they stubbornly resisted the tsar's army. Nevertheless, by the end of the day about one hundred rebels had been taken prisoner. Those men were taken to Moscow to be interrogated. After that, they were stripped naked and forced to remain outside all night long; by morning, half of them had died of exposure to the severe cold. So ended the November 26 rebel attempt to seize Krasnoe Selo.

On the morning of November 27, 1606, a huge parade and muster took place in Moscow. Tsar Vasilii himself appeared on his war horse holding his scepter and orb. The patriarch, bishops, and many clergymen carrying icons and the coffin of "St. Dmitrii" sang prayers and blessed the soldiers with holy water. Then the tsar and his senior voevodas, Mstislavskii and Vorotynskii, led their regiments out of the capital through the Kaluga and Serpukhov gates and through the guliai gorod. The tsar's army then advanced into the field in battle formation. One source claimed that Shuiskii's army poured out of the gates like water and, united in spirit, went into battle. In fact, Tsar Vasilii's plan that day was not to engage in a major battle. Shuiskii was well aware that at some point he personally needed to appear in "battle" against the rebels or risk being forever labeled a coward. Still waiting for Kriuk-Kolychev's arrival with more soldiers, however, Shuiskii's plan was to delay the real battle and to use the mass deployment of his army on November 27 as a kind of dress rehearsal. He did this for three basic reasons: first, by slowly advancing in force toward the rebel camp at Kolomenskoe, Shuiskii's army would automatically force Bolotnikov and Pashkov to give up any further plans to capture Krasnoe Selo. Second, Tsar Vasilii would be able to claim that he had participated in a battle against the hated rebels, but the tsar would not actually be in any real danger. Third, by letting Mstislavskii and Vorotynskii serve as senior commanders on November 27, Tsar Vasilii allowed those two men to restore their pride after the humiliating defeat they had suffered at the battle of Troitskoe. Then Shuiskii would be free to appoint more competent commanders for the real battle he was planning.

As the tsar's army began its march toward the enemy's main camp, rebel forces numbering about twenty thousand men moved north from Kolomenskoe to meet them. The two armies skirmished with each other on and off until early evening, but the tsar's forces remained in the field all night long—making the battle appear more important and more decisive than it really had been. Tsar Vasilii was now able to return to Moscow as a "victor." His propagandists declared that the tsar had been "bold and brave," that his army had suffered no losses, and that the exhausted rebels had been forced to flee. It was also falsely claimed that many rebels had switched sides to join Tsar Vasilii's cause. In reality, Shuiskii's forces suffered heavy casualties, and the tsar's "victory" was in name only. Nevertheless, the dress rehearsal on November 27 had served its purpose well, and Shuiskii's gamble to open up a path to Smolensk had also paid off. Advance units of Kriuk-Kolychev's detachment, with 1,500 additional troops from Smolensk and other western towns, began to arrive in Moscow by November 28; and they were immediately deployed in preparation for a general battle. It took a few more days (up to December 1) for all the Smolensk troops and returning Moscow detachments to reach the capital. The day after all those forces were in place, December 2, Tsar Vasilii finally risked a major battle with the rebels.

Before December 2, Tsar Vasilii's officials secretly contacted Pashkov and made careful plans to use his betrayal during the upcoming battle to maximum advantage. The tsar had also been convinced to bring up all his artillery to deal with rebel-held Zabore, and in the days before December 2 a well-planned assault on that rebel stronghold was attempted. Probably on November 29, advance units of Kriuk-Kolychev's forces began setting up camp near the Novodevichii monastery, located west of Zabore across the Moskva River. On November 30, Ivan Shuiskii and his newly recruited regiments from northern and northeastern Russia also arrived at the Novodevichii monastery. Ivan Shuiskii's men quickly marched east, crossed the frozen Moskva, passed the small Donskoi monastery, and began the siege of Zabore. For two days Ivan Shuiskii's forces vigorously attacked the rebel stronghold without success. Simultaneously, there was an intense artillery bombardment of Zabore, but also to no avail. The rebels stubbornly resisted all efforts to capture their position, and Shuiskii's forces suffered heavy casualties in fierce fighting. On December 2, the third day of the frustrating siege of Zabore, a general battle developed south of Moscow.

In preparation for a major battle, a large army had been formed in the guliai gorod in front of Serpukhov gate. It was commanded by Mikhail Skopin-Shuiskii. Their immediate goal was the Danilov monastery (just south of Moscow), from which they hoped to add elements of Ivan Shuiskii's detachments before engaging Bolotnikov's main army. On December 2, Skopin-Shuiskii led his forces from the guliai gorod to the Danilov monastery with no great difficulty. In the meantime, Bolotnikov had been watching developments around besieged Zabore closely; and when informers tipped him off about Skopin-Shuiskii's planned sortie in strength, the rebel commander-in-chief quickly moved most of his

Fig. 8 "Tsar Vasilii Defends Moscow Against the Rebel Attack." Detail from "The Rebel Siege of Moscow in 1606," drawn circa 1607. The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 78 H 56 (Isaac Massa's Album Amicorum). Courtesy of the National Library of the Netherlands.

Image not available

men north from Kolomenskoe to meet the tsar's army. He also sent orders to Pashkov to attack the enemy's flank while he boldly engaged Skopin-Shuiskii's forces head on. As the two opposing armies converged, a very large battle developed near the village of Kotly. While Bolotnikov's forces fiercely attacked Skopin-Shuiskii's army, Pashkov moved his corps into position—pretending to relieve the siege of Zabore. However, he and his senior officers had carefully arranged their troops so that, upon closing with the enemy, Pashkov and several hundred of his most trusted men quickly transferred their allegiance to Shuiskii and even joined the tsar's forces in attacking the rebels during the battle. The result was predictable: the rebel army, stunned by the betrayal of a senior commander, began to waver in confusion and panic. At that point, Skopin-Shuiskii and Ivan Shuiskii hit the disoriented rebels hard. Soon, their lines began to break up as hundreds of them fled from the battlefield in terror; Bolotnikov was soon forced to order a hasty retreat to Kolomenskoe.

Skopin-Shuiskii's forces moved forward rapidly, pressing their advantage and inflicting heavy casualties. Many rebels, separated from their units, quickly surrendered. Many others, attempting to elude the tsar's army by hiding, were discovered and slaughtered like "swine." In their chaotic retreat from Moscow, Bolotnikov's remaining forces were unable to make a stand in Kolomenskoe. To avoid being trapped there, Bolotnikov reluctantly ordered a general retreat south toward Serpukhov. Skopin-Shuiskii was then able to occupy Kolomenskoe, capturing Bolotnikov's camp and large quantities of supplies. The tsar's army was unable to pursue the fleeing enemy in force immediately, however, because the rebel stronghold of Zabore still menaced the gates of Moscow. Therefore, after taking Kolomenskoe, Skopin-Shuiskii and Ivan Shuiskii threw most of their forces against Zabore. It is no exaggeration to say that the heroic struggle of the cossacks in Zabore prevented the complete destruction of Bolotnikov's army. Because of their stubborn resistance, many other rebels were able to flee from Moscow holding onto their weapons; and Bolotnikov himself was able to retreat in good order with more than ten thousand men still determined to continue the struggle in Tsar Dmitrii's name.

To contemporaries, there was no doubt that Pashkov's treachery caused the defeat of Bolotnikov and forced him to break off the siege. Tsar Vasilii found out early on about the conflict between the rebel commanders and made a special effort to heat up that rivalry. In secret negotiations, Pashkov was promised a high position in Shuiskii's service, and a large sum of money was secretly delivered to him on the eve of the battle during which he betrayed the rebel cause. After the siege of Moscow was broken, Pashkov became a colonel in Tsar Vasilii's service and was rewarded with very large estates. Who joined Pashkov's treachery?

Two sources specifically claimed Pashkov was joined by 500 of his own men. In fact, it is extremely likely that Pashkov's own Epifan servicemen formed the core of his turncoat faction. Whatever the exact number of men joining Pashkov may have been, one thing is absolutely clear: The overwhelming bulk of Pashkov's own army—including a majority of the deti boiarskie under his command remained loyal to the rebel cause. Those men were either killed, captured, or escaped along with Bolotnikov.

By the time Bolotnikov's army had been defeated and put to flight, the rebel stronghold of Zabore had been under continuous siege and bombardment for more than two days. Now, Tsar Vasilii's entire army concentrated on destroying it. Surrendering rebels were paid to reveal the secrets of Zabore's defensesespecially how the rebels were able to extinguish incoming incendiary mortar rounds. Voevoda Morozov's artillerymen then came up with incendiary rounds that could not be easily extinguished and very quickly managed to set fire to the rebel stronghold. By then the three-day siege and the defeat of Bolotnikov had demoralized many of the rebels, and their hopeless situation provoked dissent inside Zabore. Tsar Vasilii's representatives offered rewards to those willing to give up, and soon a large number of rebel gentry and cossacks decided to take Shuiskii up on his offer. In the confusion caused by their actions and by the relentless bombardment of Zabore, however, the tsar's soldiers managed to break through and took the stronghold by storm. Many rebels were killed at that time, and a very large number surrendered. Many of those who voluntarily surrendered and subsequently swore an oath of loyalty to Tsar Vasilii were offered positions in Shuiskii's service. In fact, the tsar managed to recruit large numbers of former rebel cossacks by generous offers of food, shelter, and employment. He was glad to have additional soldiers and arranged for his new cossack troops to be fed and billeted in Moscow. Ordinary townspeople were forced to house two or three of them at a time, and orders were issued not to harm the tsar's newest recruits.

The siege of Moscow ended in disaster for the rebels. They had suffered a crushing defeat, and Tsar Vasilii's army returned to the capital in triumph with many prisoners. Bells pealed, prayers of thanksgiving were said, and Shuiskii's supporters celebrated their great victory. A very happy Tsar Vasilii heaped rewards on his loyal warriors—including land grants, slaves, salary increases, and promotions. Every soldier who had killed a rebel or had been wounded in battle was rewarded. The tsar bestowed the highest honors on his nephew, Mikhail Skopin-Shuiskii, and others whose service had been especially important.

It is difficult to estimate the number of rebels killed, wounded, captured, or surrendering in the final battle of the siege of Moscow. The tsar's commanders had definitely tried to kill as many of them as possible on the battlefield. According to a contemporary, trapped rebels were "slaughtered like pigs"; others were ambushed by the tsar's troops who inflicted "hideous carnage" on enemy forces. The intense bombardment of Zabore also inflicted extremely heavy casualties. Thousands of rebels were probably killed; however, estimates of the total number of rebels killed are complicated by the inclusion in records of battlefield casualties of thousands of surrendering cossacks who were actually executed at a later time. Conrad Bussow claimed that 10,000 cossacks in Zabore had been forced to surrender, and Isaac Massa claimed that 6,000 prisoners were taken during the final battle. Other contemporary estimates of Bolotnikov's losses ranged from more than 10,000 to more than 20,000. One source estimated the overall number of casualties on both sides during the siege at 40,000 and the number of rebels surrendering or captured at 15,000; another source claimed that 21,000 rebels were captured.

Very large numbers of rebels were thrown into overcrowded prisons and dungeons. Most of them did not stay incarcerated in Moscow for long. According to a contemporary, hundreds of them were brought out each night, lined up near the Iauza River, and "butchered like cattle with cudgel blows to the forehead, then thrust under the ice." Hundreds of prisoners were also sent from Moscow to fill the jails of other towns such as Novgorod and Pskov. In Novgorod, newly arriving prisoners suffered the same fate as those in Moscow; they were cudgeled and put under the ice of the Volkhov River. In Pskov, on the other hand, the 400 prisoners sent from Moscow received sympathy, food, and clothing from ordinary townspeople-an evil portent for Tsar Vasilii. Overall, the number of rebel prisoners executed after the siege of Moscow was estimated by contemporaries to be as high as 15,000. Rebel leaders who were considered particularly obnoxious were publicly impaled. Even near death, however, many still professed stubborn loyalty to Tsar Dmitrii. One impaled ataman even named Tsar Vasilii's brother Dmitrii as the traitor responsible for the rebellion. That caused such a stir that the tsar and several boyars were forced to make a hasty appearance before the people to declare the dying man's statement to be utterly false.

Not all captives were killed, of course. Some rebel cossacks were given as slaves to heroic and distinguished warriors, who were allowed to inspect cossack prisoners and claim many of them as their own runaway slaves and serfs without having to produce any documentation whatsoever. Thousands of other rebels were simply left to languish in prison. Months later, when Tsar Vasilii desperately needed all the men-at-arms he could get his hands on, many of those same prisoners were set free on the condition that they fight against their onetime comrades.

What was the point of Shuiskii's highly publicized large-scale executions of rebel prisoners, especially cossacks? The tsar's officials boldly claimed that the rebels who had laid siege to Moscow were all brigands, serfs, and slaves who deserved execution for rising against their masters. Obviously, Shuiskii was still trying to convince wavering subjects that his enemies were dangerous social revolutionaries. Beyond that motive, as well as simple revenge, the executions were definitely intended to intimidate and dampen the enthusiasm of rebels still at large. The use of terror did not produce the desired effect, however; the struggle against Tsar Vasilii continued unabated. Fanatic belief in Tsar Dmitrii's survival persisted, and rumors of his imminent return continued to circulate. Try as he might, Shuiskii was unable to put the ghost of the "true tsar" to rest. Tsar Vasilii's use of terror on such a large scale against captured rebels also set an evil precedent in the civil war. It deeply embittered his opponents, especially the cossacks, who, as a result, fought even harder for "Tsar Dmitrii" and increasingly resorted to similar terror tactics against supporters of the bloodthirsty usurper who still sat on Dmitrii's throne.

18

Retreat from Moscow, the Siege of Kaluga, and the Rise of Tsarevich Petr

Once Tsar Vasilii had finished celebrating his great victory, he and his advisers reviewed their strategic situation, which was still perilous. Belief in Tsar Dmitrii's survival remained strong everywhere in Russia, and the southern half of the country was still in rebel hands. Bolotnikov and part of his army had retreated in good order, were reported to be quickly regrouping, and were gaining new recruits every day. To the east, Nizhnii Novgorod was still under siege. Obviously, it was going to be very difficult and time-consuming for the tsar to destroy the rebels and end the civil war. Nonetheless, the failure of the siege of Moscow dramatically changed the strategic situation, giving the initiative to Shuiskii.

The primary task facing Shuiskii and his voevodas was, of course, the destruction of Bolotnikov's army; but Tsar Vasilii also launched several other minor military campaigns in early December for the purpose of ending the siege of Nizhnii Novgorod and outflanking the rebels to the southeast and southwest. Tsar Vasilii was determined to quickly break up the siege of Nizhnii Novgorod and suppress rebellion throughout the critically important central Volga region. The first objective of the tsar's forces was the strategically located town of Murom. Voevodas Grigorii G. Pushkin and S. G. Ododurov approached Murom by December 11, at which point the town voluntarily switched back to Shuiskii's side and swore an oath of loyalty to him. Rebel leaders in the town were rounded up and thrown in prison. Pushkin's forces then proceeded to Arzamas and Alatyr. Both towns temporarily submitted to Tsar Vasilii, and the Alatyr voevoda was killed; however, after the tsar's army left the area both towns later rejoined the rebellion against Shuiskii. News of the progress of the tsar's army at the end of 1606, however, sent shockwaves throughout the central Volga region and forced the rebels to break off the siege of Nizhnii Novgorod.

The Riazan region also received Tsar Vasilii's attention at this time. During the siege of Moscow, two of the more important Riazan lords, Liapunov and Sunbulov, betrayed the rebel cause. Both of those men immediately became high-profile voevodas of Tsar Vasilii. As soon as Bolotnikov had retreated from Moscow, Shuiskii dispatched Liapunov and Sunbulov with a small military force and artillery to suppress rebellion in Riazan province. Liapunov quickly succeeded in returning the towns of Pereiaslavl-Riazanskii (Riazan) and Zaraisk to Tsar Vasilii's side. However, efforts to win over the population of the small towns of southern Riazan province and those in the neighborhood of Tula failed at this time. By summer 1607, Pereiaslavl-Riazanskii came under repeated attacks from local rebels of all types. For about 20 kilometers in all directions around Pereiaslavl-Riazanskii, peasants and others championing the cause of "Tsar Dmitrii" prevented Shuiskii supporters from rallying to protect the town. Virtually under siege, Pereiaslavl-Riazanskii's voevoda was forced to admit his complete inability to cope with the problem. Fanatic peasant rebels in the region also badly frightened much of the local gentry. In fact, many lords simply sat out the civil war in Pereiaslavl-Riazanskii because they were afraid to visit their estates.

To areas south and southwest of Moscow, Tsar Vasilii dispatched small military detachments in order to win over wavering rebel towns and to isolate Bolotnikov's forces that had retreated to Kaluga. Of course, real victory for Tsar Vasilii in the civil war required outfitting and fielding a large army in order to smash Bolotnikov. Not surprisingly, therefore, once the immediate threat to Moscow had passed, Shuiskii busied himself trying to raise more troops and revenue for that gargantuan task.

Raising troops to fight against "Tsar Dmitrii" continued to be extremely difficult for the unpopular Tsar Vasilii. Not only did the rebels still hold almost half of the country, but belief in the survival of Tsar Dmitrii simply would not die down. For Shuiskii, it was essential, of course, to build up his cavalry forces. Not surprisingly, bringing stay-at-home gentry back into service proved to be a difficult task. In the months following Bolotnikov's retreat from Moscow, a significant percentage of pomeshchiki, even from areas considered very loyal to Shuiskii, continued to fail to report for duty; in some areas the number of "noshows" was as high as thirty percent. In general, there was widespread reluctance on the part of the gentry to save the usurper. Even threats to confiscate their property and the actual incarceration of their peasants in order to force reluctant warriors to serve proved to be ineffective recruiting techniques. Because of the extreme difficulty in recruiting additional pomeshchiki, Tsar Vasilii turned increasingly to recruiting datochnye liudi. Such low quality military forces had proven invaluable in the defense of Moscow, so Shuiskii began experimenting with wider use of them. He turned for help especially to the rich monasteries whose estates and villages could yield very large number of recruits. Those poorly trained men were not particularly reliable, however. Like much of the gentry, peasant recruits were not enthusiastic about serving Shuiskii.

Tsar Vasilii's desire to have eager pomeshchiki and recruits may have kept him from harshly punishing no-shows and runaways. He also tried to motivate his soldiers by providing them with more generous salaries. After Bolotnikov's retreat from Moscow, Shuiskii significantly increased the salaries of pomeshchiki fighting against the rebels and even the salaries of those cavalrymen abandoning the rebel camp and joining his service. He also offered a bounty for every rebel killed. Such generosity cost money, of course, and Shuiskii spared no effort to raise funds to pay his soldiers. However, he was essentially broke by then.

The civil war had seriously disrupted the country's economy. Tax revenues, even from regions safely under Shuiskii's control, became irregular. Constant reminders to pay arrears and the dispatch of bureaucrats to straighten out chaotic provincial finances failed to yield much revenue. As a result, Tsar Vasilii was forced to turn increasingly to wealthy monasteries for money. Yet even there he faced resistance. During the winter of 1606–7, Shuiskii also "borrowed" money from Russian merchants and began selling off old clothing, furs, and precious objects found in the treasury in order to pay his soldiers. Another technique used to shore up his gentry militia was the confiscation of the estates of pomeshchiki remaining in the rebel camp (and some persistent no-shows) in order to redistribute them to land-hungry cavalrymen who showed up to fight. Tsar Vasilii also continued to provide food and other necessities to the families of ruined pomeshchiki who remained loyal to him. However, in spite of all his efforts, Shuiskii faced chronic fiscal problems and manpower shortages until he was eventually deposed in 1610.

After the breakup of the siege of Moscow, more than ten thousand armed rebels retreated south in good order. Bolotnikov and Iurii Bezzubtsev managed to rally many of those weary troops in Serpukhov. Other rebel forces retreated to Kolomna, which had just recently switched back to Shuiskii's side; there they were actively fought by the local garrison and suffered serious casualties. After being rebuffed at Kolomna, those rebels were forced to retreat farther south to Venev, where they rallied and fought against Tsar Vasilii's forces in early 1607. Serpukhov, on the other hand, remained loyal to "Tsar Dmitrii" and gave Bolotnikov and his men a warm reception and a helping hand. Bolotnikov contemplated making a stand in Serpukhov, but the local authorities convinced him that their town did not have adequate provisions to feed all his men for long. To avoid being trapped there by rapidly advancing enemy forces, the rebel commander-in-chief abandoned Serpukhov and led his forces farther south.

Legend has it that Dmitrii Shuiskii led an army against Bolotnikov and suffered a catastrophic defeat before Kaluga by December 12. Shuiskii supposedly lost 14,000 men and was forced to retreat in humiliation; news of the disaster supposedly stirred fear in Moscow. In fact, Bolotnikov did not win a great victory over Dmitrii Shuiskii at Kaluga; the tsar's incompetent brother was not even on campaign at this time. He was so unpopular and such a poor military leader that he had been left in Moscow to work as a low-profile bureaucrat. Dmitrii Shuiskii was described by a contemporary as a craven, effeminate man who loved beauty and food but not military matters. It was, in fact, Ivan Shuiskii who led the army that chased Bolotnikov to Serpukhov and beyond.

Two of Ivan Shuiskii's subordinates, Ivan V. Golitsyn and Danila I. Mezetskii, were the first to reach Serpukhov in hot pursuit of Bolotnikov. Although they arrived too late to trap him, they did manage to kill or capture a small number of rebels. Other rebel stragglers retreating from there froze to death in the woods. Golitsyn and Mezetskii continued to pursue Bolotnikov's men to Aleksin; and from there, Mezetskii's regiment followed Bolotnikov's retreating forces to Kaluga and battled with the rebels near that town. Apparently, that confrontation did not go well for Mezetskii. Mezetskii's lack of success soon prompted Tsar Vasilii to dispatch larger forces to Kaluga. It was at this point that Ivan Shuiskii's main force advanced to Kaluga from Serpukhov and began the siege of the rebel stronghold. As the tsar's army approached, Bolotnikov's forces retreated inside the Kaluga fortress, where they were enthusiastically received by the townspeople and had plenty of food and munitions for a protracted siege.

The tsar's forces now concentrated on trapping the rebels in Kaluga. Prince Ivan M. Vorotynskii was sent from Moscow with a large force to capture Aleksin and thereby shut the door to the east from Kaluga. The tsar's commanders also scoured the entire country under their control for additional troops to aid the siege. Artillery was concentrated in Ivan Shuiskii's hands, and gradually Kaluga was surrounded on three sides by the tsar's forces.

Kaluga was an important town with a large trading and artisan population as well as a sizable garrison. The town enjoyed strong economic ties with Severia, and much Oka River trade routinely passed through the hands of Kaluga's merchants. The town was extremely well-provisioned, and most of its population enthusiastically supported the cause of Tsar Dmitrii. Only a few rich merchants supported Shuiskii, and they suffered at the hands of the rebels. Kaluga's most serious problem as it came under siege was the absence of a stone citadel and stone walls. For that reason, Bolotnikov ordered the quick repair and reinforcement of Kaluga's fortifications. The town was at that time surrounded by two wooden palisades, complete with towers and gates. Bolotnikov not only strengthened those palisades, but he also had a ditch dug (or deepened) outside the outer wall and another ditch dug between the two palisades. Earth removed from the inner ditch was piled up on the inside of the outer wall turning it into breastworks and fortifying it against artillery and battering rams.

The siege of Kaluga began on December 20, 1606. Ivan Shuiskii's army attacked the town for weeks but accomplished almost nothing. Artillery and harquebus salvos proved to be virtually useless against Bolotnikov's improved fortifications. Even worse, the rebel commander-in-chief dispatched lightningfast sorties almost every day, which often surprised Shuiskii's forces in one place or another and inflicted serious casualties. The rebels would then quickly retreat behind the palisade, having suffered almost no losses. Kaluga's artillerymen also proved to be extremely useful in fending off the enemy. In spite of its size, voevoda Shuiskii's army seemed utterly powerless, and soon his soldiers gave themselves over to drinking and gambling to pass the time. In January 1607, Ivan Shuiskii wrote to Tsar Vasilii begging for reinforcements because the hated rebels were "daily increasing their forces and supplies by reason of their great courage despite all the efforts" of the tsar's army. In fact, Kaluga was not completely blockaded and continued to receive men and supplies from Severia.

Tsar Vasilii responded to his brother's request by sending all available forces to Kaluga. A new army commanded by Fedor Mstislavskii soon joined the siege. The arrival of Mstislavskii's forces made the total number of soldiers besieging Kaluga very large. Nonetheless, sharp mestnichestvo quarrels among Tsar Vasilii's commanders stirred dissension and weakened the siege. These precedence disputes came to the attention of Bolotnikov's men, who loudly mocked the over-proud, self-important enemy voevodas from the safety of Kaluga's fortifications. Even with additional troops, the tsar's siege force continued to have no success against the energetic rebels.

Eventually, Mstislavskii and Skopin-Shuiskii came up with what seemed to them a good plan to destroy Kaluga's fortifications. They decided to construct a special type of movable siege tower known as a *primët* or *podmët*. Large numbers of local peasants were put to work chopping trees; and hundreds of sleds brought logs, firewood, and straw to the tsar's siege camp every day. Soon, there was a "mountain of wood" outside Kaluga. Carpenters quickly constructed many log panels virtually identical to those used in a guliai gorod (1.5 meters wide and 2 meters high, complete with arrow slits) that were then fastened together to form open-ended boxes or cages. In the meantime, fierce and sustained artillery fire and great battering rams allowed the tsar's forces to cross Kaluga's outer ditch in one place and approach the palisade. Then the prefabricated boxes (or modular units) were skidded or rolled on logs toward Kaluga's outer wall where several of those boxes were joined together, and then additional units were stacked on top of the first row. This technique offered protection to construction workers and to soldiers shooting at the rebels while the siege tower was being built. Gradually, the tower grew in height and length. Once it was completed, the stacked boxes were to be filled with straw and firewood in the hope that setting the tower on fire would burn down the palisade and smoke out the rebels. As the tower was being built, Bolotnikov's men recognized the danger but were unable to do much to slow down the construction work. By the beginning of February 1607, the tower was nearly completed, and Kaluga could expect the worst.

On the night before the last section was to be put in place and preparations were being made to set it afire, Bolotnikov struck back with a brilliant plan. For several days Bolotnikov had his troops secretly dig tunnels under the outer palisade in order to place mines under the siege tower. At a time of his choosing, Bolotnikov ordered the mines set off. The result was a huge explosion that lifted earth, logs, and soldiers high into the air and rained lethal debris onto the besiegers' camp. Many were killed and the siege camp fell into total confusion. The impact of the explosion was greatly increased by a well-timed rebel sortie in strength from Kaluga during which Bolotnikov's men killed and wounded many besiegers. When the wind shifted, the rebel commander also ordered the remaining piles of wood set afire, which sent smoke billowing into the dazed and choking enemy camp. This amounted to a brilliant victory for Bolotnikov, and it saved Kaluga. Unable to capture the rebel stronghold, Tsar Vasilii's commanders settled down to blockade Kaluga, hoping to starve it into submission while they tried to capture other rebel towns.

Altogether, in early 1607 things were not going very well for the tsar's forces. Disturbing rumors of Tsar Dmitrii's survival and imminent return also continued to circulate. Tsar Vasilii ordered the execution of a priest in Moscow for distributing satirical letters announcing that Dmitrii was still alive, and spies sent to gather information about rebel forces encountered several people who swore not only that Dmitrii was alive but that they had seen him with their own eyes. Unsubstantiated reports that thirty thousand rebels led by "two great lords who had gone over to the other camp" were on their way to aid Bolotnikov or to attack Moscow itself caused widespread panic in the capital. In fact, those two "great lords," boyar Prince Andrei Teliatevskii and Vasilii M. Mosalskii, while waiting for Tsar Dmitrii to show up, had temporarily become voevodas of the unsavory cossack pretender Tsarevich Petr, whose rise within the leadership of the rebel movement marked an ominous new phase in the civil war—one in which the role of cossacks rose dramatically.

Both before and during the siege of Moscow, Bolotnikov had written to Prince Shakhovskoi in Putivl urging him to find Tsar Dmitrii and bring him to Moscow. Unable to comply, Shakhovskoi instead at some point made contact with the large group of cossacks on the southern frontier who were headed by the self-styled "Tsarevich Petr," the mythical son of Tsar Fedor Ivanovich who had supposedly been hidden from the evil Boris Godunov as a child and had grown up in obscurity. Shakhovskoi knew perfectly well that no such person existed, but he nevertheless invited Petr and his cossacks to hurry to Putivl to help restore Tsar Dmitrii to the throne.

"Tsarevich Petr" started out as Ilia (or Ileika) Korovin, the illegitimate son of a poor woman of Murom and a petty trader or cobbler named Ivan Korovin. Ileika grew up in poverty and in his youth traveled briefly to Moscow. He later worked as a shop assistant in Nizhnii Novgorod and then as a cook on a merchant vessel operating on the Volga River. After several other odd jobs, he ended up in Astrakhan selling leather goods in the marketplace. Eventually, he sold himself as a slave to syn boiarskii Grigorii Elagin. That lifestyle did not appeal to him, however, and by early 1605 he ran away to Astrakhan where he joined the cossacks. By spring 1605, Terek and Volga cossacks were boldly besieging Astrakhan itself—possibly as allies of the pretender Dmitrii but more likely as opportunistic bandits. During the siege, young Ileika managed to get inside the city as a spy. In the end, however, voevoda Mikhail Saburov succeeded in pushing the cossacks back; in frustration, they eventually broke off the siege and dispersed.

The winter of 1605–6 found Ileika Korovin back on the Terek River in a large cossack host (army). He was by then a "young companion" or apprentice (*chur*) of ataman Fedor Nagiba. As an apprentice, Ileika occupied a low position and did not even have the right to speak during meetings of the cossack circle. At those meetings, the Terek cossacks discussed their economic plight and what they might do to improve their situation. They contemplated piracy against Turkish ships on the Caspian Sea or becoming mercenary troops of the Persian shah. At some point, a group of about 300 Terek cossacks—commanded by ataman Fedor Bodyrin—decided to copy Tsar Dmitrii's dramatic success by putting forward a pretender to the throne of their own as a pretext for raiding on the lower Volga. At first, Ileika's comrades chose another young man named Mitka to play the role of tsarevich; but when they discovered that he had never even visited Moscow, they turned to Ileika. He was proclaimed to be the mythical "Tsarevich Petr."

Bodyrin's 300 men then headed downstream to the town of Terek to link up with fortress cossacks and others. Terek's voevoda sent a cossack colonel to demand that Bodyrin hand over the "tsarevich" and to warn him of the gravity of the pretense. The cossacks did not give up Ileika, however; instead, they went by boat to the mouth of the Terek River and stayed for awhile on an island just off the coast. Soon, news of their activity prompted many more Terek cossacks to join the ranks of "Tsarevich Petr." The prospect of booty under Petr's banner was simply too appealing to most of the Terek cossacks. Sometime in early 1606 Tsarevich Petr's forces, growing daily, headed straight for Astrakhan. After Astrakhan's voevoda wisely refused to allow them to enter the city, Petr's detachment proceeded up the Volga robbing merchants. By then, about four thousand men rode with the "tsarevich," and they caused enough harm that word of their activities reached Tsar Dmitrii in late April 1606.

Petr and his men were in the area of Sviazhsk when they learned about Tsar Dmitrii's assassination. It has been generally accepted that news of the tsar's death caused Petr to turn south and vanish into the steppe. However, it is just as likely that the approach of voevoda Sheremetev's army on its way to Astrakhan caused the Terek cossacks to turn south. Petr's men retraced their route along the Volga, robbing and killing more merchants and others along the way. They sacked three castles on the Volga and captured some light artillery and munitions. Then they separated, most of them going into the steppe. Tsarevich Petr and his small army headed for the Don River and then went by boats to the Seversk Donets River. They traveled 100 kilometers up the Seversk Donets to the cossack stanitsas located just southeast of Tsarev-Borisov, their ranks swelling as they proceeded. It was there that Prince Shakhovskoi's courier met up with them and proposed that Petr lead his men in haste to Putivl. Petr was offered rich rewards, including the "best principality"; Shakhovskoi also told him that if Tsar Dmitrii failed to show up, then "Petr could be tsar, since he was the true born son of Fedor Ivanovich and therefore the lawful heir to the realm."

Now acting as official allies of Tsar Dmitrii, Tsarevich Petr's army immediately approached the big fortress of Tsarev-Borisov. Its voevoda tried to keep the garrison loyal to Tsar Vasilii with the assistance of the elder of the local monastery. However, Tsarev-Borisov's inhabitants demanded that Petr's men be allowed entry and threatened the elder's life. Declaring for Tsar Dmitrii, the soldiers forced open the fortress gates. Two voevodas were killed in the process, either by their own men or by Petr's cossacks. The rebellion of Tsarev-Borisov occurred no later than August 1606. From there Petr's army made its way to Putivl. They may have advanced by way of Valuiki; its voevoda, Mikhail F. Aksakov, and the entire garrison declared for Tsar Dmitrii at about that time. Petr's army did pass through Belgorod, which quickly joined the rebel cause. It is also probable that on their way to Putivl Petr's army passed through Livny, where at least one dvorianin was killed during the successful uprising of that garrison. Tsarevich Petr arrived in Putivl with many more than the four thousand cossacks he had started out with. He actively recruited men before and after his arrival in the "capital" of the rebellion by offering great rewards once Tsar Dmitrii was restored to the throne. Petr not only succeeded in bringing Terek, Volga, and Don cossacks with him but was also able to recruit streltsy from Astrakhan and other frontier garrisons. Conrad Bussow estimated that Petr arrived in Putivl with ten thousand men. The arrival of Petr and his army caused quite a commotion. Most of the inhabitants of Putivl greeted Tsarevich Petr with joy and quickly swore an oath of loyalty to him as their "protector" until Tsar Dmitrii's return.

Because he was of "tsarist" birth, Petr quite naturally took over the war council Shakhovskoi had formed and transformed it into a makeshift boyar council. However, Shakhovskoi stayed on the council and continued to maintain considerable power and influence within the rebel leadership. Petr also promoted several dvoriane to membership on his boyar council. Although it is possible that the tsarevich's atamans and sotniki wielded real power in Putivl, Petr did not allow any of them to sit on the council. Instead, under his leadership, the influence of the gentry actually increased in the rebel "capital." Petr had become somewhat of a snob, preferring titled gentlemen as his advisers and voevodas. Acting the part of a tsar, Petr held court, distributed lands and promotions, issued decrees in the names of both Tsar Dmitrii and himself, and even planned an embassy to the Polish king Sigismund III. Nevertheless, Petr quickly proved that he was no Dmitrii. The "tsarevich" was, after all, from the lower class and had not been raised to act or speak like a lord; nor did he have Dmitrii's forgiving nature. Instead, Petr proved to be bloodthirsty and vengeful in dealing with recalcitrant supporters of Vasilii Shuiskii. He was also accused of raping the daughters of Tsar Vasilii's captive voevodas. If Prince Shakhovskoi had any misgivings about the boorish, cruel, and arrogant Petr, however, he kept them to himself.

Very soon after Petr's arrival in Putivl, he was denounced as an impostor by Father Superior Dionisii of the local Bogoroditskii Molchinskii monastery. But the townspeople turned against Dionisii instead. Tsarevich Petr had the monk beaten and thrown from a tower to his death. Soon after that, according to a hostile chronicler, Petr "spilled much blood" as he put to death captured boyars, dvoriane, and deti boiarskie. In fact, the execution of captured lords did become almost a daily occurrence on the Putivl town square.

Shuiskii propaganda lumped together as victims of Petr in Putivl many of the commanders who had actually been killed when their towns declared for Tsar Dmitrii; nevertheless, over time, dozens of well-known dvoriane were put to death to the cheers of the rebel capital's townspeople. It has long been assumed that the executions of captured voevodas, boyars, courtiers, and dvoriane who had been sent to Putivl by Bolotnikov and Pashkov began as soon as Petr arrived there. In fact, the drift into wider use of terror and reprisals by the rebels was gradual, and the exact timing of the Putivl executions is not known. Some scholars have suggested that Shuiskii's mass executions of rebel cossacks after the siege of Moscow were a disproportionate response to reports of Petr's use of terror in Putivl; but it is just as likely that news of Shuiskii's slaughter of cossacks and his offer of a bounty for every rebel killed hardened attitudes in the rebel camp and stirred Petr to increase the level of violence against stubborn supporters of Tsar Vasilii who were crowded into the prisons of Putivl. Whereas Dmitrii had often shown favor to captive lords, hoping to gain their support, Tsarevich Petr began to execute some of them. Those lords were not killed because of their social class, however; they were put to death for refusing to swear an oath of loyalty to Tsarevich Petr.

The public executions of stubborn Shuiskii loyalists not only drew popular support but may also have been intended to imitate Tsar Ivan IV's popular public executions of elite "traitors." Tsar Ivan had almost always made a point of asking gathered crowds if the guilty persons deserved execution; inevitably, the response was a loud "yes." Then the tsar, as the pitiless dispenser of justice, would subject his doomed prisoners to cruel public humiliation and ritualistic torture and execution. Such shocking spectacles were very popular in early modern Russia and actually served to strengthen the bond between Ivan the Terrible and his ordinary subjects. Virtually the same thing happened in Putivl. Unrepentent Shuiskii supporters were denounced as traitors to the crowds and put to death in a variety of horrible ways. Some were beaten or hacked to death; some were crucified. Others were pushed off towers and bridges or scalded to death. A few were hung upside down and then shot; others were dismembered or impaled. The cruelest torture appears to have been reserved for those who denounced Petr as an impostor.

The similarity between Tsar Ivan's ritualized cruelty to traitors and that of rebels in the Time of Troubles was not accidental. Ivan the Terrible shared a positive folkloric image with cossack bandits in part, at least, precisely because their cruelty was perceived by supporters as appropriate and as serving a purifying function. In fact, the cossacks actively cultivated their reputation for being cruel to enemies and for seeking harsh revenge. It simultaneously intimidated their opponents and stirred widespread fear and respect for them as dispensers of rough justice. It should also be noted that many of the forms of torture and execution used in Putivl were remarkably similar to the horrible punishments Tsar Vasilii, then one of Tsar Boris's voevodas, had inflicted upon the population of the Komaritsk district back in 1605 for daring to support Dmitrii. Revenge for those despicable actions cannot be ruled out as a motive for the cruel executions in Putivl.

The increasing use of terror by Petr and others was definitely linked to disarray in rebel leadership and goals in light of the failure of Bolotnikov's siege of Moscow and the continued failure of Tsar Dmitrii to appear in the rebel camp; it was also clearly linked to the emergence of the cossacks as the principal rebel fighting force. Although most rebels strongly approved of the executions in Putivl, Tsar Vasilii's propagandists were eventually able to stir indignation and fear among members of the gentry by issuing vivid reports of Petr's activities. Putivl came to have a fearful reputation in the minds of Shuiskii's gentry supporters, and Tsarevich Petr came to be regarded as their most bloodthirsty opponent. In the end, Petr proved to be an unworthy stand-in for Tsar Dmitrii. Petr had much greater difficulty attracting gentry to the rebel camp; and, as the cossack role in the civil war increased under his leadership, terror against elite "traitors" reached a wider sweep and frightened at least some otherwise sympathetic pomeshchiki away from the rebel cause.

No later than early December 1606, Petr departed from Putivl intending to meet with King Sigismund and also to search for Tsar Dmitrii. Petr crossed the Polish-Lithvanian border and reached the town of Orsha, where he met with the local commander, Andrzej Sapieha, and quickly discovered that he could not count on King Sigismund to provide military aid to the rebels. Learning that, Petr declined Sapieha's offer of an escorted procession to meet the king and quickly left Orsha. He concentrated on trying to find Tsar Dmitrii and recruiting soldiers for the rebel cause. In the process, Petr quickly managed to secure the assistance of some Polish and Belorussian soldiers who had been in Tsar Dmitrii's service—including a lord (pan) named Zenowicz, who was then the governor (starosta) of the bordertown of Chechersk. Pan Zenowicz not only helped Petr recruit soldiers; several months later he also found someone to play the role of Tsar Dmitrii and accompanied him across the border-a development that had a great impact on the civil war. In early January 1607, Petr left the capable pan Zenowicz in charge of recruiting foreign soldiers and returned to Russia.

Petr returned to Putivl sometime in January 1607 and continued his efforts to raise troops to relieve Bolotnikov's men in beleaguered Kaluga. To his great joy, up to seven thousand Zaporozhian cossacks arrived in Putivl that same month to join his forces. Bolstered by those reinforcements, in February 1607, Tsarevich Petr moved the rebel army of up to thirty thousand men and his entire court north to the large fortified town of Tula, only about 90 kilometers from Kaluga. Beyond the attraction of its ardently pro-Dmitrii population and its location (closer than Putivl to both Kaluga and Moscow but still easily accessible from the steppe frontier), Tula appealed to Tsarevich Petr and Prince Shakhovskoi because it was a strong fortress deemed to be "better than Kaluga"; among other things, it had an impressive stone citadel or "kremlin" (*kreml*). Tula also contained a large civilian population and a marketplace with many shops; by this time it was also a well-developed armament manufacturing center.

Once Petr's army was ensconced in Tula, those forces immediately became a serious menace both to Shuiskii's army besieging Kaluga and to Moscow itself. Tsar Vasilii sent word far and wide denouncing Tsarevich Petr as a bloodthirsty impostor and ordered his commanders at all costs to prevent Petr from breaking up the siege of Kaluga.

19

Collapse of the Siege of Kaluga and the Beginning of Tsar Vasilii's Offensive

In February 1607, from the new rebel headquarters in Tula, Tsarevich Petr dispatched a large army with a huge supply train to aid Bolotnikov's hungry men in Kaluga. The relief force of 26,000 men was slowed down somewhat by hundreds of sleds loaded with food, gunpowder, lead, and light artillery; but it made good progress. At the Vyrka River (a tributary of the Oka), just 7 kilometers south of Kaluga, they encountered Tsar Vasilii's forces. The battle at the Vyrka River occurred on or about February 23, 1607.

When the rebels saw three enemy regiments blocking their path, they attempted to force their way past them by means of the typical cossack mobile defense formation known as a *tabor*—an open-ended rectangle of horses and sleds (carts in summer) tied together so that the bulk of the army could advance under the cover provided by the sleds on both flanks and to the rear. Unfortunately for the rebels, the huge supply train was extremely cumbersome and as a result the tabor lacked maneuverability and made flight virtually impossible. On their own, the rebel cossacks probably could have broken through the enemy position and reached Kaluga; but, tied down by their intertwined carts and horses, the rebel forces quickly got bogged down in battle. Shuiskii's troops took advantage of the situation by attacking the tabor furiously and smashing some of the sleds. That brought the rebel advance to a complete standstill. Although they resisted enemy attacks with great courage for "a day and a night," the rebels were defeated and suffered great losses. Many prisoners and most of the supply train-including artillery-fell into the hands of Shuiskii's forces. Large numbers of prisoners were thrown in the river and drowned. As the battle of Vyrka was ending, some rebel cossacks, seeing the hopeless position they were in, chose death over captivity. They denied Shuiskii's forces much of the rebel gunpowder supply by perching themselves on the carts laden with powder barrels and igniting them. The resulting explosion was tremendous; according to a contemporary, up to 3,000 men perished almost instantly.

The battle of Vyrka was a great victory for Tsar Vasilii. At about the same time, the tsar's commanders were making plans to move against Tula. Because that rebel stronghold was screened to the north by several smaller towns still in rebel hands, those towns quickly became targets of Shuiskii's forces. However, the rebels in Venev and Mikhailov stubbornly and successfully resisted. As a result, the tsar's commanders shifted the focus of their efforts to Serebrianye Prudy—a smaller, less well-fortified town in the Tula region, the capture of which would greatly facilitate operations against Tula.

Voevoda Andrei Khilkov was sent to capture Serebrianye Prudy. Khilkov made a vigorous assault on the town under cover of darkness. Khilkov's troops met sharp resistance at first, and casualties were high on both sides. Eventually, however, the greatly outnumbered rebels realized that they were not going to be able to hold out much longer and decided to surrender. They admitted Khilkov's men into the town and swore an oath of loyalty to Tsar Vasilii. The very next day Khilkov set up an ambush about 4 kilometers from Serebrianye Prudy in order to trap the relief force coming from Tula. The rebels were taken completely by surprise and utterly defeated. Many of them were captured, including both of their commanders who were sent to Moscow in chains. The battle of Serebrianye Prudy was a significant victory for Tsar Vasilii. Taken together with the almost simultaneous rebel defeat at the Vyrka River, it sharply eroded the strategic situation of Shuiskii's foes. In Moscow panic gave way to celebration.

In early March 1607, a more confident Tsar Vasilii and the boyar council approved new laws concerning slaves and peasants. In addition to being a continuation of the tsar's previous efforts to aid his hard-pressed gentry, Shuiskii's new laws also aimed at influencing wavering subjects and even some groups of rebels. On March 7, a generous new slave law was promulgated that overturned Boris Godunov's hated 1597 law that had trapped many elite warriors—then serving as contract slaves—in permanent slavery. Shuiskii now promised freedom to those slaves who had been forced into involuntary slavery. His goal was probably to woo such unfortunate but well-armed and experienced warriors from the rebel camp and to convince other military slaves not to join the cause of "Tsar Dmitrii." In sharp contrast to his slave law, on March 9, 1607, Shuiskii issued a harsh decree on runaway peasants that favored the gentry and strongly reinforced serfdom.

The rebels in Kaluga were beginning to run out of supplies by this time, but Bolotnikov and his men did not lose their resolve. When the tsar's soldiers in the Kaluga siege camp shouted news of their victory at Vyrka and called upon the rebels to surrender, Bolotnikov supposedly laughed at them, once again swore an oath to Tsar Dmitrii, and hanged a few suspected traitors including his own cook—in full view of the besiegers. At about that time, the tsar's voevodas greatly intensified the bombardment of Kaluga. Continuous artillery fire, day and night, including incendiary mortar rounds, killed many rebels. Bolotnikov's men did not passively endure the bombardment, however; instead, they pursued an active defense. Cossack detachments made sorties from Kaluga continually. As a result, casualties were also high among Shuiskii's forces. Meanwhile, the hungry rebels were reduced to eating their horses and grew steadily weaker; nonetheless, they continued to stubbornly resist Shuiskii's forces.

After the rebel surrender of Serebrianye Prudy, Tula itself was more vulnerable; and, by late March, Tsar Vasilii's commanders launched an offensive against that rebel stronghold. Prince Ivan Vorotynskii and a new colonel, Istoma Pashkov, advanced to Tula from Aleksin. Seeing the enemy approach Tula, Prince Andrei Teliatevskii made a sortie in force from the fortress, quickly defeated Vorotynskii, and dispersed the enemy army. Vorotynskii and Pashkov fled barely making it back to Aleksin. This defeat was a severe blow to Tsar Vasilii, coming so soon after his much-celebrated victories.

At about the same time—and connected to Vorotynskii's campaign—voevodas Khilkov, S. G. Ododurov, and Grigorii Pushkin (fresh from their victory at Serebrianye Prudy) circled around Tula to the south and attacked Dedilov in late March, hoping that its capture would isolate Tsarevich Petr's headquarters. Instead, rebel forces inflicted a terrible defeat on the tsar's army. Voevoda Ododurov was killed, and Khilkov's troops fled-abandoning most of their weapons and supplies in the process. Many of the tsar's soldiers were killed, and many more drowned in the Shat River as they tried to escape. Khilkov managed to retreat to Kashira with only a few troops and even fewer weapons. He was immediately recalled to Moscow and relieved of command. Tsarevich Petr's forces took immediate advantage of the situation and relieved several towns near Tula then under siege. They also managed to retake Serebrianye Prudy and began making plans to try again to aid Bolotnikov in Kaluga. The defeats suffered by Vorotynskii and Khilkov undid the results of Tsar Vasilii's commanders' earlier victories at Vyrka and Serebrianye Prudy. Shuiskii's joy suddenly gave way to anxious concern. To make matters worse, at about this time the clapper of the "great Moscow bell" fell down one night-an event regarded by many as an evil omen.

Throughout this period, the siege of Kaluga continued without success. Bolotnikov's men were very hungry, but Shuiskii's forces were also beginning to suffer from hunger, cold, and exhaustion due to the lengthy siege. Frequent sorties by Bolotnikov's troops also inflicted high casualties on the tsar's soldiers, and morale in the siege camp was low. By early April, the ice on the Oka River began to break up, and Shuiskii's commanders became concerned that Bolotnikov might make use of the large number of sailboats and barges (some of which were up to 24 meters in length) located in Kaluga to escape down river. To prevent that from happening, they ordered the construction of large rafts to hold troops and artillery and stationed them below the town. That tactic proved to be very successful. Shuiskii's commanders also attempted to use river craft in conjunction with ground detachments from the Kaluga siege camp in operations against other rebel towns in the area; however, those campaigns were not successful. As Massa put it, the tsar's forces were "everywhere defeated."

By late April, Tsarevich Petr and his commanders felt they were finally ready to try again to relieve Kaluga. Voevoda Teliatevskii departed from Tula with a large army. The rebels advanced to within 40 kilometers of Kaluga and encountered the tsar's army at a village near the small Pchelnia River. Altogether, the tsar's forces awaiting the rebels at Pchelnia stood at 17,000 men. That was a fairly large army; however, many of those soldiers were former rebel cossacks who had surrendered at Zabore after the siege of Moscow and agreed to enter Shuiskii's service. Those men proved to be extremely unreliable; more than once, many of them betrayed their new employer.

The battle of Pchelnia occurred on or just before May 3, 1607. The tsar's forces engaged in a furious and bloody struggle with Teliatevskii's large army. Casualties were heavy on both sides, but the battle ended in disaster for Tsar Vasilii's men. One contemporary estimate put Tsar Vasilii's losses at a staggering 14,000 men; another source claimed that all 17,000 men were lost. What actually happened? It is very likely that the Zabore cossacks in the tsar's army switched sides during the battle. One source claimed that 15,000 men switched sides that day. Isaac Massa declared that "their defection made them the cause of the whole army's defeat."

Tsarist forces escaping from the battle of Pchelnia fled in disorder back to the Kaluga siege camp, but they did not stay there for long. Instead, many of them simply kept retreating toward Moscow. In fact, the crushing defeat of Shuiskii's forces at Pchelnia had a catastrophic effect on the hungry and weary army camped before Kaluga. Learning of the deaths of their commanders and comrades, many of the demoralized soldiers in the siege camp panicked and began to abandon their posts. Bolotnikov took immediate advantage of the situation by leading a sortie of all his forces against the disorganized besiegers. The rebels inflicted a stinging defeat on the enemy, set fire to the siege camp, and put the tsar's soldiers to flight. Shuiskii's commanders barely had time to get out of their tents before terror overwhelmed their troops, who abandoned most of their provisions, munitions, and heavy artillery. So ended the siege of Kaluga.

While several of Tsar Vasilii's commanders fled in panic, others—including Skopin-Shuiskii and Pashkov—tried to organize an orderly retreat to Aleksin and Serpukhov in order to reduce the loss of men, weapons, and supplies and in order to prevent the retreat from becoming a total rout. Their efforts were only partially successful, however. The tsar's forces remained widely scattered and their paths of retreat were littered with abandoned weapons, artillery, and clothing. Under the circumstances, Mstislavskii and Skopin-Shuiskii quickly gave up on the plan to halt the retreat at Aleksin and, instead, pulled back all the way to Serpukhov.

Embarrassed and frustrated by his failure to capture Kaluga, Prince Mstislavskii led some of his men and artillery to rebel-held Borovsk (only about 80 kilometers southwest of Moscow), linked up with a small siege force there, and stormed the town. He then put all rebel defenders and all inhabitants of Borovsk to the sword. After that, Mstislavskii and Ivan Shuiskii rallied their army only 10 kilometers south of Moscow. That was done in order to calm down the alarmed ruler and the fearful population of the capital. In fact, the road to Moscow from Kaluga and Tula was now open again. So demoralized and disorganized were Shuiskii's forces and so unpopular at this point was Tsar Vasilii that, according to Isaac Massa, if the rebels had had an army with which to strike Moscow they "would have taken it without resistance."

The battle of Pchelnia and the collapse of the siege of Kaluga were powerful blows to Tsar Vasilii. It was impossible to hide the setback, which some contemporaries likened to the catastrophic collapse of the siege of Kromy in 1605. Instead of acknowledging the power of the rebel forces, however, Shuiskii's commanders blamed their failure on mestnichestvo quarrels among the tsar's voevodas and the alleged "treason" of some officers, whose deaths in battle allowed their reputations to be conveniently smeared by Shuiskii's living but humiliated commanders. The truth was far more difficult to accept.

Why didn't the rebels follow up their victories with a quick campaign against Moscow? After decisively defeating the tsar's forces at Pchelnia, Teliatevskii returned to Tula with many captives. Contemporaries criticized the rebel commander for not taking advantage of a good opportunity to march on Moscow again. However, Teliatevskii had suffered high casualties in battle and may have felt that his army was too weak to continue advancing, or he may have been bogged down by too many captives. Whatever his reasons, Teliatevskii's decision to return to Tula forced Bolotnikov to retreat to Tula also.

Once the siege of Kaluga had been broken, Bolotnikov's men were too tired, hungry, and decimated to resume an active offensive against Moscow without the assistance of another large rebel army. Instead, Bolotnikov led his battered forces from Kaluga to Tula to rest and to plan the next rebel offensive. He left behind a small garrison commanded by an experienced and trustworthy Scottish mercenary captain named Albert Wandmann, who continued to stoutly defend Kaluga for several more years. Supplies seized from the tsar's abandoned siege camp kept the garrison well fed and well armed, and most of the artillery that had been left behind was also carefully stored in Kaluga in anticipation of a future campaign against Moscow.

Looking at the overall strategic situation after the battle of Pchelnia, both sides had suffered appalling casualties by the end of winter 1607—estimated by one contemporary at 40,000 men. In addition, both sides could point to successes and failures in what was becoming a chaotic and protracted civil war. Tsar Vasilii's forces had been successful in clearing the Moscow area and much of the central Volga region of rebels. Fedor Sheremetev's army on Balchik Island also kept the Volga cossacks and the rebels in Astrakhan tied down. Even though the Nogai Tatars broke with Tsar Vasilii in this period, they devoted most of their energy to attacking their neighbors rather than aiding the rebel cause. To the south, even after the battle of Pchelnia and the loss of Aleksin and Serebrianye Prudy, Shuiskii's forces continued to hold many important towns along the old Oka frontier defense line. On the other hand, by spring 1607 Tsar Vasilii faced very serious problems, and there was genuine panic in Moscow.

The rebels still held a huge territory—about a third of the entire country. Virtually all of Russia below the Oka frontier line remained in their hands, including several agriculturally rich provinces and many important fortresses and towns with sturdy garrisons. Belief in the survival of Tsar Dmitrii and hatred for the tsar-usurper continued to unite rebels of all social classes and kept their morale from slipping even as they endured great hardships. By the spring of 1607 small detachments of mercenaries from Poland-Lithuania began arriving in Tula and elsewhere to bolster rebel forces. Shuiskii propaganda greatly exaggerated the numbers of evil foreigners joining the rebels at this time and represented the entire civil war as the product of Polish intervention. King Sigismund did, in fact, permit some untrustworthy lords he was anxious to get rid of to seek their fortune in Russia, but he did not contemplate military action of his own at this time. Rebel forces remained overwhelmingly Russian, with cossacks forming the largest contingent. The rebel army in Tula once Bolotnikov arrived there contained more than 20,000 battle-hardened soldiers with plenty of food, weapons, and munitions. Also aiding the rebel cause in the spring of 1607 was an uprising against Shuiskii by West Siberian tribes, especially the Ostiaks, who killed many of the tsar's soldiers, disrupted the flow of revenue to Moscow, and pillaged the entire region.

The failure of the rebels to follow up their victories at Pchelnia and Kaluga with a quick strike against Moscow gave Tsar Vasilii a much-needed breathing

spell, but he was in serious trouble and knew it. The mood in much of the country and in the capital was one of fear and growing opposition to the "unlucky" tsar. Demands that Shuiskii abdicate were voiced, and anonymous letters continued to appear that denounced him as a usurper. Tsar Vasilii decided to seek broader input about what to do next. He held either a special meeting with the boyars and the higher clergy or a meeting with even wider membership to discuss his options. During that meeting, the patriarch and others convinced Shuiskii that, in order to save his crown, he had to personally lead a campaign against the rebels. To his credit, Tsar Vasilii wasted no time preparing for that campaign. He immediately called for a general mobilization of all available forces and made plans to field the largest army possible. He also launched a major new propaganda campaign in order to frighten the residents of Moscow; once again, it was claimed that the rebels intended to exterminate the entire population of the capital, including all women and children.

Couriers from Moscow blanketed the country with Tsar Vasilii's decree commanding all remaining gentry to show up for military service with any ablebodied men still left on their estates. Recalcitrants were threatened with forced recruitment, physical punishment, and confiscation of their possessions. A special review of available weapons and servicemen was conducted in the Kremlin, and word got out that this time the tsar was deadly serious. As a result, many previously reluctant gentry militiamen flocked to Moscow out of fear of punishment. Shuiskii continued his on-going efforts to shore up the economies and morale of his militiamen and other soldiers by increases in land allotments and salaries, by generous rewards for service against the rebels, and by the rapid promotion of heroic individuals. Tsar Vasilii also demanded large numbers of lowquality datochnye liudi (recruits) for military service from all categories of nonservice lands-including property held by ordinarily exempt gentry widows and minors. There was considerable grumbling about such heavy demands, and there were many no-shows; but Shuiskii did manage to gain large numbers of recruits. Unfortunately, stripping the productive labor from much of the land had a negative impact on the country's overall economy, which was already reeling from the chaos of civil war and the disruption of Volga trade. Not surprisingly, Tsar Vasilii faced increasingly severe financial problems as the civil war continued, and special taxes had to be levied to help pay for the planned campaign against the rebels. As usual, church lands were heavily assessed for that task by the financially embarrassed tsar.

By late May 1607, Tsar Vasilii and his commanders had more or less prepared for a major offensive and for what was expected to be a difficult siege of Tula. Because of Shuiskii's emergency mobilization measures, a very large army was assembled at Serpukhov. Contemporary estimates placed its size at somewhere between one hundred thousand and one hundred fifty thousand men. Tsar Vasilii departed from Moscow for Serpukhov at noon on May 21, 1607, after praying in several churches and visiting briefly with a prophetess. Once Shuiskii was mounted on his horse and received his quiver and bow, he led the tsar's regiment, most of the staff of the Military Affairs Office, and some palace and treasury officials to his field headqarters. During the campaign the tsar was able to choose from nearly two dozen boyars and okolnichie to serve as his commanders. Although Prince Mstislavskii was the senior boyar, effective command of the tsar's army was probably given to more successful and energetic relatives such as Skopin-Shuiskii or to trustworthy and able friends such as Kriuk-Kolychev. The arrival of Tsar Vasilii and his impressive entourage in Serpukhov provided an immense psychological boost to his troops, who counted on the tsar's presence on the campaign to strike fear into the hearts of the rebels. Shuiskii, too, fully understood the significance of his own actions. At Serpukhov, before his huge army, the tsar vowed not to return to Moscow except as a victor. Failing that, he declared, he was prepared to die fighting against the evil rebels.

Tsar Vasilii had seized the initiative by swiftly preparing and launching a major offensive against the rebels. Meanwhile, Tsarevich Petr—for good or ill—had also been very active in Tula. The crude behavior and terror against stubborn Shuiskii supporters that he had displayed in Putivl continued unabated in his new headquarters. As time wore on, Petr's sadistic streak, combined with Tsar Dmitrii's failure to reappear after almost a year, alienated significant numbers of rebels, especially gentry, who nervously watched as their own fates became increasingly intertwined with that of the bloodthirsty and obviously fraudulent "tsarevich." "Tsar Dmitrii's" commander-in-chief may also have had some misgivings about the sadistic "tsarevich," but they shared the same basic objectives and apparently got along well enough.

Evaluating Tsarevich Petr's use of terror in Tula is just as complicated as it was in the case of Putivl. In fact, the occasional use of terror against stubborn Shuiskii supporters began before the "tsarevich" emerged as a rebel leader; and, while in Putivl, Petr had men executed for refusing to swear an oath to him. Just as in the case of Putivl, the timing of the executions in Tula is also a significant issue. It appears that violence against captured Shuiskii loyalists gradually increased as the rebels lost important battles and as the situation in Tula became increasingly desperate. In fact, out of frustration and anger, both sides resorted to greater use of violence and terror against their foes by the summer of 1607. In addition, Tsar Vasilii's decision during the campaign against Tula to continue the practice of having large numbers of captured cossacks executed undoubtedly contributed to the rising violence against Shuiskii loyalists in the besieged rebel stronghold.

In Tula, some of the first victims of Tsarevich Petr's wrath were captives brought back by voevoda Teliatevskii from the successful battle of Pchelnia. Dozens of those men were tortured to death. If one recalls that thousands of Zabore cossacks switched to the rebel side during that battle, it is not difficult to imagine the angry tales they told in Tula about the mass executions of their comrades ordered by Tsar Vasilii back in December 1606. No doubt such tales inflamed passions among all rebels, but especially among the cossacks. Nonetheless, contemporary sources also reveal that, as in Putivl, some pomeshchiki were put to death in Tula simply for refusing to swear a loyalty oath to Tsarevich Petr. Also as in Putivl, rebel crowds in Tula were given the chance to approve or disapprove of the punishment of captured enemies. Although they usually approved, at least one fortunate soldier in Tula was saved from execution by the shouts of the people. Some other captives were beaten or tortured and then thrown into prison where they grew hungry but managed to stay alive. Gentry from the Tula region who continued to fight for Shuiskii received special attention from Petr. They lost their residences, family papers, and other property in Tula, and their estates were subjected to devastating raids. Local inhabitants were also occasionally charged with hiding grain from the rebels and then tortured and imprisoned. In supervising executions in Tula, as he did in Putivl, Tsarevich Petr not only instilled terror but also provided crude entertainment. Again echoing Ivan the Terrible's horrifying spectacles, Petr was particularly fond of placing his victims in a confined space with an angry bear.

News of Tsarevich Petr's sadism spread far and wide, and not just because of Shuiskii's shrill propaganda. Many rebels, especially among the gentry, were put off or frightened by the cruel "tsarevich" and his cossack supporters. Although most of them remained loyal to the rebel cause, others gradually lost hope for the return of the true tsar or the success of their rebellion and began deserting the camp of Tsarevich Petr. By June 1607, as Shuiskii's forces closed in on Tula, dozens of rebel pomeshchiki quietly slipped away. Some of them simply went home; others joined Tsar Vasilii's cause since he then appeared to be gaining the upper hand in the civil war. In the end, Tsarevich Petr proved to be an altogether unworthy substitute for the charismatic Tsar Dmitrii. As a result, by summer 1607, even some militiamen from Severia—long the backbone of the rebel army—began to desert. That, in turn, caused rebel forces to gradually become more and more cossack in appearance and character. Nevertheless, the rebels still commanded powerful military forces who were completely dedicated to the cause of "Tsar Dmitrii." Tsar Vasilii has often been criticized for remaining in Serpukhov for two weeks before advancing against Tula. Isaac Massa somewhat unfairly attributed the delay to the tsar's fear, stating that Shuiskii was "forever apprehensive lest he be betrayed" and for that reason "did not wish to go far from the environs of Moscow." In fact, the delay was not due to the tsar's cowardice; it took six weeks to gather his huge army in Serpukhov. In addition, Shuiskii had many other things to think about besides the Tula campaign. For example, the tsar was growing increasingly concerned about events on the lower Volga. Astrakhan had by then become a powerful rebel center that attracted large numbers of free cossacks from the Volga, Don, Terek, and Iaik Rivers.

The rebel voevoda in Astrakhan, Ivan D. Khvorostinin, played a role similar to that of Prince Shakhovskoi in Putivl. Faced with no prospect of Tsar Dmitrii ever showing up, Khvorostinin eventually entered into negotiations with a local copy-cat pretender who led a large detachment of Volga and other cossacks. "Tsarevich Ivan-Avgust" claimed to be the son of Ivan the Terrible and his fourth wife, Anna Koltsovskaia-who actually produced no heirs and was confined to a convent after Ivan divorced her. Ivan-Avgust thus falsely claimed to be the "elder brother" of Tsar Dmitrii as well as the uncle of Tsarevich Petr. Khvorostinin set up a makeshift court for Ivan-Avgust in Astrakhan, and the "tsarevich" apparently exercised some real authority. Probably a former slave, this pretender had visited Moscow and knew a thing or two about life at the tsar's court. In Astrakhan, however, he proved to be-like Petr-a coarse and terrifying figure. Ivan-Avgust and Khvorostinin sent a judge to Tsaritsyn to investigate captured Shuiskii loyalists after the town joined the rebellion. Some of those men were put to death and some were beaten and released. Others were brought back to Astrakhan for trial. There not only did Ivan-Avgust order the execution of the former Tsaritsyn voevoda, F. P. Chudinov-Akinfov; but his cossacks also apparently tortured Chudinov-Akinfov's loyal subordinates to death, possibly with the inhabitants of Astrakhan involved in determining the fates of those unfortunate souls. Khvorostinin may have shuddered to himself about his new ally, but Ivan-Avgust provided a significant number of troops with which to harass Sheremetev's army on Balchik Island and a useful "tsarist" individual around whom to rally additional forces to the banner of "Tsar Dmitrii."

The rebel cause was dealt a severe blow by the fate of the campaign launched from Tula at the beginning of June. A very large rebel army with artillery appeared to be headed straight for Serpukhov but then suddenly turned toward Kashira (located 75 kilometers northeast of Tula). Retaking Kashira would allow them to bypass the tsar's big army and directly threaten weakly-defended Moscow. Shuiskii's commanders learned about their goal from scouts and spies and rushed hundreds of pomeshchiki from Serpukhov to Kashira in order to bolster Prince Andrei V. Golitsyn's garrison. Bolstered by those forces, voevoda Golitsyn advanced from Kashira southwest about 14 kilometers to the confluence of the little Vosma River and the Besputa River, near the village of Vosma. There he arrayed his forces in battle formation to await the enemy. The rebel army advancing against him was commanded by Prince Teliatevskii and Prince Mikhail F. Aksakov. The rebel army was very large, containing between 30,000 and 40,000 men. On June 5, the rebels approached the Vosma River and clashed with the tsar's forces.

Perhaps inspired by the size of his army or his recent victory at Pchelnia, Teliatevskii foolishly chose to make a frontal attack on the tsar's forces. Golitsyn's main regiment was stationed on the southern shore of the Vosma River in the direct path of the rebel army; only the Riazan cavalry had been held back as a reserve force north of the little river. The battle of Vosma began just after dawn and lasted about four hours. At the outset of the fighting, a large rebel detachment of cossacks on foot pushed their way past Golitsyn's main force, crossed the river, and lodged themselves in a gully near the Riazan cavalry. From that sheltered position the cossacks unleashed accurate harquebus volleys at the Riazan pomeshchiki, killing and wounding many men and horses and forcing Golitsyn's reserve force to retreat. Liapunov and his fellow officers did not panic, however; instead, they managed to maneuver around the entrenched cossacks, crossed the Vosma, and joined Goilitsyn's main force just as it was reeling from heavy blows delivered by Teliatevskii's army. Inspired by the arrival of those reinforcements, the tsar's soldiers did not retreat but stood their ground with shouts such as "Better to die here!" At that point, one of the rebel detachments composed of between three and four thousand men suddenly switched sides; that frightened and disoriented the other rebels and proved to be the turning point in the battle. Coming under heavy blows from Golitsyn's army, Teliatevskii's forces were decimated and retreated in disorder toward Tula. They lost their entire supply train, all their artillery, drums, and banners. A very large number of Teliatevskii's men were killed or captured, and Golitsyn's cavalry chased the fleeing rebels for more than 30 kilometers.

In the aftermath of the battle of Vosma, the cossack detachment that had been entrenched north of the river was quickly surrounded by the tsar's forces. Shuiskii's commanders repeatedly encouraged the rebels to surrender on favorable terms, even promising them liquor; but the stubborn cossacks dug in and quickly improvised makeshift defenses in what was really an impossible position to defend. Remarkably, they withstood a withering siege for two days and inflicted severe casualties on the attackers. Finally, on June 7, their position was stormed by Golitsyn's entire regiment. The cossacks held them off until they literally ran out of gunpowder. Most of them were then cut down by enemy cavalry, and many were captured. The total number of rebel losses in the disastrous battle of Vosma was enormous. One contemporary estimated that 16,000 rebel cavalry and 3,600 rebel infantry had been killed. Another reliable source put the number of men captured at 1,700. The fate awaiting the 1,700 real captives was a grim one. Out of about a thousand cossacks who had been captured on June 7, all but seven were hanged the next day. The seven lucky ones were spared only because of a petition submitted to the tsar's voevodas by several honorable central Volga pomeshchiki who requested mercy for those individuals who had prevented fellow rebels from killing the petitioners back in 1606. Golitsyn sent the remaining 700 captives to Serpukhov. There some were imprisoned and others were bailed out by favored gentry who took them as slaves just as had been done after the siege of Moscow.

The battle of Vosma was a catastrophe for the rebel cause. Not only did it put a stop to the immediate threat to Moscow but it greatly enhanced the chances for success of Tsar Vasilii's offensive. After that battle the decimated rebels were put sharply on the defensive and were forced to endure the long siege of Tula.

20

The Siege of Tula and the Resurrection of "Tsar Dmitrii"

After the battle of Vosma, Tsar Vasilii did not immediately lead his entire army to Tula. Shuiskii's commanders were still nervous about the prospect of leaving the rebel-held fortresses of Kaluga and Aleksin behind (and to the north of) the tsar's army. In order for the Tula siege to be successful, they reasoned, it would first be necessary to pacify the surrounding area to prevent rebel attacks on the siege army at inopportune times. Therefore, a decision was made in early June 1607 to allow the victors at the battle of Vosma to pursue the defeated rebels to Tula (which would effectively cut that town off from Kaluga) while other forces attempted to recapture Aleksin before the tsar's main army and siege guns advanced to Tula.

To implement this strategy, the Kashira and Riazan regiments that had fought at Vosma were sent in pursuit of the retreating rebels and ordered to join up with three additional regiments that were advancing from Serpukhov under the command of Skopin-Shuiskii. The rendezvous point chosen was the village of Pavshino, about twenty-five kilometers northwest of Tula. After those forces joined together, Skopin-Shuiskii and Andrei Golitsyn caught up with the rebel army on June 12, at the small Voronia River just a few kilometers northwest of Tula. There the swampy Voronia dumped into the Upa River and would have to be forded by the tsar's army advancing along the Kaluga road. For that reason, the rebels chose to make a stand at the Voronia in order to prevent the tsar's army from approaching Tula. They hastily gathered reinforcements but were still definitely outnumbered by the tsar's army.

The rebel commanders stationed large numbers of cavalry and infantry on a broad front all along the Voronia in order to block the tsar's forces. For two days the rebels successfully withstood innumerable direct attacks on their positions, but on June 14 the tsar's forces outflanked them to the west and managed to cross the river in several places. At that point Skopin-Shuiskii threw his main force into the fray, and the rebels were soon forced to retreat rapidly to Tula itself. Rebel losses were very heavy, with up to 4,500 men killed or captured. Some tsarist troops hotly pursued the enemy right into Tula where those impetuous men were quickly cut off and killed by the rebels. Voevodas Skopin-Shuiskii and Golitsyn began mopping up the area immediately surrounding the rebel headquarters and making preparations for a siege.

The tsar remained in Serpukhov for more than a week after receiving news of the victory at the Voronia River and the start of the siege of Tula. Only when he received word of the impending capture of Aleksin did Shuiskii advance to Aleksin with the tsar's regiment and most of his heavy artillery. He arrived before that town on June 28, 1607. Then, on June 29, Aleksin was "captured" by the tsar. In fact, the "capture" of the town was carefully stage-managed so that Tsar Vasilii would have a victory to proclaim. With Aleksin secured, Shuiskii and the tsar's regiment immediately advanced at high speed toward Tula, arriving in the siege camp the very next day, June 30.

Tsar Vasilii's announcement of his capture of Aleksin also claimed great successes by his voevodas in cleansing other towns and villages in the area of traitors. In fact Tsar Vasilii's commanders had failed to suppress rebellion in the old frontier region, which greatly complicated the task of besieging Tula. At least the siege itself prevented Tula from continuing its role of directing rebel operations. Once the siege began, rebel activity throughout southern Russia became more disconnected and local in nature, which was easier for the tsar's commanders to cope with. On the other hand, by concentrating his forces around Tula, Shuiskii freed up rebels elsewhere.

Reports from the lower Volga region continued to make Tsar Vasilii nervous as he tried to concentrate on the siege of Tula. He learned that the small army of seven thousand men he had ordered to advance from Saratov to aid voevoda Sheremetev in his struggle against "Tsarevich Ivan Avgust" and Astrakhan had unwittingly approached Tsaritsyn shortly after its garrison joined the rebel cause. The tsar's relief army came under surprise attack from the Tsaritsyn garrison and was forced to hastily retreat across the Volga. The rebels then tricked the enemy into thinking ten thousand more rebel troops were about to arrive from Astrakhan. That prompted Shuiskii's army to retreat rapidly up the Volga in disorder. Not surprisingly, that retreat then allowed Tsarevich Ivan-Avgust to sail up the Volga with about seven thousand men. His forces reached Tsaritsyn by July, cruelly putting to death all traitors to Tsar Dmitrii they met along the way. Ivan-Avgust's goal at that point may have been Moscow; but in late summer his forces were stopped at Saratov by voevoda Z. I. Saburov, whose garrison inflicted such severe losses on the "tsarevich's" forces that Ivan-Avgust immediately decided to retreat to Astrakhan. That ended the immediate threat to the central Volga region posed by the "tsarevich's" cossacks.

Upon arrival in the Tula siege camp, the tsar discovered to his annoyance that rebels in the vicinity were still defiant and very active. Among other things, they plundered and burned the estates of militiamen who had switched back to Shuiskii's side. The tsar ordered a response in kind, authorizing his troops to plunder the civilian population of all areas still in rebel hands, to destroy all crops and livestock, and to wage a cruel war against all traitors. Such raids may have marginally helped Tsar Vasilii by rewarding his soldiers with booty and by frightening a few wavering rebels. Inevitably, however, the increase in violence by the tsar's army prompted an increase in violence against Shuiskii supporters held in captivity in Tula and elsewhere.

The siege of Tula lasted four months. The town contained a large, wellsupplied civilian population and impressive fortifications. Built on the southern bank of the Upa River, Tula was defended by a large citadel (*kreml*' or kremlin) that had been constructed in the early sixteenth century. The base of the kremlin walls was composed of stone (5 meters high) on top of which brickwork raised the walls to anywhere between 10 and 18 meters high. The kremlin also had plenty of towers and openings from which to shoot at attackers. Tula's streets radiated out from the kremlin to an oak palisade (with at least fourteen towers and five gates) that surrounded the town. Both ends of the palisade went right up to the Upa River, which protected the town to the north. The town was also somewhat protected to the west by marshes and to the east by a small tributary of the Upa, the Khomutovka River.

It would obviously take a large army to capture Tula, and Tsar Vasilii had assembled the largest one he could for the task. The tsar probably concentrated more than thirty thousand troops, very large numbers of recruits, and thousands of peasant laborers before Tula's walls. Shuiskii's army was certainly much larger than the rebel force it was besieging. Inside Tula, however, rebel forces still exceeded twenty thousand well-armed men.

Tsar Vasilii established his headquarters in a small village located next to the Voronia River near its confluence with the Upa, just a few kilometers west of Tula. The tsar's senior commanders placed the main part of their siege army to the west of Tula on the south side of the Upa River, thereby cutting the town off from the Kaluga and Krapivna roads. A relatively small detachment was stationed north of the Upa River, blocking the roads from Tula to Aleksin, Venev, and Moscow. Batteries of siege guns were set up on both sides of the river in order to sweep the town from two sides; and constant artillery barrages killed or wounded many rebels. Under the circumstances, Tsar Vasilii expected to make short work of the siege.

As many as twenty-two attempts were made to take Tula by storm during the first several weeks, but they failed completely and cost Shuiskii about two

thousand casualties. The rebels not only stubbornly resisted but used their abundance of harquebuses and gunpowder to very good effect. Every day dozens of small rebel bands emerged from all sides of Tula either to repair damage done by Shuiskii's siege guns or to shoot at the enemy. They killed or wounded many of the tsar's soldiers. The incredibly wily and energetic rebels greatly frustrated Tsar Vasilii, who had not planned to spend all summer sitting in a peasant village near mosquito-infested marshes. The rebel commander-in-chief, Ivan Bolotnikov, proved to be an extremely worthy opponent whose bravery and cleverness in defending Tula matched his earlier defense of Kaluga. For a long time the tsar and his commanders remained confused and unable to come up with a viable plan for capturing Tula. Wild and false rumors spread across the land about Tsar Vasilii's humiliating retreat to Moscow, his possible dethronement, his capture in a great battle before Tula, and even his death. In fact, Shuiskii grew increasingly angry about the slow siege and began taking it out on the small numbers of rebels his men were able to capture, ordering them to be tortured. At some point he also grimly vowed to put all rebels in Tula to death.

At about this time, Prince Petr Urusov and his Tatar and Cheremis troops were ordered to wage a campaign of terror throughout the region and to kill and plunder all traitors to Tsar Vasilii. But Prince Urusov became convinced that rumors of Tsar Dmitrii's survival were true, for which reason he and his Tatar detachment abruptly broke with Tsar Vasilii. Thousands of them rode east and crossed the Volga to link up with the Nogai horde, after which they waged war against Shuiskii's frontier towns in the name of Tsar Dmitrii. Prince Urusov's departure was a great blow to Shuiskii, who already feared treason among his commanders.

As usual during a long siege, the tsar's army began to run low on supplies and morale slipped badly. As early as July, large numbers of the tsar's hungry and discouraged soldiers simply abandoned the siege camp for home. The defection of Prince Urusov also led to the departure of many non-Russian troops. At this point, although Tsar Vasilii had been primarily concerned about the threat he faced to the east, he received disheartening news of the appearance of "Tsar Dmitrii" to the west. His siege was now clearly in a race against time and the progress of "Dmitrii." The tsar nervously urged his commanders to speed up their efforts to capture Tula.

In late July, a syn boiarskii from Murom named Ivan S. Krovkov proposed to one of Tsar Vasilii's Military Affairs Office secretaries a method to force the surrender of Tula: build a dam on the Upa River below (to the west of) Tula and flood the town. Krovkov's plan was immediately presented to the tsar. At Image not available

first Shuiskii and the boyars laughed at the idea, but when Krovkov offered to forfeit his life if he failed, the tsar ordered him to carry out the audacious project. By early August, a very large number of recruits and peasants were put to work constructing the dam. It was an amazing piece of engineering, possible only because of the geography of the Tula area.

Tula sat on the southern bank of the Upa River, which flowed from the southeast to the northwest at that point (on its way to the Oka). Hills sloping up on the northeastern side of the river and hills to the southwest of the town created a shallow valley where, at or near Tula, several small rivers and streams flowed into the Upa and created numerous marshes. Krovkov figured out that by damming the Upa downstream from Tula, there was just enough slope to the land that the water would back up and flood the town. Krovkov and others chose a perfect location, just below the confluence of the Voronia River and the Upa, one and a half kilometers northwest of Tula. That site was far enough away from the town to avoid constant harassment of workers by the rebels and also assured the rapid flooding of the valley floor once the dam was completed. Thousands of workers (many from monasteries) brought logs, straw, and sacks of dirt to the construction site. In order to impound enough water to flood Tula, the dam needed to be nearly a kilometer in length and fairly high. That ambitious goal required a huge labor force and more than two months to accomplish. The work was not completed until the beginning of October.

In the first stage of construction, workers concentrated on building a long and sturdy log and earth causeway from the gently sloping and marshy northern bank of the Upa. Only after that heavy, slow work was nearly finished did they turn their attention to the opposite shore. On the steeper southern bank it was possible to construct a much shorter causeway fairly rapidly by having workers simply pile up thousands of sacks of dirt, sand, and gravel. In the last phase of construction, when speed was essential, all of the tsar's soldiers took turns hauling sacks of dirt right alongside the peasant recruits. The project was an enormous undertaking; the amount of earth moved was staggering. A century and a half later the ruins of the dam were still visible and impressive.

During all this time, of course, the rebels continued daily to inflict damage to the tsar's army. As Tsar Vasilii's siege force sustained more and more casualties and as food supplies dwindled, the grumbling among his soldiers grew as did rumors of "Tsar Dmitrii's" return to Russia. By September, large numbers of Shuiskii's wounded or sick troops were sent home; and many healthy but hungry militiamen and common soldiers continued to slip away from the siege camp. Tsar Vasilii became quite concerned that the siege of Tula would last well into the fall and that—due to the decline of his own forces and the progress of the new "Dmitrii"—the outcome of the siege he was hoping for was not at all assured. The tsar with reason came to fear that he might lose his army and maybe even his throne.

The appearance of someone playing the role of Tsar Dmitrii and the beginning of his military campaign against Tsar Vasilii ushered in a new phase in the civil war just as the siege of Tula was coming to a close. The new "Dmitrii" was able to gather large forces and to greatly expand rebel-held territory; he eventually set up his own capital and court in Tushino and laid siege to Moscow on and off for eighteen months. Ever since his arrival on the scene, the man often referred to as the "second false Dmitrii" or as the "brigand of Tushino" has stirred interest and provoked strong opinions about his identity and significance. Not surprisingly, since he came from Poland-Lithuania and counted among his supporters a number of Polish, Lithuanian, and Belorussian captains and soldiers, some contemporaries regarded him simply as a pawn of a foreign power. Of course, the same thing had been said, wrongly, about Tsar Dmitrii himself; and it turns out to be just as inaccurate an assessment of the "second false Dmitrii."

Who was the "second false Dmitrii"? Tsar Vasilii's agents made a concerted effort to discover his true identity but failed. The man was about the same height as Tsar Dmitrii but only vaguely resembled him. The impostor was fairly welleducated; he wrote Russian and Polish fluently and when "discovered" was employed as a teacher. Many sources identified him as a Russian who had lived for several years in Belorussia before assuming the identity of Tsar Dmitrii. Several sources specifically identified him as a baptized Jew named Bogdan. The Romanov dynasty, when established in 1613, concurred with that identification, basing its conclusion on Patriarch Filaret's personal acquaintance with the "second false Dmitrii" at Tushino and the alleged discovery of a copy of the Talmud and other Hebrew writings among "Dmitrii's" papers after he was killed in 1610.

Most sources claimed that the "second false Dmitrii" lacked the polish of a gentleman and was definitely from the lower class. He did, in fact, have many vile habits and, like the coarse Tsarevich Petr, was frequently crude in behavior. Contemporary sources identified him variously as the son of a blacksmith or a coach driver, as an apprentice, a common laborer, a peasant, or a cossack. He was most frequently identified as a priest's son. The impostor was quite well-versed in Orthodox priestly matters and occasionally displayed the mannerisms of a cleric. In addition, he managed to impress many people with his intimate knowledge of Tsar Dmitrii's life; even what was represented as his handwriting strongly resembled Dmitrii's. However, those things can easily be explained by the presence at the Tushino court of such clever former close associates of Tsar Dmitrii as Mikhail Molchanov and Captain Margeret.

Who was behind the creation of the "second false Dmitrii"? It was definitely not the Polish government. At that time King Sigismund was facing serious unrest at home and opposed any activities that might provoke conflict with Tsar Vasilii. On the other hand, the rise of the Tushino impostor was definitely associated with the increasing participation in Russia's civil war by Polish and Belorussian adventurers. Because he was "discovered" in Belorussia by those "foreigners," a number of contemporaries regarded him as the willing or reluctant creation of self-serving lords from Poland-Lithuania. In fact, the rebel camp inside Russia was the source of the initiative for the resurrection of Tsar Dmitrii.

Prince Shakhovskoi and Ivan Bolotnikov had, of course, long been aware of the need to produce someone to play the role of Tsar Dmitrii in order to defeat Tsar Vasilii. After the siege of Moscow was broken and the rebels retreated to Kaluga, there was a renewed sense of urgency in the search for Dmitrii. At the end of December 1606, Tsarevich Petr personally searched for the "true tsar" in eastern Belorussia. While abroad, Petr employed a number of Polish and Belorussian lords, including Pan Zenowicz, to raise troops for the rebel cause and to produce someone to play the role of Dmitrii. Zenowicz and a fellow nobleman, Pan Sienkiewicz, immediately got started on their assignments. Despite Polish government efforts to prevent it, small numbers of soldiers began crossing the border and migrating toward rebel-held territory in Russia by the spring of 1607. During the time in which Tsarevich Petr's allies abroad searched for and trained someone to play the role of Dmitrii, the rebels ended up in Tula. After Bolotnikov arrived there, he continued to send couriers in search of the "true tsar." Eventually, after receiving encouraging news, the rebel commanderin-chief dispatched from Tula one of his able lieutenants, Ivan Martynovich Zarutskii, with letters to be presented to "Tsar Dmitrii." Zarutskii made a beeline for Starodub, near the border of Poland-Lithuania, where he remained for some time waiting for the "tsar" to show up.

According to tradition, the future "Tsar Dmitrii" was at the time of his "discovery" a priest's servant and teacher who had lived for some time in the town of Shklov in Belorussia. From Shklov he eventually moved a short distance to a village near Mogilev, entered the service of a priest named Fedor Nikolskii, and taught children to read. He was so poor that he dressed in rags and needed to supplement his meager income by doing odd jobs in Mogilev. At some point during the winter of 1606–7, Nikolskii caught the future "tsar" in bed with his wife, beat him soundly, and drove him out of his home. The unemployed beggar wandered the streets of Mogilev with no food or shelter until he was spotted by an accomplice of Tsarevich Petr's allies. Pan Miechowicki, a veteran of Tsar Dmitrii's campaign for the Russian throne, noticed that the beggar looked vaguely like Dmitrii and approached him with an offer of food, clothing, and a chance for glory. The beggar at first refused the offer and fled Mogilev for Propoisk. However, Pan Miechowicki just happened to have several influential friends in Propoisk at that time, including the town's governor, Pan Ragoza, and the very same Pan Zenowicz who had agreed to help Tsarevich Petr find someone to play the role of "Dmitrii." They supposedly tossed the beggar in jail for a week, threatened him with execution as a spy, and eventually prevailed upon him to assume Dmitrii's identity. Pan Miechowicki was put in charge of training the impostor. When he was ready, the "tsar" was accompanied to the Russian border by Pan Zenowicz and Pan Ragoza. By then, whoever he really was, he had accommodated himself to his new role. Before crossing the border, he issued his handlers a wide-ranging decree from "Tsar Dmitrii" authorizing the recruitment of soldiers abroad. Dmitrii by several Russian towns; "Dmitrii" offered to pay two or three times as much as those soldiers could earn at home.

The impostor crossed the border in late May, 1607, near the town of Popova Gora. He brought with him no foreign troops and was accompanied only by his two aides. They quickly made their way to nearby Starodub and set in motion the carefully choreographed resurrection of Tsar Dmitrii. Starodub was chosen as the launch point for the pretense because, unlike Putivl, most of its inhabitants had not personally seen Tsar Dmitrii. For security reasons, the impostor traveled incognito as "Andrei Andreevich Nagoi," Tsar Dmitrii's "kinsman." He arrived in Starodub on June 12. There he and his two companions revealed to local authorities that Tsar Dmitrii was alive and would soon arrive with Pan Miechowicki and many soldiers. As Dmitrii's "kinsman," "Andrei Nagoi" promised rich rewards in return for supporting Tsar Dmitrii's struggle against the usurper Vasilii Shuiskii. That story caused quite a stir and revealed the strong rebel sympathies of the local population. Eventually, however, after several frustrating weeks of waiting for Dmitrii's army to arrive, people began to question the fantastic stories told by "Prince Andrei." At that point, in a carefully staged event, the local authorities arrested "Nagoi" and his companions and questioned them publicly on July 10, 1607.

The interrogation was designed to convince the inhabitants of Starodub and other towns that Tsar Dmitrii was indeed alive and had finally returned home to resume his struggle for the throne. Before the town's entire population, "Prince Andrei" and his companions were threatened with torture to make them reveal the truth. His scribe was stripped of his shirt and allegedly beaten with the knout, at which point he shouted that he would show them where Tsar Dmitrii was if he was released. He then revealed to a shocked crowd that "Andrei Nagoi" was none other than Tsar Dmitrii himself, traveling incognito to test their loyalty before revealing his identity. When "Nagoi" acknowledged that he really was "Tsar Dmitrii," the townspeople fell at his feet, promising to fight and die for him. At some point, the emissary from Tsarevich Petr and Bolotnikov, Ivan Zarutskii, stepped forward, also "recognized" the tsar, and presented him with letters from the Tula rebel leadership. The effect was to doubly convince the people of Starodub that Dmitrii was alive and standing before them. "Tsar Dmitrii" was conducted with great honor into the best lodgings in the fortress. On the very same day, probably by prior arrangement, Pan Miechowicki arrived in Starodub with a detachment of seven hundred foreign mercenaries expecting high pay in the service of "Tsar Dmitrii." The appearance of that force silenced any remaining doubters in Starodub.

After the "tsar" revealed himself in Starodub, he sent agents to all the towns of Severia and adjacent provinces announcing his escape—with God's help from Shuiskii's assassins and recounting his experiences since then. He called upon his subjects to help him build an army to retake his throne. At first, the cautious authorities in Putivl and Chernigov held the "tsar's" agents for questioning and sent their own people to Starodub to check up on "Dmitrii." Once they were satisfied that he was indeed the "true tsar," the response throughout Severia was extremely enthusiastic, and very soon ordinary Russians and free cossacks began flocking to Starodub to aid the resurrected "tsar." Over the course of the next two months, the "second false Dmitrii" managed to assemble a small army. Since by that time there were relatively few professional soldiers left in the region, the bulk of "Dmitrii's" recruits consisted of three thousand poorlytrained Russians (many of them peasants), supplemented by foreign mercenaries and a small number of cossacks. Only after King Sigismund's loyal troops decisively defeated his rebel subjects in battle in July 1607 did significant numbers of foreign troops begin drifting into Russia. Sigismund was glad to see the backs of those troublemakers and willingly granted permission for them to join "Tsar Dmitrii's" army.

"Tsar Dmitrii" formed a very modest boyar council in Starodub. Probably his most influential adviser was Ivan Zarutskii. This man, a Ukrainian born in Tarnopol, had led an active life. Captured by the Crimean Tatars in his youth, Zarutskii escaped from Crimea to become a cossack leader. Later he joined the rebellion against Vasilii Shuiskii and quickly rose to become one of Bolotnikov's most trusted lieutenants. Zarutskii was an incredibly smart and charismatic opportunist as well as an excellent military commander.

In Starodub the "tsar" and his advisers spent several weeks presiding over the build-up of their small army and planning their campaign. By late August, Colonel Jozef Budzilo arrived with a substantial detachment of soldiers from Belorussia. With other foreign troops scheduled to arrive soon thereafter, the "second false Dmitrii" decided to launch his campaign against Shuiskii on September 10, 1607. His first objective was strategically located Briansk, from which he could either attempt to relieve Tula or head for poorly-defended Moscow.

Tsar Vasilii had been receiving ominous reports about the appearance of "Tsar Dmitrii" since July. He was deeply disturbed by news of the impostor's plan to advance to Briansk. Shuiskii was forced to act quickly to counter that grave threat to the siege of Tula and to his own crown; he therefore rushed troops there to forestall "Dmitrii." Unfortunately for Tsar Vasilii, "Tsar Dmitrii's" approach to Briansk triggered a strong positive response from the local population. "Dmitrii" camped for about a week in Svenskii monastery near the town, and many people from Briansk and the surrounding area came to greet him. At that point, in defiance of voevoda Mikhail Kashin's protests, Kashin's men burned the town and retreated. After the fires were put out and clean-up crews did their work, "Tsar Dmitrii" entered Briansk no later than September 25.

Tsar Vasilii was bitterly disappointed by the news from Briansk. To make matters even worse, scouts from "Tsar Dmitrii" made it all the way to Tula and informed the besieged rebels that the "true tsar" was on his way to rescue them. Other scouts approached Shuiskii's siege army itself and urged the soldiers and construction workers to abandon the usurper. On September 24 or 25, a courier from "Dmitrii" boldly emerged from Tula to deliver a letter from his master to Tsar Vasilii in front of all of Shuiskii's boyars and commanders. The brave rebel publicly declared that Tsar Dmitrii had returned to recover his crown but that too much blood had already been spilled. Therefore, Shuiskii would be shown mercy if he surrendered immediately. The outraged tsar ordered the courier burned at the stake; but while the man could still speak, he kept repeating that he had been sent by the "true tsar." Those words made quite an impression. Shuiskii was now terrified that time was running out for the siege of Tula.

In the meantime, "Tsar Dmitrii" was having problems of his own. On September 26, his foreign troops staged a rebellion due to lack of pay. Many of them abandoned the impostor and made their way back across the border. That forced the "tsar" and his loyal commanders to improvise somewhat. They abandoned smoldering Briansk, crossed the Desna River, and headed southeast. They reached rebelheld Karachev by October 2. There they were joined by a large detachment of Zaporozhian cossacks. By October 4, "Dmitrii" felt confident enough to send Pan Miechowicki and Colonel Budzilo to relieve beleaguered Kozelsk, then under siege by as many as eight thousand men led by Prince Vasilii F. Mosalskii.

At dawn on October 8, the rebel army attacked Shuiskii's siege force. Mosalskii had been warned of their approach and had encircled his camp with extra guards; but those men were quickly driven back, and the rebels managed to burst right into the panic-struck enemy camp. Many of Shuiskii's soldiers, including Prince Mosalskii, fled; but many others were captured along with all their supplies. After the battle, the inhabitants of Kozelsk came out to greet the rebel army with the traditional offering of bread and salt. Shouts of joy about the return of the "good tsar" could be heard everywhere. On October 11, Dmitrii ceremonially entered Kozelsk—one day after the fall of Tula.

The arrival in Tula of couriers from "Tsar Dmitrii" in late September cheered the tired and hungry rebels somewhat, but most of them realized that there was little hope that "Dmitrii's" forces would reach them before the dam on the Upa was completed. Grumbling among the cossacks and townsmen eventually led to a sharp confrontation with the rebel leadership. Angry that no help was immediately forthcoming, many began to openly question the story of Tsar Dmitrii's survival. They called Prince Shakhovskoi a "liar" and the author of their current misery, and they threatened to turn him and Bolotnikov over to Shuiskii. Bolotnikov was able to calm them down temporarily by recounting his own meeting with "Tsar Dmitrii" in Poland-Lithuania and his sincere belief that the man he met really was Dmitrii. He urged his men to hold out for a few more days, telling them that Dmitrii's army was advancing to Tula and would arrive in a week or so. He stated that he fully expected aid from his sovereign, to whom he had written urgent appeals to hurry to their rescue. If Tsar Dmitrii did not arrive in time to save them, Bolotnikov said, they could eat his (Bolotnikov's) body. By such speeches he kept his men from surrendering for many days even though they had already slaughtered all the horses in Tula and were beginning to get very hungry. The brave commander-in-chief maintained his standing among rank-and-file rebels, but those unhappy men did throw Shakhovskoi in prison, telling him that he would be released when Tsar Dmitrii arrived. If Dmitrii failed to appear, the rebels said, he would be turned over to Shuiskii as a deceiver and as the "initiator of this war and bloodshed." As it turned out, the situation in Tula only worsened.

By the end of September the final phase of damming the Upa began, and after a furious week's work of hauling heavy sacks of dirt, sand, and gravel around the clock, the project was completed. The water immediately began to flood the shallow river valley. Within a day Tula was flooded, and its inhabitants were forced to camp out on the roofs of their homes and to go about town on rafts. Already hungry and exhausted, the beleaguered rebels now faced even more severe hardships. Water flooded all the storehouses and ruined most of what little grain and salt was left. Few could afford the incredibly high prices for the little food which remained unspoiled. By the beginning of October, many poor souls were reduced to eating "unclean" food—cats, mice, hides, and even carrion. Many of them died of starvation, disease, or exhaustion.

Bolotnikov attempted to hold out in spite of the hunger and the flood. The rebels hoped something would go wrong with Shuiskii's dam and that the water might subside enough to permit them to make a sortie in strength from Tula for the purpose of breaking through the siege camp to escape and link up with "Tsar Dmitrii's" forces. Despite Bolotnikov's best efforts to hold out, the situation in Tula quickly became unbearable. In despair, many talked openly of surrender. In their extreme misery and without authorization from the rebel leaders, small groups of soldiers and townspeople began to abandon Tula. Soon, a hundred, two hundred, even three hundred people left each day. By the end of the first week in October, representatives of the Tula citizenry who had covertly departed from the town began discussions with Tsar Vasilii's commanders about terms of surrender, including the possibility of handing over the rebel leaders.

There can be no doubt that the flooding of Tula forced its surrender. Bolotnikov was certainly intelligent enough to observe the growing desertions from Tula, and no doubt he heard that some townsmen were negotiating with Shuiskii. He was also deeply aware of the misery of the inhabitants of Tula and his own troops and knew that no relief from "Dmitrii" would arrive in time to save them. Therefore, the rebel commander-in-chief himself joined the negotiations with Shuiskii with the goal in mind of preserving the lives of his men and possibly their freedom as well. In fact, one contemporary specifically claimed that Bolotnikov's negotiations amounted to some kind of trick to deceive Shuiskii and save the rebel army.

Tsar Vasilii was well aware that he could not take Tula by storm. Because of the very real danger posed by the "second false Dmitrii's" campaign against him and the rapid decline of his siege army, the tsar was more than willing to cut a deal with the inhabitants of Tula in order to end the siege and return to Moscow as soon as possible; but Shuiskii's prestige was also on the line because he had sworn to stay in the field until he achieved victory. The tsar, therefore, welcomed contacts from the Tula citizenry and especially from the rebel commanders. It appears that Bolotnikov reluctantly agreed to surrender but insisted on negotiating the best terms possible: pardons for all the rebels and complete freedom for them to depart from Tula with their weapons and to go wherever they wished. Bolotnikov informed Tsar Vasilii that such a pardon was essential; otherwise, the rebels would hold out until the last man. Shuiskii was probably also informed that many of the rebels were willing to rejoin his service if they were forgiven. Since Shuiskii was himself in a difficult position, he readily agreed to those remarkable demands in order to be able to declare "victory" at Tula. The tsar also swore a solemn oath to spare the lives of the rebels. Appearing magnanimous at this point was a wise strategy on Shuiskii's part considering the available alternatives. There were also precedents in that era for pardoning enemy troops and for allowing besieged forces to go free in order to end sieges.

Shuiskii's propagandists represented his decision as a demonstration of the pious tsar's mercy, and they may even have used the extraordinary bravery demonstrated by the misguided rebels as justification for letting them go instead of executing or jailing them. Rank-and-file rebels were officially allowed to depart for "home" from Tula with their weapons; those who desired to serve Tsar Vasilii were offered salaries and positions in his army. The only price the rebels had to pay for this remarkable agreement appears to have been the surrender of their leaders, especially Bolotnikov and Tsarevich Petr, who were to be paraded as trophies and as proof that Tsar Vasilii had really "captured" Tula. Shuiskii did, however, solemnly promise to spare the lives of those men. By surrendering to Shuiskii, the rebel commander-in-chief made certain that his forces remained intact and would soon be available to bolster the "second false Dmitrii's" campaign against Tsar Vasilii. Through his own heroic action, Bolotnikov once again guaranteed that the civil war against the tsar-usurper would continue.

Tula capitulated to Tsar Vasilii on October 10, 1607. After the tsar's solemn oath to abide by the agreed upon terms, his friend Kriuk-Kolychev led a small detachment into Tula without incident in order to occupy it. Bolotnikov, Tsarevich Petr, Prince Shakhovskoi, Prince Teliatevskii, voevoda Bezzubtsev, voevoda Kokhanovskii, ataman Nagiba, and a few other atamans then surrendered and were escorted to Tsar Vasilii's camp. Also taken into custody were approximately fifty foreign mercenaries from Tsar Dmitrii's old bodyguard. Apparently, Tsarevich Petr did not surrender willingly. Instead, Bolotnikov and others were forced to tie up the fearful Petr in order to fulfill the agreement made with Tsar Vasilii.

There are some colorful stories in the sources about Bolotnikov riding out of Tula to Shuiskii's pavilion, having an audience with the tsar, offering him his sword, and prostrating himself before the tsar—apologizing for his sincere but misguided belief in Tsar Dmitrii. Such a meeting may have occurred. Tsar Vasilii was certainly curious about the rebel commander who had nearly toppled him from the throne. As a prisoner, Bolotnikov was a great prize for Tsar Vasilii, and he was very carefully guarded. By contrast, Prince Shakhovskoi was simply disgraced and shipped off to a remote monastery; but he soon managed to escape and made his way to the camp of the "second false Dmitrii" where he resumed his role as a senior rebel commander. Prince Teliatevskii was also quickly exiled and not even deprived of his rank or any of his property. Voevoda Kokhanovskii was exiled to Kazan without punishment, and ataman Nagiba and other cossack chieftains were similarly exiled to north Russia.

As noted earlier, the one rebel voevoda who did enter Shuiskii's service at this time was Iurii Bezzubtsev; he was immediately given command of four thousand rebel cossacks who also took the tsar up on his offer of food, shelter, and employment. In November, Bezzubtsev and his men were sent to Kaluga to try to convince the rebel garrison there to surrender or, failing that, to help capture the town. However, Bezzubtsev and his cossacks turned on the other soldiers accompanying them, forcing the tsar's loyal officers and men to abandon all their artillery and munitions and to retreat in disarray. Thereupon, Bezzubtsev handed the supplies over to Kaluga's defenders, and he and his men rode off to join up with the "second false Dmitrii." Bezzubtsev subsequently became a significant player in the rebel "capital" of Tushino.

What about the more than ten thousand rebels who were allowed to freely depart from Tula, supposedly to go home or to return to their frontier garrisons? In fact, a very large percentage of them joined the army of "Tsar Dmitrii" instead and resumed the struggle against Shuiskii. That makes Tsar Vasilii's "victory" at Tula look very hollow, indeed; but at least the siege was over, and Shuiskii had avoided disaster.

21

Tsar Vasilii's Struggle Against the Tushino Impostor

The capitulation of Tula allowed Tsar Vasilii's nervous commanders to turn their attention to stopping the advance of the "second false Dmitrii." "Dmitrii" had managed to reach Kozelsk, only 130 kilometers west of Tula, by the time Bolotnikov surrendered. In order to block the impostor's path north to Moscow, the garrison of Meshchovsk was quickly and heavily reinforced. Blocking his path to the east proved to be more difficult. News of "Tsar Dmitrii's" progress triggered rebellions during the fall of 1607 in several towns south of Tula that had only recently been "cleansed" of rebels by Shuiskii's forces, and "Dmitrii's" small army managed to fight its way into Belev by October 16.

As soon as "Tsar Dmitrii" entered Belev, he learned of Bolotnikov's surrender at Tula. Panic-struck, the impostor and his demoralized army departed from Belev the very next day—retreating southwest all the way to Karachev. There "Dmitrii" was abandoned by the Zaporozhian cossacks who had only recently joined his service. In addition, he faced another mutiny by his foreign troops, who seized all the booty picked up in Kozelsk and Belev and departed for Poland-Lithuania. In late October, the terrified "tsar" abandoned his own camp; taking only thirty trusted Russians with him, he headed toward Putivl in the hope of passing the winter in friendly territory. News of the impostor's difficulties greatly relieved Tsar Vasilii, who foolishly concluded that the threat posed by "Dmitrii" was now passing. Shuiskii failed to seize the opportunity to actively pursue and destroy his enemy. Instead, he merely ordered another punitive raid in southwestern Russia to be carried out by his remaining Tatar and Mordvian cavalrymen. That was one of Shuiskii's greatest mistakes, one that significantly prolonged the civil war.

At the same time Tsar Vasilii's forces were rushing west to stop "Tsar Dmitrii," Shuiskii's commanders were confronted by widespread rebellion in the Riazan region. Frantic appeals for help from the beleaguered voevoda of Pereiaslavl-Riazanskii (Riazan) pushed Shuiskii, once Tula had capitulated, to dispatch a detachment commanded by Prokofii Liapunov to resume the task of suppressing rebellion in his home province. Liapunov was given a free hand to restore order and to secure the obedience of the entire region—which had been in turmoil for almost a year. He was merciless in punishing rebel towns and villages, burning them and taking many prisoners. As a result, he quickly pacified the province by sheer brutality. In fact, Tsar Vasilii at one point was actually forced to order him to be less indiscriminate in punishing the area's inhabitants. The people of the region long remembered Liapunov's reign of terror. For his work, he was soon promoted to the rank of dumnyi dvorianin. Tsar Vasilii also lavished estates and villages on him and issued a special decree thanking Liapunov for his innumerable services.

In early October 1607, Shuiskii's voevoda on Balchik Island, Fedor Sheremetev, finally abandoned his position just north of Astrakhan and marched his men up the Volga to rebel-held Tsaritsyn. Sheremetev's army stormed the town on October 24, killing and capturing many men. Large numbers of rebel cossacks fled into the steppe. Eventually, Sheremetev was ordered to retreat farther up the river to Kazan so that his army would be available for operations against the "second false Dmitrii."

Believing that he had gained the upper hand against the rebels, Tsar Vasilii returned to Moscow very soon after the surrender of Tula, arriving home by October 18. There he celebrated the capture of Tula and finally got married after more than a year and a half of delays and postponements. Shuiskii made no plans whatsoever to resume active campaigning against "Dmitrii" until the following spring. The tsar's celebration of his "complete victory" over the rebels was regarded at the time by some observers as premature, to say the least. Even Tsar Vasilii's close ally, Patriarch Hermogen, questioned the extent of the victory achieved at Tula and blamed Shuiskii's premature triumphal return to Moscow on the tsar's "crafty companions."

Shuiskii's victory celebration also included showing off his prizes, Tsarevich Petr and Ivan Bolotnikov, who were conducted—along with fifty-two former members of Tsar Dmitrii's foreign guard—past crowds of curious spectators into the capital. The foreigners were soon released from custody, only to be rounded up again within a few months when Shuiskii became fearful of the progress of the "second false Dmitrii." Most of those poor souls ended up in Siberia, where some of them remained for many years. Not surprisingly, the rebel commander-in-chief and the "tsarevich" were not released or exiled but were instead kept under close guard.

The hated false Tsarevich Petr was tortured repeatedly and coerced into producing a confession about his humble origins and treasonous activities. The impostor was then hanged publicly just outside Moscow next to the Serpukhov road near the Danilov monastery. In sharp contrast to the treatment of Petr, Shuiskii kept Bolotnikov in close confinement in Moscow for many weeks. There would be no public execution of the former rebel commander-in-chief, who was too highly respected even by his enemies to allow Tsar Vasilii the luxury of openly breaking his vow to spare the man's life. It took the threat of a rebel offensive against Moscow in February 1608 to prompt the tsar to order Bolotnikov relocated to Kargopol in the far north, well away from the forces of the "second false Dmitrii." By the end of February, Bolotnikov and his guards reached Iaroslavl, where the local gentry were shocked to see this dangerous rebel traveling unfettered. According to a contemporary, when they chided the guards for not tying him up, Bolotnikov himself replied to them: "I will soon have you in chains and sewn into bearskins."

Once Bolotnikov reached Kargopol, he was thrown into prison. Some time later, as the "second false Dmitrii" approached Moscow, a panicky Tsar Vasilii ordered Bolotnikov secretly killed. First his eyes were put out, and then he was drowned. Also put to death at about this time were the other cossack atamans who had surrendered with Bolotnikov and had also been exiled to the far north. In addition, the fearful tsar suddenly resumed the mass executions of thousands of cossack prisoners who had been crowding his jails ever since the end of the siege of Moscow over a year before. Interestingly enough, when word of Bolotnikov's death got out, foreigners and Russians alike were upset. Tsar Vasilii, it seems, had been wise to be cautious and secretive in dealing with the charismatic rebel commander. One of Shuiskii's archbishops wrote that many people were indignant about the tsar breaking his oath to spare the brave man's life. Bolotnikov had by then earned the respect of friend and foe alike. As one contemporary simply but eloquently put it, "Bolotnikov had the common people with him." The rebel cause lost its most talented, energetic, and attractive leader when it lost Ivan Bolotnikov. Even so, Shuiskii's problems were far from over.

The "second false Dmitrii," demoralized and abandoned during the fall of 1607, never reached Putivl. Instead, on October 29, in the Komaritsk district he met up with a group of Polish lords leading one thousand eight hundred mercenaries they had gathered abroad to serve "Tsar Dmitrii." Cheering the impostor even more, in November yet another group of Polish lords with mercenary soldiers joined his forces at Starodub. Also joining him at about this time was another copy-cat pretender, "Tsarevich Fedor Fedorovich," who claimed to be Tsarevich Petr's younger brother. Tsarevich Fedor brought three thousand Don cossacks with him and served his "uncle Dmitrii" loyally. Thus reinforced, "Tsar Dmitrii" was able to resume the offensive against Shuiskii. He advanced to Briansk, which had just recently switched to Shuiskii's side. Sources about

the battle of Briansk are contradictory, but there was much skirmishing before the rebels eventually gave up and moved on to friendly Orel. Arriving before that town in December, cautious "Dmitrii" waited until early 1608 before entering it. To the north of Orel, in Bolkhov, sat a large detachment of Tsar Vasilii's soldiers. At the end of 1607, Shuiskii sent his luckless brother Dmitrii to Bolkhov to take charge of efforts to stop the impostor's progress. Voevoda Dmitrii Shuiskii remained there until spring of 1608. Heavy snows and extremely cold weather that winter prevented much fighting, but small detachments of the opposing forces skirmished with each other and carried out occasional raids for supplies and booty.

During the winter, "Dmitrii's" army grew rapidly due to the arrival of more foreign mercenaries, cossacks, and large numbers of Bolotnikov's men from Tula. In and around Orel were now massed more than seven thousand Polish and Belorussian troops as well as at least eight thousand Don and Zaporozhian cossacks commanded by Ivan Zarutskii. Because of active recruiting, more and more rebels continued to flock to "Tsar Dmitrii." When Prince Roman Rozynski (a poor Ukrainian magnate) arrived in April at the head of four thousand foreign mercenaries, he was able to impose himself as "Dmitrii's" senior commander. The "tsar" himself was not at all respected by the mercenaries, who treated him harshly. Although "Dmitrii" was an essential figurehead, real power in his camp came to rest in the hands of the commanders of the rebel forces, not with the impostor.

Bolotnikov's lieutenant, Ivan Zarutskii, quickly became one of the most important figures in the court of "Tsar Dmitrii." Zarutskii was promoted to the rank of boyar and received rich rewards and large estates; he worked closely with the new commander-in-chief, Rozynski, helping to plan military operations. Zarutskii imposed strict discipline on rebel cossack forces and was put in charge of a special prikaz (office) for cossack affairs. When Iurii Bezzubtsev showed up with several thousand cossacks who had turned against Shuiskii and disrupted the siege of Kaluga, that wily commander immediately became one of Zarutskii's atamans. Zarutskii's cossack detachments also swelled in size in this period as large numbers of runaway peasants and slaves from central Russia joined the ranks of the "free cossacks" and were allowed to serve side by side with new arrivals from the Don and Volga. Many more Ukrainian cossacks also drifted into "Tsar Dmitrii's" service in this period. Not surprisingly, cossacks continued to be the main rebel fighting force.

Tsar Vasilii took steps to slow down the alarming movement of runaway peasants and slaves becoming cossacks in "Tsar Dmitrii's" service. On February 25, 1608, he issued an unprecedented new law guaranteeing those men their

freedom if they would abandon the rebel cause. Shuiskii also offered amnesty and generous rewards to pomeshchiki and other soldiers who were willing to rejoin his service. Still camped in Orel at that time, the impostor quite naturally took similar steps. He sent a manifesto far and wide offering clemency for all those willing to switch to his side; and, just like Shuiskii, he promised freedom to all runaway peasants and slaves willing to join his service. The impostor's decree proved to be a powerful magnet. However, the growing enthusiasm of the lower class for "Tsar Dmitrii's" promises of freedom to them, added to the large numbers of foreign troops in "Dmitrii's" army, deeply disturbed many rebel pomeshchiki from Severia and the Briansk region, who quickly lost interest in continuing the rebellion; those men now rushed to Moscow to take advantage of Tsar Vasilii's generous amnesty. Seeing that happening, "Dmitrii" took an extraordinary step to prevent waverers from abandoning his service. He declared that the gentry switching to Shuiskii's side would have their property confiscated and redistributed to any of their servants who were willing to join his service. Even slaves were promised the lands, possessions, womenfolk, and titles of their traitorous former masters. "Dmitrii" actually followed through on his ominous threat in at least a few cases, which-of course-led to indignation and fear on the part of many lords and helped Shuiskii's cause.

If the impostor was generous to his lower class supporters, it is important to remember that he was even more generous to lords joining his service. "Tsar Dmitrii's" courtiers and commanders received lands confiscated from Shuiskii loyalists complete with serf labor. The impostor made no effort to abolish serfdom; instead, peasants on the estates he distributed were required to remain there. They could not leave on their own or be transferred. Even runaways had to be returned to their new lords. No doubt that helps to explain why large numbers of Russian gentry were attracted to "Tsar Dmitrii's" service. By spring 1608, the impostor also attempted to appeal to "respectable" townsmen by distancing himself from the excesses of Tsarevich Petr and other cossack "tsareviches," by apologizing for past rebel terror and bloodshed, and by promising that he would restrain all his soldiers—including cossacks and foreigners from looting and unnecessary violence.

By the spring of 1608, the army of "Tsar Dmitrii" was large enough to begin an offensive against Shuiskii's forces. The rebel plan was to advance against Bolkhov with twenty-seven thousand men and, if successful there, to continue on to Moscow. In anticipation of that move, over the course of several months Dmitrii Shuiskii managed with considerable difficulty to concentrate about thirty thousand men in and around Bolkhov in order to stop the rebel offensive. The rebel army approached Prince Shuiskii's position in late April. A battle soon developed that lasted four days and was a disaster for the tsar's brother. Shuiskii apparently lost his nerve and began to retreat; that retreat very quickly degenerated into a panic-stricken flight toward Moscow. Many pieces of artillery and large quantities of supplies fell into rebel hands. Moscow reacted to news of the defeat and the arrival of the retreating troops with a mixture of terror and grief. Many people, including soldiers, began to believe that Tsar Vasilii was fighting a losing battle against the real Tsar Dmitrii.

After achieving victory at Bolkhov, the impostor's army advanced toward Moscow-meeting almost no resistance. Tsar Vasilii tried to steady the population of the capital, declaring once again that the enemy planned to kill everyone in the city, including women and children. He also emphasized the participation of large numbers of hated Catholic mercenaries from Poland-Lithuania in the rebel movement. Far more important, the tsar replaced voevoda Dmitrii Shuiskii with his much more competent and popular nephew, Mikhail Skopin-Shuiskii. Even the brilliant Skopin-Shuiskii, however, was unable to defeat the rebel army. Nonetheless, he managed by the beginning of June to set up some hasty defense lines to protect the approaches to the capital. At this point, Tsar Vasilii made an extraordinary speech to his troops, offering to let them depart without punishment but encouraging them to stay to defend Moscow and his crown. Of course, all of them vowed to stay and fight for him. Soon, however, many changed their minds and defected to "Tsar Dmitrii." In the meantime, the impostor's army settled in Tushino, a strategically located village only twelve kilometers northwest of Moscow that controlled several roads linking the capital to the west. "Dmitrii" set up his court there and stayed in Tushino for a long time. Gradually, an untidy, muddy, stinking suburb of tents and log huts sprang up into which was crowded a large population of soldiers, courtiers, bureaucrats, and others. There were constant arrivals and departures and a feverish buzz of activity in Tushino. "Dmitrii's" new "capital" was too far away from Moscow to act as the operational base for the siege of that city, but it did have the advantage of being an easily defended position.

The approach to Moscow by the rebel army and the presence of large numbers of Polish troops in it finally convinced Tsar Vasilii to speed up peace negotiations with an envoy from King Sigismund. Shuiskii hastily agreed to release all Polish subjects who had been held captive since Tsar Dmitrii's assassination—including Tsar Dmitrii's widow and father-in-law as well as the Polish ambassador. The former prisoners, once released, were instructed to head straight for Poland-Lithuania; Marina Mniszech was specifically ordered not to refer to herself as "tsaritsa" and, under no circumstances, was she to recognize the Tushino impostor as her husband or to join him. In return for Shuiskii's display of good faith, the Polish envoy made a false promise that King Sigismund would recall his subjects from "Tsar Dmitrii's" camp. Tsar Vasilii was so pleased by this arrangement that his military forces took no action for two weeks. Shuiskii even offered the impostor's commander-in-chief, Rozynski, a chance to participate in peace talks and a large sum of money for his troops as soon as they departed for home from Tushino. Rozynski took advantage of the situation and, on June 25, attacked Skopin-Shuiskii's army by surprise and so furiously that it was forced to retreat to the very gates of Moscow before finally stopping the enemy advance. Just three days later, another rebel army that had approached Moscow from the south was also defeated and forced to retreat. Thanks primarily to Skopin-Shuiskii, the capital was now at least reasonably secure from direct, frontal attacks. That, unfortunately, set the stage for a very long, drawn-out and ruinous siege that lasted for a year and a half.

"Tsar Dmitrii's" forces dug in at Tushino. For over a year Russia experienced the bizarre spectacle of having two tsars, two courts, and two armies. In Tushino a rudimentary bureaucracy carried out many normal government activities around the clock. "Tsar Dmitrii's" principal advisers included several prominent Russian lords who abandoned Moscow for Tushino and were quickly rewarded with high positions, land, and peasants. Some of those lords-derisively called "migratory birds" by a contemporary—later brazenly returned to Moscow in search of even more rewards; but quite a few aristocrats stayed on in the Tushino impostor's service. Those Russian lords were no more impressed by "Tsar Dmitrii" than the Poles were, but they were nevertheless determined either to fight against Shuiskii or to profit from the civil war. On the Tushino impostor's boyar council sat such powerful men as Mikhail G. Saltykov and Dmitrii Trubetskoi. They were soon joined by several of Tsar Dmitrii's former courtiers, including Grigorii Shakhovskoi and Mikhail Molchanov. The Saltykov and Romanov families were by far the most influential Russians in Tushino. Members of the Romanov clan, in particular, flocked to Tushino. Filaret Romanov himself, then serving as metropolitan of Rostov, was "captured" by the rebels in October 1608 and brought to Tushino where he was graciously received by the "tsar" and quickly resumed his old title of patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church. The Tushino boyars secretly corresponded with friends and relatives in Moscow and enticed many of them into "Dmitrii's" service.

Much to the alarm of Tsar Vasilii, in September 1608, Tsaritsa Marina and her father were both "captured" by the rebels and brought to Tushino. After intense secret negotiations, Marina "recognized" the impostor as her husband. That news spread rapidly and electrified the nation. Many people were convinced by her action that Tsar Dmitrii must still be alive. As a result, even more gentry and aristocrats made their way to Tushino. Eventually, several members of Tsar Dmitrii's foreign bodyguard also turned up there, including Captain Margeret—whose military expertise and intimate knowledge of Dmitrii proved to be quite valuable.

The Tushino impostor and his court, far from being radical, projected a conservative, aristocratic image and jealously guarded the exalted status of the resurrected tsar. However, because of the amazing story of Tsar Dmitrii and the subsequent activities of Tsarevich Petr and the "second false Dmitrii," Russia was virtually inundated by a wave of opportunistic copy-cat tsarist pretenders during the later stages of the civil war. Up to ten more pretenders, usually of slave or peasant background, were produced by various cossack groups. But with the establishment of the snobbish court of "Tsar Dmitrii," Ivan-Avgust and other cossack pretenders came to be viewed by the Tushinites as potential rivals or as sources of embarrassment. "Tsar Dmitrii" eventually ordered even his extremely loyal "nephew," "Tsarevich Fedor Fedorovich," put to death to please his new courtiers and to attract more Russian lords to his cause. After extremely useful service against Tsar Vasilii, Tsarevich Ivan-Avgust also made the mistake of traveling to Tushino to join his "younger brother." There he was unceremoneously hanged. "Tsar Dmitrii" also sent out manifestos stating that all false tsareviches were to be seized and brought before him for judgment, and he offered great rewards for their capture. The Tushino impostor, it seems, would tolerate no others.

Throughout the summer of 1608, Tushinite forces tried without success to capture Moscow or to blockade it completely; elsewhere they met little resistance because of Shuiskii's unpopularity and growing enthusiasm for "Tsar Dmitrii." Even in Moscow, although Tsar Vasilii remained defiant, the capital's besieged population grew increasingly nervous and hungry, and many merchants and others abandoned the city to avoid being trapped there or killed. The arrival in Tushino of Jan-Piotr Sapieha with seven thousand cavalrymen in August speeded up rebel military activity. Although Sapieha and Rozynski did not particularly like one another, their uneasy alliance marked the complete triumph of foreign officers within the rebel high command. Under their influence, a new strategy was developed for occupying the area around the capital and invading the northern provinces.

So confident were the rebel commanders of their own strength and Tsar Vasilii's weakness that they decided to split up their forces for those operations. In September, Rozynskii's detachments concentrated on the area west and south of Moscow while Sapieha led about fifteen thousand troops north of the capital. Sapieha quickly seized many roads and villages and cut Moscow off from the north; he then laid siege to the wealthy and strategically located Trinty-St. Sergius monastery (approximately 70 kilometers north of Moscow). Tsar Vasilii responded by sending his brother Ivan with fifteen thousand troops to dislodge Sapieha, but the collision of those forces resulted in disaster for Prince Shuiskii. Thousands of his men were killed or wounded, and only a small number of them managed to get back to Moscow. Many others simply disappeared.

The Tushino court was by then facing serious financial problems trying to pay its mercenary soldiers and trying to fund an active war against Tsar Vasilii, but Shuiskii's own forces were now so utterly depleted that he could no longer field an army against "Dmitrii" without resorting to his enemy's strategy of importing foreign military assistance. After haughtily dismissing offers of Swedish military assistance in 1606, Tsar Vasilii now entered into serious negotiations with King Karl IX. The tsar sent his popular nephew Skopin-Shuiskii to Novgorod for the important task of concluding an agreement with the Swedes. In the meantime, Sapieha's forces were completely frustrated in their attempts to capture the Trinity-St. Sergius monastery by storm or by stratagem. The fortressmonastery, actively supplied by the local population, heroically and successfully resisted the siege for sixteen months.

During the fall of 1608, Rozynski's troops tried to close the blockade around Moscow by concentrating on Kolomna, which controlled the road between the capital and the grain-producing Riazan region. The rebels were unable to capture the town, however. They were stopped by the brilliant Prince Dmitrii Pozharskii in his first action as a commander. Thanks to Pozharskii's men, Moscow retained its lifeline to the southeast; grain and small gentry detachments from the Riazan area continued to reach the beleaguered Tsar Vasilii. Almost everywhere else, however, the Tushinites were incredibly successful due primarily to the absence of any opposing military forces capable of challenging them and to renewed—if temporary—popular enthusiasm for "Tsar Dmitrii."

The rebels faced no significant resistance in most towns in the Moscow region or in the northern and northeastern districts that had previously been untouched by the civil war. Many towns were, in fact, greatly attracted by "Dmitrii's" lavish promises of gentle treatment and tax exemptions. Tushinite forces were thus able to fan out over a vast territory in central and northern Russia. Rostov's large clerical population, however, did resist the rebels and attempted to keep the townspeople from recognizing "Tsar Dmitrii"; the end result was that Rostov was destroyed. Events in Pskov were just as dramatic. Many of the Pskov region's villages and soldiers responded enthusiastically to the progress of "Tsar Dmitrii," and it was difficult for Shuiskii loyalists to keep Pskov's inhabitants from joining the rebel cause. Couriers from Tushino caused quite a stir among the town's population, who grew indignant when those men were thrown in prison by voevoda Petr Sheremetev. Already angry about Tsar Vasilii's heavy tax levies and fearful that he was planning to hand Pskov to the Swedes, in September 1608 soldiers and townsmen suddenly arrested their voevoda, opened the gates to local rebel forces, and swore an oath to "Tsar Dmitrii." Then they released the four hundred rebel prisoners who had been detained in Pskov since December 1606. Those rebels, along with many townsmen and peasants from all over central and northern Russia, made their way to Tushino to join "Tsar Dmitrii's" forces while a small number of Pskov's wealthier citizens (especially merchants) fled in terror to Novgorod. As soon as officials from Tushino arrived in Pskov, stubborn Shuiskii loyalists—including Petr Sheremetev—were put to death in horrible ways. Pskov became an ardent supporter of "Tsar Dmitrii."

So successful was the rebel offensive that by late 1608 more than half of Russia recognized "Tsar Dmitrii." To follow up that campaign, the impostor's commanders sent forces to lay siege to Nizhnii Novgorod in an effort to open up a path to the central and lower Volga where enthusiasm for "Tsar Dmitrii" was strong and growing. However, Nizhnii Novgorod stubbornly resisted the rebel siege and even drove the besiegers away. Another rebel detachment sent against the city was also defeated and its commander was captured and hanged. Nizhnii Novgorod continued to defy rebel forces and to provide desperately needed funds to Tsar Vasilii. Its troops also helped recapture Murom and Vladimir in early 1609.

Elsewhere, troops from loyal Kazan and from voevoda Fedor Sheremetev's army also scored some minor successes against rebel forces to the east. But there was no denying that Tushino was gaining the upper hand. Tsar Vasilii found himself stuck in Moscow surrounded by rebel forces and receiving reports almost daily about "Dmitrii's" army gaining control of another part of his realm. In despair, Shuiskii supposedly turned to sorcery to defeat the ghost of Tsar Dmitrii. Increasingly cut off from his revenue sources, the tsar also continued to demand large sums of money from wealthy monasteries. Meeting considerable resistance, he eventually ordered the confiscation of precious silver objects from churches and monasteries in order to melt them down to mint coins to pay his soldiers. Some clerics never forgave Shuiskii for that radical act.

Just when it appeared that Tsar Vasilii was doomed, he was unwittingly granted a reprieve by the Tushinites. What saved him was the debt, arrogance, greed, corruption, and excessive violence of "Tsar Dmitrii's" commanders. Because the Tushino court could not actually afford to pay or even properly maintain its own soldiers, they were soon forced to forage for themselves. Willingly or not, rebel cossacks had to become robbers, which quickly alienated many potential supporters of "Tsar Dmitrii." In much the same way, the foreign mercenaries from Tushino threw away much of the good will toward "Dmitrii" that had developed in relatively prosperous north Russia. By raiding towns and villages for booty, food, and horses, those men turned many Russians into angry opponents of the Tushino impostor. Everywhere else the story was much the same. Even if one of the Tushino commanders was diplomatic enough not to steal everything from a community, another commander would soon come along and confiscate what was left. Friendly towns were overassessed and overtaxed, and the protests of local leaders were ignored or were met with threats of violence. In this way, the Tushinites in very short order caused an indescribable amount of misery and provoked much anger throughout central and northern Russia.

"Tsar Dmitrii's" commanders also stirred opposition when they installed themselves on lands confiscated from "traitors" and indiscriminately seized other properties as well, claiming those estates as their "patrimonies." Not surprisingly, they ruthlessly exploited their new holdings and overworked and abused their serfs. Because unpaid rebel cossacks who had turned to banditry also wreaked havoc and stirred enormous hostility, the Tushino authorities eventually attempted to placate both their wavering subjects and the grumbling cossacks by granting individual cossack units the right to collect food (and possibly even taxes) from certain specific towns and villages. This high-status form of maintenance, known as kormlenie, was usually reserved for high-ranking officials, but it became a regular part of the Tushino court's attempt to control and feed its cossack troops. Cossack kormlenie fell on palace lands, monastic property, privately-owned estates, and even taxable state lands. Cossack kormlenie quickly came to be viewed by the gentry during the civil war as a serious threat to their own status; they grew incensed at increasing cossack competition for income, labor, land, and military significance. Even more alarming, some Tushino cossacks were also granted pomeste estates, which they ruthlessly exploited. Members of the gentry and other professional soldiers came to fear the rebel cossacks for their rising status as well as their violence and greed. Since more and more peasants and slaves relatively unskilled at warfare "went cossack" during this stage of the civil war and swelled the ranks of "Tsar Dmitrii's" army, the privileges received by those new arrivals were especially disturbing to members of the gentry, who complained bitterly to "Tsar Dmitrii" about the pushy new cossack recruits.

In general, the Tushinite commanders and troops threw away a great opportunity by foolishly behaving as if they were occupying enemy territory rather than liberating it from the usurper Shuiskii. Any protest against or opposition to rebel predation was savagely punished. Swiftly and inevitably, that led many people to break with "Tsar Dmitrii." A popular movement against the Tushino impostor and his greedy and violent foreign mercenaries and cossacks began in late November 1608 in the north Russian town of Galich. Angry townsmen organized a makeshift militia in order to protect themselves from the Tushinites, and in the name of "the entire realm" they called upon other towns in the region to join their struggle. Soon Vologda, Kostroma, and many other towns and villages also rose in rebellion. Townspeople and peasants from crown lands and taxable state lands worked together to throw off the Tushino yoke. Within just a few months, rebellion against "Tsar Dmitrii" swept across a huge part of northeastern Russia.

Vologda, the most important town in the region, quickly emerged as the nerve center of the resistance movement. Many Russian merchants who had abandoned besieged Moscow were settled in Vologda, and most of the European merchants who still traded with war-torn Russia via the White Sea also chose to conduct their business in that relatively peaceful town. As we have already seen, Russian merchants tended to favor Tsar Vasilii during the civil war, and the merchants of Vologda proved to be no exception. They became energetic foes of the Tushino impostor. Vologda's ordinary townspeople and neighboring free peasants were also quick to join the resistance movement because of the ruthless exploitation they experienced at the hands of the Tushinite lords who had installed themselves in the area. Prompted by Galich, during the winter of 1608-9, fed-up and angry Vologda area peasants and townspeople rebelled against the local Tushinite authorities, cut off their heads, and swore an oath to Tsar Vasilii. In Vologda, a regional council of defense was set up, regular communications were established and maintained with other towns, and volunteers and supplies were gathered for the resistance movement. Soon, the town was awash in relatively cheap food and other supplies for the conflict. A largely-peasant militia was formed, and a small-scale war against the Tushinites quickly developed.

Led by Vologda, the area's towns attempted to coordinate all their resistance activities with Prince Skopin-Shuiskii. Much to the surprise of the Tushino court, by early 1609, a full-scale popular rebellion against "Tsar Dmitrii" was raging in north Russia. Many towns and thousands of peasants and townsmen fought aggressively against the Tushinites, managing to clear them out of a large portion of the region surprisingly quickly. In response, Sapieha sent military forces under the command of the particularly cruel and ruthless Alexander Lisowski to reoccupy the area and to punish the rebels. After some initial success, however, by spring 1609 even Lisowski's forces were driven away by local militia units. There is no doubt that in this phase of the civil war "Tsar Dmitrii's" forces might very well have prevailed over Tsar Vasilii if it had not been for the energetic actions of north Russian townspeople and free peasants.

Tsar Vasilii was initially unable to offer any meaningful assistance to or to profit militarily from the growing rebellion against the Tushino impostor. Shuiskii still faced large enemy forces just outside the gates of the capital, was still unable to raise a new army, and continued to be an unpopular ruler. In fact, at this point his enemies in Moscow attempted a coup d'état. The ringleaders included Shuiskii's old companion in regicide, Mikhail Tatishchev. In February 1609, the conspirators, numbering about three hundred, managed to enter the Kremlin and stormed into a boyar council meeting demanding the overthrow of the "stupid, indecent and obscene tsar." Most boyars quickly retreated to their homes, but treacherous Prince Vasilii Golitsyn accompanied the conspirators to Red Square. Along the way, the troublemakers came across Patriarch Hermogen, roughed him up, and dragged him to Red square with them. There the conspirators called upon the inhabitants of Moscow to rise against Tsar Vasiliithe unelected ruler responsible for thousands of deaths and Moscow's current misery. An appeal to recognize "Tsar Dmitrii," however, had no effect whatsoever on the gathered crowd, which soon began to break up. In a panic, the conspirators themselves left Red Square in a hurry. Tsar Vasilii, who had locked himself up in his palace, managed to survive primarily due to Patriarch Hermogen's support. In retaliation, he had Tatishchev put to death but correctly felt that he was in no position to move against Golitsyn or anyone else.

In the spring of 1609, the Tushinites renewed the siege of Kolomna in order to complete the blockade of Moscow. Although the Kolomna road was closed only briefly during the siege, that was enough to affect the hungry capital. Food prices there, already high, suddenly skyrocketed. Moscow's already siege-weary population suffered a great deal—especially the poor, who now starved to death by the hundreds each day. Hungry Muscovites frequently gathered on Red Square to express their dissatisfaction, and more plots against Tsar Vasilii were hatched. This time, however, Shuiskii's investigation of treason produced a surprising conspirator—Tsar Vasilii's close friend and principal ally in achieving the crown, boyar Ivan Kriuk-Kolychev. He was tortured and then beheaded by command of the now-friendless and increasingly paranoid usurper.

The news from southeastern Russia was also alarming. It seems that Prokofii Liapunov, who had probably been involved in the failed February coup against Shuiskii, now began to maneuver for power himself. Falsely claiming descent from Riurik, the legendary ninth-century founder of the ruling dynasty of Rus, Liapunov gained the allegiance of a few towns and began to fight against both Tsar Vasilii and "Tsar Dmitrii." Briefly styling himself the "white tsar," Liapunov caused enormous damage and killed many people. During the summer of 1609, the Crimean Tatars also invaded Russia, inflicted much damage, and took many captives back to their slave markets. Shuiskii, too embarrassed to admit his utter inability to oppose them, at first foolishly tried to claim that he had invited the Crimean Tatars to come help him in the struggle against Tushino. When the Tatars crossed the Oka and carried out merciless attacks on Shuiskii's own realm, however, the tsar's reputation suffered badly. In fact, Riazan area support for the "white tsar" may well have been greatly boosted by the apparent betrayal of the region by Tsar Vasilii.

The news from north Russia was far more encouraging to Tsar Vasilii. Just three days after the failed February coup, Prince Skopin-Shuiskii concluded an agreement with King Karl IX's representatives in Vyborg. In return for the transfer to Sweden of the fortress of Korela and its surrounding towns and villages as well as the tsar's renunciation of any claims to Livonia, the Swedes agreed to provide up to five thousand soldiers to be paid by Tsar Vasilii. The agreement was extremely unpopular in the border area being transferred to Sweden, but Shuiskii gambled that the foreign troops would help him save his crown. The Swedes actually managed to raise only three thousand mercenaries (mostly Germans, English, Scots, and French) for Russian service, and those men joined Prince Skopin-Shuiskii in Novgorod. The tsar's nephew advanced against the enemy from Novgorod on May 10, 1609, along with the newly-hired mercenaries and three thousand Russian troops of his own. Skopin-Shuiskii quickly drove the Tushinites from Tver, immediately after which his unpaid mercenaries rebelled against their own greedy officers. Most of those soldiers departed for the border, robbing villagers and townspeople along the way.

To the surprise of many, popular uprisings against "Tsar Dmitrii" in north Russia turned the tide at this point. Detachments of peasants and townsmen from Iaroslavl, Kostroma, and elsewhere soon joined Skopin-Shuiskii's forces, as did about three thousand soldiers from Smolensk. The tsar's nephew was thus able to quickly build his army back up to about fifteen thousand men. Skopin-Shuiskii's army became powerful enough to cleanse the Tushinites from his path as he marched south. When he reached Aleksandrov, he had his forces build fortifications and dig in to await the arrival of voevoda Fedor Sheremetev's army, then advancing from Nizhnii Novgorod. That excellent strategy was designed to close north Russia off completely to the Tushinites. Sapieha immediately perceived the danger to his own forces which were then still bogged down in the siege of Trinity-St. Sergius monastery. For that reason, he advanced against Skopin-Shuiskii in August but was defeated in a two-day battle. Skopin-Shuiskii then systematically beat back Tushinite forces. Eventually, Sapieha and Rozynski combined their armies in a desperate attempt to stop Skopin-Shuiskii, but they were decisively defeated. After that, Tushino's power declined rapidly.

"Tsar Dmitrii's" court was by this time deeply in debt, and most of the impostor's soldiers went unpaid. Bad news from north Russia and elsewhere caused "Dmitrii's" boyar council to begin falling apart. Even worse, some of his Polish commanders began to negotiate with King Sigismund, who had invaded Russia in September 1609 and laid siege to the great fortress of Smolensk. Only Sigismund's lack of ready cash to pay those officers prevented them from immediately departing from Tushino for Smolensk. "Tsar Dmitrii" himself grew increasingly desperate as news of Skopin-Shuiskii's relentless advance provoked desertions and fights among his remaining advisers. The suspicious and violent Rozynski eventually put the "tsar" under close watch and threatened to behead him for plotting with Rozynski's enemies. However, with the aid of some loyal cossacks, "Dmitrii" managed to flee in disguise to Kaluga in late December 1609.

The "tsar's" departure caused the entire Tushino camp to break up in disarray. Some Tushinites followed the impostor to Kaluga while others began serious negotiations with King Sigismund. Once again, friendless Tsar Vasilii was saved but only temporarily. Foreign intervention soon overwhelmed him and transformed the civil war into a bitter, chaotic struggle for the very survival of an independent Russia.

22

Foreign Intervention and the Formation of the National Liberation Movement

In the final years of the Time of Troubles the struggle between Tsar Vasilii and "Tsar Dmitrii" was overwhelmed by foreign intervention. Russia's neighbors took advantage of the civil war to grab territory and, in the process, pushed the country into chaos. For a time, Russia had no tsar, and its very survival as an independent state was in serious doubt. But that powerful external threat eventually pushed many Russians to set aside their differences in a desperate effort to regain control of their destiny and to restore order in their war-torn land.

King Sigismund had actually been careful to avoid provoking conflict with Russia up to this point. Nevertheless, Russia's internal distress stirred his interest. At first, Sigismund was reluctant to get involved in a foreign conflict while he was facing a growing rebellion at home. By the summer of 1607, a huge mutiny against the king peaked with open combat between the mutineers and royalist forces under the command of crown hetman (commander) Stanislas Zolkiewski; but Zolkiewski's men won a decisive victory at the battle of Guzów on July 6, 1607 (New Style). As a result, many mutineers drifted across the border into the service of "Tsar Dmitrii" searching for employment and riches. The king encouraged them to go, thereby simultaneously ridding himself of troublemakers and further weakening Russia. At one point, the king made secret plans to seize Chernigov and Novgorod Severskii but was blocked by opposition from Zolkiewski and other Polish aristocrats. Forced to sit on the sidelines, Sigismund searched for a plausible pretext for direct military intervention in Russia. He did not have to wait long.

The pretext the king needed was provided by Tsar Vasilii's agreement with King Karl IX (February 1609), which ceded territory to Sweden in return for mercenary forces. The Polish king's advisers immediately stopped objecting and began helping him make plans for military intervention in Russia. Their immediate goal was the great fortress of Smolensk (lost by Lithuania to the Russians in 1514). The king took personal charge of the siege in September 1609, calling upon all his subjects in Tushinite service to rally to him and help capture Smolensk. Only Sigismund's lack of ready cash prevented many soldiers from immediately abandoning Tushino. As a result, the king had at his disposal in the Smolensk siege camp only twelve thousand men and a few big guns—a completely inadequate force to capture the huge, state-of-the-art fortress. An attempt to take Smolensk by storm in October failed, forcing Sigismund to carry out a frustrating and expensive twentymonth siege that slowed down Polish intervention considerably.

If King Sigismund had problems, they were not nearly as severe as those facing the Russian opponents of Tsar Vasilii. After "Tsar Dmitrii" fled to Kaluga, the Tushino camp quickly broke up and the siege of Moscow ended. News of the collapse of the Tushino camp reverberated across Russia. Most Russian lords in the collapsing Tushino court came to believe that rebellion in the name of "Tsar Dmitrii" was now a lost cause. Unwilling to follow the impostor to Kaluga but still strongly opposed to Tsar Vasilii, they had few options left open to them. Not surprisingly, they chose to negotiate with Sigismund III. Patriarch Filaret, other members of the Romanov clan, boyar Mikhail G. Saltykov, and Mikhail Molchanov were ready to support Sigismund's son, Wladyslaw, as tsar.

After two weeks of intense negotiations in the Smolensk siege camp, the Russians produced a treaty on February 4, 1610, which they hoped would help end the civil war and restore order in Russia. It stipulated that Wladyslaw was to convert to Orthodoxy before becoming tsar, that serfdom was to be preserved, that Wladyslaw was not to free any slaves or allow them into his military service, that impoverished gentry were to be given small holdings to support their military service, and that the new tsar was to rule in the traditional wayby conferring with the boyars and the patriarch on important matters. It has been asserted that this treaty represented an attempt by the boyars to impose "constitutional" restrictions on autocracy. It is far more likely, however, that it was merely an attempt by those desperate men to protect themselves from powerful favorites who might emerge in the court of Tsar Wladyslaw. The Russian lords negotiating with the Polish king probably did not dream of altering the basic structure of their government. However, Sigismund now began to dream quietly of the complete conquest of Russia, which would, among other things, then allow him to crush Karl IX and regain the Swedish crown. Prospects for successful intervention soon improved even more; by March 1610, a large percentage of the Tushino Poles were finally enticed into Sigismund's service. In the same period, boyar Ivan Zarutskii repeatedly attempted to convince the Tushino cossacks to break with "Tsar Dmitrii" and join the Poles, but many of them refused. About two thousand cossacks openly defied their commander and set out for Kaluga; but Zarutskii and Rozynski had them ambushed, and many were killed. Ambitious and ruthless Zarutskii then led his remaining cossacks into Polish service—but only temporarily.

The shock of the cold-blooded slaughter by Zarutskii of cossacks loyal to "Dmitrii" and the entry of the Tushino boyars into alliance with King Sigismund marked a turning point in the civil war for many rebels. Patriotic elements among the former Tushinite forces objected to aiding foreign intervention. Iurii Bezzubtsev and others broke decisively with those "traitors," and Bezzubtsev's cossacks began actively fighting against the interventionists without attempting to coordinate their activities with "Tsar Dmitrii" in Kaluga. In fact, many patriotic cossacks who eventually did go to Kaluga were deeply offended by Jan-Piotr Sapieha's obvious control over the "tsar" and regarded that as virtually the same thing as Polish intervention. As a result, many cossacks abandoned the cause of "Dmitrii" altogether. Some of them returned home but most chose to fight against the interventionists.

After his flight from Tushino, the "tsar" had been warmly received in Kaluga. There "Dmitrii" called upon his supporters to kill the hated foreign interventionists and to confiscate their possessions. Many foreigners, not just Poles, were indiscriminately killed as a result. The impostor soon received a big boost when, in February 1610, Tsaritsa Marina made her way to Kaluga accompanied by a small detachment of cossacks and foreign mercenaries. She was very well received by her "husband" and the townspeople. Word soon went out far and wide that "Tsar Dmitrii" was alive and well and building a new army with which to regain his throne. By spring 1610, "Dmitrii's" army was growing rapidly. Prince Shakhovskoi brought thousands of Tushinite cossacks to Kaluga, and Jan-Piotr Sapieha brought a sizable detachment of foreign troops. By summer 1610, "Tsar Dmitrii's" army stood at ten thousand men; and, much to the surprise of his enemies, he was ready to march on Moscow.

In March 1610, Tsar Vasilii's brilliant nephew Skopin-Shuiskii made a triumphal entry into the capital widely hailed as the hero who had ended the siege of Moscow and eliminated the longstanding threat posed by Tushino. Skopin-Shuiskii was by this time far more popular than Tsar Vasilii and was being secretly promoted by Prokofii Liapunov and others as the next tsar. Although Skopin-Shuiskii immediately rejected the radical idea of toppling his uncle, the paranoid tsar learned about his nephew's flirtation with treason. Tsar Vasilii thereupon invited Skopin-Shuiskii to a private audience during which Shuiskii was reportedly urged to abdicate. Less than a month after that meeting, the popular commander died mysteriously. Many people claimed that he had been poisoned by a jealous relative, either the tsar himself or his brother Dmitrii who was, in fact, hoping to succeed the childless ruler some day. Skopin-Shuiskii's death, whatever its cause, proved to be a disaster for the unpopular Tsar Vasilii. Few people believed the tsar sincerely mourned the loss of his nephew, and many suspected him of involvement in murder. Tsar Vasilii quickly chose his militarily incompetent and extremely unpopular brother Dmitrii, now one of the only boyars he trusted, to replace Skopin-Shuiskii as his main commander; that appointment provoked strong protests among officers and soldiers alike.

In 1610 King Karl sent ten thousand mercenary troops to assist Shuiskii against Polish intervention. By then the tsar's spring levy of militiamen and recruits had boosted the size of his own army to thirty thousand men. Many cavalrymen, it seems, were strongly attracted to Shuiskii's offer of very high salaries. In early June, Dmitrii Shuiskii's assistant, voevoda Grigorii Valuev, advanced westward along the Smolensk road with six thousand men, cleared the area of rebels and interventionists, and set up a fortified camp near the village of Klushino (150 kilometers west of Moscow) in order to block any Polish offensive until additional forces arrived from Moscow. Hetman Zolkiewski, learning of Valuev's actions, swiftly advanced with a small army and surrounded the enemy's camp before Dmitrii Shuiskii or the Swedish general, Jacob de la Gardie, could arrive to assist the outnumbered Russian forces.

By June 23, Shuiskii and de la Gardie managed to reach Klushino and camped there with the intention of attempting to relieve Valuev the next day. Instead, Zolkiewski's somewhat smaller army (which contained many former Tushinites, including Zarutskii's cossacks) boldly advanced against Klushino and won a decisive battle in about four hours. As a result of secret negotiations, most of the mercenary forces were induced to abandon their Russian allies. De la Gardie, to save himself, concluded a hasty truce with Zolkiewski, as a result of which half of his men went over to the Polish side. The actions of the mercenaries plus Dmitrii Shuiskii's own cowardice quickly turned defeat and a somewhat chaotic retreat by the Russian army into a complete rout. Shuiskii's army broke up completely, and even Valuev was induced to switch sides upon receiving assurances that King Sigismund would lift the siege of Smolensk as soon as his son became tsar. Zolkiewski now advanced to Viazma virtually unopposed and began making plans to march on Moscow. In the meantime, "Tsar Dmitrii's" small army also advanced from Kaluga against Moscow. Soon, the impostor occupied Serpukhov and advanced all the way to Kolomenskoe, where he set up camp in preparation for a possible assault on the capital.

The beleaguered and unpopular Tsar Vasilii no longer had an army. Not surprisingly, Shuiskii's enemies became very active at this time. Large crowds flocked to Red Square to denounce unlucky Tsar Vasilii, who was forced to remain in hiding. In the meantime, Prokofii Liapunov, Vasilii Golitsyn, and others made plans to depose Shuiskii. Mstislavskii and the boyars were increasingly interested in the idea of "Tsar Wladyslaw" and the prospect of ruling Russia in his

name. The extremely popular Filaret Romanov (who had been captured by Valuev and sent to Moscow as a "prisoner") also began quietly lobbying on behalf of Wladyslaw's candidacy. Tsar Vasilii was utterly powerless to put a stop to the plots, which now included some of the same leading merchants who had been among Shuiskii's strongest allies in the past. On July 16, 1610, one of "Tsar Dmitrii's" principal voevodas, Prince Dmitrii Trubetskoi, in a ruse, approached the capital and urged Moscow to get rid of Shuiskii while he, Trubetskoi, eliminated "Tsar Dmitrii." Then, he proposed, both sides could join forces, elect a new tsar, and put an end to the civil war. The very next day, July 17, thanks especially to the efforts of the Liapunovs and Golitsyns, a huge crowd assembled on Red Square demanding the overthrow of Tsar Vasilii. On cue, the boyars at this point finally arrested Shuiskii in spite of strong protests from Patriarch Hermogen. They offered to grant the deposed tsar a virtually independent province centered at Nizhnii Novgorod if he would cooperate, but he sullenly refused. In frustration, the boyars took Shuiskii to his residence, beat him up, and had him forcibly tonsured as the monk Varlaam. He was then placed under close guard in a Kremlin monastery.

The end of the reign of "Tsar Vasilii IV" marked the end of another phase in the civil war, but it did not end Russia's misery. Polish intervention continued, "Tsar Dmitrii" still had an army in the suburbs of the capital, and several Russian boyars now vied with one another for the crown. Moscow by then actually exercised little control over most of Russia; instead, chaos reigned in the land as small armies scoured the countryside for food and as thousands of displaced persons wandered around. Many people longed for a tsar capable of restoring order, but each group supported a different candidate. As a result, Russia disintegrated into near-collapse.

In the days following the coup against Tsar Vasilii, Filaret Romanov—with the patriarch's approval—proposed his fourteen-year-old son, Mikhail, as a candidate for tsar; but neither he nor anyone else could gain a majority during the boyar council deliberations. For that reason, the boyars voted to convene a zemskii sobor for the important task of choosing a new tsar. In the meantime, a council of seven boyars was appointed to rule. Before a zemskii sobor could be convened, however, Zolkiewski's army quickly approached Moscow unopposed, and the hetman began extensive negotiations with the "council of seven" about Prince Wladyslaw becoming tsar. The Moscow boyars were at that time especially anxious to get rid of "Tsar Dmitrii's" forces then menacing the capital; and Zolkiewski cleverly offered to help them. Up to five hundred courtiers, gentry, bureaucrats, and others traveled to Zolkiewski's camp to negotiate final details. The council of seven was even prepared to welcome back without recrimination or punishment all of the Tushino lords who had joined forces with Zolkiewski except for one man—Ivan Zarutskii, Bolotnikov's old lieutenant who was of non-noble birth. Zolkiewski, who was running out of time and money, proved to be more than willing to sacrifice Zarutskii in order to close the deal. Learning of the betrayal, Zarutskii fled with his cossacks. The council of seven now quickly agreed to invite Wladyslaw to rule, and on August 17, about ten thousand Russians swore an oath of loyalty to Tsar Wladyslaw. Several towns immediately followed suit.

The controversial decision by the council of seven to select Wladyslaw was always represented by them as the will of many layers of Russian society. In fact, the key documents associated with Wladyslaw's selection were not signed by the boyar council (as was customary) nor even by all members of the council of seven. Although many courtiers, bureaucrats, and merchants approved of Wladyslaw's selection, a number of boyars and Patriarch Hermogen flatly rejected the idea of a foreign tsar. Indeed, the council of seven's choice alienated many patriotic Russians, and popular suspicion of the boyars as greedy traitors grew much stronger as a result of that decision. As early as August 18, monks from the Simonov monastery made contact with "Tsar Dmitrii," and by August 20 many people began to quietly abandon Moscow for "Dmitrii's" camp. News of the "election" of Tsar Wladyslaw was also extremely unpopular in the provinces. Pskov refused to accept the decision, remaining steadfastly loyal to "Tsar Dmitrii." Soon, the inhabitants of Tver, Vladimir, Rostov, and Suzdal also broke with the "traitors" in Moscow and sent representatives to meet with "Tsar Dmitrii." In the meantime, Zolkiewski's forces quietly surrounded the suddenly more popular impostor's camp in Kolomenskoe. Even though he seemed to be trapped, the "tsar" somehow managed to flee to Kaluga. Unfortunately for "Dmitrii," Sapieha's forces defected from him at this time due to a large bribe paid by the council of seven. At least partially compensating for that loss, however, was the reentry of Zarutskii and his cossack troops into "Tsar Dmitrii's" service.

Having rid the Moscow area of "Dmitrii's" forces, Zolkiewski then cleverly organized a grand embassy of Russian dignitaries to visit King Sigismund in the Smolensk siege camp, ostensibly to discuss Wladylaw's accession. What Zolkiewski actually had in mind, though, was the removal of all potential Russian candidates for the throne and others around whom opposition to Polish intervention might be organized. He had been secretly informed by Sigismund that the king did not intend to let his son become tsar but instead planned to conquer Russia himself. Keeping that news to himself, Zolkiewski managed to convince Vasilii Golitsyn and Filaret Romanov to join the embassy, and he briefly contemplated sending young Mikhail Romanov as well. The former Tsar Vasilii, now called Varlaam, and his two brothers were also included in the delegation going to Smolensk. Once the embassy reached Sigismund's camp, after much ceremonial stalling by the Poles, they were eventually informed of the king's plan to rule Russia in his own name. Quite naturally the Russians rejected that idea out of hand, whereupon they were all arrested and taken to Poland under guard. In that way, the Poles removed from Moscow the men who might have been able to put a stop to Polish intervention.

The Poles made sure that Moscow only slowly learned of King Sigismund's real intentions. Even the council of seven was kept in the dark about the king's plans. For several months the unpopular boyars continued to labor under the illusion that Wladyslaw would eventually show up and share power with them. Those unhappy men were, therefore, at a loss to explain why Polish troops began a series of devastating raids on Russian towns and why Sigismund renewed siege operations against Smolensk (which had been temporarily suspended during the negotiations concerning Wladyslaw's candidacy). The council of seven, never popular, not only proved to be incapable of bringing peace to Russia but also ended up being double-crossed by the Poles. As that reality sank in, the capital began to see with discontent. The council of seven, fearing the anger of its own subjects, at this point took the incredibly drastic and extremely unpopular step of inviting Zolkiewski's troops into the capital to restore order.

Real power in Moscow quickly came to rest in the hands of the Polish garrison commander, Alexander Gosiewski, and his Russian accomplices-especially boyar Mikhail G. Saltykov. Captain Margeret was appointed to be one of the commanders (and paymaster) of the elite detachment of eight hundred mercenaries (mostly Germans) who formed the core of the occupation force. The increasingly brutal Polish military dictatorship quickly shoved aside most members of the council of seven, but those humiliated and basically irrelevant boyarsby remaining in the capital and not openly breaking with the hated Polish interventionists—now appeared to be traitors to most patriotic Russians who were horrified to see those greedy boyars allow the occupation of their capital by a foreign army bent on rape and pillage. King Sigismund's lavish gifts of titles and lands even nudged the confused and unpopular council of seven to order Smolensk to surrender to the Poles. That radical and unpatriotic command was, of course, ignored by the defenders of Smolensk; but it finally stirred Patriarch Hermogen and many others to step forward to openly denounce the council's "treason." In the resulting confusion, agents of "Tsar Dmitrii" openly agitated against the Poles on the streets of the capital. In reaction, Moscow's stern rulers arrested several prominent individuals, including Patriarch

Hermogen—who was accused of unauthorized contact with "Dmitrii." Once again, the people of Moscow heard solemn warnings about the impostor "Dmitrii's" intention to murder the well-to-do of the capital and to confiscate their wives and property. Of course, most Muscovites did not b elieve that shopworn propaganda and instead came to deeply loathe Moscow's brutal foreign rulers and the Russian traitors who assisted them.

During the summer and fall of 1610, Zarutskii emerged emerged as the real leader of "Dmitrii's" army, and he managed to inflict a serious defeat on enemy forces in November 1610. The impostor's supporters were also cheered at that time by the news that Kazan's population had rebelled against voevoda Belskii, killed him, and sworn an oath to "Tsar Dmitrii." In spite of the good news, however, the "second false Dmitrii" grew increasingly fearful of treason and began foolishly to alienate his key supporters. He arbitrarily ordered arrests, confiscations, and executions, which increasingly outraged Tsaritsa Marina, the "tsar's" boyars, his foreign mercenaries, and many others. A clever undercover Polish effort to topple "Dmitrii" at this time resulted in forged documents that appeared to compromise the Kasimov Tatars who then made up the bulk of the paranoid tsar's bodyguard. In a fit of anger, "Dmitrii" had fifty of them detained briefly, beaten, tortured, and then released-including the captain of his bodyguard, the proud and high-born Prince Petr Urusov. In revenge, on December 11, 1610, while "Dmitrii" was sleighriding outside Kaluga, Urusov killed him.

The shock of "Tsar Dmitrii's" death produced turmoil in Kaluga. In the midst of the town's mourning, Tsaritsa Marina gave birth to "Tsarevich Ivan Dmitrievich" and begged the citizens of Kaluga and the cossacks to protect him as the rightful claimant to the throne. There was actually very little enthusiasm for the "whore Marina" and the "illegitimate baby brigand" among the Kaluga boyars, who seriously doubted that "Dmitrii" had fathered little Ivan and, in any case, were now anxious to reach some kind of agreement with the Moscow government. But the common people of Kaluga strongly opposed negotiations with the traitors who had let Polish troops occupy the capital, and the powerful Ivan Zarutskii—already scorned by Moscow—stood by Marina and her son. Kaluga's population swore an oath of loyalty to heir "Ivan Dmitrievich." Zarutskii, Marina, and Ivan soon departed from Kaluga, and boyar Dmitrii Trubetskoi quickly emerged as the senior commander of "Tsar Dmitrii's" former soldiers (mostly cossacks) who remained in that town. Marina and Ivan eventually settled in Kolomna where they were treated very well as legitimate claimants to the throne. Zarutskii, however, briefly flirted with rejoining Polish service before making contact with Prokofii Liapunov and other patriotic Russians to offer

the service of his cossack forces for the daunting task of liberating Moscow from the interventionists and the traitors who supported them.

The death of the "second false Dmitrii" caused rejoicing in Moscow among the members of the council of seven and their adherents, but his demise actually removed the chief obstacle to unifying the Russian people against foreign intervention. A powerful but still disjointed patriotic movement slowly began to develop throughout the land and even in Moscow. The capital was by this time once again growing hungry, and its people were tired of the escalating violence and greed of the Polish occupation forces-who had so much booty by this time that they occasionally loaded their guns with pearls and jewels instead of lead. Many fights broke out between Muscovites and interventionists, several foreigners were murdered, and the propaganda campaign against the Poles and their accomplices grew bolder. Retaliations were swift and fierce, and a smoldering, undeclared war developed over the course of several months. Attempts were made to disarm the townspeople, all movement by civilians was prohibited after dark, and entry into the city was severely restricted. More ominously, artillery was moved from Moscow's outer defenses to the Kremlin walls and aimed at the city's own streets. Even under arrest, Patriarch Hermogen managed to send secret letters to the citizens of Nizhnii Novgorod. Hermogen revealed to them King Sigismund's plan to conquer and rule Russia, and he warned all Orthodox Christians to fight against Polish Catholic domination and the possible destruction of the Russian Orthodox church. Not surprisingly, his appeals were quite effective.

Outside Moscow, opposition to Polish intervention developed spontaneously in several different areas. In many ways, it was a reprise of the powerful opposition to the oppressive Tushinites that had burst forth and swept across much of north Russia two years earlier. As former supporters of "Tsar Dmitrii" were now forced to make hard choices, many of them responded to the patriarch's appeal to their patriotism. In part for self-protection, in part for religious and national survival, some Russian commanders began ignoring the orders they received from the unpopular council of seven and instead clashed with Polish interventionists. They also began reaching out to other patriots.

Prince Dmitrii Pozharskii, the voevoda of Zaraisk, contacted Zarutskii and helped convince him to commit his forces to the national liberation movement. Some lords, including Prokofii Liapunov in Riazan province, openly declared war on the council of seven and Polish intervention. Liapunov summoned all patriots throughout the land to help him liberate Moscow. Liapunov himself then came under siege in Pereiaslavl-Riazanskii by Moscow-loyalist forces under the command of Grigorii Sunbulov, but the beleaguered voevoda managed to dispatch an appeal to Pozharskii to help him. The brilliant Pozharskii quickly drove Sunbulov's forces away. At about the same time, Zarutskii's Don cossacks managed to drive the interventionists out of Tula.

Almost overnight Pozharskii, Liapunov, and even Zarutskii gained enormous prestige and popularity for fighting against the hated foreigners. Very soon a loose-knit national liberation army began to form around Pozharskii and Liapunov. The patriotic movement grew very rapidly and spread all over the country. Concerned citizens often crowded into their local church's refectory to discuss strategy, and it is clear that townspeople and peasants regarded their own unprecedented activism as part of a life-or-death religious struggle. Town after town joined the liberation movement with enthusiasm. Peaceful coups against the council of seven occurred with dizzying speed in Murom, in Vladimir, and—most importantly—in Nizhnii Novgorod and Iaroslavl.

There were very good reasons why Patriarch Hermogen had appealed specifically to Nizhnii Novgorod to begin organizing opposition to Polish intervention. That prosperous central Volga trade and administrative center had stubbornly supported Tsar Vasilii against rebel forces on many occasions. Nizhnii Novgorod boasted strong fortifications and a garrison of five hundred streltsy. The town's wealth grew directly out of its strategic location at the intersection of several important trade routes. Nizhnii Novgorod's population of about eight thousand was primarily oriented to trade and maintained close ties with the inhabitants of many other towns on the Volga, in central and northern Russia, and even in Siberia. Nizhnii Novgorod's trade fairs were extremely famous and drew people from very far away. Its merchants, shopkeepers, blacksmiths, and boatbuilders were respected everywhere. Even though the civil war had shut down much Volga River traffic, Nizhnii Novgorod itself had suffered only a relatively modest decline in trade activity and profits. Nonetheless, the town's wealthy merchants and sturdy shopkeepers were nervous about the future and certainly had enough money to help finance the creation of an army of patriots to rid their land of foreign interventionists. Patriarch Hermogen was not disappointed by the powerful response of Nizhnii Novgorod's inhabitants to his appeal. The town's merchants soon emerged as the most important financiers of Russia's national liberation movement.

In January 1611, Nizhnii Novgorod informed Prokofii Liapunov that the town, on the advice of Patriarch Hermogen and "the entire realm," had resolved to raise forces to liberate Moscow. Murom immediately sent a detachment of gentry and fortress cossacks to help with the task; Vladimir and Suzdal did likewise. Iaroslavl also began making military preparations at this time. When the rulers of Moscow sent five hundred streltsy to Vologda to put a stop to such activities, those soldiers were wooed into switching sides and immediately joined Iaroslavl's growing force of armed patriots.

Prokofii Liapunov sent agents to Nizhnii Novgorod to begin coordinating activities with them, and he also started aggressively recruiting cossacks formerly in "Tsar Dmitrii's" service. Liapunov made important concessions to those cossacks, offering them not only food, gunpowder, lead, and salaries if they would join the "national militia" but also promising freedom to any former slaves among them willing to fight against foreign intervention. The response was overwhelming. Thousands of "cossacks" came forward to serve. Some were, indeed, free cossacks from the Don and Volga; but many others were former slaves, serfs, and urban plebes from the Moscow region who had "gone cossack" while the Tushino impostor waged war against Tsar Vasilii or who became "cossacks" only in response to Liapunov's appeal. By early February 1611, Kaluga (under the control of boyar Dmitrii Trubetskoi) began cooperating actively with Liapunov's forces, as a result of which Kolomna was captured. When Serpukhov rebelled against the council of seven soon thereafter, Zarutskii's cossacks went to their aid along with five hundred streltsy from Vologda and Riazan province sent by Liapunov. The patriots very quickly consolidated their position near Moscow, and Liapunov sent letters to many towns outlining plans for the liberation of the capital. Although the rapid growth of the national liberation forces clearly demonstrated the unpopularity of the council of seven, personal rivalries among the leaders of the patriot movement, the wariness of many of them to cooperate with cossacks, and occasional clashes with detachments loyal to Moscow frustrated Liapunov's own ambitious plans at this time. The result was an uncoordinated advance against Moscow.

In the capital, news of the approach of patriot forces stirred the city's population to action. Arms and soldiers were smuggled in and plans were made to coordinate a popular uprising with the patriot militia's attack. On March 19, 1611, however, a clash between townsmen and the hated Polish occupation force provoked a premature battle. Even without coordinated militia support, the Muscovites—soon joined by the Moscow streltsy—pressed the occupying forces so hard they were in danger of annihilation. Only the daring and ferocious assaults by Captain Margeret's German mercenaries saved the Polish garrison.

By March 21, elements of the "national militia" managed to force their way into Moscow's suburbs. In heavy fighting, however, Prince Pozharskii was seriously wounded, and his troops were forced to retreat. The Polish commander Gosiewski then immediately ordered much of the outer city burned. The fires raged for days and gave the Poles time to crush the uprising inside Moscow. In

that bloody work they were actively assisted by Mikhail G. Saltykov, members of the council of seven (especially Fedor Mstislavskii, Fedor Sheremetev, and Ivan Romanov), other nobles, and rich merchants who greatly feared their own countrymen and knew what fate awaited them if the insurgents were successful. For the time being, at least, the "national militia's" efforts to liberate the capital had been blocked. Nevertheless, the Poles now held only the inner city (the Kremlin and the Kitaigorod district); the rest of Moscow was in ashes. Many of the city's inhabitants had perished in the fire; many others soon froze to death; and large numbers abandoned the capital in search of shelter and food or to join the resistance movement. The Polish garrison now began wholesale looting, in the process robbing and killing some of the same rich merchants who had just helped them crush the uprising. Gosiewski at this point dropped all pretense of cooperation with the council of seven. The dictator of Moscow abused several council members and began arbitrarily and violently cutting down any perceived opposition. After the uprising, Gosiewski also threw Patriarch Hermogen in prison. Even from there Hermogen still managed to continue stirring up the patriot cause by writing incendiary letters to Russian towns right up to his death by starvation in February 1612.

The burning of Moscow profoundly shocked the Russian people and helped galvanize opposition to Polish intervention, but there was actually a long pause in patriot military operations during the spring of 1611. Pozharskii was temporarily out of action, and the imperious and arrogant Liapunov faced many difficulties trying to organize the "national militia." He and Zarutskii did manage to cooperate; they both administered an oath to their forces to fight against the Poles and to serve a tsar to be chosen by the "entire realm." Liapunov also proclaimed a general mobilization of Russia's entire gentry militia and warned all cavalrymen to appear before Moscow by May or risk losing their estates. Many pomeshchiki responded to his call. Liapunov and others also managed to set up a highly representative "national militia council" with members drawn from the "entire realm"—including dvoriane, deti boiarskie, common soldiers, and free cossacks. Zarutskii's and Trubetskoi's cossacks soon managed to dig in and fortify positions in Moscow's suburbs, and they gradually closed all paths to the capital except for the Smolensk road.

Along the Smolensk road cossack raids and partisan activity kept increasing, even after the great fortress of Smolensk finally fell to King Sigismund on June 3, 1611. Patriotic soldiers arriving before Moscow from Kazan helped Zarutskii's men occupy Novodevichii monastery, from which they could constantly menace the all-important Smolensk road. The brilliant rebel commander Iurii Bezzubtsev and his cossack detachment also arrived from Severia to help capture Moscow. Polish attempts to neutralize the cossacks by offering them large rewards were flatly rejected; the cossacks declared that they were firmly committed to a Russian Orthodox tsar and to the expulsion of foreign interventionists. Irregular detachments of patriots (including Tatars, Mordvians, and Chuvashi) also arrived almost every day to bolster the forces arrayed before Moscow. Despite its growing strength, however, the loosely coordinated national militia was still not capable of taking the capital by storm.

To no one's surprise, the great city of Novgorod had balked at the council of seven's acceptance of Polish intervention in 1610. As a result, Mikhail G. Saltykov's son, Ivan, was sent there to enforce obedience to the council's controversial decision. Nervous city officials reluctantly admitted him only after he promised not to introduce foreign troops into Novgorod—as had happened in Moscow. Saltykov's regime was unpopular, especially after he ordered the executions of several hundred cossack rebels who had been languishing in the city's jails since the failure of Bolotnikov's siege of Moscow. At about the same time as the failed uprising in Moscow, a patriotic rebellion also broke out in Novgorod during which Ivan Saltykov was impaled. Novgorod's sudden decision to join the national liberation movement was big news in the camps before Moscow, but Swedish military intervention in Russia actually prevented that wealthy city from sending much aid to Liapunov.

Ever since the collapse of Tsar Vasilii's regime and the council of seven's agreement to have a Polish prince as tsar, King Karl felt that he had a good excuse to grab Russian territory for himself. As Polish military intervention in Russia gained momentum, Sweden's direct intervention in north Russia also picked up speed. Swedish forces briefly laid siege to Novgorod in August 1610. In September, they besieged the fortress of Korela, and it finally fell to them in March 1611. Unsuccessful Swedish campaigns were also launched in Russia's far north during the winter of 1610–11.

By late spring 1611, Novgorod again came under siege by a Swedish army commanded by Jacob de la Gardie. In June, de la Gardie began intense secret negotiations with representatives from the city who (in quiet coordination with Liapunov and other national militia leaders) requested military assistance against the Poles and secretly offered the Russian throne to one of the Swedish king's sons if he would be willing to convert to Orthodoxy. In the meantime, Novgorod itself was to be placed under the protection of Sweden, and de la Gardie was to be allowed in to serve as its military governor. Even though Liapunov and Novgorodian officials regarded this drastic step as a necessary sacrifice in order to liberate Moscow, they had no illusions about how ordinary Russians would react to it. Because of the fierce hatred of the Swedes by the common people of Novgorod, the gates of the city had to be secretly opened to Swedish occupation forces. Once done, that resulted in the immediate surrender of the city on July 17, 1611. In sharp contrast to the hated regime of Ivan Saltykov, however, Novgorod's new rulers from the very beginning went out of their way to placate former rebel cossacks and even managed to entice some of them into joining the city's garrison. Soon, Russian cossacks were also helping the Swedes in military operations elsewhere, including the far north.

King Karl was, of course, delighted by the news from Novgorod; and, just like his cousin Sigismund, he now began to behave as a conqueror-completely disregarding all the solemn agreements made with the Russians by his representatives. No Swedish prince hurried to become tsar, and Sweden failed to assist the Russians against the Poles. Instead, de la Gardie quickly seized complete control of Novgorod and the surrounding area and began Sweden's systematic conquest and annexation of many border towns and fortresses, completely cutting Russia off from the Baltic Sea by early 1612. De la Gardie failed, however, to capture Pskov. Swedish troops also renewed their attempt to conquer Russia's far north, fully intending to capture the old port town of Kola (Murmansk) and Russia's extremely important new White Sea port town of Arkhangelsk in order to close them both to European ships. The plan was for Sweden to gain control of all of Russia's exports and to force merchants to buy those products at Sweden's Baltic ports. Fortunately for the Russians, even with cossack allies the Swedes failed to capture or shut down those northern portswhich became indispensable for Russia in the seventeenth century due to Sweden's successful conquest of Russia's entire Baltic coastline during the Time of Troubles.

Karl's aggressive policies were inherited by his son, Gustav Adolf, who succeeded him in late 1611. King Gustav Adolf, like Sigismund, contemplated becoming the ruler of Russia in his own name. He was therefore in no hurry to send his younger brother, Prince Karl Filip, to become tsar in spite of de la Gardie's constant reminders that some Russian commanders and lords were more than ready to swear an oath to him. Like Sigismund, the new king of Sweden ended up overplaying his hand in Russia. In late 1612, Gustav Adolf proudly announced that more than two hundred Russian towns had acknowledged Karl Filip as tsar; but Sweden's greatest king still dreamed of having those towns—and even more Russian territory—for himself. Swedish intervention was a powerful shock to the beleaguered Russians, and it greatly complicated and slowed down their efforts to expel the Poles from Moscow.

In the final years of the Time of Troubles, news of Russia's misery and of Polish and Swedish military intervention spread far and wide. Hearing of the capture of Moscow, Smolensk, and Novgorod, many people doubted that Russia would be able to survive as an independent country. Intermittent efforts were made in the West to provide mercenary soldiers to counter Polish and Swedish interventionists; some Protestant contemporaries especially stressed the need to stop Catholic Poland from conquering Russia. Even King James of England came to dream of intervention in north Russia and the acquisition of Arkhangelsk in order to prevent the Swedes or the Poles from threatening English merchants' direct access to and accumulated privileges in the Russian marketplace. James, Russia Company merchants, and others also fantasized about pulling the trade of Persia and the entire Orient through Russia to England. The archbishop of Canterbury himself got involved in the king's half-baked plan to stop the Catholics in Russia and to profit from an English monopoly on Russia's export trade. There was even loose talk of sending the future King Charles I to Russia as a candidate for tsar or as the "protector" of north Russia. King James became so interested in the plan that he eventually sent an ambassador to negotiate the details with the Russians. Arriving shortly after the election of Mikhail Romanov as tsar in 1613, the tardy English envoys first made certain that the young man was secure on the throne before giving up on the king's mad dream. It seems that Russia's internal misery went to the heads of several kings before the Russian people finally put an end to the civil war.

23

The End of the Civil War and the Election of Mikhail Romanov

The massing of patriotic forces preparing to expel the Polish garrison from Moscow seemed to be proceeding well during the spring and early summer of 1611, but for a number of reasons that effort stumbled. As a result, Russia continued to suffer from foreign intervention and descended into near chaos before competing domestic factions eventually joined forces to save their homeland and elect a new tsar.

By late spring 1611, Prokofii Liapunov, Dmitrii Pozharskii, and other militia leaders succeeded in mobilizing sizable forces of gentry militia and cossacks for the purpose of liberating Moscow. Pozharskii was the first national militia commander to reach out to Zarutskii's cossacks and to urge them to join the struggle against foreign intervention. Liapunov subsequently took the important step of sending manifestos far and wide promising freedom to all cossacks who joined the national militia even if those men had only recently been slaves or serfs. There was, understandably, a strong positive response from "cossacks" old and new. Thousands of men claiming to be cossacks flocked to the camps of the national liberation movement. Some were, in fact, free cossacks from the Don and Volga, but most had "gone cossack" more recently, including many refugees from smoldering Moscow. The bulk of those men had been in Tushino service, but others had seen very little military action before joining the national militia.

Power within the militia leadership quickly came to rest in the hands of Liapunov, Dmitrii Trubetskoi, and Ivan Zarutskii. Liapunov made strong efforts to forge and maintain cooperation between gentry units and the cossack forces of the two former Tushino boyars. He treated the cossack commanders as equal partners in the struggle against the interventionists since their men provided the national militia with its main fighting force. In fact, the cossacks fought with a frenzy against Polish troops. No doubt there were awkward moments whenever noble warriors came across their former slaves among the cossack patriots, but social tension was not allowed to interfere with the important task at hand. Indeed, the "council of the entire realm" set up by the national militia leaders deliberately included representatives from the dvoriane, deti boiarskie, common soldiers, and free cossacks. That highly representative agency—which in many ways resembled a zemskii sobor—met almost constantly and resolved many of the minor conflicts that emerged among the diverse forces camped before Moscow. A rudimentary bureaucracy was also set up, staffed mainly by incredibly dedicated secretaries and bureaucrats who had deserted the ruined capital; and Liapunov and his fellow senior commanders began to administer the territories under the control of their provisional government.

At the end of June 1611, the "council of the entire realm" issued a famous decree sometimes referred to as the "constitution" of the "first militia" (or of the "first national host"). In addition to laying the foundation for a temporary national government, the decree focused on shoring up the patriotic forces fighting against the interventionists-both gentry and cossacks. Those men were to receive land allotments-especially from estates confiscated from boyar traitors collaborating with the Polish interventionists. The decree's twenty-third article, which required the return to their old masters of runaway or abducted peasants and set no time limit for finding them, has been correctly interpreted as an expression of the gentry's desire to put a stop to unfair and damaging competition by the boyars (who were not strongly represented in the national militia). The decree thus clearly indicated that serfdom was to remain sacrosanct. It is important to note that the decree was in direct response to cossack as well as gentry petitions and was signed by cossack representatives of the "council of the realm." Runaway serfs and slaves mentioned in the decree were specifically those who fled to towns, other estates, or elsewhere-not those who had become cossack patriots serving in the national militia. That entire group of critically important soldiers were declared to be free men. Much to the confusion of many scholars, those patriotic cossacks had no objection to enslaving or enserfing other men who did not fight for their country.

It has long been rashly and incorrectly assumed that cossacks in the national militia formed a monolithic host and acted as champions of democracy or of the peasants in their struggle against serfdom. Nothing could be further from the truth. Cossack forces before Moscow were under the overall command of boyars Zarutskii and Trubetskoi, who appointed their own subordinate commanders. Patriotic cossacks preserved their quasi-democratic self-government only at the smallest unit level. Cossack detachments in the national militia also acted independently and maintained only very loose contact with one another. Those men had no interest in spreading democracy, and they did not regard themselves as peasants or as peasant leaders. In fact, peasants did not always get along with cossacks and occasionally fought bitterly against them.

Even though cossacks in the national militia were not a "revolutionary host," they did fight for their interests. They regarded themselves as a special corporation deserving certain privileges in return for military service. They jealously guarded those privileges and constantly strove to improve their position relative to other groups through rewards and a regular salary. Cossacks in Russia sought a status similar to that of the gentry and demanded similar rewards. It was, of course, critically important for the national militia leaders to provide the cossacks with a reliable food supply and to meet the other, strictly military needs of that all-important military force. The alternative was cossack banditry, which experience had shown only generated chaos, misery, and great hostility. The policy of granting cossack units high-status kormlenie (the right to collect food, and possibly taxes, from a designated area) became routine in the Tushino camp. It was also experimented with by the north Russian towns in their struggle against Tushino. By the time of the formation of the national militia, the cossacks had become better organized and had emerged as a powerful force quite capable of lobbying on their own behalf in direct competition with the gentry; and by then many cossacks were used to having the privilege of highstatus kormlenie as a reward for their vital military service. Significantly, in response to cossack petitions, the June 30 decree issued by the "council of the realm" placed the cossacks in the national militia under the same administrative authority as the gentry and not under a separate "cossack affairs" office, as had been the case in Tushino. Cossacks, like all other patriotic soldiers, were provided with at least some food and a small salary by the new makeshift government; but, in part to redirect their foraging away from taxpaying lands, cossacks in the national militia were also granted generous kormlenie privileges in certain areas-primarily crown and palace villages that, because of the civil war, no longer produced for the tsar. Cossack pristavstvo, as it was called, amounted to a given cossack unit's temporary collective control of a specific place and the right to collect a fixed amount of rent or supplies from it. Of course, even the most patriotic peasants did not appreciate being forced to support the wild and fierce cossacks.

Pomeshchiki in the national militia, already uneasy about the presence of former serfs and slaves within the ranks of the cossacks, grew increasingly alarmed by sharp cossack competition for resources and military significance. National militia cavalrymen complained to their commanders about the activities of the cossacks in much the same way that the rebel gentry had complained to Tushino authorities about those same unruly soldiers. In fact, in many ways the cossacks really did think of themselves by this time as a viable alternative to the relatively ineffective gentry militia (with its allergy to adopting gunpowder technology), and there is no denying that cossack kormlenie was perceived as a serious threat to gentry landholding. Nevertheless, it was regarded as a necessary evil by the national militia commanders who had no other way to sustain the cossacks—recognized by all of them as the most important military force in the struggle against Polish intervention. Many lords were unhappy about cossack activities, privileges, and growing arrogance; but Liapunov, Zarutskii, and Trubetskoi wisely focused on unifying and fortifying their forces, not on destroying the fragile coalition they had forged in order to liberate their homeland.

Cossack foraging for food and booty stirred protests from the gentry and from villagers in the area around Moscow. Within a very short time, predatory cossack activities began to harm the national militia's reputation and the cohesion of its forces. In response, Liapunov severely cracked down on those men. He imposed harsh restrictions on cossack food gathering that quickly made him very unpopular among those soldiers, who were facing extreme hardships at this time while most of the gentry units were reasonably well supplied. When one militia commander ordered twenty-eight cossacks drowned for illegal looting, other cossacks quickly rescued their guilty comrades. Tensions grew on both sides. Cossack forces in the national militia now felt boxed in-receiving inadequate supplies and yet facing increasing restrictions on obtaining any more. They blamed Liapunov directly for their plight. He was, by his own admission, unable to supply the cossacks except by means of kormlenie, and now he was backing away from that earlier arrangement. When Liapunov authorized the summary execution of some cossack thieves in July 1611, many cossacks howled in protest at what they perceived to be an attack on their privileges as well as a blow to their ability to survive. Liapunov's foolish attempt to end the collection of supplies by the cossacks themselves without having a realistic and acceptable alternative logistical system in place inevitably provoked a sharp response. The cossacks invited him to a cossack circle to debate the issue. There, on July 22, 1611, the imperious commander behaved so arrogantly that angry cossacks killed him. The assassination of Liapunov was intended as much to protect cossack status as it was to protect their food supplies.

Liapunov's death was certainly a blow to the patriot cause. With him gone, the problems of getting cossack forces and gentry detachments to cooperate grew even more intractable, primarily due to the grandiose ambitions of Zarutskii and Trubetskoi. Nevertheless, Liapunov's murder did not lead to gentry flight from the national militia. Even Liapunov's own son felt safe among the patriotic cossacks after his father's death, and gentry units continued to arrive in the camps before Moscow for the rest of the summer of 1611. The "council of the realm" and the patriots' small bureaucracy continued to function—and not just in the interests of the cossacks. Bureaucrats continued to supervise the distribution of resources, and militia authorities continued to deal with such internal problems as robbery and murder.

Zarutskii emerged as the effective head of the militia; and under his supervision patriotic forces (mostly cossacks) very effectively stopped the Polish hetman Jan Karol Chodkiewicz's large-scale offensive during the summer of 1611 and continued to tighten the blockade around hungry Moscow. In a major effort to capture the city in the fall, however, the patriots failed and suffered many casualties. Soon, gentry forces within the national militia began to disappear. What eventually led to the breakup of the militia forces in the fall of 1611 was what always led to the dissolution of the gentry militia in that era-exhaustion and lack of provisions after several months of active duty. Indeed, famine descended on the entire Moscow region by late 1611-not due to cossack banditry so much as to the disruption of war and the concentration in one place of too many mouths to feed. In addition, the national militia had assigned remote estates to a large percentage of the gentry, and many of them were anxious to visit those lands in order to claim them and to rest there for the winter. The departure of those cavalrymen in large numbers meant the decline of the militia's strength. Efforts to storm Moscow in December 1611 failed again, and many cossacks were killed. Because of increasing frustration and hunger, many of the cossacks themselves began drifting off in search of food and better shelter for the winter. As a result, active patriot military operations around Moscow were suspended until the spring of 1612.

Another problem that contributed to the dissolution of the national militia by the end of 1611 was Zarutskii's increasing agitation on behalf of Tsaritsa Marina's son Ivan as the future tsar. Zarutskii, not surprisingly, came to dream of putting Ivan Dmitrievich (the "little brigand") on the throne with himself acting as regent. Once Liapunov was dead and Zarutskii became the de facto commander of the national militia, he continued to promote the "little brigand's" candidacy. Although many laymen and some church leaders urged continued cooperation between gentry and cossack forces in order to expel the foreigners, Patriarch Hermogen (in prison in Moscow) managed to send another letter to Nizhnii Novgorod warning against cooperation with Zarutskii's cossacks and urging the repudiation of "Marina's accursed son." There was a quick and powerful response to his message. In August 1611, Nizhnii Novgorod and Kazan entered into an agreement against Zarutskii and his cossacks (as well as against the Poles and the Swedes), declaring that they would reject any cossack candidate for tsar chosen without the consent of the entire realm. Furthermore, they would refuse to allow Zarutskii's cossack forces into their towns. Thus began a rapidly growing split between patriotic towns led by Nizhnii Novgorod and the increasingly cossack-dominated national militia. Serious efforts were made by Nizhnii Novgorod's authorities from this point on both to check the growing influence of cossacks within the national liberation movement and to reorganize Russia's struggle against foreign intervention so that it was no longer dependent upon those unruly men.

Greatly accelerating the developing split between Nizhnii Novgorod and Zarutskii's forces—and therefore seriously threatening the very existence of the national liberation movement—was the appearance at this time of yet another pretender masquerading as "Tsar Dmitrii" who managed to temporarily attract considerable cossack support. Possibly a deacon or a petty trader from Moscow or Kaluga, "Matiushka" or "Sidorka" ended up as a beggar in Novgorod where he revealed his identity as "Dmitrii" and managed to attract a few supporters. They soon moved to Ivangorod, which was then under siege by the Swedes. On March 23, 1611, the beleaguered town enthusiastically welcomed the resurrected tsar. "Dmitrii" was apparently a good speaker, and news of the "true tsar's" return to claim his throne and to fight against Swedish intervention spread like wildfire. Several other towns trying to fend off the Swedes quickly recognized "Dmitrii".

In Pskov, a detachment of former Tushinite cossacks took up the new impostor's cause and invited him to move to that town in early July 1611. However, Pskov's administrators balked and refused to admit the "tsar." "Dmitrii" hung around the area for several weeks and then suddenly disappeared when a combined Swedish and Russian army from Novgorod arrived and laid siege to Pskov for about five weeks. Not surprisingly, the national militia forces hurriedly sent to relieve Pskov contained many cossacks who had long supported one "Dmitrii" or another. Rumors that "Dmitrii" was alive in the Pskov region provoked great enthusiasm. Once the siege of Pskov was broken by patriot forces, the town (including its streltsy garrison) and the national militia units there at the time formally welcomed "Tsar Dmitrii," who arrived in Pskov on December 4, 1611.

The impostor immediately sent out manifestos declaring his miraculous survival and calling upon patriots to rally to him. There was a dramatic response. Several northern towns took up his cause immediately, and some cossacks from Novgorod joined his growing forces. Many southern frontier towns soon swore oaths of obedience to the "tsar" in Pskov as well. To the east, "Dmitrii" was also recognized as tsar in Alatyr, Kurmysh, and Arzamas. In those districts, crown and palace peasants—extremely angry about national militia efforts to enserf them in order to provide for impoverished gentry—took up the cause of "Dmitrii"

with a vengeance and were joined by many local streltsy units. Those men terrorized local pomeshchiki unwilling to swear an oath to the "true tsar" and forced them to flee. Very quickly, patriot forces all over Russia split decisively into supporters of "Dmitrii" and opponents of any cossack candidate for tsar.

The Swedes tried by various means to neutralize or to come to terms with the new impostor, but those efforts failed. He urged his supporters to attack Swedish occupation forces at every opportunity. For obvious reasons, "Dmitrii" made a special appeal to the Tushinite veterans encamped before Moscow, and a cossack delegation from the national militia soon journeyed to Pskov to meet with the "tsar." There they apparently quickly figured out that he was an impostor but were intimidated into sending a report back to the national militia that "Tsar Dmitrii" was alive. That message caused a sensation. On March 2, 1612, at a huge conclave before Moscow a large majority of cossacks declared for "Dmitrii." Although many patriots fled in protest, both Zarutskii and Trubetskoi felt they had no choice but to join their excited men in swearing an oath of loyalty to "Tsar Dmitrii." Most towns in the Moscow area, however, quickly rejected the reincarnated tsar. Even more important, the immediate and strident hostility of the powerful, newly-emerging commander-in-chief of patriot forces, Prince Dmitrii Pozharskii, to the link being forged between Zarutskii and Trubetskoi on the one hand and "Tsar Dmitrii" on the other was enough to force Trubetskoi and Zarutskii to begin making extremely polite overtures to Pozharskii in which they apologized profusely for having been forced by their men to swear an oath to the latest "Dmitrii."

Zarutskii actually regarded the newest "Dmitrii" as a serious rival to himself and began making plans to have him eliminated as soon as possible. Taking matters into his own hands, Zarutskii organized a delegation from the national militia to travel to Pskov, ostensibly to forge a stronger link to the "tsar." The delegation's real mission, however, was to seize the impostor at the first available opportunity. Because of "Dmitrii's" reign of rape and terror in Pskov, Zarutskii's agents soon found several secret allies—including the town's voevoda and other leading citizens fed up with the cruel impostor. The conspirators took advantage of the approach of a Swedish army to send the bulk of the ardently pro-Dmitrii forces out of Pskov to fight the enemy. While those men were away, an attempt was made to arrest "Dmitrii," but he managed to escape. The extremely anxious conspirators finally captured him on May 20, 1612. Several weeks later he was sent in chains under heavy escort to the national militia camps before Moscow. There, the "third false Dmitrii" was put on public display for a long time for the amusement of the soldiers. Only much later was he hanged. Although Zarutskii again apologized to Prince Pozharskii for having temporarily backed

"Dmitrii" and even pledged to stop working on behalf of Tsaritsa Marina and little Ivan Dmitrievich, the cossack boyar actually continued to intrigue against opponents of the "little brigand," including Pozharskii.

In spite of all the problems created by ambitious and unscrupulous militia commanders and by the "third false Dmitrii," by the fall of 1611 in Nizhnii Novgorod a new patriotic movement and a new military force capable of salvaging Russia's national sovereignty were beginning to take shape. Chosen by his fellow citizens to heed Patriarch Hermogen's call, an eloquent and energetic local butcher named Kuzma Minin convinced his fellow citizens to raise money for an army to cleanse Russia of foreign interventionists and to restore order in the realm. Minin was granted broad powers to impose extraordinary taxes on the population of Nizhnii Novgorod as well as on local monasteries and crown peasant villages; and he raised a lot of money very quickly. Next, Minin chose the brilliant and self-effacing Prince Pozharskii, then recovering from his wounds on a nearby estate, to be commander-in-chief of the new militia being formed. That choice shocked and annoyed a number of ambitious aristocrats who pointed out that Pozharskii was, after all, only a minor prince and not even a boyar. But Minin rightly concluded that the honest and unflappable Pozharskii was just the man for the incredibly difficult task of getting various patriot factions to work together. Pozharskii, in turn, insisted that Minin continue as the patriotic movement's treasurer with very broad powers. Together, those two men quickly put together a detachment of gentry cavalry, cautiously reached out to some patriotic cossack atamans with offers of pomeste grants and salaries, and spread word far and wide of their intentions. Repeating their successful strategy against Tushino, patriotic towns exchanged letters about local decisions to cooperate with Minin and Pozharskii in order to oppose foreigners and unruly cossacks.

The news that Minin and Pozharskii could actually pay troops a regular salary caused many soldiers of all types (as well as armed peasants) to flock to Pozharskii's banner. Within a few months, most of the major towns of the middle and upper Volga joined the new patriot movement. Militia units from Kolomna and Riazan province, detachments of streltsy, and even some local cossacks quickly swelled the ranks of Pozharskii's new army, which has often been referred to as the "second militia." Minin and Pozharskii cautiously organized their forces to struggle against both the Poles in Moscow and Zarutskii and the "little brigand." They also declared their intention to convene a zemskii sobor to choose a new tsar. Not surprisingly, that produced something akin to open warfare between remnants of the old national militia and the new one. Zarutskii and Trubetskoi immediately recognized the potential threat to their own status and ambition posed by Pozharskii's army. For that reason, in early 1612 they blocked Minin and Pozharskii's plans to use Suzdal as a base of operations against Moscow. That action forced the new national militia leaders to choose Iaroslavl as the base of their operations, which worked out well. Iaroslavl was still a rich town with wide commercial contacts even though its trade had suffered during the civil war. The town also boasted a strong fortress and had already proven its worth during the struggle against the oppressive Tushinites. Zarutskii tried desperately to prevent Pozharskii from occupying strategically located Iaroslavl, which linked the upper Volga region to the far north, but Pozharskii's forces beat him back. Iaroslavl thereupon enthusiastically opened its gates to Minin and Pozharskii and quickly emerged as the headquarters of the national liberation movement and as the seat of the new provisional government.

At first, the merchants of Iaroslavl balked at Minin's unprecedented demand for up to thirty per cent of their net worth. That forced him to coerce those stingy and greatly surprised men with armed streltsy. Meanwhile, Pozharskii's forces, unable to approach Moscow due to the temporary flirtation of old national militia elements there with the "third false Dmitrii," spent their time clearing Zarutskii loyalists out of a wide region. Iaroslavl soon became a powerful magnet attracting more and more towns fed up with both rampaging cossacks and foreign interventionists. Troops and supplies poured into Iaroslavl from the Volga region and the far north. Within just a few months a very large area of north and central Russia had once again spontaneously organized itself against an external threat, virtually duplicating what the region had done in response to the aggression of the Tushinites. No doubt the progress of the relentless Swedish interventionists in north Russia also influenced the rapid emergence of the national liberation movement.

The new provisional government in Iaroslavl functioned reasonably well. In addition to gathering food and supplies, it distributed estates to impoverished gentry and cossack atamans, minted coins, and invited representatives from towns, monasteries, and even prosperous peasant villages to come to Iaroslavl and remain there as advisers. The provisional government enrolled large numbers of townsmen and streltsy in the new national militia and also attracted many pomeshchiki away from the old militia forces then still flirting with the Pskov impostor. The arrival in Iaroslavl of a few wealthy aristocrats caused some friction, but Prince Pozharskii dealt diplomatically with them—wisely regarding those extremely arrogant men as essential for the pacification and reconstruction of the country. Pozharskii was equally diplomatic in negotiating with the unruly but still-essential cossacks. By June 1612, he managed to attract seventeen atamans and their detachments away from the declining Moscow-area militia forces—much to the alarm of Zarutskii and, to a lesser extent, Trubetskoi. In general, Pozharskii worked extremely well with the cossacks; he made good use of them and earned their respect and trust. Minin and Pozharskii also succeeded in drawing many more towns, nobles, gentry, cossacks, Tatars, Mordvians, Chuvashi, and others into Iaroslavl service by the summer of 1612. With patience and determination, Pozharskii managed to build a strong army and looked for the first available opportunity to put it to good use. By summer 1612, his forces in Iaroslavl stood at more that ten thousand men and may have numbered as many as twenty thousand soldiers.

The provisional government in Iaroslavl was strongly committed to liberating the country and convening a zemskii sobor to choose a new tsar. Minin and Pozharskii wisely avoided publicly picking a favorite candidate, but they did loudly and adamantly oppose "heir Ivan Dmitrievich" and the Pskov impostor. Several leading Russian candidates for tsar were, of course, still in Polish captivity. In spite of that, Filaret Romanov's close relatives were quite active in Iaroslavl and floated the prospect of his fifteen-year-old son, Mikhail, as a candidate for the throne. Since young Mikhail was at that time still in Polish-occupied Moscow living with his uncle Ivan (a member of the despised council of seven), there was understandably very little enthusiasm in Iaroslavl for his candidacy. Prince Pozharskii himself cleverly hinted at the possibility of a Swedish tsar in negotiations with the Swedish interventionists-who were then holding Novgorod and many other Russian towns. The Swedes, in turn, displayed considerable interest in the prospect of "Tsar Karl Filip"; and, as a result, Pozharskii was able to negotiate a critically-important truce with them in June 1612 that secured his northern base and allowed him to move his army toward Moscow to concentrate on liberating the capital from the Polish interventionists.

During the spring of 1612, Polish hetman Chodkiewicz once again launched an offensive from the west in order to clear patriot forces from the Smolensk road and to link up with the Polish garrison in Moscow. His soldiers were constantly harassed by Russian partisans and, in retaliation, brutally terrorized the countryside. Chodkiewicz, however, failed to dislodge Zarutskii's forces. The bloodthirsty dictator of Moscow, Alexander Gosiewski, sensing the approaching end, wisely chose this moment to remove his mercenary detachment from Moscow, replacing those weary but well-paid men with fresh troops. On his way out of the capital, he looted what was left of the Kremlin treasury. (Among the items stolen was the tsar's "unicorn horn" staff that was cut into little pieces and distributed to the mercenaries; the Russians complained bitterly about its loss for many decades.) Once Gosiewski and Chodkiewicz departed from the Moscow area, Zarutskii made yet another attempt to storm the inner city but failed, suffering staggering losses. By then he was desperate to achieve victory before the arrival of Pozharskii's army in the vain hope of retaining his position of leadership and of promoting Ivan Dmitrievich as a candidate for tsar. Publicly, however, Zarutskii and Trubetskoi had already both been forced to renounce the "little brigand" as well as the Pskov pretender in their negotiations with the provisional government and the increasingly powerful Prince Pozharskii. Even so, many people in Iaroslavl warned against cooperating with Zarutskii, who was loudly denounced as the author of Liapunov's murder and as a greedy and corrupt self-promoter. Under the circumstances, Pozharskii wisely refused to have anything more to do with Zarutskii.

Rebuffed and frustrated, Zarutskii reportedly resorted to witchcraft and hired assassins to get rid of the new national militia commander-in-chief. However, those plots not only failed but backfired. Zarutskii was personally implicated in them and as a result lost the support of Trubetskoi and others, who quickly abandoned him to work with Pozharskii. Isolated and increasingly desperate, Zarutskii briefly flirted with the Polish interventionists again, but that act of "treason" was discovered by Trubetskoi. In a panic, just as Pozharskii's army began arriving before Moscow, on July 28, 1612, Zarutskii abruptly departed. By then, however, he had lost much of the support of his own rank-and-file cossacks. Therefore, when Zarutskii ordered his men to join him in abandoning the siege of Moscow, most of them flatly refused. Only about twenty-five hundred cossacks accompanied him on his flight. Zarutskii's detachment made a beeline for Kolomna, picked up Marina and Ivan, looted the town, and then headed into Riazan province-causing enormous damage along the way. Zarutskii set up his new headquarters and "heir Ivan's" court in Mikhailov, and Zarutskii and Marina continued to be a thorn in the side of the Russians for about two more years.

Prince Pozharskii had been anxious to work out an agreement about unified command with Trubetskoi, who still commanded three or four thousand cossacks; but Trubetskoi looked down on Pozharskii as a low-born prince and was not at all helpful. In fact, Trubetskoi was not the only Russian commander who felt superior to the national militia's commander-in-chief. Several great lords had already deserted Iaroslavl when Pozharskii refused to step aside in favor of one of them; and by the time the bulk of Pozharskii's army finally reached the environs of Moscow in early August, very few high-born nobles were among its officers. Pozharskii commanded at least ten thousand men, but his motley forces—armed with many lances, pole-axes, and spears but few harquebuses provoked premature derision from the new garrison in Moscow. The Russian commander-in-chief was urged by the enemy to send his men back home to plow the fields. Far worse, a haughty and disdainful Trubetskoi kept his own cossack forces on the sidelines when Pozharskii's men fought their first battle with hetman Chodkiewicz, who approached the capital from the west again in August with about eight thousand Zaporozhian cossacks and Polish troops. During that bloody confrontation, several cossack units ignored their inactive commander (Trubetskoi) and joined Pozharskii's men.

The patriotic decision by those soldiers to join forces with the new national militia helped decide the outcome of the battle. Chodkiewicz was eventually forced to retreat—which ultimately doomed the Polish garrison. King Sigismund personally invaded Russia in the fall of 1612 in a last-ditch effort to resupply and reinforce his beleaguered troops in Moscow and to conquer additional territory. His army actually managed to reach Tushino and Volok Lamskii before national militia cossacks and local partisan activity stopped them and forced the king to retreat.

Although Trubetskoi's cossacks played a decisive role in the struggle against Polish interventionists before Moscow, it was no thanks to their ruthlessly ambitious commander. Even as he failed to provide crucial support to Pozharskii, Trubetskoi stirred his cossacks against the gentry in the national militia. They complained bitterly about their own suffering and sacrifice during the previous year and a half while Pozharskii's army by contrast looked well-fed, wellclothed, and well-supplied. In early September, Trubetskoi attempted to storm the capital on his own and failed. By then, even he recognized that the quick unification of all patriot forces was going to be necessary in order to achieve victory. In a major diplomatic step to end Russia's long and nightmarish civil war, Pozharskii announced that the two forces were combining into a single national militia under the nominal control of Trubetskoi. In fact, boyar Prince Trubetskoi had finally been defeated. Pozharskii and Minin were now firmly in charge of all militia forces and immediately speeded up the siege.

The garrison in Moscow, now shrunken to about fifteen hundred men, was desperately hungry. Famine forced them to allow many Russians to leave the Kremlin by October 1612. Prince Mstislavskii, the president of the council of seven, personally sent a delegation to Pozharskii to inform him of the desire of the Russian lords who had cooperated with the Polish interventionists to leave Moscow and to beg for an honorable reception. Cossacks in the militia were extremely angry with those traitors and called for their deaths or, at the very least, the confiscation of their property. Pozharskii, however, regarded those compromised boyars as necessary for the restoration of order in the country. In return for renouncing their oath to "Tsar Wladyslaw," he allowed them to keep their estates and agreed to credit the lie that they had been held in Moscow against their will. On October 26, Mstislavskii—his head prominently bandaged to cover and draw attention to an injury inflicted by a member of the Polish garrison—led Ivan Romanov, Mikhail Romanov, and other sheepish aristocrats out of the Kremlin. Many cossacks derided them as traitors as they filed out of the ruined city. The next day, October 27, the Polish garrison surrendered unconditionally, and national militia forces entered the capital. Much work remained to be done, but at least the Russians controlled Moscow again and, except for the problem of Zarutskii and Tsaritsa Marina, the civil war was now at an end.

To the great surprise of many contemporaries, by late 1612 the Russian people at long last and with extraordinary difficulty had put aside their differences in order to save their country from chaos and foreign intervention. As Pozharskii, Minin, and Trubetskoi contemplated the difficult tasks of rebuilding the destroyed Russian state and restoring order, they knew full well that the recent military victory at Moscow had to be followed up immediately by the convocation of a zemskii sobor truly representing the entire realm for the critically important task of choosing a new tsar who would be regarded as legitimate in the eyes of most of the nation. As soon as Moscow was liberated, therefore, they sent urgent and unprecedented messages throughout the country calling for representatives of all groups of free men (dvoriane, deti boiarskie, streltsy and other low status soldiers, townspeople, clergy, peasants from crown and taxable state lands, and cossacks) to come as quickly as possible to Moscow. By January 1613, several hundred delegates arrived in the capital-the broadest cross-section of Russian society ever assembled to choose a tsar.

While waiting for the delegates to arrive, Pozharskii dismissed more than half of the national militia's gentry detachments in order to reduce pressure on food supplies in the Moscow area. That left fewer than two thousand gentry militiamen near the capital, along with approximately one thousand streltsy and other soldiers, and at least six thousand free cossacks. Some gentry and national militia leaders were anxious to remove thousands of cossacks from the vicinity of the capital as soon as possible, but the prudent commander-in-chief still regarded those men as a necessary defense against possible Polish advances. In fact, Sigismund's army had been stopped in November 1612 only 90 kilometers west of Moscow, and those same cossacks had played a crucial role in turning him back. Prince Pozharskii was by this time extremely grateful to the patriotic cossacks for the essential role they had played in defeating and pushing back the Polish interventionists. Pozharskii appealed to the Russian towns to overcome their fears and prejudices and to voluntarily feed those heroic men. He also gave national militia cossack atamans the right to continue collecting food in certain districts. Senior cossacks in the militia received a salary; rankand-file cossacks received a two-year exemption from debts and taxes, the promise of housing in Moscow and other towns, and a guarantee of freedom to all former serfs and slaves among them who had fought to liberate their homeland. Many pomeshchiki, who detested and feared the cossacks, did not approve of those measures, but their commander-in-chief regarded them as no more than a just and fair reward for the liberators of Moscow.

The idea of a foreign tsar, once championed by several boyars, quickly faded as the election approached. Cossacks and other patriots would simply not tolerate any further consideration of Prince Wladyslaw. On the other hand, the candidacy of Karl Filip still had some support in Swedish-controlled Novgorod, and he was definitely preferred to Wladyslaw by Russian Orthodox church leaders. According to some writers, Pozharskii himself may have favored the Swedish prince, although the traditional view has always been that his negotiations concerning Karl Filip were merely insincere plays for time. In any case, whatever support among Russian aristocrats the Swedish prince may have enjoyed at one time quickly vanished as the boyars themselves began once more to dream of occupying the throne and as Pozharskii and others came under irresistible pressure from the cossacks to choose a native Russian tsar.

During several weeks of maneuvering for the election, the Romanov faction was extremely active. Ivan Romanov very much wanted to become tsar but was unpopular for having actively collaborated with the hated Polish interventionists. However, the candidacy of his nephew, Mikhail, drew some gentry and merchant support and was enthusiastically embraced by much of the remaining national militia forces (then serving as the Moscow garrison) as well as by the cossack delegates to the zemskii sobor. Mikhail's father, Filaret Romanov, was popular among the cossacks for having been the patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church in Tushino, for having been a strong supporter of Tsar Dmitrii, and for being related to the old sacred ruling dynasty. Although the Romanov faction joined some of the others in spreading money around to influence the election, the zemskii sobor initially rejected Mikhail Romanov as a candidate, and the delegates were temporarily deadlocked. On cue, some cossacks from Trubetskoi's detachments then proposed their own arrogant and obnoxious commander as tsar. Trubetskoi did everything he could to advance his candidacy at this point but was strongly resisted by Pozharskii and the aristocrats.

Throughout this period, young Mikhail Romanov's candidacy kept gaining support as Romanov agents made quiet appeals behind the scenes to block Trubetskoi and as some cossacks openly pleaded Mikhail's case and

not-too-subtly threatened supporters of other candidates. Eventually, cossack delegates in the zemskii sobor supporting Mikhail Romanov prevailed in a vote held on February 7, 1613. Continued resistance on the part of Trubetskoi and Pozharskii resulted in the virtual siege of their residences. Both were accused of plotting to put a foreign tsar on the throne so they could continue to dominate the new government and steal state revenues. The cossacks loudly demanded a native tsar who would reward them for their sacrifices and for liberating Moscow. In the end, the boyars were forced to accept the fact that the young Romanov and not one of them was going to become the ruler of Russia. There was, understandably, considerable grumbling about it. The sixteen-year-old boy did not impress the boyars at all; he was poorly educated and not particularly intelligent. Nonetheless, those great lords consoled themselves with the knowledge that Trubetskoi would not become tsar and that Mikhail's ambitious and highly intelligent father, Filaret, was still in Polish captivity. That meant that the boyars still had an excellent opportunity to dominate and profit from the new government. One of the boyars allegedly said at the time, "Let us have Misha Romanov for he is young and not yet wise; he will suit our purposes." But, of course, the boyars really did not have the final word. They merely bowed to irresistible popular pressure and tried to make the best of a situation that they certainly did not control. After a three-day fast to seek divine guidance, on February 21, 1613, the cossack-dominated zemskii sobor finally proclaimed Mikhail Romanov as the new tsar.

Tsar Mikhail was crowned in Moscow on July 21, 1613, in a ceremony intended to show unity among the various factions that had joined together to end the civil war. Some contemporaries noted, however, that since the troublesome cossacks had put Romanov on the throne, Russia's Time of Troubles was bound to continue. They need not have worried. Mikhail Romanov actually feared and detested the cossacks. In fact, under the strong influence of reactionary boyars, even in preparation for his coronation, the deeply conservative new tsar revealed his true feelings about his subjects by snubbing many patriots simply because they were mere commoners. It is one of the great and tragic ironies of Russian history that the founder of the Romanov dynasty quickly put an end to the Troubles in part by crushing the very same patriotic cossacks who saved the country and brought him to power.

24

Tsar Mikhail and the End of the Time of Troubles

Tsar Mikhail Fedorovich Romanov (r. 1613–45) was chosen by his subjects to restore God's grace to Russia and to lead the country out of civil war. Memories of the horrors of the civil war pushed most Russians, regardless of social position or sides taken in years past, to support the new Romanov regime in the hope that Tsar Mikhail would be able to reimpose order. Russia's first civil war produced a very broad consensus across class lines in support of restoring as much as possible of the form and content of the tsarist system of the old sacred ruling dynasty. That powerful consensus gave the young tsar, his mother, and their principal advisers the time and support needed to assert the new regime's authority, to preside over the rebuilding of the Russian government, to mop up the last traces of the civil war, and to confront Polish and Swedish interventionists. Even so, the problems produced by a decade of extraordinarily bitter conflict were so severe that it took several years for the new tsar to put an end to the destabilizing forces unleashed by the civil war.

As one might expect of a new dynasty with a relatively weak claim to legitimacy, the Romanovs worked assiduously to promote Tsar Mikhail as the "Godchosen," sacred ruler of Russia and his family as the natural successors of the ancient ruling dynasty that had died out in 1598. False electioneering propaganda to the effect that Tsar Fedor Ivanovich had intended for the crown to pass from him directly to Tsar Mikhail's father, Fedor (later Filaret), was refined and became part of the official Romanov version of the Time of Troubles. The relationship of the new tsar's family to the old dynasty was emphasized while its adherence to Tsar Dmitrii, to the "second false Dmitrii," and to Prince Wladyslaw was carefully covered up. The new government brazenly and falsely proclaimed that Patriarch Filaret had opposed Wladyslaw's plans to become tsar while delicately avoiding any mention of just exactly how Filaret had managed to become head of the Russian Orthodox Church while he was in Tushino. The new regime also revised Tsar Mikhail's own embarrassing personal history so that during the two years he lived in the Polish-occupied Kremlin, instead of being just a low-profile nephew of the collaborator Ivan Romanov, Mikhail was

Image not available

Fig. 9 "Tsar Mikhail Romanov." Engraved circa 1633. Published in Adam Olearius, Des Welt-berühmten Adami Olearii colligirte und vermehrte Reise-Beschreibungen: bestehend in der nach Musskau und Persien . . . (Hamburg, 1696). (Frequently misidentified as a portrait of Tsar Mikhail's son, Tsar Aleksei.) From D. A. Rovinskii, Materialy dlia Russkoi Ikonografii, part 1 (St. Petersburg, 1884). Courtesy of The British Library. falsely portrayed as a "captive" who was respected even by the hated Poles for his family's connection to the old ruling dynasty and for his personal piety and dignity. The new tsar was also repeatedly and misleadingly described as prudent, judicious, and capable.

In the aftermath of Russia's first civil war, the Romanov regime attempted to enhance its own legitimacy as well as that of the political order it represented by placing great emphasis on the autocratic and sacred nature of Tsar Mikhail's office. As discussed earlier, to most Russians in the early modern period the salvation of all Orthodox Russians (and perhaps the whole world) depended on the piety of the tsar. In that spirit, the new tsar began to wear a pectoral cross over his robes-a former practice of the Muscovite grand princes but never before seen on a tsar. Mikhail and his advisers also insisted that since a legitimate, God-chosen tsar once again ruled Russia, it was time for the Russian people themselves to withdraw from involvement in matters of state and once again to become as "mute as fish." In fact, Tsar Mikhail was deeply afraid of his own subjects, and those fears were fanned by his conservative relatives, close friends, and the boyars. The Russian elite had been taken by surprise and badly frightened by the powerful popular support Tsar Dmitrii generated during his campaign for the throne; and they were even more confused and terrified by the fanatical and relentless popular support for pretenders claiming to be "Dmitrii" during the period 1606–12. Many aristocrats at Tsar Mikhail's court deeply resented the unprecedented role ordinary Russians ended up playing in politics and military affairs during the Time of Troubles, activities traditionally reserved for the tsar and the nobility. The new ruler was therefore strongly urged to put an end to such unseemly popular encroachments on the ruling elite's exclusive privileges. Tsar Mikhail was advised that he had to take stern measures in order to survive and to cement his authority, including the suppression of all popular activism—which was widely regarded at court as a principal cause of the civil war in the first place.

Because of the threats posed by the continued presence of foreign troops in Russia and smoldering unrest associated with Zarutskii, Tsaritsa Marina, and little Ivan Dmitrievich, the strategy adopted for restoring domestic order by the insecure Romanov regime included brutally lashing out at any and all hints of opposition to Tsar Mikhail's legitimacy; and there were, in fact, some people who questioned that legitimacy. Unlike the ill-fated Tsar Dmitrii, however, the Romanovs quickly set up machinery to investigate and severely punish any comments or actions, no matter how trivial, which threatened or even slighted the ruling family. There were, of course, precedents for such heavyhanded measures. Nevertheless, the speed and zeal with which the paranoid Romanovs pursued their real or perceived enemies was completely without precedent.

The Romanovs were particularly nervous about nostalgia for Tsar Dmitrii, and from the outset of Tsar Mikhail's reign anyone who claimed Dmitrii was still alive or who even dared to remember him fondly was brutally punished. Others were tortured or imprisoned for comments favorable to any pretender or past ruler whose legitimacy the new regime disputed. It is important to remember that the situation at the end of the Time of Troubles was still unstable and dangerous. Armed opponents of the Romanovs still operated inside Russia, and many of Tsar Mikhail's subjects continued to harbor "romantic notions" about Tsar Dmitrii. Under those circumstances, the very unpopular boyars probably had little choice but to embrace and promote the new tsar's legitimacy and harsh policies as the best means to secure their own futures and to avoid any reckoning for their inconsistent and unpatriotic activities during the civil war.

From the very beginning of Mikhail's reign, the aristocracy—of which the Romanovs had been a part—dominated and set the reactionary tone of his regime. Tsar Mikhail, like all grand princes and tsars before him, added some family members to the ruling circle. Nonetheless, due at least in part to the weakness of the new tsar's legitimacy, he emphasized his connection to the pre-1598 regime by restoring as much as possible of the old aristocracy and court. Mikhail was extremely generous to boyars and courtiers who had survived the Time of Troubles. For understandable reasons, few questions were asked about which sides they had supported during the civil war. Almost all of the great lords were encouraged to help the tsar restore order and, in effect, the old regime. As a result, the new boyar council looked a lot like it had been before the Time of Troubles. Not surprisingly, Fedor Mstislavskii (one of the richest aristocrats) resumed his position as the senior boyar. To ensure the boyars' loyalty, the new tsar showered those already rich men with more lands and gifts.

A small number of the Romanovs, their in-laws, and other leading aristocrats emerged as a self-serving ruling elite who ruthlessly exploited their positions in order to increase their personal holdings. They pursued policies that served only the interests of the aristocracy, and they did not hesitate to seize the property of others in their quest for more wealth. Those greedy and arrogant lords ignored, shoved aside, or even humiliated honorable patriots such as Kuzma Minin and Dmitrii Pozharskii who dared to urge the government to live up to the promises that had been made to the cossacks and other heroic commoners. In fact, Minin and Pozharskii were regarded with jealousy and contempt by many of the new tsar's courtiers. Those two men were somewhat reluctantly rewarded for their past service (Minin became a dumnyi dvorianin and Pozharskii became a boyar), but they were both quickly removed from any meaningful involvement in the operation of the new government.

Aristocrats at court constantly pressured the young tsar for large rewards, including much crown land occupied by taxpaying peasants whose status the greedy lords boldly wished to reduce to that of serfs. Understandably, those peasants resisted-sometimes violently. They were occasionally assisted by free cossacks who were also angry at attempts by the aristocrats to "enslave" them. Such outbreaks of popular violence terrified Tsar Mikhail and his courtiers, and they were dealt with very harshly. Cossack resistance in this period was mainly due to the desperate attempts by those hard-pressed soldiers to retain their status. Those patriots reacted in horror and indignation as the nobility and the church successfully lobbied the tsar to authorize the tracking down of all fugitive peasants-including those who had bravely served against the Poles-in order to return them to servile status. Rebellions among the Volga Tatars, the Cheremis, and other non-Slavic nationalities early in Mikhail's reign were primarily revolts against the extraordinary fiscal pressures that were being applied by the corrupt new regime without any consideration of the impact those exactions had on the tsar's ordinary subjects. In retrospect, the infuriating activities of young Tsar Mikhail's courtiers appear to have been extremely short-sighted considering the fact that the Romanov regime was still confronted by Polish and Swedish armies operating inside Russia and by thousands of cossacks and other supporters of Tsaritsa Marina and the "little brigand." The greedy and thoughtless reactionaries at Mikhail Romanov's court greatly complicated the tsar's task of ousting foreign troops, pacifying the realm, and building support for the new dynasty.

In the early years of his reign, Tsar Mikhail wisely asked the members of the zemskii sobor that had elected him to remain in Moscow in order to help him rebuild the shattered Russian state. In fact, Mikhail Romanov made far more extensive use of the zemskii sobor than any other tsar, and he was wise to do so. The energetic and experienced patriots in that assembly maintained on-going contact with the towns and provinces they represented, and they provided the central government with valuable information about conditions far from the capital. Unlike some of the young tsar's greedy courtiers, however, the zemskii sobor delegates actually helped with the difficult tasks of restoring the state administration and renewing the flow of taxes to fund the day-to-day operations of government and to maintain military forces capable of challenging foreign interventionists and the renegade Zarutskii.

The zemskii sobor delegates helped the tsar's officials locate potential sources of revenue and legitimized the new regime's heavy taxation and other unpopular emergency revenue-generating measures, which fell primarily on the towns. So great a burden falling on such a small part of the Russian population, however, inevitably slowed down the country's economic recovery from the Time of Troubles. By 1616, grumbling among his overtaxed subjects forced Tsar Mikhail to seek additional legitimization for his extraordinary revenue measures. In that year he wisely appointed the popular and much-trusted Prince Pozharskii as head of a new agency set up to collect yet another onerous and unpopular tax amounting to twenty percent of everyone's income. Despite such extraordinary measures, Tsar Mikhail's government remained chronically short of cash long after the Time of Troubles was over. In fact, fiscal problems related to the destruction caused by the civil war continued to haunt the early Romanovs throughout the seventeenth century.

Although it was actually the domination of the new tsar by aristocrats that led some historians to accurately characterize the period between Mikhail's election and Patriarch Filaret's return to Russia in 1619 as the "non-tsar period," the unprecedented activity and duration of the zemskii sobor led Platonov and others to an extremely faulty view of that institution. During the Time of Troubles, the townsmen who played such a critically important role in organizing and funding the national militia supposedly gained a sense of themselves as members of an emerging "nation-state" and after 1613 attempted to modify the tsarist system into a kind of constitutional monarchy in which those newly politicized commoners in some way shared power with the tsar. Through their participation in the zemskii sobor, which worked closely with Tsar Mikhail, the townsmen allegedly came to view the state as something distinct from the person of the tsar and themselves as representatives of the "will of the people." That still-influential view is, in fact, hopelessly anachronistic and inaccurate.

There is no evidence that early modern Russian townsmen ever viewed themselves as having any constitutional right to participate in the central government or that they came to see the state in secular terms as something distinct from the tsar. Far from it! The townsmen, like other Russians in the early seventeenth century, still regarded themselves as subjects of a God-chosen autocrat. While there certainly were very real religious and moral restraints on the exercise of tsarist power, there was no budding constitutionalism or constitutional monarchy in seventeenth-century Russia. The zemskii sobor was an incredibly useful tool for speeding up Russia's recovery, but it had no autonomy from the tsar and sought none. As noted earlier, the zemskii sobor was a governmentcreated and government-summoned consultative assembly with no legislative prerogatives. It was essentially a sounding board with strong links to the state's chief revenue sources—the towns. Its members were content to act as advisers and, in fact, were extremely pleased with themselves for having been asked to help the tsar restore order. Instead of regarding themselves as the emerging voice of Russian "citizens," they willingly and actively helped rebuild autocracy and asked few questions about whose interests were being served by the restoration of the sacred old regime. In the end, with the active support of the zemskii sobor delegates, incredibly resilient bureaucrats, and many other patriotic Russians, much of the administrative structure of autocracy was quickly rebuilt, and the new regime gained sufficient resources to deal with the lingering problems of foreign military intervention and the "little brigand," Ivan Dmitrievich.

King Sigismund and Prince Wladyslaw, despite the loss of Moscow in 1612 and the election of Tsar Mikhail, still dreamed of conquering Russia. They even made plans to personally lead Polish military forces against the new tsar in 1613. However, the king faced too many fiscal and political problems at home to carry out an energetic invasion. That respite gave the fragile new Romanov regime time to recover and to begin making its own plans to liberate Polish-occupied Russian territory. The tsar, Prince Mstislavskii, and others regarded such a campaign as a good opportunity to send most of the remaining cossacks in the national militia-whom they feared and hated-away from the Moscow area. As a result, in 1613, Russian forces (primarily cossacks) under the command of Dmitrii Cherkasskii drove Polish troops out of Kaluga, Viazma, Dorogobuzh, and Belaia, and then laid siege to Smolensk. Before that mighty fortress soon arrived an additional two thousand cossacks who had recently abandoned Zarutskii to join Tsar Mikhail's service. By 1614, the siege produced hunger in Smolensk and high hopes among the Russians for its imminent capture. With fewer than twelve thousand men in the siege army, however, the Russians were unable to recapture the fortress.

In 1613, Tsar Mikhail and his advisers sent Dmitrii Trubetskoi with almost all of the remaining cossacks stationed in the Moscow vicinity, plus additional gentry detachments, to confront Swedish forces in northwest Russia. The Russians quickly managed to liberate a few towns and weakened the Swedes' overall strategic position somewhat. King Gustav Adolf, who briefly contemplated turning Swedish-occupied Russia into a buffer state to be ruled by his younger brother, Karl Filip, still held many important strongholds in the region but was increasingly disheartened by the complete lack of support for his ambitious military plans among the Russians themselves—even in Swedish-dominated Novgorod. Continuing partisan warfare in the region, the exhaustion of Swedish troops, and severe fiscal problems at home also threatened to reverse many of Sweden's gains made in Russia during the Time of Troubles. That prompted the king personally to lead a military campaign into north Russia during 1614. After some initial success against voevoda Trubetskoi, Gustav Adolf's forces got bogged down in a siege of the strategically and economically important town of Pskov. The heavily outnumbered and outgunned Pskov garrison stubbornly and heroically resisted the Swedes throughout all of 1615 and early 1616. By then, fiscal and domestic political pressures on the frustrated king forced him to begin serious negotiations to end the war in Russia.

After many months of complex diplomacy in which Prince Pozharskii played an important role, both countries agreed to sign the Treaty of Stolbovo in 1617. By the terms of the treaty, Sweden restored Novgorod, Ladoga, Staraia Rusa, and Porkhov to Russia but retained the strategically located lands and towns it had acquired along the coast of the Gulf of Finland-thereby cutting Russia off completely from the Baltic Sea. The Russians remained angry about Swedish military intervention, of course, and dreamed of regaining access to the Baltic; but relations between the two countries rapidly improved after the signing of the treaty. In fact, Sweden became the first country to maintain a permanent diplomatic representative in Moscow. Gustav Adolf personally regarded the Treaty of Stolbovo as a great triumph; and, in fairness, it did produce a buffer zone that secured his country's eastern borders and allowed the king to turn his attention elsewhere. Nevertheless, Swedish military intervention in Russia failed to produce the total domination of that country's trade with the West that the Swedes had greatly desired and that may, in fact, have been their only real hope for sustaining Sweden's short-lived imperial adventure.

One of Tsar Mikhail's first military actions was to send an army south against Ivan Zarutskii—the last serious domestic rival to the new Romanov regime. After Zarutskii abandoned the siege of Moscow, he and more than two thousand cossacks still loyal to Tsaritsa Marina and Ivan Dmitrievich ruthlessly plundered estates along the southern frontier during late 1612 and early 1613. By June 1613, Tsar Mikhail's forces caught up with Zarutskii at Voronezh, and, after a fierce battle, many rebel cossacks deserted their commander and the "little brigand"—choosing instead to enter Tsar Mikhail's service. Zarutskii was reduced to leading only Marina, Ivan, and a few hundred loyal cossacks to Astrakhan. At first, that great rebel stronghold welcomed them with open arms; city officials recognized little Ivan as "tsar" and Marina and Zarutskii as his regents.

Soon after their arrival, however, Zarutskii launched a reign of terror during which many of the town's leading citizens—including voevoda Ivan D. Khvorostinin, the head of the streltsy garrison, and several monks and merchants—were put to death. The archbishop's residence was also sacked, and hundreds of townspeople and Zarutskii's cossacks divided up the possessions of their victims. By spring 1614, however, Zarutskii's support among the population of Astrakhan began to wane rapidly as word spread that Tsar Mikhail's commanders were preparing to march on the city. Rumors that Zarutskii intended to allow five hundred newly arriving Volga cossacks to loot the city prompted a powerful uprising by the townspeople. A surprised Zarutskii and about eight hundred men were temporarily forced to retreat to the citadel where they were besieged for days by more than three thousand men. In May 1614, Zarutskii, Marina, Ivan, and a dwindling number of loyal cossacks managed to escape from Astrakhan—which was immediately occupied by Tsar Mikhail's forces. The tsar's troops entering the city were greeted by the sounds of church bells and loud cheers. Streltsy units were quickly dispatched to track down Zarutskii and Ivan, which they managed to do by mid-June. In a remote area along the Iaik River, Zarutskii's cossacks, realizing at last that their situation was hopeless, suddenly seized their commander and handed him—along with Tsaritsa Marina and the "little brigand"—over to Tsar Mikhail's men.

The captives, in chains, were quickly taken to Moscow under very heavy guard. There, by command of Tsar Mikhail and the zemskii sobor, Zarutskii was impaled and Ivan Dmitrievich, then almost four years old, was hanged outside the city gates. Tsaritsa Marina was locked up in a tower in Kolomna and died soon thereafter. Sources differ on whether she starved to death or died of natural causes. Not surprisingly, according to one legend, she managed to escape—by using witchcraft to transform herself into a magpie and then flying away.

Once Zarutskii and the "little brigand" had been eliminated, Tsar Mikhail felt secure enough to begin dealing harshly with the free cossacks still serving in the national militia. As noted earlier, Mikhail Romanov was no friend to the cossacks who had liberated Moscow and put him on the throne. Having endured the siege of the capital inside the Kremlin for two years, he had grown to share the council of seven's hatred for the patriotic cossacks in the national militia. Even before he was crowned, the new tsar began to echo boyar and gentry denunciations of cossack banditry and violence; and, just as soon as they could, Tsar Mikhail and his advisers speeded up the transfer of cossack forces away from Moscow. Although free cossacks made up at least half of the national militia and were still indispensable for operations against the Poles, the Swedes, and Zarutskii, the reactionary court shared the gentry's fear of the cossacks' military prowess, independence, and emergence as serious competitors to the gentry cavalry force. Bent on restoring as much as possible of the pre-civil war old regime, Tsar Mikhail and his advisers made it a priority to shore up the shattered and foundering gentry militia as Russia's principal fighting force and began

pushing the cossacks aside. Because of cossack support of Tsar Dmitrii and other pretenders during the Time of Troubles, as well as day-to-day difficulties getting cossack troops to cooperate with gentry detachments, it was easy for the frightened Russian elite to credit ten years of their own propaganda as well as countless hysterical gentry claims about the cossacks as dangerous social revolutionaries. That was a seriously flawed perception, but in truth the cossacks really were a threat to the traumatized gentry's role in Russian society; and, unlike the gentry, the free cossacks did not easily fit into the new regime's plans for the restoration of the old regime and the development of a rigidly stratified society.

Once Zarutskii was out of the way, the tsar and his boyars began seriouslyand somewhat prematurely-to heed the gentry's calls for the outright elimination of the "cossack menace." Emphasis was placed on cossack banditry and the need to restore order by suppressing them even though Russia continued to face Polish and Swedish military intervention as well as powerful raids by the Nogai and Crimean Tatars. In fact, banditry really did become a chronic problem in the aftermath of the civil war and required serious measures to suppress it. Some cossacks (and displaced peasants and townsmen) had become bandits in order to survive; others, however, were falsely accused of banditry simply because they resisted government attempts to suppress their independence and freedom. It turns out that most of the cossacks the Romanov regime took stern measures against were not bandits at all; instead, they were loyal, patriotic soldiers who foolishly believed the new tsar would live up to the promises made to them by Prince Pozharskii. Tsar Mikhail not only failed to reward them but launched a series of menacing investigations into their social background. Employing techniques similar to those used by the Polish government in Ukraine, the tsar's officials attempted simultaneously to co-opt cossack atamans into the ranks of the petty gentry, to liquidate cossack self-rule at the small unit level, to stop newcomers from joining the tsar's cossack detachments, and to return all runaway serfs and slaves in those detachments either to their former masters or to new ones. Not surprisingly, those measures provoked serious unrest among the patriotic cossacks, who were well aware that the new tsar was dominated by greedy and unscrupulous boyars who were now boldly trying to enslave many of the heroic liberators of Moscow.

Some cossack units responded to threats of investigation by abruptly abandoning state service. In order to support themselves and to show their displeasure at the betrayal of the promises made to them, they went out of their way to raid the estates of Prince Mstislavskii and even members of the Romanov clan but were always careful to avoid harming Pozharskii's property. Many cossacks attached to Trubetskoi's army, then fighting against the Swedes, also refused to obey orders to proceed to Moscow where menacing investigations awaited them. On their own initiative, some of them organized mixed military units of cossacks, peasants, and streltsy who declared their eagerness to continue fighting against foreign interventionists but only if the Romanov regime would give up its efforts to return runaways among them to their former masters. Tsar Mikhail's court reacted in horror to such developments. In spite of continued military pressure from Sweden and Poland-Lithuania (as well as devastating Tatar raids), the new regime focussed obsessively on eliminating the "cossack menace." During the summer of 1615, some of those upstart cossack leaders (e.g., Mikhail Balovnia) were tricked into traveling to Moscow to negotiate with tsarist officials, where they were seized, briefly jailed, and then executed. Gentry militia units also occasionally attacked disaffected cossack groups without warning, killing or capturing thousands of them. Most of the survivors were eventually hanged or forced into slavery. Such savage reprisals against the essentially loyal free cossacks-whose only real crime was their desire for a fair reward for past service and the chance to continue living as free men-had a powerful, destabilizing psychological effect in the country in addition to dangerously reducing the size and effectiveness of the Russian army. Cossack and, to a lesser extent, popular enthusiasm for Tsar Mikhail temporarily waned just as the country faced a renewed Polish effort to capture Moscow.

The Romanov regime should not have been surprised to find itself facing serious difficulties fielding sufficient military forces to counter the renewed Polish offensive beginning in 1615. The harsh treatment of the cossacks had provoked such disaffection that many of those patriots lost all interest in defending the new dynasty. Among Russian commanders, only Prince Pozharskii could still inspire the cossacks to fight for their homeland. As a result, a reluctant court was forced to rely increasingly on Pozharskii to raise and command troops to counter the Polish drive toward Moscow. Prince Pozharskii was still loved and respected by the patriotic cossacks, and he immediately drew their support "like a magnet." The incredibly honorable and brilliant Pozharskii even managed to entice many cossacks away from the Polish invasion force, and he was able to inflict such serious losses on the Poles that their offensive temporarily stalled out.

Starting in 1617, "Tsar Wladyslaw" himself made one final attempt to capture Moscow. Thousands of cossacks in the Russian army at that time openly refused to fight against the Poles under the banners of corrupt and cowardly boyar commanders who not only failed to pay or feed them but who openly planned to enslave or enserf them as soon as their military service was no longer desperately needed. Only after the frantic boyars went into the field personally to negotiate with the rebel cossacks and insincerely agreed to meet their demands were many of those disaffected warriors willing to defend the capital again. It is noteworthy that, even then, the suspicious cossacks were still willing to serve only under the trustworthy Pozharskii, and the reluctant court had no choice but to agree. By then the regime had finally begun to realize the great danger to its survival posed by its own unpopularity. Many patriots who had initially been wildly enthusiastic about Tsar Mikhail were now having second thoughts about him. The treacherous boyars had, of course, never been popular and were at this time widely believed to be secretly negotiating with the hated Poles; a terrified Prince Mstislavskii was even threatened by an armed crowd of angry and suspicious Muscovites. In order to survive, Tsar Mikhail felt compelled at long last to richly reward and publicly exalt Pozharskii and to trust him with the defense of the capital in the fall of 1618. The entire population of the city was summoned for the task of resisting the Poles, and they responded willingly and enthusiastically to the beloved Prince Pozharskii. As a result, the Polish hetman Chodkiewicz and Prince Wladyslaw were stopped decisively and forced to withdraw.

Because Prince Wladyslaw's military campaign had failed to achieve its primary objective, the Polish government was forced by fiscal constraints to immediately enter into serious peace negotiations with the Russians. Nevertheless, the fourteen-year Truce of Deulino that was signed in December 1618 proved to be a harsh one for the Russians. By its terms, Poland-Lithuania gained thirty towns and a considerable amount of territory: the entire Smolensk and Chernigov regions and much of Severia. During the negotiations, Tsar Mikhail hastily ordered the evacuation and transfer to the Poles of several border towns and fortresses that, up to that point, had been actively and successfully resisting enemy forces.

Why did the tsar accept such a one-sided truce that transferred many of his loyal subjects to Lithuanian administration and made many of his remaining subjects extremely unhappy? In part, it was due to the Romanov regime's growing fear of continued cossack unrest (and to the related problem of the weakness of the Russian army) at a time when the tsar and his advisers finally realized that Mikhail had lost some popular support. The main reason, however, was simply to assure the prompt return of the tsar's father, Patriarch Filaret, from Polish captivity.

Once the Truce of Deulino was signed, the Romanov regime felt secure enough to resume the grim business of eliminating all remaining free cossacks in the Russian army. Under such pressure, the cossacks failed to maintain



Map 7 Russian Territory Lost by Treaty.

their status as a special service class; and by the end of 1619, there were no more free cossacks in central Russia. Many of them fled to the Don and other places along the frontier; others became bandits. Small numbers of former national militia cossacks were forced to become serfs. Remarkably enough, in spite of its harsh treatment of the patriotic cossacks, the Romanov regime was soon able to make use of many of them as it resumed Russia's colonization and extension of the southern frontier. Although the cossacks periodically rebelled against the relentless encroachment on their lands and liberty by the Russian state and provided the main fighting force for such powerful uprisings as the Razin and Pugachev rebellions, there is no denying that the cossacks themselves also actively aided the expansion of the Russian empire and the resulting extinction of their own much-vaunted freedom.

In many ways, Patriarch Filaret's return to Moscow in 1619 marked the real end of the Time of Troubles. By then, Russia was well on the road to recovery, the last remnants of the civil war had been eliminated, and the country was once again at peace with its neighbors. Much of the state structure had been rebuilt and was functioning, and a greatly relieved Russian society was willing to accept the Romanov dynasty as legitimate and to work hard to rebuild the devastated country. Patriarch Filaret immediately took charge of his son's regime and became the effective ruler of Russia until his own death in 1633. Under Filaret's firm hand, Russia by the 1620s—superficially at least—appeared to be much like it had been before the civil war. Yet, as Robert Crummey wisely pointed out, the nightmarish experience of the Time of Troubles left very deep scars, and Russia "would never be quite the same again."

25

Disturbing Legacy

The Time of Troubles, one of the darkest chapters in Russian history, left deep scars, but its impact has puzzled generations of scholars for at least two reasons. First, historians have usually evaluated the outcome of the Troubles primarily in terms of winners and losers in a mythical class struggle. Second, the incredibly rapid recovery of the autocratic regime and the spectacular expansion of Russia's empire under the early Romanovs has obscured the impact of Russia's first civil war and led some writers to minimize or even ignore it in their comments about the development of autocracy, increasing social stratification, or the growth of Russia in the seventeenth century. That view is just as mistaken as the class war interpretation. In fact, the Time of Troubles produced a powerful consensus in favor of restoring and even enhancing the power of the tsars. At the same time, however, the extraordinary success of Russian autocracy in the seventeenth century exposed deeply embedded elements of opposition among the tsars' overburdened subjects-opposition that, ironically, found much of its origin, justification, tactics, and vocabulary in the very same civil war that produced the consensus favoring a more powerful autocracy. Such was the troubling and somewhat confusing legacy of the Time of Troubles.

Without doubt, the real winner in Russia's first civil war was the autocratic government represented by the new Romanov dynasty. Writers have, of course, long noted that the Time of Troubles hastened centralization of authority and the strengthening of autocracy, but they have been unable to explain with any credibility how Russia, devastated by civil war and foreign intervention, could so quickly restore the essential components of its state structure and bureaucratic administration, let alone develop them so breathtakingly far beyond the precrisis old order within just a few decades. Nor have they been able to account for the astonishing growth of Russia in the seventeenth century.

Under Tsar Mikhail the Russian empire reached the Pacific Ocean and became the world's largest country. In the next generation, his son, Tsar Aleksei (r. 1645–76), was able to shift forever the balance of power between Russia and Poland-Lithuania in the Thirteen Years War (1654–67), managing in the process to regain all territory lost to Poland in the Time of Troubles and adding half of Ukraine and the ancient capital city of Kiev to his domain for good measure. Within a century of the Troubles, Aleksei's son, Peter the Great (r. 1689–1725), completed Russia's revenge against Sweden. Peter, of course, not only regained all territory that had previously been lost to the Swedes and once again gave Russia direct access to the Baltic Sea; but, in the process, he also transformed the Russian empire into the "great power" so well-known and feared since the eighteenth century. Although there is clearly no monocausal explanation for the incredible success of the early Romanovs, one of the most important factors was the Time of Troubles itself.

Many factors related to the civil war contributed to the enhanced power of the autocratic regime of the early Romanovs. We have already seen, for example, that the Time of Troubles did not lead to political innovation or the emergence of any secular notion of a Russian "nation-state" independent of the tsar. Instead, the chaos and destruction of the civil war years produced a sharp political, social, and cultural reaction that rejected innovation in favor of restoring as much as possible of the precrisis old order. As a result, the prestige and authority of the tsar—already very high in Russian political culture—actually increased in the seventeenth century. That, in turn, strengthened and sanctified the imperial ambitions of the early Romanovs and the quick reconstruction and growth of the central state bureaucracy, which soon resumed its coercive and large-scale allocation of Russia's human and capital resources for the purpose of exalting the ruler and expanding the state. The results were profound. As already noted, the empire of the Romanovs tripled in size over the course of the seventeenth century. In the same period, the tsarist bureaucracy grew at an even faster rate and produced a powerful "caste of professional civil servants" accustomed to interfering with the economy and regulating and controlling the lives of the Russian people.

It is well known that, even before the Time of Troubles, Russian culture placed a high value on the preservation of established order and the maintenance of traditional social hierarchy. Not surprisingly, that tendency was strengthened by the violence and uncertainty of the civil war years, and in the decades after the Troubles it combined with a sharp political and cultural reaction, a very weak economy, and zealous bureaucrats to greatly accelerate the regimentation and stratification of Russian society. Russia in the seventeenth century became even more of a "role prescriptive" society than it had been in the late sixteenth century. By the time Tsar Aleksei issued his famous law code, the *Ulozhenie*, in 1649, in which his regime took the final legal step in the enserfment of the peasants, the central government also attempted to force all other subjects into fixed positions in a "highly-stratified, explicitly ordered society." The result was the legal codification of an eerily premodern, near-caste society dedicated to the service of Russia's "God-chosen" ruler. As elite and popular worship of the tsars increased, the emerging "orientalized" Russian political culture severely limited any possible modernization of society even as Russia emerged as a major player on the European and world stage. Although Russia's rather backward system was powerful enough to lay the basis for its emergence as a great power in the eighteenth century, that system also impoverished the country and the Russian people in many ways.

According to the traditional interpretation of the Time of Troubles, the winners included the townsmen. A brief look at the condition of the Russian economy and towns in the seventeenth century will demonstrate very quickly that almost nothing could be further from the truth. Russia lay in ruins by the end of the Troubles. Large parts of the country had been destroyed; many towns and villages stood empty; several important towns had been lost to Poland-Lithuania and Sweden; and an already-declining economy had been seriously disrupted. In many places trade and industry simply disappeared and agricultural activity ceased altogether or continued its late-sixteenth-century slide backward to a low-level focus on self-sufficiency rather than production for the marketplace. Several scholars have emphasized that the huge decline in production and the reversion to a "natural economy" caused by the Time of Troubles, coming on top of the late sixteenth-century economic crisis, delivered the "final blow" to the development of the early modern Russian economy along capitalist lines—with drastic consequences for the Russian people. Among other things, in spite of a return to relatively normal prices by the late 1620s, the "great ruin" contributed significantly to the relative backwardness of the economy and to the already-developing stratification and regimentation of Russian society.

The overall population of Russia recovered relatively quickly after the Time of Troubles; by mid-century, it reached more or less the level of the late sixteenth century. That growth, however, was very uneven and did not favor the towns and taxpaying villages of central Russia. Towns in the far north and along the Volga River, which had been less adversely affected in the civil war years, tended to recover quicker; and some of them saw significant growth in population and economic activity in the seventeenth century. It was a very different story in the heartland, however, where a number of towns and more than half of all peasant villages had been completely abandoned by the end of the civil war.

Although the economic base of the country remained fragile and relatively unproductive, the cash-strapped central government's appetite for revenue grew

in the years following the Time of Troubles. Unfortunately, that meant raising taxes on townspeople-still the most important source of revenue for the state's increasing military expenses. Just as the collection of taxes without concern about their impact on the economy had hurt Russian towns and trade activity in the sixteenth century, so too did overtaxing a struggling urban population in the seventeenth century seriously interfere with Russia's recovery from the Time of Troubles. It led to a further spiraling down of the urban economy, occasional outbreaks of violence, and further abandonment of towns by desperate, overtaxed subjects. Under those circumstances, it should really be no surprise that over the course of the seventeenth century the percentage of urban taxpayers in Russia relative to the overall population actually declined. Russian towns and commercial activity continued to stagnate for several generations; even a hundred years after the Time of Troubles, many towns had not recovered the population, vitality, and economic growth they had enjoyed in the mid-sixteenth century. Instead, in the towns, as elsewhere, a highly stratified society emerged-a clear sign of economic backwardness and trouble.

It is no exaggeration to state that, in the aftermath of the Time of Troubles, the failure of early modern Russian towns and capitalism to develop significantly until the eighteenth century had drastic consequences. It not only put Russia further behind the West economically, but it also helped push the country down an entirely different, decidedly illiberal path of political, social, legal, and cultural development—one in which wealth actually declined as a status symbol in favor of one's position in an increasingly rigid social hierarchy dedicated to the service of the tsar. While in the early modern West the rise of capitalism, towns, and an increasingly powerful and self-aware middle class laid the basis for the transition to modern states and societies; at the same time in Russia the economy remained extremely weak and the tiny and beleaguered Russian middle class merely constituted another relatively powerless stratum in a backward, highly regimented, near-caste society.

According to the traditional interpretation of the Time of Troubles, the gentry shared "victory" with the townsmen and were, in effect, a "rising class" during the seventeenth century. The gentry militiamen supposedly demonstrated their new power and self-awareness by participating in Tsar Mikhail's election and by working closely with him in the zemskii sobor. In fact, however, it is well documented that gentry participation in the activities of the central government quickly faded as autocracy was reconstructed. Whatever sense of common identity had been forged among the gentry during the civil war did not in any way mark the emergence of a triumphant new interest group with budding political aspirations. Instead, what developed was a growing realization on the part of the economically and militarily weak gentry of their shared vulnerability to serious threats posed to them by greedy and influential "strong men" at court on the one hand and by competent cossack military forces on the other.

We have already seen that the extraordinary activity of the zemskii sobor in the early years of Tsar Mikhail's reign did not represent the development either of a secular notion of the Russian state as something separate from the person of the tsar or of groups of the tsar's subjects as an emerging force independent of and interested in sharing power with the ruler. On the contrary, the gentry representatives to the zemskii sobor—like the townsmen—were pleased to be invited to help the tsar restore order, and they asked few questions about whose interests were being served in the process. Looking ahead to the lobbying activities of unhappy pomeshchiki during the 1630s and 1640s, however, one cannot help but to conclude that the gentry's involvement in the zemskii sobor of Tsar Mikhail's early years did significantly raise their collective consciousness about how autocracy functioned, whose interests it served, and how to go about the task of pragmatically and rationally protecting gentry interests in the future.

It should be remembered that the gentry militia had been in deep crisis on the eve of the Time of Troubles. Needless to say, the destruction and dislocation associated with the famine, a prolonged civil war, and foreign intervention-far from improving the situation-made things much worse. By the end of the Time of Troubles, the ranks of the gentry had been seriously depleted. Many militiamen remaining in service had lost most of their peasant labor force and were barely able to eke out a living. Many others had lost everything and by 1613 were truly desperate men. Perhaps even worse, the battered gentry had proven to be almost useless in the age of gunpowder technology, frequently being humiliated in battle by cossacks and foreign troops. Because of that, the early Romanovs were forced to attempt significant military reforms in order to compensate for the weakness of the gentry and to move beyond reliance on those nearly obsolete forces for defense and expansion of the realm. Nevertheless, Russia's ruling elite shared the gentry's fear of the militarily potent free cossack forces as a threat to an increasingly rigid social hierarchy in which even a badly weakened gentry still had some role to play. Thus, as we have seen, it was Tsar Mikhail and his courtiers who consciously shored up the gentry as Russia's exclusive warrior caste and made common cause with them to purge the Russian army of free cossacks. In addition, and much to the relief of the gentry, the Romanovs more or less put a stop to the use of slaves in combat.

In spite of the new regime's efforts to shore up its traumatized gentry, however, the early seventeenth century did not see much improvement in their overall condition. As a result, the struggling gentry's complaints about their status and conditions grew louder and more frequent. Protests were especially strong against unfair and often illegal competition for land and peasant labor on the part of corrupt and greedy "strong men," but the government usually ignored the gentry's complaints or failed to implement promised remedies. By the 1640s, many gentry were actually so upset at being taken advantage of by the rich and powerful and at being ignored by an obviously corrupt government that they dared to vent their anger and frustration against Tsar Aleksei himself. In 1648, the demoralized gentry profoundly shocked the tsar and his ruling circle by their unwillingness to take the side of the central government against rioters in Moscow and other towns, whose ominous protests about the abuse of power by bureaucrats and "strong men" echoed the gentry's own complaints. It was only then that the Romanov regime finally agreed to make fundamental concessions to the gentry, including specific language in Tsar Aleksei's Ulozhenie that formally codified the enserfment of peasants in ways favorable to the gentry. Thus, it was not at the end of the Time of Troubles but only after 1649 that the Russian gentry began to look and act like real "winners" and members of the "ruling class."

According to the traditional interpretation of the impact of the Time of Troubles, Russia's old aristocracy were to be counted among the losers. That is an extremely faulty interpretation. As Robert Crummey and others have ably demonstrated, in the generations following the Time of Troubles, aristocrats must surely be counted among the biggest winners. We have already seen that Tsar Mikhail restored as much as possible of the old aristocracy and court and showered gifts and privileges on most of the survivors. From the outset of his reign, the tsar forged a strong alliance with the reactionary aristocracy, and those "strong men" took maximum advantage of their privileged position to secure greater wealth and power for themselves—even to the point of harming the country. Among other things, over the course of the seventeenth century many of them entrenched themselves in the top ranks of the rapidly expanding central state bureaucracy—further enriching themselves. Sometimes those aristocratic servitors performed their jobs well; often they badly misgoverned Russia in the name of the tsar.

According to the traditional interpretation of the Time of Troubles, the lower classes were the real losers. Even though Russia's first civil war was not a social struggle against serfdom, it is impossible to disagree with that general conclusion. The most significant impact of the Time of Troubles on the bulk of the Russian people, apart from sheer physical destruction and economic stagnation, may have been the harsh precedent set by Tsar Vasilii Shuiskii's 1607 decree on runaway peasants that strongly reinforced serfdom. In it Shuiskii "introduced

a police element into what had largely been a civil matter," making local officials for the first time legally and materially responsible for returning runaway peasants to their rightful owners. Although the beleaguered Shuiskii was unable to enforce his decree in much of the country during the civil war, after the Time of Troubles his coercive approach to enforcement proved to be so successful that it became a permanent part of serf law. Moreover, Shuiskii's decrees began an ominous blurring of the distinction between peasants and slaves, an innovation that was also retained by the Romanovs. In the decades following the Troubles the legal rights of all peasants continued to decline as the government increasingly tended to equate peasants with slaves and began treating both groups less and less as subjects and more and more as mere property. As a result, in the highly stratified, near-caste society codified by Tsar Aleksei's Ulozhenie, not only were the bulk of the Russian people reduced to the status of serfs, but those unfortunate souls by law and custom were also well on their way to becoming something akin to chattel.

There has never been much scholarly controversy about the impact of the Time of Troubles on the Russian Orthodox Church. Instead, there has been general agreement that the church was a big winner. In fact, however, the growth of the church's power and wealth in the early seventeenth century helped set the stage for a traumatic schism among Russia's Orthodox population. During the Time of Troubles, the Orthodox faith, the patriarch, the clergy, and the monasteries had played crucial roles in stirring "patriotic nationalism" and in rallying the Russian people to resist foreign intervention. As a result, Orthodoxy and the Russian Orthodox Church emerged from that period with significantly enhanced stature. That was especially true for the relatively new office of patriarch. Its more exalted status was symbolically and powerfully expressed by the selection of Tsar Mikhail's father for the position and by Patriarch Filaret's immediate emergence as the real ruler of Russia. That was something no mere metropolitan could ever have aspired to, and it inadvertently established an awkward precedent that would later haunt Filaret's grandson, Tsar Aleksei.

The "great sovereign" Patriarch Filaret presided over the development of a powerful clerical bureaucracy, an increase in the power of his own office in both secular and church affairs, and the rapid growth of the church's landholdings and wealth. Just as the enhanced prestige of the tsar sanctified and facilitated the unprecedented growth of the central state bureaucracy's interference in the lives of ordinary Russians, so too did the enhanced prestige and authority of the patriarch sanctify and facilitate the unprecedented growth of the clerical bureaucracy's aggressive, overbearing, and sometimes crude and violent efforts to expand the church's territory, wealth, and influence and to regulate and intrude into the lives

of ordinary Russians. Just to cite one example, during the Time of Troubles the church had managed to acquire by various means much additional land, and Filaret and other church leaders made sure it retained all those gains and acquired even more. Like the aristocrats at the tsar's court, the "strong men" of the church took maximum advantage of their positions and influence to increase their holdings and to gain and retain valuable peasant labor. At the outset of Tsar Mikhail's reign, the church was able to secure the government's active assistance in recovering runaway peasants. From then on, powerful and wealthy church officials' successful on-going efforts to acquire even more land and peasants put them in direct but uneven competition with the struggling gentry, who grew just as angry about the greed of spiritual "strong men" as they were about predatory lay magnates. Needless to say, many peasants also deeply resented the church's insatiable appetite for acquiring them and exploiting their labor. It is worth noting that by the time Tsar Aleksei was forced to confront the imperious and unpopular Patriarch Nikon at midcentury, the spiritual leader of the Russian people owned approximately thirty-five thousand serfs.

In the decades following the Time of Troubles, the Russian Orthodox Church followed many of the same general trends that Jack Goldstone detected in the religious establishments of other early modern agrarian societies recovering from severe state crises. In Russia, as elsewhere, as the power and authority of the church was strengthened, traditional religious orthodoxy was reaffirmed and became more rigidly defined and conformist, and major efforts were made to purify a society (and clergy) perceived as corrupt and to purge all deviations from orthodoxy-which were widely regarded as being responsible for the crisis in the first place. As elsewhere, Russian society also became increasingly xenophobic and chauvinistic, and there emerged both elite and folk "ideologies of rectification." It is well known that Patriarch Filaret and his successors jealously guarded the church's control over the spiritual life of the tsars' subjects and in matters of faith demanded obedience from all of them. In addition, during the seventeenth century the church worked tirelessly to shield "true Christians" from evil foreign influences and ended up presiding over one of the more xenophobic and chauvinistic periods in Russian history. After the Time of Troubles the church also launched major efforts to purify a society viewed as corrupt and to reform the intellectual and moral life of the clergy. For many Russians, the resulting changes such as the banning of the extremely popular minstrels or the requirement that the faithful stand for several hours in church were annoying and made the exalted and arrogant leaders of the Russian Orthodox Church almost as unpopular as did those same spiritual strong men's lust to acquire land and peasants.

Historians have traditionally focused on Patriarch Nikon's zealous liturgical reforms as the primary cause of the development during the second half of the seventeenth century of the most traumatic and long-lasting schism in the history of the Russian Orthodox Church. In fact, in that era of extreme xenophobia, one group of deeply conservative and suspicious dissenters-known as Old Believers-did reject the patriarch's reforms (his reactionary attempt to "re-Byzantinize" the Russian church) as "foreign cultural innovations" that threatened the purity of their faith and their very souls. The response of the church and the tsarist regime was, not surprisingly, brutal persecution of the Old Believers and harsh imposition of Nikon's unpopular reforms. In the cultural and emotional climate of the seventeenth century, there was simply no possible compromise between the radically differing "ideologies of rectification" represented by the equally stubborn Patriarch Nikon and Archpriest Avvakum. The shock of the resulting collision was profound. Recently, however, Georg Michels has demonstrated that at the heart of the rapidly developing split between the official church and many faithful Orthodox dissenters was not concern about the liturgy at all but instead a growing alienation from the powerful Romanov-era church's unprecedented, acquisitive, and aggressive intrusion into the countryside, the villages, and the lives of the tsar's ordinary lay and clerical subjects. Although most Russians, at least publicly, refrained from criticizing the brutal suppression of those spiritual dissenters, many Orthodox Christians were deeply impressed by the courage and passion of the schismatics, who remained a thorn in the side of the Romanov dynasty until 1917.

One of the most important legacies of the Time of Troubles was to force Russian people at all levels of society to take a closer look at their traditional faith and how it was practiced. In ways somewhat reminiscent of the impact of the Black Death on the fourteenth-century European mind, the Troubles profoundly shocked most Russians psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually. Some regarded the Troubles as God's punishment for the sins of the Russian people or their rulers and concluded that, if God allowed the country to survive, there would be need for significant moral and spiritual reform. At the same time, others who fought long and hard against an "evil" regime or against foreign intervention had their traditional faith reaffirmed and strengthened; and many of them became utterly convinced that untainted Orthodox Christianity itself was primarily responsible for the country's survival. Under those circumstances, it should be no surprise that the early decades of the seventeenth century produced a resurgence of interest in religion and a considerable variety of official and personal commitments to defend, shore up, or reform Russian Orthodoxy. Many Russians apparently concluded that the Time of Troubles

had been caused primarily by the "silence" of the Russian people—that is, by the failure of the Orthodox faithful to oppose an evil or false tsar. As a result, at least some of them resolved not to remain silent in the future if they saw a tsar deviate from or threaten the existence of "true Christianity."

The idea that the Russian people were themselves personally responsible for the fate of the realm and for Christianity itself made very significant progress during the Time of Troubles. The civil war saw tens of thousands of Russians who were willing to stand up to oppose false tsars, setting a powerful precedent and greatly reinforcing the potentially destabilizing aspect of early modern Russian political culture that allowed even lowly Orthodox subjects to oppose erring or evil rulers. According to Paul Bushkovitch, the Time of Troubles actually undermined the older Orthodox notion of complete harmony between tsar and people and contributed to the growing split between the state and the nation. Moreover, when all national institutions failed during the Troubles, Russia's salvation came at the hands of the people themselves, adding to patriotic Russians' growing sense of personal responsibility to defend their homeland as the last refuge of true, untainted Christianity. According to Michael Cherniavsky, the Time of Troubles inevitably led to some separation in the minds of the faithful between the sacred mission of "Holy Russia" and the temporary, sometimes evil occupants of the tsarist or patriarchal thrones.

Scholarship on the intriguing notion of "Holy Russia" has traditionally focused on the sixteenth century or even earlier as its point of origin. The first usage of the term that can be precisely dated, however, is 1619; and it was, significantly, associated with Patriarch Filaret's return from Poland-a joyful event marking the symbolic end to the Time of Troubles. The term actually came into common usage only in the decades after the Time of Troubles and was associated especially with the Don cossacks-those "Christian crusaders" who had played such an important role in the salvation of Holy Russia during the Troubles. All things considered, therefore, it seems highly probable that the term originated in the growing realization during the civil war that the Russian land and its people, not just the tsar, had important roles to play in safeguarding the country's sacred mission. In other words, if Russia was ruled by a sacred shepherd, then his flock and the land were sacred too. Daniel Rowland has demonstrated that the notion of the Russian people as a holy people or God's chosen people was already in play during the sixteenth century. In addition, Nancy Shields Kollmann has charted the increasing use of such terms as the Russian "state" and the Russian "land" during the Time of Troubles and has detected in them an intentional distinction from the tsar's authority and the central government. According to Cherniavsky, what remained in the Time of Troubles "after Tsar and State and

Church hierarchy were gone" was nothing less than the "concentrated essence of Russia" or Holy Russia. After the Troubles, much of Russia's religious resurgence was apparently animated by such an idea. The early Romanovs, deeply fearful of such popular attitudes, saw clearly enough the subversive potential of any notion of Holy Russia that was separate from the person of the tsar; it was a dangerous concept that might further empower the ruler's lowly but devout subjects to dare to judge or even to oppose his actions. For that reason, the central government was careful to avoid use of the term.

Over the course of the seventeenth century, as many of the tsars' unhappy subjects periodically challenged the oppressive state and church's growing aloofness, rationalization, and bureaucratization in such outbursts as the 1648 riots, the Russian schism, and the Razin rebellion (1670–71), an increasingly nervous ruling elite came to the conclusion that Russia's traditional, God-centered ideology was responsible for much of the unrest. As a result, starting with Peter the Great's father, Tsar Aleksei, most of the court and aristocracy (followed by the gentry once the Ulozhenie satisfied them) gradually abandoned the traditional ideology in favor of one that would compel the allegiance of all subjects and maintain stability. Not surprisingly, they gravitated toward a more Westernstyle ideology in which "the ruler was the sole judge alike of God's will and the public good" and in which "to advocate putting God's law above the law of the state" would be treated as "an act of treason."

It was Peter the Great, of course, who completed the transformation of Russia from a sacred realm to a secular empire and, in the process, completely replaced the old, potentially destablizing ideology with his own vision of a "well-ordered police state" based on the impersonal rule of law. The bulk of the ruling elite and gentry saw the utility for themselves of that transition and went along with it without much protest. Try as they might, however, Peter and his successors were unable to eradicate completely all vestiges of the troublesome old nonsecular political culture. Religious dissent became the rallying point for many discontented elements of Russian society and seriously undermined popular loyalty to both church and state. Opponents of the Petrine empire and the very heavy burden it placed on its subjects not infrequently rose in rebellion in the name of the "true faith," the "true tsar," and "Holy Russia." In fact, the term Holy Russia had a very long life as what Cherniavsky called the "myth of enslaved masses."

The rapid reconstruction of a highly effective fiscal-military state in the years following the Time of Troubles further enhanced the status of the tsar and patriarch and led to the dizzying growth of the Russian empire and its secular and clerical bureaucracies. Even more than in the sixteenth century, the ambitious

new regime and its church grossly overburdened the Russian people and, in the process, helped produce a rigidly stratified, near-caste society. The rapid growth of state and church power also produced a widening split between the Russian people and the increasingly impersonal central government and church that intruded more and more into the lives of the tsar's subjects. Even before the schismatics broke with the official church and state, there were a number of sharp outbursts of popular violence directed against the growing bureaucratization, corruption, and arrogance of the autocratic government and the Russian Orthodox Church. Especially alarming to many Russians was the Romanov regime's determination to rationalize the state order and to remove the tsar from all vulgar contacts—in effect, abandoning the tsar's traditional role of "merciful ruler" and protector of his people. In such popular disturbances as the 1648 riots and the activities of the spiritual dissenters we can detect many Russian people stubbornly clinging to their "traditional, highly personalized and theocratic ideological system" in spite of the regime's relentless efforts to create a more rational, impersonal, and ultimately secularized state order.

The growing split between the tsarist government and the official church on the one hand and the Russian people on the other, which was noticeable by the mid-seventeenth century, became a permanent feature of the Romanov era and had disastrous consequences, the effects of which were still being felt in the twentieth century. As the state-building of the Romanovs focused increasingly on meeting the needs of an expanding empire, the condition or needs of the tsar's subjects were never seriously taken into account. In addition to overburdening the Russian people and alienating many of them from church and state in the process, Geoffrey Hosking has reminded us that the tsar's government failed utterly to nurture the development of "community associations which commonly provide the basis for the civic sense of nationhood." Instead, the rapid growth of the Russian empire actually increased the huge gap between elite society and the Russian people and impeded the formation of a Russian nation. Some of the origins of that tragic split can be traced back to the sixteenth-century development of autocracy, imperialism, and enserfment. Nevertheless, Russia's first civil war also played a critically important role. In addition to the tremendous boost it gave to the oppressive autocracy and the heavy-handed church of the Romanovs, the traumatic Time of Troublesironically—also helped give voice to critics of the path being taken by the central government and the official church. It is no exaggeration to say that the Troubles contributed significantly to the dissenting tradition that produced such things as the 1648 riots and the Russian schism and that continued to haunt the Russian empire until its demise.

Soviet scholars traditionally lumped the events of the Time of Troubles together with later cossack-led frontier uprisings such as the Razin rebellion (1670-71) and the Pugachev rebellion (1773-74), regarding them all as "peasant wars" or social revolutions against serfdom. That faulty interpretation has, among other things, seriously distorted the study of the relationship of the Bolotnikov rebellion and the Time of Troubles to those later uprisings. A closer look at that relationship is worthwhile in trying to assess the legacy of Russia's first civil war. We have already determined that the civil war was not a social revolution, and Michael Khodarkovsky has demonstrated that the Razin rebellion was also not a "peasant war" or a struggle of the masses against serfdom. The Pugachev rebellion, on the other hand, which occurred at a later time when the overburdened serfs really were treated as little more than chattel, did see significant serf participation and did take aim directly against serfdom and "evil" gentry masters. It contained powerful elements of social revolution and thus was qualitatively different from the earlier uprisings to which it is usually compared. Nevertheless, the Pugachev rebellion did share certain characteristics with and was influenced by both the Time of Troubles and the Razin rebellion.

In ways similar to Russia's first civil war, the Razin and Pugachev rebellions both saw the southern frontier go up in flames as cossacks and non-Russian minorities reacted violently to the relentless pressure of a central government determined to expand its control deeper into the frontier zone and to harness more tightly that region's population. Just as in the Time of Troubles, disgruntled cossacks took the lead in the Razin and Pugachev rebellions, and those uprisings were to some extent anticolonial in nature. Repetition of such patterns tells us something about continuing instability on Russia's southern frontier throughout the early modern period and something about Russian imperialism; but generalizations based on such comparisons have only limited value in assessing the period of the Time of Troubles. Even though Russia's first civil war also started out as a frontier rebellion, it quickly expanded into a huge, long-lasting civil war, whereas the Razin and Pugachev rebellions never overcame their frontier or sectional character, never seriously threatened the heartland, and were ruthlessly suppressed relatively quickly.

A far more revealing point of comparison concerns rebel consciousness. In ways strikingly reminiscent of the Time of Troubles, many Razin and Pugachev supporters were motivated to a great extent by their religious beliefs. We have already observed that the religious revival produced by the Troubles can be regarded as one of the sources of opposition to the Romanovs—from rioters in 1648 to religious dissenters to cossack-led frontier uprisings. Although there are good reasons to be skeptical of the emphasis placed in traditional scholarship on Old Believers as the inciters, organizers, and leaders of the Razin and Pugachev rebellions; there is no denying the presence and energetic activity of Russian schismatics within the ranks of those powerful movements. Many early modern Russian rebels were undoubtedly just as troubled by the empire's lack of spiritual orientation as they were by corruption and the gross exploitation of the masses presided over by church and state. Some rebels really did regard themselves as representatives of God's "chosen people" who had been betrayed by a wicked ruling elite that casually abandoned Russia's all-important spiritual mission in favor of the fleeting benefits and glory of a secular empire. In this context, it was certainly no coincidence that opponents of the Romanovs rallied so often behind pretenders masquerading as "true tsars" or their representatives.

The real source of Russian pretenderism, which became a chronic problem by the eighteenth century, was the miraculous story of the "true tsar" Dmitrii's multiple "resurrections" during Russia's first civil war. Emilian Pugachev was, of course, the most famous Russian pretender after the Time of Troubles. Interestingly enough, even though he claimed to be Catherine the Great's unfortunate husband, Peter III, some of Pugachev's followers regarded him as nothing less than the "second coming" of Stenka Razin. In fact, both Pugachev and Razin were in a very real sense spiritual reincarnations of Russia's original pretender—Dmitrii. It is quite striking that, just like Tsar Dmitrii, Razin and Pugachev were both regarded by many Russians as immortal, Christ-like deliverers of the people from an overbearing and evil regime; and both were hailed, just as Dmitrii had been, as "resplendent suns" with magical powers who—even if defeated—would return again with God's help to champion the cause of Russia's faithful Orthodox masses.

Early modern Russia's ruling classes reacted in horror and incomprehension to the Razin and Pugachev rebellions and tried to dismiss them—in Aleksandr Pushkin's famous phrase—as "senseless and merciless." As a result, the lords came to fear the Russian people as irrational, uncontrollable, and sometimes even irreligious. To protect themselves from the violent and superstitious masses, much of privileged Russian society not only strongly supported harsh repression of all rebels but also became increasingly reactionary supporters of autocracy and serfdom. Try as they might, most of the Romanov empire's increasingly secularized elite utterly failed to comprehend the Russian people's mystical, nonsecular ideas about the meaning and purpose of the sacred realm they had so bravely defended against false tsars and evil foreigners during the Time of Troubles.

It is, of course, well known that some thoughtful members of imperial Russia's "ruling class" eventually recoiled from the harsh treatment and miserable conditions of the bulk of the tsar's subjects and formed an intellectual,

conscience-based opposition to autocracy and serfdom. Ironically, that "revolutionary intelligentsia" also deeply misunderstood the source of much of the anger and alienation of the Russian people whose cause they so ardently championed. Inspired by what they believed had been the heroic resistance of the masses to serfdom under the leadership of Bolotnikov, Razin, and Pugachev, many radicals in the nineteenth century made energetic but ineffective (and very frustrating) efforts to stir the people against the imperial government by conjuring the memory of those past rebel leaders as champions of the lower classes. Fixated on purely secular notions of state, society, materialism, and class conflict, even the most sincere "friends of the people"-from Populists to Socialist Revolutionaries to Marxists-usually failed to bridge the huge gap in consciousness that separated many of them, as members of the elite, from the empire's long-suffering, faithful Orthodox masses. Sadly, that split between the Russian people and their "ruling class," which developed in the era of the Time of Troubles and deepened with each successive popular uprising, did not close in 1917 or during the "dictatorship of the proletariat" that followed the Revolution. In light of that, it really should not be surprising that most Russian and Soviet historians who studied early modern popular uprisings, including the so-called Bolotnikov rebellion, could not bridge that gap, either.

In conclusion, Russia's first civil war left a profound and complex legacy. Even as memories of that nightmarish experience gradually faded away, its impact continued to reverberate for generations. Looking back, it is possible to trace many of the problems associated with Russia's historical "backwardness" and the poverty and oppression of its people under both the tsars and the commissars to the aftermath of the civil war carried out in Tsar Dmitrii's name. Aleksei (tsar), 314-15, 319, 321, 324 Aleksin, 128-30, 188, 219, 230-33, 240-42 ambassadors, 224, 261, 275, 285. See also diplomacy aristocrats, 18-19, 21-22, 30-32, 41-42, 64-66, 106, 124, 130, 133, 140, 143-44, 147, 163, 186, 205, 216, 259, 271, 293, 295, 297, 299, 303-4, 319, 324, 325, 327-28. See also boyars; courtiers; elites Arkhangelsk, 284 armies, Russian, 14, 16, 21-30, 103-6; condition and morale, 31, 57-58, 61-62, 72-73, 78, 100-104, 106, 108-9, 123-24, 128, 173-74, 183, 185, 195, 203, 233, 317-19; hunger in, 100, 104, 112, 128, 228-31, 245, 250-52; modernization of, 25-27, 29, 148, 318; salaries, 22-27, 57, 98, 103, 115, 181, 188-89, 208, 264, 273, 280-81, 297-98; of Tsar Boris, 91, 95, 100-109, 112-19, 123-24; rebellion against Tsar Boris, 128-31; of Tsar Dmitrii, 140, 148; of Tsar Vasilii Shuiskii, 178, 180-82, 184-86, 188-89, 192, 197, 202-3, 216-19, 221, 230, 232, 235, 238, 240-41, 255-56, 259-60, 268-69; of Tsar Mikhail Romanov, 308-11, 318. See also rebel military forces campaigns and battles: campaigns, 24, 72, 106-12, 149, 183, 196-97, 216-17, 234-35, 237; battles, 109, 113-15, 182-85, 188-89, 197, 203, 205-6, 208-9, 230-32, 238, 240-41, 250-51, 254, 259-60, 268-69, 273, 296, 307. See also plunder; sieges military engineering, 97, 104, 114, 196, 199, 220-21, 243-45; battering rams, 220; dams, 245, 251-52; fortification construction, 59, 114, 121, 179, 199, 220-21, 250, 268; siege towers, 97, 164, 220-21. See also fortifications; fortresses; guliai gorod; sieges officers: commanders (see also rebel commanders; voevodas), 17-18, 21-22, 24,

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