

he himself never masqueraded as the sovereign. He merely claimed, like Bolotnikov before him, to be fighting on the tsar's behalf in order to rid the country of treason. To his followers, however, he was a *batko* or *batiushka*, a father figure who would deliver his children from their oppressors. They saw in Stenka a man of more than human qualities, a messiah sent by Providence to lead them to the Promised Land, and the government launched a vigorous campaign to shatter this image. Razin was denounced as a brigand and an apostate, luring the ignorant into heresy and damnation. A striking example of this counterpropaganda was the following charter issued by the patriarch in September 1670:

From time immemorial the Devil, who hates everything good, has filled his vessel with flattery and cunning and poured out his bile and poisoned the hearts of the faithful. He has stung the flesh of the innocent like a viper emitting its venom. And now from the cave of vipers comes the bandit and traitor and desecrator of the cross, the Don Cossack Stenka Razin. With his cursed accomplices he has caught true Christians in his embrace like a serpent and pulled them down with him into the ditch of ruination. Like a carnivorous lion on the prowl, he has been gnawing at them, not at their flesh and possessions but at their very souls, despoiling them of their oath of allegiance to the Great Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince, Alexis Mikhailovich. Having lost the fear of Almighty God and forsaken the Holy Orthodox and Apostolic Church, and having forgotten his oath to the Great Sovereign, the brigand has betrayed him, the Great Sovereign, and the whole Muscovite state.⁸²

But efforts to discredit Razin were of little avail. The popular desire for a redeemer was too strong to be easily dissipated, and a host of pretenders appeared during Alexis' reign to challenge the existing regime. In the district of Tver, for instance, peasants wearing red shawls and armed with muskets carried around in a sedan chair a man whom they called the real sovereign.⁸³

Razin was quick to exploit the situation. Following Bolotnikov's example, he brought forward a new "tsarevich," falsely reported dead, who was marching with him to Moscow to recover the throne. What was the basis for this story? In March 1669 the tsar's wife, Maria Miloslavskaya, had died, followed ten months later by the death of their elder son, Alexis Alekseevich, at the

age of sixteen. In June 1670, by an odd coincidence, the Tsarevich Semyon, aged four, also died. That this succession of princely deaths at a time of acute tension should have stimulated rumors of foul play is not surprising. Razin encouraged the rumors. More than that, he spread the word that Tsarevich Alexis had escaped "the violent hands of the boyars and great lords, and taken his refuge to him, adding that he, Stenko, was come by order of the Great Czar to put to death all the boyars, nobles, senators, and other great ones (that were too near his Majesty) as enemies and traitors of their country."⁸⁴ And "to color the lie the better," as the English narrative puts it, he employed a simple ruse. On one of his barges, covered with red velvet, he kept a young Circassian prisoner, about the same age as the tsarevich, whom he claimed to be the rightful heir to the throne, riding with him to eliminate the traitors. The government countered that the tsarevich was indeed in the grave and that Razin was an ordinary cutthroat trying to conceal his crimes behind a bogus pretender. But the story caught on, with the result that "the ignorant people were inflamed to fight furiously, and those of them that were taken prisoners underwent death with a wonderful resolution as being possessed with the persuasion of dying for a good cause." The authorities responded with increasing brutality, so that in Smolensk a citizen was hanged merely for stating that he had seen the tsarevich in Razin's company.⁸⁵

In a second barge—decked out in black velvet—Razin displayed yet another imposter. This one posed as the disgraced Patriarch Nikon, whom the tsar had banished to a monastery in the remote north. Razin had actually sent emissaries to Nikon with a promise to restore him to office in return for his cooperation, but Nikon, who like Luther in Germany would have no truck with peasant rebellion, refused to see them. So Stenka resorted to an impostor, and moving upriver, urged the people to kiss the cross to the tsarevich and to recognize Nikon as patriarch. Again the government reacted sharply, and a village priest was hanged after confessing that he had "uttered words in praise of the former Patriarch Nikon and prayed to God for him and for the rebel Cossacks."⁸⁶

It may seem odd that Razin should wish to collaborate with a patriarch whose reforming zeal had alienated a broad segment of

the lower classes. There are some, indeed, who regard this as Stenka's worst blunder, costing him the support of the Old Believers, which might have altered the outcome of the rebellion. The error is usually attributed to Razin's political naiveté and indifference to spiritual matters, and up to a point this may be true. But on closer inspection his maneuver does not appear quite so ill-conceived. For Nikon too was a sworn enemy of the boyars and of the existing political order. He was born on the Volga of Russian and Mordva peasants, and his background differed little from that of the typical insurgent. To the aristocracy, moreover, he was an unwelcome upstart whose position in the church and influence on the tsar they deeply resented and were determined to counteract. Nikon, of course, resisted such designs. He resisted the growing domination of the state in church affairs and yearned for the old theocratic monarchy of the early Muscovite princes. After his disgrace he severely condemned the Code of 1649, in which the emerging order of secular absolutism had received legal sanction. In all this he and the rebels saw eye to eye. It was easy for Razin to cast him as the victim of a boyar conspiracy. Was it not through their treachery that he had been deposed? To all who opposed the established order Nikon could thus become a martyr and could, despite his hated reforms, be annexed to the rebel cause.

It is true that the Old Believers played only a small role in the insurrection. Razin was denounced in government charters as a heretic and devil's disciple but never as a schismatic, and known links between the schism, or *raskol*, and his movement were limited to sporadic participation of Old Believers in the Nizhni Novgorod area and to the Old Believer rising in the Solovetsky Monastery on the White Sea, in which a number of Stenka's veterans took an active part.⁸⁷ But if few schismatics joined Razin's revolt, this had little to do with his espousal of Nikon. It was merely because the *raskol* had not yet become a major force of social protest in the borderlands. Along the Don and the Volga there was, to be sure, a strong atmosphere of religious dissent which doubtless helped the rebels attract a following, but till the late 1670s the number of Old Believers in the south was still small. On the other hand, it was more than mere coincidence that the territory of future militant Old Belief should overlap so

extensively with the territory of Razin's movement or that Razin should appear in future Old Believer legend as an ardent schismatic who had received Avvakum's blessing. Indeed, in the immediate aftermath of his defeat social rebellion and religious dissent were to merge in a single current which would erupt with unprecedented violence in the century to come.

6. Simbirsk

By late summer of 1670 Razin was at the height of his success. His revolt had spread up the Volga almost to its bend—a stretch of some 800 miles—and threatened to move toward Moscow. Astrakhan had been captured, and Cherney Yar, Tsaritsyn, Saratov, and Samara had opened their gates without resistance. Razin's popularity was immense. He was looked on as a sort of Robin Hood, come to avenge the poor on the property and lives of the wealthy. His program, for all its vagueness, had widespread appeal. He promised to "remove" the boyars and root out treason, to eliminate state officials and restore the ancient bond between tsar and people. Townsmen and peasants, tribesmen and vagabonds greeted him as their liberator. By mid-September his legendary prowess and seditious letters had attracted nearly 20,000 adherents, a motley army driven by anger and a craving for vengeance. His coming let loose the fury of the lower classes, and it swept toward the capital, spreading chaos in its wake. Arson and looting flared out of control. The Volga trade was thoroughly disrupted. Razin, in the words of a contemporary, "wrought great devastation . . . and ordered many to be killed."⁸⁸

The government, however, did not remain idle. After the debacle at Astrakhan, troops were collected from all over the country to put down the rising. To lead them the tsar's choice fell on Prince Yuri Dolgoruky, a seasoned officer about sixty years old, who had proven his ability in the recent war with Poland. It was the same Dolgoruky who, as legend had it, had executed Stenka's brother, thus arousing his thirst for revenge. Dolgoruky's army consisted largely of gentry cavalry; and though the lack of infantry was a drawback of which he was to complain more than

once in the coming campaign, the foot soldiers on hand were of good quality. Many were veterans of the Polish War, and some had been trained by foreign officers, though their field commanders were nearly all Russian noblemen. The troops, moreover, were equipped with up-to-date muskets and artillery and were inspected by the tsar himself before being sent against the rebels.

Razin's prolonged stay in Astrakhan had given the authorities a welcome reprieve. But his ascent of the Volga had been so rapid that by September 1, when Dolgoruky left Moscow, he was already approaching Simbirsk, the last major stronghold before Kazan, where the river turns westward toward the capital. It was at Simbirsk that the fate of the rebellion was decided. Founded by Alexis in 1648, Simbirsk (now Ulyanovsk, the birthplace of Lenin) boasted of strong natural defenses, with a citadel perched on a terraced hill high above the rest of the town. Its *voevoda*, Prince Ivan Miloslavsky, was an able officer and administrator who, in contrast to his downstream colleagues, had won the unswerving loyalty of his garrison. Four regiments of *streltsy* were at his disposal, as well as a few hundred noblemen who had fled to Simbirsk from the surrounding countryside on news of Razin's approach. In addition, the *voevoda* of nearby Alatyry had come to join him with a small party of landowners. But his strongest asset was a cavalry detachment of Russian gentry and Tatar *murzy* under Prince Yuri Bariatinsky, the officer who had dispersed Vaska Us's band four years earlier. Bariatinsky, traveling at breakneck speed, had arrived in Simbirsk on August 31, only four days in advance of the rebels.

Razin's army outnumbered the defenders by about four to one. But apart from a seasoned core of Cossacks and *streltsy*, it was a heterogeneous and poorly equipped collection, totally destitute of training and discipline. Though most had joined voluntarily, some had been forced into battle on pain of death. Their arms were an odd assortment of cudgels, spears, sickles, axes, pitchforks, staves, and stones. Prone to drinking and looting, they were extremely untrustworthy and liable to panic when opposed by regular military formations. Yet their numbers compensated to some extent for these deficiencies; and more important, they enjoyed the support of the local population and, except in siege operations, were able to put their guerrilla methods to effective use.

On September 4 the rebels sailed past Simbirsk, singing a hymn of war:

We have come to claim our freedom,
With our *ataman* Stenka Razin,
From wicked judges and officials.⁸⁹

They camped above the town for the night, and Razin planned his attack. The following morning he marched on Simbirsk and tried to take it by storm. Bariatinsky rode out with his cavalry to meet him. The ensuing battle raged till sundown, but Bariatinsky, short of infantry, could not mount a counterattack and was finally forced to withdraw across the Sura River and make for Kazan to obtain reinforcements. Miloslavsky, fearing that the residents of the outer city would now open their gates to the insurgents, retired to the citadel, in which the barracks, cathedral, government buildings, and houses of the wealthier citizens were located. The citadel was well defended with artillery and encircled by a wooden wall and a moat. The *voevoda*, determined to hold out at all costs, buttressed the wall with sacks of earth, flour, and salt. It was essential to delay the rebels long enough for Dolgoruky, in Kazan, to deploy his army against them. "Though death may come, I will not surrender to the brigand," vowed Miloslavsky.⁹⁰ Razin meanwhile entered the outer city unopposed. Following the established pattern, the inhabitants were proclaimed free men and a Cossack-style regime was introduced amid general jubilation.

As usual, the news of Stenka's victory drew an influx of fresh recruits to the rebel camp. Peasants, tribesmen, and barge haulers flocked to Simbirsk, anxious to take part in the assault on the fortress. Razin, opposed by some 4000 well-entrenched defenders, made careful preparations for the attack. Carts filled with wood, hay, and straw were brought up and emptied into the moat beside the wall. On September 15 this material was set alight and the fortress encircled by fire. While the defenders struggled to put it out, the rebels attacked through a thick screen of smoke. Scaling ladders were thrown upon the wall, and waves of insurgents tried to clamber up, only to be mowed down by the men within. Miloslavsky's troops, like their commander, fought "with extraordinary courage,"⁹¹ raining cannonballs down on the

enemy and working feverishly to repair their damaged defenses. The women of the fortress hurried to the wall with ammunition and with water to put out the flames and to refresh the defenders. By nightfall the assault had been rebuffed.

The second assault came three days later, under cover of darkness. The Cossacks threw incendiary missiles filled with oil and kindling into the citadel, while Mari and Mordva hunters shot burning arrows into the air which fell on the roofs inside. Much of the fortress was soon in flames. "Here and there," an eyewitness noted, "the flames were high, and from the town they brought canvas and poured out water."⁹² The defenders were sent scurrying to put out the fires, and a number of rebels mounted the wall but were beaten off after ferocious hand-to-hand fighting. Losses were very heavy on both sides. But the rebels did not give up. A third assault was made a few days later, again at night to escape the deadly fire from within. It was preceded by a prolonged barrage from cannon mounted on earthen ramparts erected alongside the citadel wall. As before, flaming missiles were hurled over the wall, and tinder was thrown into the moat and set alight, but again the attack was rebuffed. The defenders, who knew that they were fighting for their lives, were sustained by the hope that Bariatinsky might return at any moment with reinforcements. Yet the strain was beginning to tell on their nerves, and there was growing anxiety over the dwindling supply of food and munitions. Bariatinsky would have to come soon if Simbirsk was to be saved.

The month-long siege of Simbirsk saw the climax of Razin's revolt. While the siege was in progress, large rebel detachments, each led by a Cossack *ataman*, fanned out over the surrounding districts, inciting the inhabitants to attack the towns, monasteries, and estates. During this period the rebellion even spread across the Volga into western Siberia, where, in the words of the Tobolsk *voevoda*, Cossack bands distributed "alluring rebel leaflets to seduce the ignorant and propertyless."⁹³ It has been argued that by dispersing his forces in this manner Razin committed a serious, perhaps even fatal, error. If he had used all his men to storm the Simbirsk citadel, he might have been able to capture it, thereby opening the way to Kazan and Nizhni Novgorod, and perhaps to the capital itself. On the other hand, hav-

ing taken every other Volga town without a struggle, Razin may not have anticipated the determined resistance he met at Simbirsk. Moreover, he was anxious to broaden his base of support, convinced that only in this way could he win a lasting victory. It was for this reason that he had sent his envoys to the Ukrainian Cossacks and the Kazan Tatars and sent leaflets into every corner. Thus, rather than concentrate all his forces at one point, perhaps he believed that by sending out detachments in every direction he was ensuring his mastery over the country at large. It is questionable, in any case, whether he was able to control the movements of his restless lieutenants, always on the lookout for loot and adventure.

Three of the rebel detachments were of particular importance and merit our special attention. The first, led by Mishka Kharitonov, struck out to the southwest, captured Penza and Saransk, and put their *voevodas* to the sword. At Penza, Kharitonov was joined by another Don Cossack, Vaska Fedorov, who came with his band from Saratov. Together they made for Verkhni and Nizhni Lomov, killed the *voevodas*, and wreaked havoc on the merchants and officials. A second detachment, under Prokopi Ivanov, traveled up the Volga and, skirting Kazan, seized the town of Kozmodemiansk, whose inhabitants, led by a priest, had risen on their approach. The largest detachment was led by Maksim Osipov and numbered several thousand, predominantly peasants and tribesmen with a small nucleus of Cossacks. Heading northwest toward Nizhni Novgorod, Osipov sacked the town of Alaty, then set it ablaze. The *voevoda* and his family, together with the local nobility, were all burned alive in the cathedral, where they had taken refuge. Osipov entered Kurmysh and Yadrin without firing a shot but was forced to bypass Arzamas, as Dolgoruky had just arrived there from Kazan with a large troop of cavalry augmented by gentry from the surrounding countryside. The Cossack leaders, as a rule, tried to avoid direct clashes with government regulars, for though their peasant and native followers knew the country and had the advantage of numbers, they were virtually useless against disciplined formations. They were at their best in guerrilla warfare, erecting roadblocks, obstructing rivers, and ambushing parties of landowners on their way to join the government forces; and it was by such

maneuvers that they succeeded in delaying Bariatinsky, who was hurrying with reinforcements to lift the siege of Simbirsk.⁹⁴

During September, as Razin strove to reduce the fortress, a full-scale jacquerie raged out of control throughout the middle Volga. In such districts as Alatyr and Arzamas, Saransk and Kurmysh, manor houses were invaded by mobs of peasants and tribesmen on whose merest whim hung the lives of the owners and their families. Unpopular landlords were butchered on the spot, together with their wives and children.⁹⁵ Others were spared if they surrendered their money and belongings. Many took to the woods, whose shelter was closest to hand, or fled to the nearest town, where if they were in luck, government troops had arrived to protect them. In most of the towns, however, it was the rebels who held sway, having massacred the governors and officials. A few *voevodas*—those of Kadom and Kerensk are examples—managed to flee to safety or, in exceptional cases, were spared by the residents as enlightened administrators.⁹⁶

Meanwhile, as Razin prepared his fourth assault on the Simbirsk citadel, Bariatinsky arrived from Kazan with a fresh and well-equipped army on October 1, 1670. For a month Miloslavsky had defied every rebel effort to capture the fortress. The delay was crucial, for it not only allowed Dolgoruky to marshal his forces but also enabled Bariatinsky to return in time to save the city. Stenka was informed of Bariatinsky's approach and rode out to meet him with a detachment of 6000 men, leaving the rest of his army to continue the siege. His troops, however, were not the same as those which had swept up the Volga with such terrifying speed. What was once a powerful force of Cossacks and musketeers had been fatally diluted by an ill-assorted mob of peasants, tribesmen, boatmen, convicts, and flotsam from the neighboring towns. Unreliable soldiers, good perhaps at the first onrush, they were easily discouraged if not at once successful and were hardly a match for Bariatinsky's picked troops, which, besides the usual horsemen and *streltsy*, included some of the tsar's best regiments, the cream of the Russian army, trained in the European manner and equipped with the latest handguns and artillery.

As Bariatinsky deployed his troops, the rebels forded the Sviaga River and rushed in to attack, screaming their battle cries

and urged on by drums seized during earlier encounters with the government. These sounds, however, were quickly drowned out by the roar of Bariatinsky's artillery, which launched a terrific bombardment that tore gaping holes in the ranks of the attackers. Peasants and tribesmen dropped their primitive weapons and scattered toward the river for safety. Only the Cossacks offered serious resistance, but they too were soon forced to give ground before Bariatinsky's cannonade. As the rebels fled, Bariatinsky ordered his dragoons into action, and the dead began to pile up. Razin himself, wounded in the head and leg, owed his life to a brave Cossack who used his own body to protect his fallen leader. Carried off the field by his men, Stenka was taken to the main army besieging the citadel. Meanwhile thousands of terror-stricken peasants streamed across the Sviaga in full flight, heading for the safety of the forests beyond. More than a hundred, however, were taken prisoner and executed on the spot. Four cannon, fourteen standards, and a number of drums were also lost to the enemy.

Thus Razin had suffered his first defeat. It was shattering, even decisive, and worse was still to come. On October 3 Bariatinsky hastily threw two bridges across the Sviaga, over which he led his army to liberate Miloslavsky and his weary soldiers in the beleaguered fortress. The fourth assault was still in progress when he mounted his attack, driving the insurgents into full retreat. He overtook them on the banks of the Sviaga, and on October 4 a bloody battle was fought that lasted all day. Once again Bariatinsky used his artillery and cavalry with deadly efficiency against the frightened and demoralized rebels, who broke in panic and scattered in all directions. When all was lost the Cossacks fled with their wounded *ataman* to their boats, pursued by Bariatinsky's horsemen. There was a great crush at the moorings; many of the craft capsized and hundreds of rebels were drowned. Yet most of the Cossacks, Razin among them, managed to escape, leaving the peasants and tribesmen behind to certain death. Bariatinsky showed no mercy for the conquered mob. Reprisals began at once on the banks of the river, where hundreds of rebels—many already wounded—were hanged, quartered, or shot. Others were hooked onto posts on wooden rafts and floated down the river as a lesson to their sympathizers.

About the same time, a similar disaster overtook Razin's followers on the Don. Toward the end of September, while the rebels were preparing their last assault on Simbirsk, Frolka Razin collected an army and sailed up the Don into the grain-producing districts of south-central Muscovy. His objective was twofold: to reopen the supply routes blocked by the government and to enlarge the scope of the rebellion. Frolka's thrust formed the second prong of the Cossack campaign into the heartland, each following a major waterway along which a mass of discontented humanity was concentrated; and it had probably been ordered by his brother in yet another effort to broaden the base of his movement. Toward the same end fresh overtures were made to the Ukrainian Cossacks to mount a concerted drive against Moscow, but again they fell on deaf ears—indeed, the Ukrainian hetman, far from collaborating with the insurgents, sent a thousand men to assist the government in crushing them.⁹⁷

As Frolka approached Voronezh, at the headwaters of the Don, there occurred nearby one of the few episodes of the rising in which a nobleman joined forces with the insurgents. In the town of Ostrogozhsk the commander of the garrison, Colonel Ivan Dzinkovsky, incited his troops to mutiny and executed the *voevoda* and his deputy. Dzinkovsky's motives are unclear, but as he had once been a confederate of Bogdan Khmel'nitsky, the famous hetman of the Ukraine, Razin's revolt perhaps reawakened in him old dreams of a united Cossack republic throughout the steppe. At any rate, he summoned a *krug* and urged the townsmen to "go with [Stenka] to Moscow and eliminate the traitors and boyars."⁹⁸ The mutiny soon spread to Olshansk, whose *voevoda* was put to death. But it got no further, for Dzinkovsky was arrested by one of his own officers, who had won control of the garrison. Soon after, Prince Grigori Romodanovsky, the tsar's most capable commander in the area, arrived with a large detachment and crushed all remaining resistance. Dzinkovsky, as a traitor to the tsar and to his class, was quartered alive, then hanged; and in their fury Romodanovsky's officers executed his wife as well. Apart from Dzinkovsky, only a handful of gentry cast their lot with the rebels, and all met a similar fate.⁹⁹

Frolka, meanwhile, was having troubles of his own. On Septem-

ber 27 he placed the town of Korotoyak under siege with every hope of success, but Prince Romodanovsky, fresh from his triumph at Ostrogozhsk, hurried to the scene and drove the Cossacks to flight. Like his brother on the Volga, Frolka took to his boats and sailed down the Don toward home.

7. Suppression

The defeats at Simbirsk and Korotoyak were grave setbacks to the rebel cause, for the two prongs of Razin's assault were simultaneously blunted and the Cossacks forced to withdraw to the peripheries from which they had come. Stenka himself, severely wounded and vanquished in combat, lost the aura of invincibility which had clung to him for more than three years. Yet his rebellion was far from over, for popular excitement once aroused was not easily subdued. In Kadom and Kurmysh, Saransk and Lomov, Kerensk and Tambov, the jacquerie continued for months to come. A number of Volga towns remained in rebel hands throughout the autumn and winter. Roving bands of Cossacks, peasants, and tribesmen went on burning, looting, and massacring, and dozens of pitched battles had to be fought before order was restored. In the meantime, the rebellion spread all the way to the Oka, sending shivers of fear through the citizens of the capital.

After Simbirsk, however, the tide turned unmistakably in favor of the government. Dolgoruky on the Volga and Romodanovsky on the Don pursued the bands of rebels and dispersed them one by one. To facilitate the task of repression, fresh regiments were collected from all over the country and sent to Kazan and Voronezh, headquarters of the punitive armies. Some were first inspected by Alexis himself on a field outside the capital; in the largest review, which took eight days to complete, some 60,000 men paraded before the tsar.¹⁰⁰ Fortunately for the government, the Polish War had ended before the revolt began, and a supply of experienced soldiers was available to crush it. In the next century major wars were to coincide with the risings of Bulavin and Pugachev, making the task of suppression much more difficult

for lack of troops and equipment. Alexis, by contrast, was able to dispatch some of his best units with up-to-date weapons against the insurgents. Tambov, for example, received an extra company of dragoons trained in the German manner and equipped with "thirty pairs of pistols with holsters and thirty carbines with slings and hooks," all of the latest European design.¹⁰¹

In the Volga theater of operations Dolgoruky had the benefit of two remarkable officers, Fyodor Leontiev and Prince Konstantin Shcherbatov. Acting as a team, they won a series of victories in which large numbers of rebels "were killed and captured, cannon, supplies, handguns, banners, and drums taken, and the captured bandits executed."¹⁰² One a prince and the other a service landowner, their collaboration was symbolic of the fusion, in progress since the Time of Troubles, of boyars and gentry into a single class of noblemen. Their primary mission was to intercept the detachment of Maksim Osipov, some ten or twelve thousand strong, which having swept through Alatyry, Kurmysh, and Yadrin, was heading toward Nizhni Novgorod. In early October Osipov, still ignorant of Razin's defeat at Simbirsk, laid siege to the Makariev Zheltovodsky Monastery near the confluence of the Volga and the Oka. Monasteries were frequent victims of rebel attacks, not because of their religious function (though this may have provoked some of the insurgent tribesmen) but because of their combined roles as landlords, trading centers, and outposts of Muscovite colonization. The Makariev Monastery, an affluent market and producer, attracted the insurgents mainly by its promise of booty. For ten days its monks and peasants put up a desperate resistance, but the rebels finally breached the walls and carried away rich plunder in money, livestock, and grain.

Osipov planned to move next on Nizhni Novgorod, but a messenger arrived with news of Razin's defeat, and he swung around and headed south, in the direction from which he had come. Approaching Arzamas, the field headquarters of Dolgoruky, he "began to think that the weather was unfavorable,"¹⁰³ so he skirted the town and made for Lyskovo and Murashkino, from which many of his peasant adherents originated. Until recently the two villages had belonged to Boris Morozov, tutor, brother-in-law, and favorite of Alexis, who had granted him vast

estates in the area. Gifts of crown lands in the Volga districts were becoming increasingly common, much to the chagrin of the peasants, whose condition after conversion to serfdom took a sharp turn for the worse. Morozov, for one, had tripled the quitrent (*obrok*) of his villagers and forced them to supply potash without payment. Earlier, his notorious profiteering had made him the chief target of the Moscow mob in the "salt rebellion" of 1648. When he died in 1664, Lyskovo and Murashkino reverted to the crown, but no improvement followed. The peasants continued to pay heavy taxes and to supply potash to the state for export and domestic sale. An indication of their poverty is that three out of four households owned no horses.¹⁰⁴ Small wonder, then, that Lyskovo and Murashkino saw some of the worst rioting of the rebellion. When Osipov passed through on his way to Nizhni Novgorod, he was met by a procession with icons, crosses, and bell-ringing, and hundreds of villagers joined him for the raid on the Makariev Monastery, having long coveted its rich possessions. Accomplishing their purpose, the rebels returned home to divide up the spoils.

But Shcherbatov and Leontiev were not far behind. On October 22 they reached Murashkino and defeated the rebels in a two-day battle in which 21 cannon, 880 cannonballs, and numerous muskets and banners were taken. Hundreds of captured rebels, mostly local peasants, were hanged or beheaded. Lyskovo experienced a similar ordeal, after which Leontiev and Shcherbatov informed Dolgoruky that the area had been "cleared of the brigands" and that the peasants had taken the oath to the tsar.¹⁰⁵ But the rising was not yet over. Still another battle occurred a few days later at Bolshaya Kondorat in which a well-armed government force inflicted a crushing defeat on the rebels. A witness reported that "on the fields and roads horses and wagons could not pass because of the corpses; so much blood was spilled that it ran in rivulets, as after a heavy rain." Government parties continued to sweep the countryside, mopping up isolated pockets of insurgents. By the end of November Dolgoruky could advise the tsar that the whole territory "from Simbirsk to Kazan and from Kazan to Moscow" had been pacified.¹⁰⁶ Osipov himself fled down the Volga but was captured in Tsaritsyn and hanged.

Meanwhile, Romodanovskiy was carrying out a similar mission

in the south. Rebel activity reached a climax here during October and November. Several towns, including Mayak and Tsarevo-Borisov, were taken by bands of insurgents who called on "all the common folk" to join their cause "lest we all perish because of them, the traitor boyars."¹⁰⁷ At the same time, Frolka Razin launched a new campaign up the Don. His target was Tambov, where he hoped to link up with the large detachment of Mishka Kharitonov, who was riding westward from the Volga toward Shatsk. In the past few decades the crown had granted many estates in this region to Russian and Tatar gentry, against whom the peasants harbored both national and social grievances. Thus if Frolka and Kharitonov could join forces, they might start an immense jacquerie throughout the area. Aware of the danger, Romodanovsky made every effort to stop them. Though hampered by wholesale desertions among the *strelety* and other petty servicemen of the garrison towns, and by incompetent *voevodas* who abandoned their posts or otherwise failed to rally their forces against the rebels, he was fortunate that the governors of two key strongpoints—Yakov Khitrovo of Tambov and Stepan Khrushchev of Kozlov—were capable men who, like Miloslavsky in Simbirsk, commanded the devotion of their troops. As a result, he was able to concentrate his own efforts against Kharitonov and disperse his band before it could reach Shatsk. Frolka meanwhile placed Tambov under siege, but his repeated attempts to storm the citadel were as fruitless as his brother's at Simbirsk. On December 3, after a five-week siege, the Cossacks finally penetrated the fortress, only to be repulsed by the timely arrival of two of Romodanovsky's detachments. After a bloody battle they fled through the adjacent forests, their adversaries in close pursuit. The next day the rebels were overtaken at the village of Boikino, and the two armies joined in a ferocious struggle. The government, outnumbered by three to one, suffered heavy losses. But rebel losses were even heavier, thanks to the superior artillery at Romodanovsky's disposal, and the Cossacks were forced to withdraw to their home territory on the Don. The rebellion had been halted before it could endanger the heartland. To the end, the central districts remained little affected, apart from sporadic and isolated rioting, which Romodanovsky had no difficulty in bringing under control.

Little by little the rebel army was reduced to a handful of exhausted bands, fleeing in terror from their pursuers. Hundreds of Cossacks were caught while trying to escape eastward to Siberia or westward to their Zaporozhian cousins on the Dnieper. Others hid out in the forests until the repressions were over. A few made the long journey to the White Sea to join the beleaguered monks in defending the Solovetsky Monastery against a government invasion. The majority, however, were hunted down and executed or banished to Siberia or the frozen north. A contemporary observer estimated that 100,000 insurgents lost their lives in combat and a similar number in the repressions that followed. Though this is surely an exaggeration, the number of dead nevertheless rose into the tens of thousands.¹⁰⁸

The brutality of the repressions by far exceeded the atrocities committed by the insurgents. Where rebel violence was largely spontaneous, occurring amid the breakdown of local authority, the violence of the government was a calculated policy ordered and approved by the tsar to terrorize the populace into submission and to discourage future outbursts. Captured rebels were impaled on stakes, nailed to boards, torn to shreds by fleshhooks, and flogged or strangled to death. Throughout the main theaters of the rising, public hanging, quartering, disemboweling, beheading, and breaking on the wheel went on for many months. Rebel leaders were decapitated in market squares or strung up at town gates for display. Arms and legs were amputated and nostrils torn out with iron pincers. Countless bodies were hung by a rib on metal hooks and set floating down the rivers as a grisly warning to the population. The paths of Dolgoruky and Romodanovsky were marked by gibbets, corpses, and burning villages. In some districts where reprisals were especially brutal, the population was decimated. Thus in Lyskovo and Murashkino 35 percent of the inhabitants died in battle, 30 percent fled, 7 percent were impressed into the army, and 4 percent were executed.¹⁰⁹ The cruelest scenes, however, were reported in the town of Arzamas, where Dolgoruky maintained his field headquarters. "The place was terrible to behold," wrote the anonymous Englishman from the *Queen Esther*,

and had the resemblance of the suburbs of Hell. Round about it were gallows, each of which was loaded with forty or fifty men.

In another place lay many beheaded and covered with blood. Here and there stood some impaled, whereof not a few lived unto the third day, and were heard to speak. Within the space of three months, there were by the hands of the executioners put to death eleven thousand men, in a legal way, upon the hearing of witnesses.¹¹⁰

Some of the most tragic episodes occurred in the tribal districts near the bend of the Volga between Kazan and Nizhni Novgorod. Thousands of Chuvash, Mordva, and Mari, as well as Russian peasants of the neighborhood, were executed or flogged and their villages razed. Prince Bariatinsky reported that in the town of Kozmodemiansk, whose inhabitants had risen and slain their *voevoda*, some 400 were put to death and another 100 deprived of their limbs or beaten with the knout. "I have marched against the bandits," the new *voevoda* reported to Moscow, "and with the aid of Almighty God, the Blessed Virgin, and the Great Sovereign have defeated them and beheaded or hanged five hundred in different villages."¹¹¹ When their work was done, a party of officers appeared before the tribal assembly of one Mari village and called on the natives to remain loyal to God and the tsar, "even though the Cheremis [Mari] were not baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." The villagers admitted they had been aroused by the "many alluring rebel leaflets" brought to their settlement by Razin's emissaries. They added, however, that they had sought only to regain the ancestral lands of which the state had deprived them. "There is no more stateless land any place," the officer replied, and advised the Mari to rest content with their present lot, "to live [peacefully] in their homes, and wander freely in the forests."¹¹²

Meanwhile, a grateful tsar began to lavish rewards upon the victors. Wholesale promotions and large bounties went to officers and men wounded in battle, while nobles who had deserted or refused to serve were deprived of their estates. In January 1671 Alexis received Dolgoruky and Bariatinsky in the Kremlin and granted them large sums of money in token of his gratitude. Dolgoruky, as commander-in-chief of the punitive army, also received a silver goblet and a sable coat lined with velvet.

It remains to inquire into Razin's fate after his defeat at Simbirsk. In early October he fled down the Volga toward the southern frontier. Samara and Saratov, which only a few weeks earlier had thrown open their gates to the triumphant *ataman*, now refused him shelter, fearing the reprisals of a vengeful government. Stenka continued downriver to the portage above Tsaritsyn, and from there to his native Don. Back in his island fortress, he nursed his wounds, which, thanks to his robust constitution, quickly healed. As his strength returned, so too did his chronic restlessness, and before winter had passed he was already planning a new venture, this time against the downstream elders. In February 1671, collecting a band of "naked" Cossacks, a mere remnant of his once enormous army, he sailed to Cherkassk with the object of unseating the established authorities. For a whole week he tried to rouse the rank and file there to "kill the elders and create disturbances in the Host," then join him in a new campaign against Moscow.¹¹³ But the powerful loyalist party—headed by Kornilo Yakovlev and Mikhail Samarenin (who lately had been alternating with Yakovlev as *voiskovoi ataman*)—prevented him from entering the city. Finally admitting defeat, Razin returned to his longboats and sailed back to Kagalnik to map out a new strategy.

The immediate effect of Razin's bid for power was to strengthen the hitherto tenuous links between Cherkassk and Moscow. For four years Yakovlev had shrunk from interfering with his troublesome godson. He had cherished the traditional independence of the Don Host and refused to take orders from any higher authority. But Razin had renewed his threat to the privileged position of the house-owning oligarchy; moreover, failure to act now, after Razin's revolt against the government, would surely invite the tsar to send his own forces to crush the insurgents. Thus Yakovlev chose to collaborate. Ironically, it was Stenka himself who precipitated precisely what he had all along been struggling to prevent, a Muscovite presence on the Don. Alexis, resuming his *zhalovanie*, dispatched to Cherkassk a large consignment of grain and several pieces of artillery, but also 2000 Muscovite dragoons, the first such force ever to enter the Don territory, arriving there in March 1671. That same

month, on instructions from the tsar, Patriarch Ioasaf anathematized Razin and his cohorts in a solemn ceremony at the Kremlin.¹¹⁴

Meanwhile, the Cossack elders decided that the time had come to wipe out the rebel nest at Kagalnik. Yakovlev mustered his followers and sailed to the island. On April 14, under cover of darkness, he silently surrounded the bastion, stacked firewood and dry reeds against its walls, and set them alight. He then led his men through the smoke and swiftly crushed all resistance. Razin and his brother were clapped in irons and removed under heavy guard to Cherkassk. The fortress was burned to the ground. From now on only one Host remained on the Don, though among the "naked" Cossacks there survived a legacy of opposition that never completely abated.

Soon afterward, Yakovlev and Samarenin, heading a convoy of seventy-six Cossacks, set out with their prisoners for Moscow. They had strict orders from the government to guard the rebel leaders "with great caution" during the long trip north. At the town of Serpukhov, some twenty miles below Moscow, they were met by a company of *streltsy* who provided an escort for the final leg of the journey. It was thus, as a prisoner rather than a conquerer, that Razin was to enter the capital. Yet even now he retained his faith in the mercy and justice of the sovereign. He requested an audience with Alexis, "always imagining that he had many things to say, very important for the Czar to know."¹¹⁵ A mile before Moscow a wagon awaited the convoy to carry Razin into the city. A remarkable drawing made by the visitor from the *Queen Esther* shows Stenka with his neck chained to a scaffold mounted on the rear of the wagon, and Frolka, going on foot alongside, fastened to the wagon by an iron chain (see illustration No. 6). In this position the great Cossack was trundled into Moscow, "and so," wrote the Englishman wryly, "fulfilling his prophecy of the honor he should have in entering the town."¹¹⁶

Razin's desire to see the tsar was soon realized. Alexis interrogated his prisoner, then put him through a series of hideous tortures: he was beaten with the knout, his limbs were pulled out of joint, a hot iron was passed over his body, and the crown of his head was shaved and cold water poured on it drop by

drop, "which they say causeth very great pain."¹¹⁷ Razin, it is said, endured all his torments without a sound. On June 6, 1671, he was taken to the execution block on Red Square where his crimes were read aloud, followed by his sentence: "For evil and loathsome acts against God, for betraying the Great Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Alexis Mikhailovich, and for bringing ruin and devastation upon the whole Muscovite state [Stepan Razin] by order of the Great Sovereign and the boyars is condemned to the execution of the wicked, quartering." According to a German witness, Razin replied with "angry and hate-ridden gestures that Russia preferred to be ruined by alien action rather than to gain freedom." He then crossed himself and was quartered, during which he "gave not the least sigh." Finally, his head and limbs were mounted on stakes and his torso thrown to the dogs.¹¹⁸

About the same time, Razin's mother and uncle were executed in Tsarevo-Borisov for their part in the rebellion. Frolka's death sentence, however, was not immediately carried out. He is believed to have prolonged his life by claiming to know the whereabouts of hidden booty or of hidden leaflets that the authorities were eager to examine. Kept in prison for five years, he was finally decapitated in May 1676, shortly after the death of Alexis.¹¹⁹

After Stenka's execution, Yakovlev and Samarenin returned to Cherkassk laden with rewards from the tsar. Apart from the full restoration of their subsidy, they received a special allotment of munitions, grain, and wine, which led the upstream Cossacks to accuse them of selling out for mere *zhalovanie*. Yet, given the relentless expansion of the state, Muscovite domination was probably inevitable; the irony is that it might have been delayed if not for Razin's rebellion. At any rate, in August 1671 envoys arrived from Moscow to administer the oath of allegiance, and the Cossacks, who had refused to do so in the past, swore fealty to the sovereign in a ceremony that marked the beginning of the end of their traditional independence.¹²⁰ No longer could they boast, as they had for nearly two centuries, that "the tsar rules in Moscow but the Cossacks rule on the Don." Though they retained internal autonomy, they had now become Muscovite subjects and in future years were to take

an oath of allegiance with the accession of each new ruler. As time wore on, moreover, their remaining autonomy was to wane with the waning power of the steppe and the growing power of the central government.

By the spring of 1671 only Astrakhan, the principal rebel stronghold on the Volga, remained unsubdued. It will be recalled that Razin had left Vaska Us in charge of the city when he embarked on his campaign against Moscow. But Us, "that former destroyer of Orthodox Christians," as a contemporary chronicle describes him, had meanwhile "come to a wicked end," succumbing to an attack of intestinal worms.¹²¹ In May 1671 his successor, Fyodor Sheludyak, announced his intention to renew Stenka's campaign and "go up river to Moscow and defeat and eliminate the traitor boyars."¹²² Leading some 5000 Cossacks up the Volga, he got as far as Simbirsk only to be routed there, like Stenka before him, by a well-equipped army and forced to return to Astrakhan. Embittered by their failure, the Cossacks threw all restraint to the winds, and in July a terrible bloodbath took place in the city. Metropolitan Iosif was flung down from the ramparts of the citadel, while Prince Lvov, without his protector to save him, was beheaded and his house given over to plunder. "And the gentry and officials of all ranks serving the tsar in Astrakhan," reads a contemporary report, "all of them were killed, some being thrown from the parapet."¹²³

To Prince Ivan Miloslavsky, the heroic defender of Simbirsk, fell the task of reducing the last rebel bastion. In August 1671 he led an army of 30,000 down the Volga and camped above Astrakhan. His strategy was to starve the Cossacks into capitulation, so he blocked the river and prevented any supplies from entering the city. As winter set in, hunger overtook the defenders. Yet for three months Sheludyak, "a servant of the Devil, in the company of Judas," managed to hold out.¹²⁴ In an effort to break the blockade he launched repeated sorties against the government camp, but without success. As supplies dwindled, dissension arose among the insurgents, recalling Bolotnikov's experience at Tula in 1607. One group was ready to surrender, but another, headed by Sheludyak, vowed "to sit in siege and together suffer privations and even death, regarding every privation as a blessing."¹²⁵ To fan the discord Miloslavsky, like Shuisky at Tula, promised the rebels clemency if they would

surrender. For the moment, however, the diehards prevailed. It was left to the Circassian prince Kaspulat Mutsalovich to break the impasse. The year before, it was his courageous tribesmen who had fired coins at the Cossacks and fought them to the last man. Kaspulat now avenged their death by a trick not unworthy of the Cossacks themselves. Offering to negotiate, he lured Sheludyak to his headquarters and clapped him in irons, whereupon Sheludyak's followers lost the will to fight and, yielding to the moderates, accepted the government's offer of amnesty. On November 26 Miloslavsky entered the city, and after a year and a half of mutiny, restored government control. Miloslavsky, in the words of a witness, "deployed his troops, then stopped at the cathedral to recite his prayers. Next he went to the town hall to get the tsar's seal, which he affixed to the stores of powder and lead. And these were placed beside the warders at the gates and on the watchtowers, where they had been before the bandits came with their destruction."¹²⁶

Faithful to his promise, Miloslavsky left Sheludyak and his men at liberty to wander about the city. For six months the authorities, seeking to avoid a fresh outbreak, took no action against them. In the end, however, "eternal torment awaited them for their sins."¹²⁷ During the summer of 1672 the tsar appointed Prince Yakov Odoevsky as the new Astrakhan *voevoda*, a post he had held from 1663 to 1666, earning a reputation for arbitrariness and brutality. Fierce retribution followed immediately after his arrival. Sheludyak and his main confederates were rounded up, tortured, then sent to Moscow to be hanged. Many other rebels were quartered or burned at the stake. The more fortunate had their tongues cut out and were banished to Archangel and Kholmogory in the far north.

By the end of 1671, however, the last embers of revolt had been stamped out. In January 1672 services were held in the capital to celebrate the victory and to honor the troops who had fallen in the struggle. The shah of Persia, whose own subjects were among the first to suffer at the hands of the Cossacks, sent congratulations to Alexis for suppressing the rebellion. So too did Charles II of England, whose memories of the Puritan Revolution and of his father's beheading inspired in him a loathing of all who opposed their legitimate ruler.¹²⁸

8. Conclusion

Razin in many ways carried on the tradition launched by Bolotnikov at the beginning of the century. In the first place, both movements were what one historian has described as struggles "between the depths and heights of society,"¹²⁹ elemental outbursts of the lower orders against the landowners and officials who held them in subjection. In both rebellions, moreover, there was a wide overlap between banditry and social protest. Razin's movement, in fact, originated as a campaign of plunder; but by igniting the underdog elements of the frontier, it was quickly transformed into an outright revolt against the state. Furthermore, like its predecessor, it was as much a sectional as a social conflict, pitting the expanding center against the retreating frontier. The Don and the Volga became conduits of rebellion alive with an assortment of disaffected groups—tribesmen and peasants, convicts and vagabonds, Cossacks and boatmen—following their redeemer along the path of destruction. Razin's strength lay chiefly in those districts which had only recently been colonized by Moscow and in which government control was still weak. In the central provinces, where the authorities were firmly entrenched, the revolt never penetrated to any significant extent. The same was true of the northern stretches from the upper Volga to the White Sea, where, as before, the commercial towns, dependent on the Volga for their livelihood, rallied behind the government against the challenge from the steppe. In the north, moreover, serfdom and service estates were extremely rare, so that the rebels would have found few supporters among the peasantry even if they had penetrated into the area. Thus, for all the turmoil to the south, the northern region remained quiet except for the Old Believer rising at the Solovetsky Monastery, which raged on for eight years before the government could suppress it.

Razin's rebellion, far from being an isolated event, stands as a dramatic episode in that great struggle between the centralizing aspirations of monarchs and the traditional rights and liberties of their subjects which was raging all over Europe in the seventeenth century. As far as Russia was concerned, it was another chapter, as Kostomarov put it, in the age-old struggle

between "the appanage-*veche* and the autocratic" traditions,¹³⁰ a struggle in which regional autonomy ultimately collapsed beneath the weight of the rising autocracy. Throughout the realm townsmen and peasants were losing their freedom. Along the Volga, tribal autonomy was rapidly succumbing to Muscovite colonization. And on the Don the Cossacks, the very symbol of the vanishing seminomadic life, were forced to surrender their traditional independence and proclaim their loyalty to the tsar.

Like Bolotnikov, however, Razin lacked a coherent vision with which to combat the emerging order. His program was essentially destructive: to eliminate the landlords and officials so that the people could run their own affairs as they saw fit, on traditional lines of local self-government. Yet his aim was not to destroy the state as such. What he wanted was a popular government with a popular tsar. He wanted to replace the new bureaucratic autocracy with a decentralized, Cossack-style regime of local assemblies and elected officials, such as he inaugurated in the towns of the lower and middle Volga. Nor was it his aim to destroy the official church, as his opponents maintained. He himself, despite his early pilgrimage to the White Sea, was admittedly not attached to any organized church. He appealed to religion only as a means of attracting new followers; and he was just as ready to invoke Nikon, if this should suit his purpose, as he was to appeal to the Moslem tribesmen in the name of Mohammed. In religious as in political matters he was content to allow each region to determine its own practices. Thus when he dispensed with Orthodox wedding ceremonies in his own camp, it was less from any hostility to the church than because this was a longstanding custom on the Don, where clergy were in short supply and where priests who did live in the area were generally elected by the inhabitants,¹³¹ a practice of which Stenka doubtless approved.

But Razin—again like Bolotnikov—failed to realize his objectives. Indeed, his revolt hastened the very developments he had hoped to forestall. Cossack independence was fatally impaired and the way opened to further Muscovite encroachments on the Don. The ties between the tsar and the nobility were strengthened owing to their mutual fear of similar outbreaks

in the future. And in the ensuing years the government became increasingly authoritarian, serfdom was clamped down more firmly than ever, and the last vestiges of popular freedom and local autonomy were trampled underfoot.

In resisting all this, Razin, however vaguely and inarticulately, was resisting the modernization and secularization of Russian life. It is no accident that his rising should have occurred at a time when Russia was being drawn ever more closely into contact with western Europe. And it is symbolic that European-trained forces should have played a key part in crushing the rebellion. For it was the state, with its increasingly Western orientation, which played the "progressive" role in Russian history; and while the state was working to discard outmoded customs and habits, the bulk of the population looked backward to a simpler and purer age which perhaps had never existed outside their own imagination. The gulf between the Western-oriented ruling stratum and the mass of ordinary citizens who clung to their native traditions, a gulf that was to characterize Russian society for centuries to come, was already in the making.

Although the stratum upholding the government was extremely thin, the rebels were unable to undermine it. And they failed for much the same reasons that Bolotnikov had failed before them. For one thing, as it has been seen, they lacked a constructive program. But even more serious were their deficiencies in arms and military experience, which, whatever their program, were bound to spell defeat. Stenka's followers, for all their numerical strength and cyclonic fury, had little discipline or organizational unity. In the end they proved a poor match for the tsar's picked regiments with their up-to-date weapons and European training. "For if this power of the rebels," wrote the Englishman from the *Queen Esther*, "consisting of two hundred thousand men, had been united and unanimous, it would have been difficult for the forces of the Czar to have resisted and mastered the same."¹³² Corrupt and unwieldy as the government was, it always proved stronger in sustained combat than the movements of destruction from the steppes. If Bolotnikov, during the Time of Troubles, had been able to reach the gates of Moscow, it was only because of the political vacuum created by the absence of a "born tsar." In Razin's

case, as the rebels approached the capital, their quality became diluted by an influx of peasants, tribesmen, and derelicts, while the government's forces, though weak in the peripheries, were both more numerous and more trustworthy in the center. Hence the Oka line encircling the heartland was never breached.

Yet, for all the parallels between the revolts of Bolotnikov and Razin, there were a number of important differences. Bolotnikov, we have said, unlike Razin, succeeded in crossing the Oka and in laying siege to the capital. Furthermore, although the same segments of the population sided with the rebels in each case, they did so in strikingly different proportions. In comparison with its predecessor, there were few slaves in Razin's movement, for slaves in Russia were a vanishing class whose members were being converted into taxpaying serfs. The proportion of peasants, by the same token, was much greater. While only the peasants of the Komaritskaya district joined Bolotnikov in any strength, in Razin's time a vast jacquerie, the largest in Europe during the seventeenth century, engulfed the whole region of the middle Volga, where serfdom had taken firm root. Serfdom was by now a well-advanced institution, sanctified in the nation's code of laws. And the peasants, for their part, were beginning to show signs of a rudimentary class consciousness almost entirely lacking a generation or two earlier. Class lines were in general more sharply defined, particularly after the Law Code of 1649, and only a handful of noblemen, mainly for personal and discreditable reasons, cast their lot with the rebels, in contrast to Bolotnikov's time. Yet again the jacquerie was confined largely to the peripheries, scarcely touching the rural districts within the Oka perimeter. This, as we have seen, was chiefly because Razin's bands, owing to the government's strength in the center, were unable to penetrate the area and rouse the villagers to revolt. The peasants of the Volga, moreover, like those of Komaritskaya in Bolotnikov's day, were still sufficiently independent to resist the encroachments of Moscow. Since they were only recently enserfed, their backs were not so bent nor their spirit so crushed that they would not rise in protest when a charismatic leader appeared to lead them.

Aside from the larger peasant element in Razin's movement,

the Cossacks also took a more prominent part, serving as its spearhead and most effective fighting force. An interesting feature was that the social conflict dividing the country as a whole was reproduced in miniature along the Don, where the "naked" Cossacks locked horns with the more prosperous downstream elements. Razin, as his followers sang, refused to "walk with the elders" or to "think as they thought,"¹³³ but preferred to harness his chariot to the propertyless *golytba* and to challenge the privileged stratum from which he himself had sprung. The tribes of the Volga were another group which rose in greater strength than before, Muscovite colonization having made enormous strides since the Time of Troubles. Crushed by taxation and robbed of their lands, the tribesmen shared the grievances of the Russian peasantry, but national differences were too pronounced for any effective collaboration against the authorities. The clergy, too, participated in unprecedented numbers, some hundreds of village priests flocking with their parishioners to the rebel cause. The Old Believers, however, had not yet emerged in strength, and so played only a marginal role. Finally, the towns once more occupied a central place, though again there was little coordination with the outbreaks in the rural districts. In the garrison towns of the frontier, *streltsy* mutinies were more serious than any in the past, whether in Bolotnikov's rising or in the urban insurrections of more recent years, and foreshadowed the great *streltsy* revolts of the end of the century which led Peter the Great to disband this volatile group once and for all.

Razin's revolt was crushed in blood. Like Bolotnikov's, it failed to alter the immediate course of Russian history. But it nevertheless had far-reaching consequences. It awakened, however dimly, the social consciousness of the poor, gave them a new sense of power, and made the upper classes tremble for their lives and possessions. Moreover, it left a myth of rebellion which would inspire future generations with dreams of liberation. Above all, it created a martyr whose memory was preserved in ballad, lore, and epic. Of the four great rebels of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Razin, whom Pushkin called "the one poetic figure in Russian history," was the one most revered by the people. According to one authority, he is the subject of more songs and legends than any other popular hero.¹³⁴ Long after his death he

was regarded as a sorcerer endowed with superhuman powers: bullets could not harm him, he could cast a spell over snakes, open locks by magic, and escape from prison merely by drawing a boat on the wall with charcoal or chalk and sailing away. These legends gave rise in turn to the legend of his immortality. He had not really died, it was said, but was hiding out in the forests or hills or on a remote island, and at a critical moment for the people would return "with his golden banner" and deliver them from their oppressors. Along the middle and lower Volga, rocks, ravines, and burial mounds were named after him and were said to be the sites of his hidden treasure. Below Saratov, we are told, stands a hill bearing Razin's name, and, according to legend, whoever climbs it at night will learn his secret—the secret of class war.¹³⁵

Razin was the bravest and most colorful of the four rebel leaders. People admired his adventurous spirit, his daring in battle, and his sense of honor and justice. He was admired too for his unflinching courage under torture and on the execution block. In the eyes of some he was a Christ-like martyr sacrificing his life to save the poor and bring about a golden age that would last forever. Within a short time after his death a whole legend grew up about his second coming. During the 1680s Old Believer agitators on the Don, convinced that he would rise again and lead them to the Promised Land, preached a doctrine of self-immolation to escape their tormentors "until the new coming of Razin."¹³⁶ In many poems and ballads Stenka is referred to as the "resplendent sun" (*krasnoe solnyshko*), an epithet suggesting renewal and resurrection and associated with that earlier messianic redeemer, the False Dmitri, and before him with Prince Vladimir of Kiev, the tenth-century saint who brought Christianity to the Russians:

Rise, oh rise, resplendent sun,
Warm us hardy, stalwart lads,
Us poor folk, poor orphans.
No thieves, no brigands we,
But Stenka Razin's comrades.¹³⁷

Afterward, songs about a "son of Razin" were to evolve into songs about Pugachev, a kind of apostolic succession in which the

myth of the rebel savior martyred for the people was kept alive. As late as the 1840s Nikolai Kostomarov met an old peasant on the Volga who was convinced that Pugachev had been the "second coming of Razin after a hundred years."¹³⁸

The persistence of such myths is far from accidental. That a futile adventure by an obscure and illiterate Cossack should survive in popular memory bears witness to the mood of rebellion which continued unabated in Russia down to the twentieth century. Periodically, new messiahs would appear in various guises to resurrect Razin's promise of liberation. On May 1, 1919, Lenin himself, in a speech at the notorious execution block on Red Square, claimed Razin as his forebear in the struggle against slavery and exploitation.¹³⁹

But Razin left more immediate heirs. After his death a number of partisan bands sprang up in the Don territory and, though never strong enough to mount a new campaign against Moscow, aroused considerable alarm within the government. In 1673 one Don Cossack, a veteran of Razin's revolt who called himself "Tsarevich Semyon Alekseevich," collected a band of followers against the tsar but was crushed before his movement could spread.¹⁴⁰ Further disturbances occurred as religious dissent took root along the Don. In 1682 a group of schismatic Cossacks who planned an expedition to the Caspian under Razin's horsetail banner were subdued by the *voiskovoi ataman*, and fifteen ring-leaders were taken to Cherkassk and hanged. In 1688 and 1689 Old Believers again rose on the upper Don and had to be crushed by force of arms. A former *ataman* and an unfrocked priest were arrested and executed for "plots against the Great Sovereign and the Russian state and for wicked rebellious acts, aiming to gather like-minded bandits and launch a campaign up the Volga to Moscow, just as Stenka Razin had done."¹⁴¹ In spite of the most savage repressions, however, the southern frontier remained a powder barrel for many years to come. In 1707, during the reign of Peter the Great, another major revolt erupted on the Don under the leadership of an upstream *ataman* named Kondrati Bulavin, among whose lieutenants was an old Cossack who had been "with Stenka Razin for seven years."¹⁴² The torch of rebellion had passed to a new generation.



1. The Siege of Moscow, December 2, 1606



2. Prince Mikhail Skopin-Shuisky

3. Samara and Tsaritsyn in the Seventeenth Century





4. Stenka Razin, a Contemporary Engraving

5. Razin's Capture of Astrakhan, June 24, 1670



6. Razin and His Brother Being Taken to Moscow

7. Beard-Clipping During the Reign of Peter the Great, a Contemporary Cartoon





10. Colonel Ivan Mikhelson

11. Pugachev in His Cage,
a Contemporary
Engraving



III Bulavin

1707—

1708

1. The Streltsy

With the accession of Peter the Great in 1682, the dominant trends of Russian historical development received a powerful new impetus. Peter's expansionist foreign policy, his sweeping reorganization of the government and the army, his financial and industrial reforms, his extension of serfdom and of compulsory state service, his importation of foreign advisors and techniques—all these had their origins in the past; but he carried them out with such unprecedented energy and on so grand a scale that, by the end of his reign in 1725, Russia was transformed into a power of the first magnitude whose destiny was firmly tied to the destiny of Europe as a whole.

In this sense Peter's reign marked a watershed in Russian history. Owing to his all-embracing reforms, the emergence of centralized absolutism proceeded apace. Completing the work of the Legal Code issued by his father in 1649, he sharpened the division of the population into separate classes, each with its specific duties to the state. And it was during his reign that Russia saw the final merger of boyars and gentry into a single service nobility, and of peasants and slaves into a single class of serfs. All this, however, was achieved at the cost of appalling sacrifices. Regimentation reached a climax. Peter's edicts, as Pushkin put it, were "written as though with the knout." And if the peasantry, as we shall see, bore the heaviest burden of his policies, the entire population was harnessed to the state and driven forward by a dynamic ruler whose energy was as boundless as his appetite for power was insatiable.

There was little of the traditional tsar in Peter's makeup. He was an iconoclast who, for the sake of efficiency and modernization, overturned time-honored values and beliefs. His whole bent was pragmatic and utilitarian. He rejected every appeal to religious or regional custom. His loathing for the backward and primitive elements in Russian life was as keen as his admiration for foreign achievements in warfare and technique. His overriding ambition was, in his own words, "to sever the people from their former Asiatic customs and instruct them how all Christian peoples in Europe comport themselves."¹ After his return from the West in 1698, he spared no effort to impose new habits and values on an

unreceptive population. He personally shaved off the beards of his courtiers and ordered them to discard their flowing robes for knee-length German or Hungarian coats. These measures, when extended to other segments of the population, aroused bitter resentment. Ordinary Russians, in the words of a foreign visitor, "had a kind of religious respect and veneration for their beards,"² and to shave was to desecrate the image of God in which man had been created. Faced with mounting opposition, the tsar partially relented. Peasants and priests were left unmolested and townsmen could wear beards on payment of a special tax. But in the years ahead, unshaven chins and native dress became badges of opposition to the innovating state, and along the Don and the Volga the mere rumor of beard-cutting was enough to trigger violent outbreaks against the authorities which had to be crushed by force of arms.

Peter's campaign of Westernization struck a blow at the obstinate conservatism of the old Muscovite order. In an effort to propel backward Russia into the eighteenth century, he recruited foreign technicians, modernized the calendar, simplified the alphabet, translated Western books, launched the first Russian newspaper, and founded technical schools to prepare sons of the gentry for state service. The introduction of European culture drove a wedge between rulers and ruled, between new and old, which profoundly affected the subsequent course of Russian history. While the government and its supporters looked ahead to a future of technical modernization and economic development on Western lines, the mass of ordinary citizens were determined to remain loyal to their sacred customs and traditions. Peasants and Cossacks, *streltsy* and Old Believers, and even the aristocratic boyars insofar as they had not been assimilated to the service gentry, resisted Peter's innovations and clung to an idealized past undefiled by the emergence of a disciplined secular state. The tsar, in their eyes, had diverted the nation from its natural path and set it on a new and alien course that, sooner or later, would surely spell disaster for the people. Yet they too, for all their tenacious conservatism, had revolutionary ambitions, yearning as they did for a vanished age of personal freedom, local autonomy, authentic religion, and harmony between the tsar and his subjects—in short for Holy Russia as against the new

secular order in the making. Thereafter two distinct cultures faced each other across a widening gulf of dress, habit, language, and religion. A small body of landowners and bureaucrats, clothed in Western styles and educated in Western ideas, enforced their will on a mass of rural and urban poor—illiterate, superstitious, and resentful of each new change imposed from above. With the expansion of the state, moreover, a growing number of gentry were of “alien” blood as well as habits, while the lower classes retained in large measure their ethnic and cultural homogeneity. All this goes a long way to explain the fury with which the peasants were to attack their masters during Pugachev’s revolt in the 1770s, as compared with their milder behavior in the past, when Russians of all classes were still more or less united in a single Muscovite culture.

Apart from Westernization, war and territorial expansion—the root causes of popular misery—were the dominant themes of Peter’s reign. His initial thrust was southward against the Turkish fortress of Azov at the mouth of the Don. Sixty years earlier, in 1637, the Don Cossacks had seized Azov and held it for five years so their ships might pass freely into the Black Sea on expeditions of plunder. When they withdrew on Tsar Michael’s orders, the Turks rebuilt the fortress as a bulwark against further depredations. Now Peter, thanks to a new Russian fleet and a modern assault force, succeeded in capturing it on his second try in 1696. Four years later, when the outbreak of war deflected Peter’s attention to the Baltic, popular disturbances flared up in the south at Azov, Astrakhan, and along the Don. The most serious of these outbreaks was that of Bulavin, one of whose aims, it will be seen, was to wrest Azov from Muscovite control and reopen the Black Sea to Cossack entry.

Russia was at war almost continuously throughout the forty years of Peter’s reign, during which the tsar bent every effort to modernize his armed forces. What this entailed was a more efficient chain of command, a greater reliance on foreign specialists, and, above all, a determined push toward regular and permanent service. Before his accession a standing army had already begun to take shape, trained and officered largely by Westerners. The old tradition of a landowner appearing when called, with a specified number of men, was rapidly yielding to

a system of direct conscription for life. By the 1680s regular troops constituted more than half of Russia’s fighting force, some 90,000 out of 165,000 men. But their ranks were being depleted at a rapid rate by combat, disease, and mass desertion. Moreover, Peter’s wars on two fronts called for reinforcements on a larger scale than ever. Peasants were conscripted by periodic levies, so many recruits from so many households, the normal ratio being one to twenty. To meet the rising demand, recruitment was extended to categories of the population hitherto exempt from military service. Neither townsmen nor vagrants nor even clergy escaped the recruiting sergeant’s net. Between 1705 and 1709 levies were repeated on an annual basis, until the Swedish war had passed its climax and Bulavin’s rising had been subdued.

All told, during the first decade of the eighteenth century, some 300,000 men from a total population of 14 million had been put into uniform and compelled to serve for life rather than for the duration of a campaign.³ At the same time, modern equipment was introduced on a wide scale. The pike was abandoned for the bayonet, the flintlock musket replaced the outmoded firelock, and new types of light artillery were brought into service. These weapons, of course, could be deployed against internal as well as foreign enemies. The bayonet and flintlock made possible the development of new tactics which, when combined with mobile artillery, enabled infantry to stop Cossack cavalry charges. It will be recalled that Prince Bariatinsky had used similar innovations to smash Razin’s army at Simbirsk. Thus the new weapons threatened the independence—perhaps the very survival—of Cossack horsemen in the same way that gunpowder had contributed to the extinction of the medieval knight. Up-to-date artillery, moreover, made the defense of towns against invading rebels more effective. Peter, at the same time, redoubled his efforts to attract military specialists from abroad and constructed factories in the Urals and near St. Petersburg to keep his troops supplied with the latest munitions. As a result, the government in the eighteenth century was able to cope with domestic uprisings even while simultaneously embroiled in major external wars.

Peter’s modernization of the army was bitterly opposed by the turbulent *streltsy*, who stood to lose more from it than any other

military group except perhaps the Cossacks. At the beginning of Peter's reign there were some 50,000 *streltsy* throughout Muscovy, half of whom were stationed in the capital and organized in 22 regiments of 1000 men each. A deeply conservative lot, they were exceedingly hostile to newfangled methods which might threaten their customary way of life or, indeed, their very existence as a privileged armed force. Unlike the new peasant conscripts, who served continuously with no privileges and little pay and lived in barracks often remote from family and village, the majority of *streltsy* had their own homes with garden plots and carried on trade and crafts on a tax-free basis. Their chief preoccupation was to protect their special status against the emergent standing army and to prevent themselves from falling to the level of bondsmen. But under the pressures of modernization their position was rapidly deteriorating, and they were being reduced to a disgruntled element opposed to innovation and to the whole emerging order. The decline in their status paralleled that of the Cossacks, peasants, and tribesmen, who clung with nostalgic fervor to their former customs and religion. The *streltsy* yearned for the traditional military organization just as the Cossacks yearned for their former "liberties," the Old Believers for their ancient ritual, and the serfs for "land and liberty." Like the Cossacks, moreover, they chafed over arrears in their *zhalovanie* and were prone to run amok when inflamed by rumor or drink. They had showed how troublesome they might be during Razin's revolt and during the urban riots of 1648 and 1662, in which they played a destructive role, joining rather than restraining the Muscovite mob in its outbursts of arson and plunder. Faced now with outright extinction, they were in a state of profound unrest, aggravated by the abuses of their gentry commanders. Their morale was low, their discipline lax, their deep-seated xenophobia excited by the large-scale introduction of foreign officers, weapons, uniforms, and drill. The early years of Peter's reign saw them erupt in periodic riots and mutinies which, far from improving their lot, were to precipitate their ultimate downfall.

Little wonder, then, that Peter should resolve to replace the *streltsy* with a modern standing army. His vast military program demanded a more reliable and efficient infantry; and since the *streltsy* also served as civic police and palace guard, their chronic

unrest was all the more intolerable. Beyond this, Peter had firsthand recollections of their violent outbursts dating from the beginning of his reign in 1682. As a boy of ten, he had witnessed a savage mutiny in which the Moscow *streltsy* invaded the Kremlin, butchered a number of his relatives, and installed his ambitious half-sister Sophia as regent. Drink, rumor, irregular pay, and the fear of losing traditional privileges had combined to touch off the explosion. The rumor in this case was that the boyar "traitors" had murdered Peter's half-brother and co-ruler Ivan. The rioters, having avenged his fictitious death in blood, proceeded to loot the houses of the nobility and to tear up the title deeds of their serfs, scattering the pieces over Red Square. Peter himself was left unharmed in the Kremlin, while the mutiny was put down and the ringleaders summarily executed. Twelve *streltsy* regiments were transferred to the borderlands, where, as in the past, they formed hotbeds of social and religious discontent for years to come.⁴

This, however, was but the first of a series of *streltsy* revolts during Peter's reign. It is important to dwell on them because they were at once links to the risings of the past and harbingers of what was to come. In a number of ways, we shall see, they anticipated Bulavin's rebellion in the south. In 1689, seven years after the first outbreak, a rumor that the *streltsy* were on their way to murder Peter sent him galloping to safety in the Trinity Monastery of St. Sergei. It proved, however, to be a false alarm. The next real trouble occurred in 1698, while Peter was away on his celebrated journey to the West. What sparked the disturbances was an announcement that four *streltsy* regiments would be transferred from Moscow to reinforce the recently won fortress of Azov. For the *streltsy* this amounted to virtual banishment, and they rose in protest, determined to remain in the capital where their roots were deep and they led a relatively comfortable existence with their own homes and economic privileges. An investigation by the secret police revealed that bogus rumors of Peter's death had convinced the rebels that the time was ripe to act. Their object, they announced, was to kill the boyars and foreigners who, in the tsar's absence, had taken the reins of government in their own hands. For Peter, however, the *streltsy* were "nothing but begetters of evil, and not soldiers,"⁵ and he hurried back to Moscow to deal with them once and for

all. The coup of 1682 was now revenged in mass torture and execution. Hundreds of rebels were done to death and their bodies left hanging for months as a grisly warning to their sympathizers. The remaining regiments were disbanded and scattered with their families to the peripheries. Of these a large number were banished to Azov "to dig trenches."⁶ They were to cause further trouble in the years ahead. But their backbone had been broken. Never again, as B. H. Sumner observed, was the capital to be threatened by these unruly musketeers, so closely tied to the past and so hostile to Peter's innovations. By liquidating them Peter removed at a single stroke the chief obstacle to his military reforms and the one armed force that resisted his efforts to alter the course of Russian history.⁷

Along the southern frontier, however, the *streltsy* remained a nuisance for several more years. In 1697 a group of them in Taganrog, Peter's new naval harbor on the Sea of Azov, had already sought to attract the Don Cossacks into a joint campaign against the authorities. "I shall go to Moscow and do what Stenka Razin had done," declared their leader.⁸ Their appeal struck a sympathetic chord among the poorer Cossacks, who longed to repeat Razin's exploits, but the movement was nipped in the bud and its instigators taken to Moscow for execution. After the 1698 revolt, pockets of exiles persisted in their seditious behavior. In 1699, for instance, a band of disgruntled *streltsy* made common cause with the Cossacks for the first time since Razin, proclaiming their ambition to "go to Moscow to stir up the common folk and kill him, the Sovereign." "When Razin revolted," boasted one of the insurgents, "I went with him." They cursed Peter for transferring them to godforsaken Azov and forcing them to labor day and night with little compensation. But their worst venom was reserved for the boyars and "Germans" (i.e., foreigners), whom they regarded as the true source of their oppression. One of their leaders expressed this feeling in graphic terms: "In the earth there are worms, in the water demons; in Moscow there are boyars, in Azov Germans."⁹ On the eve of Bulavin's revolt the *streltsy* in the south were finally disbanded. But long afterward dissident petty servitors—soldiers, Cossacks, deserters—remained the chief agitators and rumor-mongers who stirred the poor to rebellion and who, in Pugachev's time, even posed as the messiahs who sought to lead them to a better world.

2. Christ or Antichrist?

The *streltsy*, for all their turbulence, were by no means the only group with strong grievances against the state. The weight of Peter's policies fell just as heavily on the taxpaying peasants, traders, and artisans of the villages and towns. To meet the voracious needs of the treasury, levies were imposed on them in ever-increasing amounts. "Gather ye money where ye may," Peter instructed the Senate, "for money is the artery of war." Existing taxes were raised, and new taxes invented by a special corps of "profit-makers" who caused, in the words of a contemporary, "wailing amongst all the populace." The profit-makers were resourceful men who, as Kliuchevsky noted, "attained virtuosity and almost insane ingenuity." The Hanoverian resident in Russia compared them to birds of prey who regarded their duties merely as opportunities to suck the marrow from the peasants' bones and build their personal fortunes on the ruin of others.¹⁰ From 1704, when the profit-makers were organized, some thirty new taxes were introduced—on land, beards, hats, boots, horse collars, beehives, baths, chimneys, coffins, firewood, foodstuffs, and other items—arousing widespread discontent. In 1707–1708, the period of Bulavin's rising, the average peasant household paid five times the annual taxes it had paid in 1700.¹¹ Although the number of taxpayers had, according to the census of 1710, declined by more than a fifth during the last thirty years, owing partly to military recruitment, partly to the merger of households, and partly to the continuing flight of peasants to the frontier, the burden was merely shifted to those who stayed behind. As the demand for money increased, so did the murmurs of opposition among the people. A mass explosion seemed inevitable.

Another source of unrest was the large-scale conscription of peasant labor for government construction projects. Tens of thousands from all parts of Russia were forced to work building Peter's "paradise" on the marshes of the Neva. An appalling number succumbed to dysentery, disease, and sheer exhaustion, reminding some observers of how the Pharaohs erected their pyramids. St. Petersburg, it was said, was a city built on bones, a mass grave.¹² In the south, additional conscripts were sent to build ships at Voronezh, fortifications at Azov, and a naval station at Taganrog. The demand for labor was insatiable. At Azov alone

more than 5000 were put to work strengthening the fortress, which Peter was only to relinquish to the Turks in 1711. Thousands more, herded like cattle, labored at digging a new canal that was to link the Don and the Volga, thereby creating an uninterrupted waterway from Moscow to Azov. The project, however, was abandoned after the loss of Azov and not completed till after the Second World War, nearly 250 years later. On the upper Don near Voronezh, where the first Russian fleet was being constructed under the direction of Western artisans and engineers, whole villages were conscripted to labor in the shipyards and to cut wood in the surrounding forests. Wages were irregular, sickness rankled, desertion mounted. "The years have become hungry years and taxes are heavy upon us," complained a peasant from the area. "We have no food and God alone knows how we exist, how we pay. And now we are dragged to Voronezh to work forever as carpenters, which leaves our own villages without wood."¹³ According to the figures of the Azov governor, from 1704 through 1709 an annual call went out for some 30,000 laborers in the south; and though fewer than half actually reported, the effect on the villages was severe.¹⁴ The number appearing for work dropped sharply in 1706, on the eve of Bulavin's revolt, a sign of the disaffection among the Don inhabitants. Sporadic disturbances broke out among the forced laborers at Taganrog harbor and among the woodcutters and carpenters at the Voronezh shipyards. There was trouble too among the raftsmen recruited to float timber from the forests to the sites of construction.

The fact that foreigners were everywhere in charge of the work contributed in no small way to the growing ferment. Another interesting development was that the tsar himself came in for as much criticism as his hirelings and subordinates. A noticeable shift was taking place in the popular attitude toward the ruler. The files of the secret police contain hundreds of complaints about Peter's oppressive activities. Peasants denounced him as a drinker of their blood, a tormentor of their flesh, a devourer of their village (*miroed*). "What kind of tsar is he?" asked one distraught villager of her interrogators. "He has driven the peasants from their homes and taken our husbands as soldiers. He has made orphans of us and of our children and left us to

weep forever."¹⁵ Opponents of the government cursed Peter and all his works—his centralized bureaucracy, his new army and navy, his wars and taxes, his conscription of labor, his destruction of old values and beliefs. Their most earnest wish was to rid themselves of this tyrant and restore a more traditional and less onerous social order. All sorts of rumors were circulated about him by vagrants and deserters, by runaway peasants and dissident priests, rumors which a superstitious people accepted as the only explanation of their suffering. Some said he was a changeling substituted for the real tsar during his travels abroad. Others insisted he had been murdered in Stockholm and a German installed in his place. Dozens of such stories were heard throughout the country. Peter, in the popular mind, became an evil impostor, a false tsar, a creature possessed of the Devil, born of an impure virgin, the very antithesis of an Orthodox sovereign. This, indeed, was why he massacred the *streltsy*, hobnobbed with foreigners, burdened his subjects with recruitment and taxes, cut off beards, donned strange coats, smoked tobacco, and—a reference to his calendar reform—stole eight years from God. Antichrist, they said, sat on the throne of Holy Russia with smoke issuing from his mouth. The same thing had been said of his father, but now it was clear that Peter was the true Antichrist.¹⁶

But it was Peter himself who was attacked and not the institution of tsardom. The idea of Russia without a sovereign remained beyond the popular imagination. As Sumner put it, the tsar in some form was accepted as something given, like the sun and the moon.¹⁷ Indeed, the belief in a popular ruler hiding from the treacherous nobility was stronger and more widespread than ever. A hermit on the Don spread the rumor that Ivan Alekseevich, Peter's feeble-minded half-brother whom the conservatives had always favored, "is alive in Jerusalem and that is why the boyars are stealing; for Peter loves the boyars while Tsar Ivan loves the common folk."¹⁸ A group of Cossacks were so excited by this tale that they resolved to kidnap Peter on his next trip to the Don and hand him over to the Turkish sultan, a plan, however, that they never had a chance to put into effect. In a similar way Peter's son Alexis was later to become the hope of conservative elements of society, outraged by the tsar's alien and heretical innovations. In the light of these widespread yearn-

ings for a "just" ruler, a "people's tsar," it is odd that Bulavin did not exploit them. Not once during the course of his revolt did he attempt to put forward a pretender to the throne. By failing to do so he forfeited a good deal of potential support, and this, it will be seen, was one of the chief reasons for his downfall.

The belief that Peter was the Antichrist was, as one might expect, especially strong among the Old Believers, who were largely responsible for spreading it among the people as a whole. The Old Believers were shocked by the tsar's flagrant impiety and disrespect for traditional modes of worship. He melted down churchbells for cannon, pressed clerics into military service, and organized a mock church council that indulged in drunken parodies of venerated religious rites. More than that, Peter's reign saw the final subjugation of the church to the state begun by his predecessors. The office of patriarch was allowed to lapse and a holy synod subsequently founded in its place on the Protestant model of Sweden or Germany. For the schismatics this was nothing but a betrayal of the tradition that Moscow was the true and uncontaminated vessel of Christianity. They drew a sharper line than ever between the state-dominated official church and the native Orthodoxy of their "fathers and forefathers." In their eyes, the former was a heretical institution shorn of sacramental grace, the latter the third and last surviving Rome. They longed to return to the original faith of Holy Russia, when, in the words of their seventeenth-century progenitor Avvakum, "under our pious princes and tsars the Orthodox faith was pure and undefiled, and in the church was no sedition."¹⁹ They clung to the strict observation of established ritual as a necessary preliminary to salvation. They resisted conscription, taxation, and even the census, recalling the biblical account of David's sin of "numbering" the people.²⁰ To yield to the dictates of state power or of the church hierarchy, they felt, would lead to certain damnation. The issue was clear. It was, as an English preacher phrased it during the Puritan Revolution, "whether Christ or Antichrist shall be lord or king."²¹

But the Old Believers were more than mere religious fanatics struggling against the modification of church ritual. Religious issues, though important in themselves, provided an outlet for social and political discontent. The dissenters were as much op-

posed to the expanding state and to the whole new pattern of life which it imposed as they were to changes in the spelling of "Jesus" or in the number of fingers used in making the sign of the cross. They saw the deeds of Antichrist not only in Peter's irreverent mockery of religious worship but also in his ruthless accumulation of power at the expense of the people. For them the centralized state was an artificial body forcibly grafted upon Russian society, an alien growth weighing heavily on the poor and responsible for their suffering. Their tenacious loyalty to traditional habits found wide support among small tradesmen, independent peasants, and other elements within the conservative core of the taxpaying population, and also among the mass of underprivileged and dispossessed who clung to everything old because everything new fell on their shoulders with a heavy weight. They were particularly numerous among the Cossacks and *streltsy*, semiautonomous groups which, threatened with the loss of traditional privileges and status, expressed their social grievances in religious dissent. Old Belief, paradoxically, was a deeply conservative movement that simultaneously became a restless and even a revolutionary factor in Russian life. It formed a nucleus around which all dissident social elements, all elements opposed to the secularized, bureaucratic, and Westernized power-state in the making, might rally. It is not surprising, therefore, that the *streltsy* rising of 1682 should have taken as its manifesto an Old Believer tract drawn up by a schismatic priest (Nikita Dobrynin, known as Pustosviat) and appealing, among other things, for the right to make the sign of the cross with two fingers, as in the past. From that time on, all popular rebellions in which *streltsy* and Cossacks took the lead were to be fought under the banner of Old Belief, the risings of Bulavin and Pugachev being the most notable cases in point. Thereafter the restoration of traditional rituals and texts would be inseparably linked with the abolition of serfdom and centralized absolutism.

Old Belief and popular rebellion had still another important feature in common. As products of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, an era of emergent national feeling in Russia, both were inspired by nativist tendencies and ideas. They were movements of national as well as plebeian opposition to the Europeanized gentry-dominated state and to the state-dominated official

church.²² They aimed to root out alien elements in both society and religion. With the rapid absorption of new territory, Russia was becoming a multinational empire and, as such, was losing whatever ethnic, religious, and cultural homogeneity it had formerly possessed. This process, accelerated by the influx of Western merchants, technicians, and military specialists, brought about a profound nativist reaction. In the popular mind, Europeans and the Europeanized gentry were identified with the forces of modernization and change that were working to the detriment of the lower classes. The governing strata, it was thought, did not belong to the Russian folk, but formed a class apart, an alien breed of parasites sucking the blood of the poor. Beliefs of this sort sharpened the hostility of serf against master and, as was noted earlier, help to explain the widespread massacre of landowners during Pugachev's revolt in the late eighteenth century. It was in this combined social and cultural schism, moreover, that the gulf between the "dark" masses and the educated minority had its origins, as did much else of what was to divide Russian society in future years, down to the Revolution of 1917 and even beyond.

The Old Believers, finally, were in part responsible for the religious overtones and quasi-religious vocabulary exhibited by movements of social protest in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These were manifested most dramatically in the millenarian quest of Bulavin and Pugachev for a golden past when men were free from the shackles of serf-owner and bureaucrat. Since the time of Avvakum, indeed, rebels and schismatics looked back to a holier Russia uncontaminated by the rise of serfdom and of the barracks state. They were convinced that the end of the world was at hand, that the sun would be eclipsed, the stars fall from the sky, the earth burn up, and that on Judgment Day the Archangel's trumpet would summon the righteous to God's kingdom. During the 1670s and 1680s peasants on the Volga, in anticipation of these events, abandoned their fields and, dressed in white shrouds, lay down in coffins hollowed from tree trunks to await the trumpet call. The brutal persecutions by the government only heightened their fanaticism. "Let us go into the flames," declared their leader Avvakum, "for in the other world our shirts will be of gold, our boots of red leather, and there will be plenty of

honey, nuts, and apples. It is better to burn alive than to serve Antichrist."²³ In response to his appeal no less than 20,000 schismatics sacrificed their lives in paroxysms of self-immolation. Among them, as we have seen, were Old Believers on the Don who sought purification by fire "until the new coming of Razin."

The tide of religious and social opposition was to reach a new climax with Bulavin's rebellion of 1707-1708. But two years earlier a violent outbreak in Astrakhan, that perennial hotbed of revolt, provided a foretaste of what lay ahead. The apocalyptic mood there, so strong in Razin's time, had, if anything, deepened during the reign of Peter the Great. The town's inhabitants, many of whom were Old Believers, continued to look for signs heralding the end of the world. These appeared in abundance with the launching of Peter's reforms. Following orders from Moscow, the *voevoda*, Timofei Rzhnevsky, began in 1704 to levy taxes on baths and laundries, cellars and taverns. Citizens complained of beard-cutting, innovations of dress, and curtailment of traditional fishing rights. It was even rumored that all Russian girls would be forced to wed foreigners, which led to the hasty performance of a hundred marriages in a single day.²⁴ Rzhnevsky, moreover, was an extremely unpopular governor, loathed for his cruelty and extortion. The *streltsy*, for whom Astrakhan was the last remaining stronghold, accused him of embezzling their *zhalovanie* while overloading them with new labor duties beyond their already heavy obligations.

In July 1705 the lower-class inhabitants, headed by *streltsy*, schismatics, and other malcontents, rose in revolt and slaughtered the *voevoda* and some 300 noblemen, officials, and foreigners. Then the insurgents, harking back to Razin and Sheludyak, held a *krug* in the Cossack manner, elected an *ataman*, and resolved to avenge the massacre of their fellow *streltsy* in Moscow by killing the tsar. "He calls himself tsar," they said of Peter, "but he has forsaken the Christian faith."²⁵ The time had come to act, they thought, for the army was embroiled with the Swedes, leaving the capital virtually defenseless. Some of the rebels, on the other hand, later told their police inquisitors that they had merely wished to see if the tsar were alive, because rumors had circulated that he had died in Stockholm and that an impostor had taken the throne. "We decided to go to Moscow," they said, "to

question the boyars about the sovereign, then raise a rebellion and kill them all." This apparent contradiction stems, perhaps, from their implicit belief in a "true" sovereign who sided with the people against their oppressors. At any rate, their aim was "to go to Moscow and kill the government administrators, military officers, and above all the foreigners . . . and to swear allegiance to the sovereign so he should restore the old faith and not require the wearing of German clothes or the shaving of beards."²⁵

As the preceding quotation indicates, the nativist element in the rising was very strong. Since the arrival of the *Orel* in 1669, an increasing number of European ships and technicians had been coming to Astrakhan, and among the *streltsy* and Old Believers xenophobic feelings were running high. According to John Perry, an English engineer hired for the dredging of the Volga-Don canal, "all the strangers that were in the city were cut to pieces in a revengeful manner, without sparing either man, woman, or child."²⁷ The victims included the entire crew of a Dutch-built vessel outfitted to sail on the Caspian.

From Astrakhan the revolt spread quickly to the nearby garrison towns of Cherny Yar, Krasny Yar, Guriev, and Terki. At one point the rebels, following an established tradition, sent emissaries to Cherkassk to solicit the aid of the Don Cossacks, to whom they complained that their beards were being shaved and Western clothes introduced by force, a charge that Bulavin was to repeat when seeking support for his own rebellion. But the *ataman*, Lukian Maksimov, and the Cossack elders refused to collaborate. Some, in fact, lent their services to the government in suppressing the revolt. The following year a grateful tsar rewarded them with a special *zhalovanie* and issued a charter praising the Host for its loyalty at such a critical moment.²⁸

The Astrakhan revolt continued for eight months, until a government expedition was sent to crush it. To carry out the task Peter summoned from the Swedish front one of his ablest officers, Field Marshal Boris Sheremetiev, to whom he allotted several Muscovite regiments and a detachment of Kalmyk tribesmen supplied by Khan Ayuka Taisha. The Kalmyks, like the Cossack loyalists, were receiving a handsome subsidy from the crown, to which they had earlier demonstrated their loyalty in the suppression of Razin. Sheremetiev's army arrived in March 1706

and, after a fierce struggle, put down the rebellion. The ring-leaders were sent to Moscow to be interrogated and then were hanged. A few, however, eluded capture and fled to the Don to await a new opportunity to challenge the government.

3. Bulavin

Despite the loyalty of the Don Cossacks during the Astrakhan rising, their relations with Moscow were very strained. Nor are the reasons far to seek. With the expansion of the state to the south and the simultaneous growth of the Cossack Host to the north, the competition for land became keen. Little by little Muscovite landlords were advancing into the northern Don territory, carrying in their train what the Cossacks had always feared: agriculture, serfdom, and government control. "Where the Moskals go, tears and blood flow," went a Cossack proverb.²⁹ With less and less land available in the center, the tsar took to distributing new estates in the south and east, the recipients being both newer service gentry and powerful older families such as the Romanovs, Repnins, and Naryshkins. Monasteries, too, cramped by Peter's restrictions in the heartland, were extending their holdings in the peripheries, particularly along the upper Don and its tributaries. At the same time, Cossack influence in these areas was on the rise. This was especially apparent in the valleys of the Aidar and Northern Donets rivers, where every month new villages sprang up, settled by runaway peasants who looked to Cherkassk rather than Moscow for protection.

Inevitably the ill-defined, shifting border between Moscow and the Don became a source of bitter contention. In February 1702, for instance, the foreign office in Moscow, which continued to handle relations with the Cossacks, warned the Host not to fish, poach, or trap, nor even to graze cattle or keep bees on the bishop of Tambov's new estate on the Koper River, a tributary of the Don. The Cossacks in a defiant reply told the "trespassers" to get off *their* land or be "thrown into the water."³⁰ But the government, for which the Don was the base of its new fleet and the highway to mastery over the Turks, was determined to make its

authority felt. In 1702 a decree was issued prohibiting the Cossacks to fish near recently conquered Azov. Over the next few years fishing rights along the rest of the Don and its tributaries were progressively curtailed. Woodcutting was also limited in order to conserve timber for the shipyards at Voronezh. Restrictions on the use of forests in turn impeded hunting, trapping, and beekeeping, the traditional means by which the Cossacks gained their livelihood. Finally, a government edict of February 28, 1706, forbade the Cossacks to occupy empty land throughout the whole territory of the upper Don. The two sides had reached a deadlock. The Cossacks were bent on stopping further encroachments on what they claimed to be part of their own territory, while the government insisted that the land belonged to the tsar and "that the Don Cossacks not extend their settlements any further."³¹

An additional source of friction was the extraction of salt in areas claimed by both the Cossacks and the government. Salt, a highly valued commodity, gave rise to repeated clashes between the competing parties. In 1704, for example, Colonel F. V. Shidlovsky of the Iziium regiment, which consisted of military Cossacks in regular government service, seized the salt works at Bakhmut on the Northern Donets. The local Cossacks who had opened the works in 1701 were evicted as mere squatters with no legal claim to the salt. The following year a Cossack band led by the Bakhmut *ataman*, Kondrati Bulavin, retaliated by destroying the works in a surprise attack. Word of the dispute reached Moscow, and the tsar ordered an inquiry. Nothing was settled, however, for though Shidlovsky won control of the salt deposits, the conflict simmered till the fall of 1707, when it merged with Bulavin's mass rebellion.

For the elders in Cherkassk an old dilemma was revived. Since the middle of the seventeenth century they had been engaged in two simultaneous struggles, one against the expanding autocracy, the other against the impoverished fugitives from the central districts. Once again they had to decide whether to support the government and risk further encroachments on their "liberties" or to side with the upstream newcomers who posed a threat to their wealth and security. Neither was an attractive alternative. On the one hand, the danger of government domination was greater

than ever. Since the 1660s new stockades had been going up along the northern fringes of the Don territory. On the Northern Donets, for instance, fortified blockhouses had been erected at Tor in 1668 and Iziium in 1680, intended chiefly as buffers against the Crimean Tatars, who, though no longer able to penetrate the heartland, continued to menace the outlying southern districts. If necessary, however, they could also be used against the Cossacks, as during the dispute over the salt works at Bakhmut. With the capture of Azov in 1696, the Cossacks found themselves caught in a government vise. Well-equipped garrisons stood on the north and south. The Cossack *strugi*, moreover, were no match for Peter's modern fleet at Voronezh and Taganrog. In Cherkassk the influence of Moscow was perceptibly increasing. A council of elders friendly to the tsar was beginning to supplant the authority of the general assembly. The independence of the *ataman*, moreover, was on the wane. And since the Old Believer revolts of the 1680s, the government had been attempting to interfere with the Cossack tradition of electing their own priests. The clergy, however, were still, for the most part, chosen by their parishioners; and within the Cossack oligarchy discord persisted between those who favored closer ties with Moscow and those who sought to protect their shrinking autonomy.

On the other hand, the old-timers were being swamped by the rising tide of immigration from the center. In Razin's heyday there had been some 50 Cossack settlements on the Don with a population of 20,000 to 25,000. Now, a single generation later, there were more than 120 settlements with as many as 50,000 or 60,000 inhabitants. The new arrivals settled mainly along the upper Don, the Northern Donets, and their tributaries. On the Khover River, for example, where only 8 villages had existed in Razin's time, there were 26 when Bulavin took up the torch of revolt. The settlers included former *streltsy*, urban poor, and a large number of military deserters. Many were Old Believers who complained that "in Moscow there are many churches but neither God nor justice."³² But the vast majority were runaway peasants whose situation had become worse since Peter's coronation. The fetters of bondage were everywhere tightened. Slaves were subjected to taxation and recruitment, while serfs were reduced to

virtual slavery, so that the distinction between them was obliterated. Monastery peasants were, if anything, even worse off than the hard-pressed serfs on private estates. And if conditions were somewhat better for peasants on state lands, they too suffered from the mounting burden of taxes, conscription, and forced labor. For peasants of all categories flight remained the chief means of protest. The urge to wander, to escape from tyranny and oppression, was a permanent trait of the rural inhabitants, and the broad, underpopulated expanses of the south and east offered full scope to their quest for a freer life. The flight of whole villages was not unknown, the fugitives often plundering the manor and, on rarer occasions, even killing their master before departing for the frontier.

The influx of runaways brought the dilemma of the downstream Cossacks to a head. The sharp increase in the number of newcomers threatened to shift the balance of strength against the entrenched oligarchy. The older Cossacks, as we have seen, enjoyed a virtual monopoly on trade, *zhalovanie*, and political authority. They willingly employed the *golytba* to fell their timber and tend their herds and as hired laborers in their fisheries, apiaries, and salt works. But they drew the line at admitting them into the Host. Newcomers were accepted as Cossacks only after a seven-year residence period and on the vote of the *krug* in Cherkassk. Lately they were being rejected with greater frequency than in the past because the older residents were reluctant to spread the government subsidies any thinner and also because of the tendency of the runaways to bring agriculture into their new settlements. The downstream Cossacks regarded the peasant refugees with more contempt than sympathy, boasting that they themselves "neither sow nor reap nor spin but live well just the same."³³ Their worst fear was that the Don would fall under the plough, and on its upper reaches at least this fear was becoming a reality.

Thus the elders and the government had something in common: both wanted to stem the tide of fugitives into the steppe. For Peter the Great, bent on marshaling the population to serve the state, the drain of manpower to the frontier was intolerable. In 1703 he sent two officers to the Don to take a census of old and new residents, setting 1695 as the cutoff date. Settlers who

had arrived after that year were to be rounded up and sent back to the towns and villages from which they had fled. The Cossacks, however, refused to cooperate, and the officers returned to Moscow with their mission unfulfilled. New emissaries were sent, but without result. For if the established Cossacks looked askance at the newcomers, they were not prepared to surrender them at the government's demand. They kept faith with their motto, "From the Don runaways are not handed over." Some, their livelihood already menaced by government restrictions on fishing, woodcutting, and salt extraction, regarded this new interference as intolerable. For Bulavin, at any rate, it was the immediate cause for rebellion.

Peter, however, refused to countenance the right of sanctuary any longer. With the expansion of the northern war his demands for the return of runaways became more and more insistent. In May 1705 he sent a charter to the Don ordering the immediate transfer of new settlements beyond the Northern Donets boundary and the return of all fugitives to their place of origin. During the Astrakhan revolt he relaxed his demands lest the Cossacks be driven into an alliance with the insurgents. He was relieved and gratified when they remained loyal, and in February 1706, as we have seen, sent them a special subsidy as a reward. Some of the elders, notably Efrem Petrov and Yakim Filipiev, actually took part in quashing the uprising. Others sympathized with the rebels but shrank from joining them for fear of government reprisals and a further reduction of Cossack independence. The majority, however, including the *ataman*, Lukian Maksimov, favored a show of obedience and even a certain measure of collaboration in order to preserve their dwindling autonomy, and until the outbreak of Bulavin it was their position that prevailed.

In July 1707 the tsar took a decisive step, sending Colonel Prince Yuri Dolgoruky with a detachment of 300 men to enforce the charter of May 1705. Dolgoruky's was but one of a long series of search parties sent to the frontier since the middle of the seventeenth century. The difference, however, was that for the first time recovery operations were extended into the Don territory on a significant scale. Peter instructed Dolgoruky—a relative of the officer of the same name who subdued Razin's

rising—to track down the “*posad* folk and peasants of various landlords who, not wanting to pay their regular taxes, abandon their work . . . and conceal themselves on the Don with their wives and children.” The Cossacks, Peter complained, “do not drive these fugitives from their settlements but harbor them in their homes.”³⁴ Dolgoruky, in addition, was ordered to look into the simmering quarrel between the Don and Izium Cossacks over the Bakhmut salt works.

Arriving in Cherkassk on September 2, 1707, Dolgoruky was received with little enthusiasm by Ataman Maksimov, who rightly saw his mission as part of a broader Muscovite effort to colonize the steppe and to mobilize the wealth and manpower of the Cossacks for the service of the state. What then was to be done? Maksimov settled on a compromise. He refused to allow any interference in the Cherkassk area, yet, rather than antagonize the government, agreed to cooperate in a search of the upper Don and the Northern Donets, where the bulk of the newcomers was concentrated. He assigned to Dolgoruky seven experienced men, among them the loyalist elder Efrem Petrov, to act as guides. Dolgoruky divided his force into four separate posses and sent them along the rivers of the upper Don territory to root out fugitives. The populace was roughly handled and the knout freely applied. Each day hundreds of settlers were rounded up—ecclesiastical peasants, peasants from crown and private estates, townsmen, barge haulers, and runaway soldiers and laborers from the new bases at Azov and Taganrog, whom Peter was especially anxious to retrieve. In a month's time Dolgoruky recovered some 3000 runaways, though more than a few insisted that they had come to the Don long before the cutoff date and had participated in the Azov campaigns of 1695 and 1696.³⁵

Dolgoruky's mission was not only a direct violation of traditional Cossack immunities; it was a challenge to the principle of autonomy to which the Cossacks owed their very existence. The Cherkassk elders recognized this but felt powerless to resist. Instead, they were content to deflect the government's efforts away from their own immediate bailiwick and against the newer settlements to the north, about which they themselves had cause for apprehension. It was left to the local upstream *atamans*, headed by Kondrati Afanasievich Bulavin, to offer opposition.

Of Bulavin's early life very little is known. The son of a village *ataman*, he was born about 1660 in Trekhizbianskaya Stanitsa on the Northern Donets, and so was old enough to remember Stenka Razin, with whom he had much in common. Like Razin, he was from an established Cossack family, though from an upstream settlement where government intrusions were directly felt and deeply resented. He appears, like Stenka, to have been illiterate. And as a young Cossack—once again like his predecessor—he won his spurs in campaigns against the Kuban and Crimean Tatars, undertaken jointly with the Zaporozhian Cossacks as in the past. During these campaigns Bulavin apparently became acquainted with Mazepa, the celebrated hetman of the Ukraine. From 1704 to 1706 Bulavin served as *ataman* of Bakhmut, a settlement not far from his birthplace. It was at this time that he first showed his rebellious spirit, leading an attack on the salt works seized by government troops, a harbinger of things to come.

When Dolgoruky arrived on the upper Don and began to carry out his recovery mission, Bulavin resolved to stop him. For this purpose he collected a band of some 200 Cossacks and runaways, among whom was at least one veteran of Razin's rebellion, a Cossack named Ivan Loskut. Their anger had been aroused not only by reports of atrocities committed by the searchers, but also, as in Astrakhan, by the rumor that the authorities intended to cut off their beards, for which they had “a high veneration,” as a foreigner noted, “in as much as they think they make them resemble God Almighty, whom their painters represent with a beard.”³⁶ On October 8 Bulavin ambushed Dolgoruky at night in the village of Shulgin on the Aidar River (a branch of the Northern Donets) and slaughtered him and most of his men, then flung their corpses into wolf pits. The survivors fled in terror to Voronezh, while Efrem Petrov hurried to alert his comrades in Cherkassk.

Bulavin later tried to justify his action in a letter to the tsar. The Cossacks, he wrote, had asked nothing more of Dolgoruky's party than “to recognize the Don and other rivers, as of old, as Cossack territory of our grandfathers, our fathers, and ourselves,” yet “without the advice or consent of the whole Don Host, they went through many settlements, wreaking destruc-

tion and subjecting many men to torture and the knout; they took our wives and daughters to bed by force, hung our children by the legs from trees, and without cause slit the nostrils of many Cossacks." Others, continued Bulavin, were cursed and humiliated, their possessions confiscated, their villages burned, and old residents of at least twenty years' standing sent "against their will into Russia." Bulavin further charged, in a letter to the Kuban Cossacks, that the intruders "began to shave beards and mustaches . . . and wanted to introduce the Hellenic faith."³⁷

Following the attack, Bulavin rode through the surrounding villages and appealed to the inhabitants to join him. At Sary Borovsky Gorodok, the local *ataman* greeted him with bread, wine, and honey, and summoned a village assembly in his honor. In a speech worthy of Razin, Bulavin promised arms and horses to all who would go with him against Azov and Taganrog to liberate the exiles and conscripts. Once freed from their tormentors, he said, they would become "our faithful comrades" and march with us on Voronezh and Moscow.³⁸ Bulavin's exhortations, accompanied by threats of reprisal against those who refused to cooperate, won an immediate response. During the next few days several hundred Cossacks rallied to his standard. Ataman Maksimov, alarmed by his success, offered a 200-ruble reward for his capture and gathered a force against him.

On October 18, just as the rebellion was gaining momentum, it suffered a major setback when Maksimov overtook Bulavin on the Aidar and, in a long and savage struggle, soundly defeated him. Bulavin escaped with a small group of followers into a neighboring forest. The captives were harshly dealt with; more than a hundred had their nostrils slit, and ten of the ringleaders were taken to Moscow for interrogation and hanging. According to the British ambassador, Charles Whitworth, they were "willing to own no more than that it was a sudden uproar caused by the imprudent severity of Mr. Dolgoruky and his party, who, under pretense of searching for deserters, plundered the inhabitants and abused the heads of some of their villages."³⁹

Maksimov's collaboration with the government thus exceeded his original intentions. Though at first he merely supplied a few guides for the searchers, when confronted with the prospect of a general rising by the upstream Cossacks, a rising that might en-

danger his own position and bring the government down on his head, he acted, as Yakovlev had done against Razin, to suppress it. After the battle of October 18 an uneasy calm settled on the upper Don territory. Maksimov reported to Moscow that the "banditry of Kondrat Bulavin has been eradicated and all is quiet in the Cossack villages." But Whitworth, a shrewd observer, sounded a note of caution. "So they said," he wrote to the foreign secretary in London, "when the rebellion at Astrakhan first broke out and, I believe, there is more danger than they are willing to own."⁴⁰

4. The Rebels

After hiding out for a week or two in the Koper forests, Bulavin and a dozen close confederates, including his brother Ivan, Semyon Drany, who was a local *ataman* from the Northern Donets, and an Old Believer monk named Pitirim, made their way across the steppe to the Dnieper. In November they arrived in the town of Kodak on the main route from Zaporozhie to Moscow, at the point where the Dnieper bends toward the Northern Donets. Joined by forty more Don Cossacks, they spent the rest of the winter there, planning their next move. In December, however, Bulavin went down the Dnieper to the headquarters of the Zaporozhian Cossacks and tried to drum up support for a new insurrection. Addressing the Cossack assembly, he revived Razin's proposal for a joint campaign "into Russia."⁴¹ The dream of a united Ukraine, momentarily realized by Khmel'nitsky half a century before, remained alive, and the Cossacks listened with sympathy to Bulavin's appeal, though in the end only a fraction were to join him.

In the meantime, the tsar had learned of Bulavin's whereabouts and sent an envoy to Hetman Mazepa demanding that he arrest the rebel and hand him over to the government. Mazepa's feelings about his former comrade-in-arms were ambivalent. To arrest him might give the appearance of bowing to Moscow's orders and thereby weaken his autonomy. More important, the hetman had already begun secret negotiations with King Charles XII of

Sweden for an alliance against Peter, so he might well have regarded Bulavin as a welcome thorn in the tsar's side. But he was not prepared at this stage to show his hand and fight openly against Moscow. Cooperation with Bulavin might bring government reprisals before his deal with the Swedes could be implemented. Beyond this, he may have resented Bulavin as an upstart against the Cossack oligarchy, whose seditious example was not to be encouraged. In the end, while he forbade his men to join Bulavin, he allowed him to return unmolested to Kodak. At the same time, however, he ordered him to be detained if he should go again to Zaporozhie for support.

With the passing of winter the traditional time approached for launching a Cossack adventure. In Kodak, Bulavin prepared to return to the Don with a small band of Zaporozhian volunteers who, as in Razin's time, had joined him in defiance of their *ataman's* orders. In March 1708 they began their eastward trek, sending agitators in the van with seditious letters to stir up the populace. One proclamation, "For the True Faith," was directed at the Old Believers, who made up a large proportion of the steppe's inhabitants. In another, which was addressed to the "Brave Atamans" of the Don territory and was among the most eloquent to be issued during the rebellion, Bulavin appealed to all who wanted "to roam the open fields with him, to go in style, to drink sweetly, eat well, and ride fine horses." He called on them to spread his message and to throw open the prisons but warned against wanton killing and plunder. Our aim, he declared, is

to stand with all our fervor for the house of the Blessed Virgin, for the true Christian faith, for the pious tsar, and for our own souls and heads. Son with father, brother with brother, comrade with comrade, we shall die as one [rather than] remain silent and submissive before the wicked deeds of evil men—princes and boyars, profiteers and Germans—who are leading us into the Hellenic faith and away from the true Christian faith.⁴²

Given the widespread conviction—particularly among the Old Believers, on whom Bulavin relied for support—that Peter was the Antichrist, it is odd that he did not attack the tsar directly, rather than perpetuate the traditional legend of a "pious tsar" surrounded by alien and wicked men who deceived him and op-

pressed the people. It is possible, of course, that the "pious tsar" of Bulavin's manifesto refers not to Peter but to the "true" sovereign of popular imagination, the long-awaited savior who would liberate the poor and restore their cherished traditions. Yet this is not borne out by the evidence, for there is no further reference in rebel propaganda to a "substitute" tsar, nor did Bulavin ever put forward a claimant to the throne. A more likely explanation lies in the political naiveté of these primitive rebels, exhibited earlier in Razin's endorsement of Nikon, who, like Peter, was widely regarded as an agent of the Devil.

At all events, Bulavin reached the upper Don toward the end of March and chose Pristansky Gorodok, a settlement on the Khoper near the town of Borisoglebsk, as his base for collecting an army. From Pristansky Gorodok he issued a torrent of leaflets appealing for support. The response was remarkable. By the end of April no less than 33 settlements along the upper Don and its three major tributaries—the Khoper, the Buzuluk, and the Medveditsa—with nearly 7000 inhabitants had joined him. At the same time, a dozen settlements on the Northern Donets with 1700 residents went over to Bulavin's lieutenant, Semyon Drany. Thus, as in Razin's movement, it was the Don Cossacks, the disgruntled upstream *golytba* for the most part, who provided the leadership as well as much of the rank and file of the rebel army. Such figures as Semyon Drany ("ragged") and Nikita Goly ("naked") were poor Cossacks in fact as well as in name. Drany, according to some accounts, was a former serf from the Voronezh area who had fled to the Northern Donets only a few years before the rebellion. As the rising gained momentum, moreover, an increasing number of Zaporozhian volunteers—perhaps 2000 or 3000 in all—crossed the steppe to join it, particularly after a letter arrived from Drany calling for "Cossack brotherly love and assistance, so that our Cossack rivers should be as before." "We are ready to die with you as one," said Drany, "so that Russia might not rule over us and that our common Cossack glory might prevail."⁴³ The overriding aim of the Cossack insurgents was, of course, to stop Muscovite expansion, and especially recovery operations, in what they regarded as their territory. As a rebel leaflet put it, "Our first task is to keep our old land and hold it firmly."⁴⁴

The composition of the rest of the rebel following—peasants and townsmen, deserters and clerics—was largely the same as in Razin's day. "Many are swine—runaways, service men of various ranks from the towns escaping from service and taxes, monastery and landlords' peasants fleeing dues and payments to their masters," declared G. I. Volkonsky, the unpopular *voevoda* of Kozlov.⁴⁵ Of the peasant adherents most were from Volkonsky's own district or from neighboring Tambov, where fugitives from the north abounded. In March and April a rebel party under Lukian Khokhlach, a Cossack from Bulavin's native village who played a leading role in the uprising, rode through the area with incendiary leaflets urging the peasants to "annihilate the boyars, Germans, and profiteers" and hereafter to "plow for yourselves."⁴⁶ By the end of April more than 700 Russian and Mordva villagers were added to the rebel ranks, though some, it appears, had to be recruited by force. In May and June the jacquerie spread north-east toward Verkhni and Nizhni Lomov, where Razin had won a large following. In many villages Cossack self-rule was introduced, with local *krugs* and elected *atamans* and elders. Estates were pillaged, towns sacked, and officials murdered or taken to the Cossacks for execution. In a report to Prince Menshikov, one of the largest landlords in Tambov, thanks to lavish gifts from the tsar, Volkonsky wrote that "there was much destruction, plunder, and killing."⁴⁷ Actually only one Tambov landowner lost his life, though many were injured and there was widespread arson, wood-cutting, and theft of grain, cattle, and horses. During the year 1708, peasants rioted in forty-three districts throughout the country. Though only a fraction of incidents were directly related to Bulavin's revolt, the number indicates the wide extent of rural unrest and the danger it presented to the government. In eighteen districts manors were attacked, and in seven landowners or stewards put to death,⁴⁸ a warning of what was to occur later in the century. An occasional nobleman—an official in Korotoyak, for example—joined hands with the insurgents, but instances of class defection were even rarer than in Razin's time.

In the towns, by contrast, the rebellion failed to take root. The situation was very different from what it had been in the seventeenth century, when towns constituted the principal rebel strongholds. By Peter's time even the most volatile of the garrison towns

were being transformed into market and trading centers with a more settled population that was less responsive to seditious propaganda. In addition, government control was more firmly entrenched and the troops more efficient and reliable. Few merchants and traders were convinced by Bulavin's assurances that they had nothing to fear since his quarrel was only with "the boyars and Germans."⁴⁹ In most cases they wasted little time mobilizing against the insurgents. The most notable rebel victory in a town occurred at the end of April, when Khokhlach swept through Borisoglebsk, just north of Bulavin's headquarters, slaughtered the officials, burned public records, and inaugurated a Cossack-style regime. Khokhlach next laid siege to Tambov but was forced to withdraw when Colonel Stepan Bakhmetiev arrived with a fresh regiment of dragoons. On the Volga, as we shall soon see, a number of towns (including Tsaritsyn) were briefly occupied, only to be evacuated on the arrival of reinforcements.

An important place in the rising was occupied by the lower clergy—monks, priests, sextons—especially those adhering to the old ritual. One of Bulavin's original confederates was an Old Believer monk who fled with him to the Dnieper. Bulavin's Cossack lieutenants Nikita Goly and Ignati Nekrasov were Old Believers, and possibly Khokhlach and Bulavin himself;⁵⁰ but since most of the Cossacks were illiterate, it was left to the monks and priests to draft the rebel manifestoes, many of which called for the restoration of traditional religious practices. "We stand for the old faith," proclaimed one of Goly's leaflets, "and for the house of the Blessed Virgin, and for you, the common folk, that we should not fall into the Hellenic faith."⁵¹ Beyond this, renegade clergymen conducted religious ceremonies for the rebels, and a few even commanded detachments that took an active part in the fighting.

A new element in the revolt was the labor force conscripted largely from the rural districts. Included in this group were—apart from barge haulers, who had already supported Razin in considerable numbers—carpenters and stevedores, woodcutters and raftsmen, uprooted, overworked, underpaid men "without horses, without weapons, without money,"⁵² and eager to settle accounts with their oppressors. The situation was complicated, however, when Cossack raiders attacked and destroyed the timber-

collecting station on the Koper, killing its director and alienating many of the workers by their indiscriminate violence, an error Pugachev was later to repeat, though on a much larger scale, in the factories and mines of the Urals.

Finally, a word must be said about the Volga tribesmen, who had figured so predominantly in Razin's uprising. Now, apart from a small number of Mordva peasants in the Tambov area, their participation was negligible. The main reason was that, in comparison with Razin, the territory mastered by Bulavin was rather small. Owing to the government's growing strength, he was unable to establish even a tentative foothold in the territory where the tribesmen were concentrated, but remained confined to the Don region and a few adjoining districts. At most he could issue vain appeals to the Kalmyks and the Kuban Tatars for support, but since they were traditional rivals of the Cossacks, their response was predictably negative. The Kalmyks, moreover, under Ayuka Taisha, were receiving a substantial *zhalovanie* from the tsar and were not likely to risk it for an adventure that may have seemed doomed from the outset.

What is puzzling, however, is Bulavin's failure to approach the Bashkirs, who were themselves in rebellion against Moscow and who were later to furnish Pugachev with some of his best warriors. The Bashkir rising had erupted in 1705, sparked by forced baptisms, searches for Russian deserters, and mounting levies of horses and tribute for the war. The tribesmen feared, moreover, that Peter's new foundries in the Urals would crowd them off their land. Their grievances, then, were akin to those of the Cossacks, and, like the Cossacks, they opposed the disruption of their customary way of life. Thus Bulavin's failure to try to draw them into an alliance seems all the more mystifying. Reports that he did in fact do so⁵³ are without foundation. He did, however, write to the Turkish sultan, calling on him to attack Azov, his former possession. The Russians had long been worried lest the Turks unite with their Volga coreligionists (to say nothing of the Cossacks) and menace their southern frontier. But beyond some exchanges of messages no joint action was forthcoming.⁵⁴ Apart from the Bashkirs, the tribes remained quiet. However, the prospect of the Cossacks and Bashkirs making common cause doubtless alarmed the government, which, aided by

the Kalmyks, redoubled its efforts to crush them; and within a few years the task was accomplished, though the dreaded combination was indeed to materialize later in the century with devastating results.

5. Cherkassk

Meanwhile, at Pristansky Gorodok, each week brought hundreds of volunteers to the rebel camp. In early April Bulavin summoned a general assembly and announced his intention "to march on Cherkassk, destroy Azov, and remove from all the towns the boyars, profiteers, and Germans." He vowed, moreover, "to kill the *ataman* because he collaborates with the Azov boyars."⁵⁵ Lukashka Khokhlach, for his part, proposed to attack Voronezh and burn Peter's new fleet. To forestall these plans Maksimov decided to take the offensive. Mobilizing his followers, he sailed up the Don and, on April 8, encountered a rebel force of 3000, with Bulavin himself at the head, on the banks of the Liskovatka River above Panshin. Maksimov, with a detachment of Kalmyks and government troops from Azov to complement his Cossacks, outnumbered the insurgents by more than two to one. Nevertheless, he accepted a proposal to negotiate and sent Efrem Petrov to represent him. The parleys, however, were nothing more than a ruse. For no sooner had Petrov returned to make his report than the rebels launched a fierce surprise attack. Part of Maksimov's army immediately defected, while the rest, taken unawares, were thrown into disorder. For Bulavin the victory was complete: four cannon were seized, together with a large quantity of powder and lead, and—a particularly coveted prize—8000 rubles of government *zhalovanie*. Maksimov's battered troops meanwhile beat a swift retreat to Cherkassk to nurse their wounds and prepare for the rebel assault.

As usual, as the news of victory spread, a swarm of new recruits swelled the rebel ranks, so that by the latter part of April Bulavin had an army of 7000 men. The situation, from the government standpoint, was grave. The Cherkassk loyalists had been soundly beaten. Azov was alarmed. The tsar himself was wor-

ried, for at a time when the Swedes were marching toward the Russian frontier, badly needed soldiers had to be diverted for use against the rebels. Colonel Stepan Bakhmetiev was dispatched with a regiment to Tambov and Kozlov, where a peasant jacquerie was in full blaze, but was unable to quell the disorders. Thus Peter, on April 12, four days after Maksimov's defeat on the Liskovatka, summoned from the Swedish front one of his best officers, Guards Major Prince Vladimir Dolgoruky, brother of the slain colonel whose expedition had precipitated the rebellion. The tsar allotted Dolgoruky two Muscovite regiments (one dragoon, one infantry) and ordered him to spare no effort "to extinguish the flames of revolt."⁵⁶ Peter also sent a contingent from his crack Preobrazhensky regiment and 400 dragoons from Voronezh, replacing the latter with a fresh infantry regiment under Lieutenant Colonel William Rykman, whose chief mission was to guard the shipyards against a rebel assault. The Voronezh dragoons, drawn largely from the local population, proved unreliable; some, indeed, deserted with their weapons to the rebel camp. At the same time, the governor of Azov, Ivan Tolstoy, warned that seditious propaganda was threatening to subvert his entire garrison. Peter found it necessary to mobilize additional gentry against Bulavin, "a cousin to that rogue, traitor, and accursed criminal, Stepan Razin."⁵⁷ In addition, Hetman Mazepa, on the eve of his own betrayal of Moscow, sent at the tsar's behest 1000 Ukrainian Cossacks, so that, all told, Dolgoruky had an army of 32,000 with which to deal with the insurgents.

Khokhlach, marching on Voronezh, was the first to encounter the government forces. On the night of April 16 he forded the Bitiug River and attacked Rykman's dragoons, who, though caught off guard, managed to drive off their assailants. On April 28 a second encounter took place on the banks of the Kurlak. By now, however, Rykman had been joined by Bakhmetiev and by Colonel Ivan Teviashev, commander of the Ostrogozhsk regiment, and what occurred was a slaughter rather than a battle. The rebels, despite their preponderance of more than two to one, were no match for the picked government troops. Of some 1500 insurgents, many of them peasants with only staves and cudgels for weapons, nearly 1000 were killed and another 143 captured (along with three of their horsetail banners), the rest fleeing

into the adjacent woods and swamps. On the government side, although Rykman was wounded, losses were very few.

That same day, April 28, Bulavin sailed down the Don against Cherkassk. Cherkassk, like Astrakhan and the Zaporozhian Sech, was built on a narrow island with a thick wall surmounted by mortars and artillery. The surrounding area, moreover, was studded with fortified Cossack settlements defended with some forty or fifty cannon. Cherkassk, then, was virtually impregnable—were it not for the human element. For Bulavin's propaganda had aroused dissension among the defenders, and five villages guarding the approaches to the Cossack capital allowed him to pass unopposed. Within the city itself the Cossacks were torn by factional conflict. On May 1, rebel sympathizers rose in revolt, drowned a number of elders, and admitted Bulavin's army. Though some of the loyalists escaped to Azov, Maksimov, Petrov, and several of their supporters were handed over and, at a specially summoned *krug*, condemned to death. Before the assembly Bulavin himself beat them with a whip to find out where their treasury was hidden. At length some 20,000 rubles were unearthed and divided up among the insurgents. On May 6 the loyalists were beheaded. "Though I die by your hands," declared Petrov on the execution block, "the Sovereign will cleanse this great river and exterminate you bandits."⁵⁸ On May 9 another *krug* assembled and Bulavin was elected *ataman* of the Host, thus succeeding—at least for the moment—where Razin before him had failed.

Once ensconced in Cherkassk, Bulavin, like Razin at Simbirsk, strove desperately to secure his position and to broaden his base of support. One of his first acts was to write to Peter and ask him to recall Dolgoruky and his troops. He insisted that, as the British ambassador put it, "he aimed at nothing but to live quietly under their old privileges, and therefore he wondered the Czar was sending an army against him, who was a good subject." What he had done, he said, was merely to depose the "unjust" elders so that the Cossacks might live peacefully "as before." He had no quarrel with the throne, he added, but if Peter's troops should advance he would resist with all his might and, if necessary, flee to the Kuban and put his Cossacks under the protection of the Turks.⁵⁹ Bulavin wrote in a similar vein to the foreign

office and to government headquarters at Voronezh, requesting that *zhalovanie* be sent to Cherkassk as in the past. At the same time, however, he sought military aid from a number of sources—the Kalmyks, the Kuban Tatars, the Kuban and Zaporozhian Cossacks, the Turkish sultan—against a Muscovite invasion. He wrote finally to the governor of Kiev, Prince D. M. Golitsyn, threatening to send an army unless his wife and son, imprisoned in Belgorod, were released at once.⁶⁰ But all his efforts were in vain. Apart from some Zaporozhian volunteers, no assistance was obtained from any quarter. Moreover, the government, far from softening its stand, was more determined than ever to bring the insurgents to heel. As for Bulavin's wife and child, they remained behind bars till after the rebellion, when a worse fate overtook them.

Thus Bulavin was compelled to fall back on his own resources. During May and June he sent his Cossack bands in all directions, just as Razin had done, in an effort to enlarge the scope of the rising. His aim was to advance "into Russia, from town to town, as far as Moscow"—or to flee to the Kuban if the tide should turn against him.⁶¹ While Goly hurried north to block the government forces descending from Voronezh, Drany, joined by 1500 Zaporozhians, extended his operations along the Northern Donets, and Khokhlach, Nekrasov, and Ivan Pavlov headed eastward in an attempt to ignite the Volga valley.

On May 13 Khokhlach, with 1000 men, occupied the Volga town of Dmitrievsk na Kamyshinke (formerly Kamyshin), which Razin had taken by ruse in 1670. This time, it seems, the inhabitants themselves—at any rate the lower classes of the *posad*—invited the rebels to come and admitted them without opposition. The rebels, "children of the arch-cunning Devil" in the description of a government official,⁶² seized and drowned the director of the local salt works and, assisted by the townspeople, played havoc with the commercial traffic on the Volga. Then Khokhlach, joined by 1500 Dmitrievsk poor armed with picks, hoes, and spades, linked up with Nekrasov near Saratov. On May 26, with a combined force of 4000, they placed the town under siege. At night they tried to storm the gates but were beaten off with heavy losses. A second attempt, on May 29, was cut short by the appearance of Ayuka Taisha's Kalmyks, some 10,000 strong, fresh

from a victorious engagement with the rebellious Bashkirs. In the ensuing struggle the insurgents lost 200 dead and several hundred wounded or captured, as well as a large number of horses and weapons. The survivors fled to safety down the Volga. Khokhlach crossed over to the Don and made his way to Cherkassk, while Nekrasov and his men joined forces with Pavlov, who had meanwhile laid siege to Tsaritsyn, a favorite target of Cossack marauders since well before Razin's day. The Tsaritsyn *voevoda*, Afanasi Turchaninov, with only 500 defenders against some 3000 rebels, withdrew to the citadel to await reinforcements. Seven weeks were to pass before his fate, as we shall see, was decided.

The Cherkassk period (May–June 1708), during which Bulavin was *ataman* of the Don Host, marked the high point of his rebellion. It was also one of the most precarious moments of Peter's reign. On the Volga the Bashkir rising continued to rage out of control (not till 1711 was it finally quelled). Bulavin's movement by now had nearly 30,000 adherents and threatened to grow still larger. Some 2000 Zaporozhians had cast their lot with the insurgents, and Mazepa, the Ukrainian hetman, was on the point of joining forces with Sweden. The Swedes themselves, with their formidable King Charles XII at the lead, were nearing the Russian frontier in strength, and Count Loewenhaupt was distributing leaflets calling on the population to depose Peter and choose "a legal and just tsar under whose authority the lives and property of the Russian people can be safe and secure."⁶³ The Swedish general, by invoking the myth of a "just tsar," showed greater political sense than Bulavin, who never once made use of this powerful weapon, much less bring forth a pretender to the throne, even though he had lost his faith in Peter and forbidden his men on pain of death to utter his name. Nor did Bulavin, like Mazepa, seek an alliance with Charles XII. His captured followers, questioned under torture, were steadfast in their denial of any contacts with the Swedes.⁶⁴

The tsar, however, was extremely anxious over the possibility of collaboration between his internal and external enemies. He worried, moreover, lest his new bases at Azov and Taganrog succumb to rebel propaganda or to a direct rebel assault. After Bulavin's capture of Cherkassk, he instructed Dolgoruky to "spread the rumor that I shall be there," and at one point, it

seems, he seriously considered hastening to the Don to direct military operations in person.⁶⁵ Though this did not prove necessary, he did feel constrained, at the end of June, to send Dolgoruky an additional regiment of dragoons and one of infantry, to be followed soon after by an infantry battalion from Poland and two infantry regiments from Narva. For "the rebels are very dangerous," noted the British ambassador, "most of the cozaks on the Don being up in arms; and what is worse, the new raised forces sent from hence desert to them in whole companies."⁶⁶

Peter's fears for his southern outposts were well founded, for at the beginning of July Bulavin made ready to march on Azov. His decision, however, aroused considerable opposition, especially among the "house-owning" Cossacks, who were far from being reconciled to Bulavin's "election" as *ataman*. Ever since his coup in May, they had considered him a usurper and awaited the moment to depose him. They feared that if Azov were attacked, relations with Moscow would be irreparably impaired, the flow of *zhalovanie* would cease, and total government control would be the final result. They felt threatened, moreover, by the "bare-back" element which initiated the revolt, and saw their only hope in a reconciliation with the tsar. What occurred, in short, was a repetition of the split which had earlier sealed the fate of Razin's rebellion and of Bolotnikov's before it.

A plot to oust Bulavin, in which some 500 Cossacks were to be involved, had begun to take shape from the moment he occupied Cherkassk. The leader, Ilya Zershchikov, was a former opponent of Moscow who had come to recognize the dangers of Bulavin's movement—or simply wanted power for himself. Zershchikov and his accomplices began to spy on the rebels and to feed information to the Azov governor, Ivan Tolstoy, "about their roguish and wicked schemes."⁶⁷ On the night of July 1 the conspirators, hoping to forestall the drive on Azov, dispersed the rebel horses grazing outside Cherkassk. But Bulavin was not so easily deterred. The horses were rounded up, and on July 6 an army of 5000 under Lukian Khokhlach began their march. When they neared the fortress, a regiment of cavalry rode out to meet them but failed to stem their advance. Four companies of infantry moved up to bolster the horsemen, and the rebels were

driven back to the Kalancha River, where they fell under cross-fire from the fortress and from government warships anchored nearby. Hundreds were killed outright or drowned while swimming for safety. The rest broke in panic and fled into the surrounding woods. A tattered remnant made its way back to Cherkassk to report the news of the disaster.

A few days earlier the rebellion had sustained another major setback on the Northern Donets, where Semyon Drany held sway with a force of 7000 Cossacks, including 1500 Zaporozhians. Drany, having sacked the town of Tor on June 30, withdrew to the east at the approach of a large government detachment under Brigadier (formerly Colonel) F. V. Shidlovsky, Bulavin's erstwhile adversary in the Bakhmut salt controversy. Drany was overtaken, however, the following afternoon at the village of Krivaya Luka and driven back against his supply wagons by a sudden onslaught in which hundreds of his men were shot or speared with lances. Fierce fighting continued long after dark and rebel casualties mounted. Many drowned in the Northern Donets and adjoining swamps while trying to escape. All told, more than 1000 insurgents, Drany among them, lost their lives in the debacle. Part of the Zaporozhian contingent got away but were overtaken at Bakhmut and all but annihilated. On Shidlovsky's orders Bakhmut was reduced to ashes.

The double blow at Azov and Krivaya Luka led, as one might expect, to defection and betrayal. In Cherkassk, Bulavin's position and the morale of his followers were irreparably undermined. Khokhlach was treacherously murdered by one of his own lieutenants. Discontented veterans of the Azov campaign flocked to Zershchikov's conspiracy. Overnight even the staunchest insurgents became turncoats. For the plotters the time had come to act. Marshaling their forces, they seized control of the city. In most cases the rebels were disarmed without incident, but Bulavin and his closest confederates barricaded themselves in a Cossack house and offered stiff resistance. The plotters surrounded the house and set it afire, then, taking up their axes, smashed their way through the door and windows. Inside they found Bulavin dead, a bullet in his brain. With his pistol he had killed two attackers and then, if Zershchikov is to be believed, saved the last round for himself. A Soviet specialist maintains,

however, that he was killed by his assailants and that Zershchikov, fearing responsibility for the act, put it down as suicide. The truth must remain uncertain. "About Bulavin," wrote the governor of Kazan, P. I. Khovansky, to the tsar, "many say that certainly the Cossacks in Cherkassk killed him and Lunka Khokhlach, but others say that they killed themselves."⁶⁸ At any rate, twenty-six of Bulavin's associates, including his brother and Drany's son, were taken alive and held in irons under heavy guard till government troops could arrive and escort them to Moscow.

The following day, July 8, Bulavin's body was sent to Azov and suspended by the feet on the banks of the Kalancha, where his army had suffered defeat two days before. His head, however, was cut off and preserved in alcohol. In Moscow word of his fate was acclaimed with jubilation. Writing to Tolstoy in Azov, Peter said: "We have received with great joy news of the death of the scurrilous villain Bulavin."⁶⁹ One of Peter's ministers proposed a public celebration, but this was not done for fear of touching off riots, in view of the widespread hostility to the tsar and sympathy for the rebel who had opposed him. Instead, a thanksgiving service was held at Peter's field headquarters at Mogilev, and nearby, it was said, the Swedes could hear the noise of Russian cannon saluting the victory over the rebels. With the pacification of the steppe a good part of Dolgoruky's army could be transferred to the Swedish front. As Charles Whitworth noted: "Thus the tranquillity of [the Don] is resettled, and near fifteen thousand men of regular troops are left at liberty to be employed by his Czarish Majesty on other occasions."⁷⁰

But Whitworth's remarks were a trifle premature. Along the Volga, the Don, and the Northern Donets the rebellion simmered and in places broke out with renewed violence. On July 17 Nekrasov and Pavlov, after a seven-week siege, finally captured the Tsaritsyn citadel, massacred the *voevoda* and officials, and inaugurated Cossack self-rule. Their triumph, however, was short-lived. Only three days later a well-equipped government regiment under Colonel Lewiston arrived from Astrakhan and, after a brief struggle, forced the Cossacks to abandon the city. Embittered by defeat, the leaders fell to quarreling over their next destination. Nekrasov wanted to return to the Don, while Pavlov argued for

sailing down the Volga to the Caspian, as Razin had done forty years before. When Nekrasov departed, Pavlov and his men drowned their anger in drink, and many were slaughtered when Lewiston chose the moment to launch a surprise attack against them. The survivors fled in panic to their boats with the government troops close behind. On the point of being overtaken, they were forced to scuttle their vessels and make it back to Panshin on foot.

Once in Panshin, Nekrasov and Pavlov patched up their differences and threatened to sail against Cherkassk to seek revenge for Bulavin's death. On July 27, however, the Cossack capital was occupied by Dolgoruky, and they had to abandon their plans. Dolgoruky's entry into Cherkassk was a momentous occasion. With banners flying, Zershchikov, in his new role as *ataman*, went out on horseback to meet him, knelt, and swore an oath of fealty to the tsar. The Preobrazhensky guards, in their short green tunics and three-cornered hats and armed with new muskets and bayonets, must have been a hateful sight to the Cossacks. The latter, nevertheless, sang hymns of welcome and "kissed the cross" to Peter, swearing that "in the future they would not rise up or be enticed into rebellion, they would kill and destroy no more, hold no more mutinous gatherings, join no more with bandits and mutineers, distribute no more seditious letters either openly or surreptitiously, and stand no more behind brigands and insurgents."⁷¹ Despite this show of submission, there was no mercy for the conquered. At Dolgoruky's command some 200 rebels were hanged in the main square of Cherkassk, and on August 4 Bulavin's headless corpse, having been retrieved from Azov, was quartered and the limbs mounted on stakes for all to see. The twenty-six captured ringleaders, however, were temporarily spared for questioning, and a large number of dissidents escaped to Panshin to join Pavlov and Nekrasov.

Panshin and nearby Esaulov, to which Nekrasov shifted his headquarters in early August, were rallying points for the scattered remnants of Bulavin's movement. Determined to wipe them out, Dolgoruky mustered his troops (bolstered by Cossack loyalists) and marched up the Don valley, reaching Esaulov on August 22. In the struggle that followed, the rebels were dealt a crushing blow. Of some 5000 defenders nearly 1000 perished in the fight-

ing, while at least 200 were selected from the survivors to be hanged on gibbets or mounted on rafts and floated down the Don as a warning to their supporters. The local *ataman* was quartered alive, as were two schismatic monks—one for leading a guerrilla detachment, the other merely for conducting prayers for a rebel victory—and their heads and limbs were paraded about the village.

But Nekrasov managed to escape. He and his followers, some 2000 in all, fled to the Kuban and placed themselves under the protection of the Crimean khan. Peter's demands for his return fell on deaf ears, and for the next two decades he appeared on the steppes raiding with the Tatars and stirring up trouble for the tsar.⁷² Seventy years later, in 1778, the Nekrasovites, augmented by fugitives from Pugachev's revolt, moved to Anatolia, settling near Constantinople, where they have remained for nearly 200 years, clinging to their old religion and traditional Cossack ways. Some of their descendants, lured by a promise of autonomy, returned to the Soviet Union in the 1920s, only to fall victim to Stalin's collectivization drive, while in 1963 others, still looking for the Promised Land, emigrated to the United States.

No sooner had Dolgoruky routed the insurgents at Esaulov than another government expedition, led by the able governor of Kazan, P. I. Khovansky, attacked their second stronghold at Panshin with equally devastating results. In a fierce battle on August 23, half of the 4000 defenders were killed, some being speared in the Don like fish by Kalmyk horsemen fighting on the government side. Six rebel banners, eight cannon, and all the rebel supply wagons were taken, and Panshin, the base of Cossack pirates for over a century, was razed.

By now the only sizable rebel force still intact was that of Nikita Goly on the upper Don. Goly had established headquarters in the village of Donetsk Gorodok, where he enjoyed the full cooperation of the local *ataman*, Nikolai Kolychev. In a last-ditch effort to rally support for the waning rebel movement, he issued, in August 1708, what was probably the most eloquent leaflet to appear during the course of the uprising. It declared:

We have no quarrel with the common people. Our quarrel is only with the boyars and those who do injustice. You barebacks and poor folk, come all of you, come out of your towns,

on horse or on foot, naked and barefoot. Come, have no fear. There will be horses and guns, clothing and money for you. We have stood for the old faith and the house of the Blessed Virgin, and for you, for all the common people, that we should not fall into the Hellenic faith. . . . And whoever would seize the common people and not let them pass, he shall be hanged to death.⁷³

On October 3 Goly and Kolychev won a stunning victory over the government below Donetsk Gorodok when they captured a fleet of barges from Azov laden with money and provisions and defended by more than 1000 troops. The commander, Colonel Ilya Bils, was ignominiously taken in by the simplest of Cossack tricks. Pretending to be friendly, Goly hailed him to shore by shouting that he had a message from the tsar. When the barges pulled over they were overwhelmed by the rebels, who drowned Bils and his officers in the Don. On hearing the news Peter was furious. "That fool Bils," he wrote to Dolgoruky. "Such a fine regiment lost through his stupidity!"⁷⁴

But this was the last rebel triumph of any consequence. Moreover, the government's revenge was swift. That same month Dolgoruky himself led a large force up the Don to deal with Goly and his followers. In a brief fight on October 26 Dolgoruky wiped out the rebel nest at Donetsk Gorodok, hanged 150 survivors, and burned the village to the ground. Goly, however, had fled with the bulk of his detachment to Reshetevskaya Stanitsa, where Dolgoruky overtook them on November 4. They joined in an uneven battle which left nearly 3000 rebels strewn on the banks of the Don while hundreds more were drowned or shot as they tried to swim to safety. Two cannon and sixteen Cossack standards were taken. Beyond this, 300 captives from Bils's regiment were liberated, with four of their flags. Reshetevskaya Stanitsa was relieved of its grain, then gutted, as were two neighboring villages that supported the rebels. In the two engagements the government lost only 17 dead and 57 wounded.

Though Goly again escaped, his following of 5000 men had been virtually annihilated, and except for the mopping up of isolated rebel pockets, his defeat marked the end of the rebellion. During the next few months the remaining insurgents were hunted down and exterminated. Kolychev was captured in November and

taken to Moscow for questioning by the secret police. Goly himself was caught and executed in February 1709. His wife and mother had already been drowned in the Don by Cossack loyalists. A similar fate most likely befell Bulavin's wife and son in Belgorod, where they had been held prisoner since the beginning of the revolt. His twenty-six comrades seized in Cherkassk on the day of his death were sent to Moscow for interrogation, torture, and hanging. The suppression was carried out with ruthless cruelty, "and no quarter given to man, woman or child."⁷⁵ Dolgoruky in his memoirs reckons the total number of rebel dead at 28,500, and though half this figure would be a more accurate estimate, it was still a large number considering the comparatively small scope of the movement. In September Peter ordered all new settlements on the upper Don and Northern Donets to be razed. The villagers were rounded up, "their homes destroyed and burned without mercy, and they themselves returned to the places from which they had fled."⁷⁶ Crops were destroyed and scores of villages leveled, though a few were spared after declaring their loyalty to the tsar.

Thus, in the critical months before Poltava, the last embers of the revolt were extinguished. Yet, in the opinion of some observers, had Peter been defeated by the Swedes, he would have faced a new and even greater upheaval. "It is certain," wrote John Perry, an English engineer whom the tsar had hired during his historic journey to the West,

that not only the Cossacks, but the Russes too, who were everywhere ripe for rebellion, and who had before taken up arms in several places, and had been defeated, would, if the Czar had lost the battle of Poltava, have made a general revolt, in hopes of relief to their grievances complained of in the Czar's administration, and to be restored to their old superstition and ignorance, to be rid of the foreigners whom they were always dissatisfied with, and to be eased of the burden of their taxes, and drain of their people, occasioned not only by the long war, but by the other public undertakings of the Czar. Such particularly as the erecting and fortifying of new places on the frontiers (whither they with their families, gentlemen as well as soldiers and peasants, were obliged, upon the Czar's commands, to remove and inhabit), as also the building of fleets, with works for making rivers navigable, which they reckoned they had no occasion for, and which they nor their fathers had never known.⁷⁷

On April 19, 1709, after the victory of Poltava was assured, Peter went to Cherkassk to celebrate on the spot the crushing of the rebellion. Bulavin's head, preserved for the occasion, was exhibited on a pike, as was the head of Ilya Zershchikov, who had been executed after Goly denounced him as a former opponent of Muscovite policy. Thereafter Peter tightened his grip on the Cossacks. Some of their best lands he claimed for his own. He ordered the dismantling of their fleet as a danger to Azov and Taganrog, and forbade the construction of new *strugi* on the Don. Although the Cossacks retained their local administration, military organization, and unique way of life, the presence of the government was increasingly felt as the years passed. In 1721 dealings with the Host passed from the College of Foreign Affairs to the War College, and the Don territory became in effect an integral part of the empire. The following year, 1722, the War College established a department of Cossack affairs to carry on relations with Cherkassk. Soon after, the Cossacks lost the right to elect their own *ataman*, who was henceforth appointed in Moscow. Stripped of its independence, the Don lost its attraction as a sanctuary for the oppressed, and the size of the Host, which had expanded very rapidly since the sixteenth century, was to remain fairly stable for more than 150 years to come.

6. Conclusion

Perhaps the most striking feature of Bulavin's revolt was its close resemblance to Razin's revolt a generation before. The parallels are so numerous, in fact, as to warrant calling the former a virtual replica of the latter, though on a smaller scale in area and in the number of participants. Both rebellions attracted much the same social elements into their ranks. Both were partly Cossack insurrections against the increasing encroachments of the state, partly peasant risings against the institution of serfdom, the bonds of which in Bulavin's time were greatly strengthened by a ruler for whom work and service were the chief reasons for existence. Both at bottom were sectional struggles of the frontier against the center, of the untamed Cossack prairie against the

disciplined Muscovite autocracy, and in an age, moreover, when Western habits and ideas were progressively challenging the traditional patterns of Russian life. As Europeanization increased the capacity of the government to deal with its opponents, the contest became more and more one-sided. Nevertheless, it was to persist down to the twentieth century, when Don Cossacks under Ataman Kaledin, pitted in civil war against the Bolsheviks, could still see themselves as heirs of Razin and Bulavin, defending their traditional liberties against the tyranny of the central government.⁷⁸

To a certain extent, indeed, Bulavin's revolt seems to have been consciously patterned after its predecessor. One of Bulavin's "colonels," Ivan Loskut,⁷⁹ provided a living link between the two movements, which were fought under the same horsetail banner, with the same slogans and tactics, and for essentially the same objectives. Nor was the government blind to these similarities. For Peter, indeed, Bulavin was "a cousin to that rogue, traitor, and accursed criminal, Stepan Razin." And a member of the privy chancellery, on the occasion of Bulavin's death, described his rising as a typical display of Cossack banditry, "just as Razin's had been."⁸⁰

But Bulavin's rebellion differed from Razin's in a number of important respects. For one thing, it was more exclusively a Cossack affair, with the peasants assuming a decidedly secondary role. The jacquerie encompassed only those districts contiguous to the territory of the Don, districts in which serfdom was just beginning to take hold and in which the population was unstable and government control as yet insecure. Moreover, for reasons already indicated, the towns were little affected in comparison with the revolts of the seventeenth century. Nor did the tribesmen play a significant role, apart from scattered rioting among the Mordva peasants of Tambov and the serious but independent Bashkir rising further east. Unlike Razin, Bulavin had little success along the Volga. His Cossack bands succeeded in occupying only Dmitrievsk and Tsaritsyn, and then only briefly. On the other hand, his was the first mass uprising to involve the Old Believers on a large scale. The schismatics, like the Cossacks and peasants from whom they drew so much of their following, longed to return to a vanished past in which their ancient faith

and customs were as yet unimpaired by the rising secular state. The same longing for a golden past gripped yet another new element in the revolt, the conscripted workers, whose participation, like that of the religious dissenters, provided a warning of what was to come with Pugachev's outbreak later in the century.

Bulavin, moreover, succeeded in one respect where Razin had failed. He occupied Cherkassk and installed himself as *voiskovoi ataman*. But his tenure was brief. He never gained a secure foothold on the lower Don, and in the end, like his predecessor, was doomed to be defeated by the Muscovites with the aid of the Cossack oligarchy. The main reason for his downfall was the overwhelming strength of the government, which was able, although embroiled in a major war with Sweden, to keep the rebellion from spreading beyond the confines of the Don. Owing to Peter's reforms, a centralized bureaucracy was replacing the old rough-and-ready rule of the *voevodas* in the outlying provinces. Furthermore, the bulk of the Russian army was now equipped and trained on Western lines, and the number of foreign officers employed against the rebels—Rykman, Lewiston, Bils, to name only the most prominent—was far greater than in the past, as, indeed, was the nativist reaction against them.

But in part the failure stems from Bulavin's own inadequacies as a leader. He lacked, so far as one can tell, Razin's immense charismatic powers. No legend grew up around him after his death. One of the few songs devoted to his exploits (specifically to his ambush of Yuri Dolgoruky) does not even mention his name:

Thereupon they rose in commotion,
Flung themselves upon the boyar,
Cut off his proud head,
And threw his white body into the quiet Don.⁸¹

Nor was he a particularly effective military commander. He never became undisputed chieftain of the rebellion but remained throughout merely first among equals, with only a tenuous control over the actions of his lieutenants. For two whole months he lingered in Cherkassk, while Peter gathered his forces against him. His legions were dispersed over a wide area rather than marshaled in a single concerted attack against Azov or Voronezh.

By such a strategy, it is true, he might avoid pitched battles with superior government troops and conduct his struggle by means of small, mobile guerrilla bands, scattering the sparks of sedition far and wide in hopes of igniting a general conflagration. Such hopes, however, were in vain. He failed to conquer Azov, to master the Volga, or to penetrate the Muscovite heartland. Beyond the Don territory his rebellion did not take hold. He won no outside support, either from the Tatars or the Turks or from the other Cossack hosts—save for a number of volunteers from the Dnieper. He secured no assistance from Mazepa, his erstwhile comrade-in-arms against the Crimean Tatars; on the contrary, Mazepa furnished a Cossack detachment to help suppress the rebellion. He made no effort to combine his revolt with that of the Bashkirs. Nor did he collaborate with the Swedes, though contemporary observers conjectured that a synchronized campaign might have altered the outcome of his rising. As it was, Peter was able to tackle his enemies one by one and curb the Cossacks before the Swedish threat had reached its climax. Finally, and perhaps most important, Bulavin failed to put forward a pretender. His was the only one of the four mass revolts not to employ this effective device. Had he done so he would undoubtedly have won much broader support. For Peter lacked the popular devotion enjoyed by earlier rulers—indeed he was widely hated and feared, as inquests by his secret police revealed. Moreover, given the widespread belief that he was not the true tsar but a German changeling or even Antichrist himself, it is all the more surprising that Bulavin did not bring forward a claimant to the throne, in the convenient guise, say, of Ivan Alekseevich, whom dissident elements had always preferred to his innovating half-brother.

For all these reasons Bulavin's movement was fated to dissolve into sporadic, localized outbursts which the government had little difficulty in stamping out. After 1709 the intensity of warfare, both external and internal, gradually abated. Bulavin was defeated in 1708, Mazepa and Charles XII in 1709, the Bashkirs in 1711. But Peter's troubles were far from over. On the foreign front much fighting was still to be done against the Swedes, the Turks, and the Persians. And at home isolated bands of Cossacks and peasants continued to haunt the steppes, and again and again troops had

to be called in to quell them. From 1722 to 1724, near the close of Peter's reign, new rioting flared up in many districts owing to poor harvests and to the introduction of the poll tax. Among the Cossacks, however, the disturbances centered no longer on the Don but on the Yaik in the remote Urals, where the government administration had yet to strike firm roots. Once again it was mainly the refusal of the Cossacks to return runaways that sparked the violence, though another cause was their unwillingness to serve in Peter's ill-conceived war against Persia, for which the tsar had ordered a thousand Cossacks to muster for duty.⁸² Some of the instigators, it seems, were veterans of Bulavin's rebellion, but carrying their grievances to the Urals, they shifted the scene to a new location from which, half a century later, the last and greatest of the mass revolts was to be launched.

IV Pugachev

1773—

1774

God, what a sad country our Russia is!

—ALEXANDER PUSHKIN

on reading Gogol's *Dead Souls*

1. The Yaik

In the first three risings, as we have seen, Cossacks of the Don and Volga played a critical role. After Bulavin, however, the seedbeds of revolt shifted farther east, following the retreat of the frontier. Thus, while Pugachev was himself a Don Cossack, it was the Yaik Host which formed the spearhead of his insurrection. Unyielding frontiersmen, the Yaik Cossacks were descended largely from Don and Volga Cossacks who had fled into the Urals to escape Muscovite expansion. Some, however, traced their ancestry to the first Cossacks who appeared in the region after Ivan the Terrible's conquest of the Volga in the mid-sixteenth century. They insisted that Tsar Michael, in return for guarding the frontier, had promised their forebears full "possession of the Yaik River with its tributaries and all its adjacent land from its source to its mouth [so they might] gather there to live as free men."¹ Whatever the validity of this claim, the Yaik Cossacks did in fact receive a small subsidy from the government as a reward for border service against the Tatars, Kalmyks, and Kirghiz. Their main livelihood, however, was fishing, supplemented by cattle herding and salt production, which had replaced the marauding operations of an earlier age. The Yaik, they said, referring to its plentiful supply of fish, was "the golden Don with a silver lining."²

By the early part of the eighteenth century, however, not even the remote Yaik was safe from government intervention. Little by little the Urals were being settled by Russian colonists, industry was expanding under government tutelage, and the new frontier, like the old, was vanishing. The revolt of Pugachev represented a last-ditch stand against this Muscovite expansionism, a final battle between frontier and heartland, after which there was no more steppeland to conquer save in the distant stretches of Siberia and central Asia.

Peter the Great, near the end of his reign, took the first steps to incorporate the Yaik Cossacks into the expanding state system. In 1721 the Yaik Host, together with its parent body on the Don, was placed under the jurisdiction of the War College in St. Petersburg. The Cossacks were so outraged that they burned down their capital, Yaitski Gorodok (Yaitsk for short), and prepared

to flee to the Kuban or to the Kirghiz steppes in central Asia. But Peter sent an army to stop them, and adding insult to injury, appointed his own *ataman* to rule over the Host, a practice continued by his successors. Peter, ever hungry for new recruits, sought ultimately to absorb the Cossacks into the regular military service; and though he himself died in 1725, his object was partly fulfilled, toward the middle of the century, when a chain of forts and outposts was built along the Yaik and the governor of Orenburg (founded in 1735) was given full authority over the Cossacks in the area.

The Cossacks themselves were torn by dissension. As on the Don, two parties took shape: the more prosperous loyalists, headed by the elders and the government-appointed *ataman*, and the dissident rank and file, numbering between 3000 and 4000 and filled with the spirit of rebellion. As in Bulavin's revolt, disputes broke out over salt extraction and over attempts by the authorities to recover runaway serfs. But the main source of friction was the right to fish in the Yaik, over which the government had established a monopoly, compelling the Cossacks to lease concessions for a large annual payment. During the 1760s, shortly after the accession of Catherine the Great, a scandal erupted when a group of dissidents accused the *ataman*, in league with the elders, of pocketing part of the payment. He denied the charges and ordered his accusers beaten with whips. A government commission sent to investigate the affair found that the *ataman* had indeed embezzled some 2000 rubles intended for the treasury in St. Petersburg. Yet no punishment was forthcoming. This infuriated the dissident party, who took matters into their own hands. Disturbances broke out, and troops had to be sent from Orenburg to restore order. But tensions continued to mount, reaching a climax on the eve of Pugachev's appearance.

Meanwhile, a new crisis arose over the question of military service. Hitherto the Yaik Cossacks, though under the general jurisdiction of St. Petersburg and Orenburg, enjoyed considerable autonomy, serving on a voluntary basis in their own detachments with their own elected officers. In 1765, however, new regulations came down from the War College, headed by Zakhar Chernyshev, who more than anyone else was responsible for the explosion that followed. From now on service was made mandatory

for all able-bodied Cossacks, and the practice of electing officers was abolished. The rank and file indignantly refused to submit to this new violation of their traditional liberties, but Chernyshev was adamant and troops sent from Orenburg began taking conscripts by force.

With the outbreak of war with Turkey in 1768, matters became still worse. The authorities began to recruit Yaik Cossacks into a regular unit of the Russian army, which from the standpoint of the Cossacks meant being reduced to ordinary serfs. As regular recruits, they would be outfitted in Western-style uniforms, shorn of their beards, and subjected to rigid discipline by Muscovite and foreign-born officers. "From the very beginning of our existence there have never been such regulations as are now being introduced," the Cossacks protested. They particularly objected to the loss of their beards, which as Old Believers they prized "almost equal to their lives."³ A series of delegations made the long journey to St. Petersburg with petitions for redress, only to be evicted without ceremony on Chernyshev's orders. In the end, however, Catherine relented. The war with the Turks was not going well, and she needed loyal soldiers, not potential mutineers, for her army. Anxious to placate the Cossacks, she disbanded the regular detachment and allowed them to return to their old system of service. Moreover, in December 1770 she ordered a new commission to look into their grievances on the Yaik.

The commission, headed by Major General von Traubenberg of the Orenburg garrison, did not arrive until the end of the following year and, when it finally came, showed little sympathy for the complaints of the rank and file. Indeed, it began its work by arresting seven of the dissidents and having them shaved and whipped in the public square as a lesson to their sympathizers. A more provocative act would be hard to imagine, and the enraged Cossacks declared they would retaliate by "shaking up Moscow."⁴ As a first step they ambushed a government convoy and liberated their shorn and beaten comrades, who were being taken as recruits to Orenburg. Then, on January 13, 1772, a band of Yaik dissidents fell upon Traubenberg's commission, slaughtered the general and most of his subordinates, and sacked the houses of their own elders. When word of the outbreak reached St. Petersburg, Catherine ordered a regiment of infantry from Mos-

cow under Major General Fyodor Freiman to suppress it and punish the ringleaders. Freiman reached Orenburg in May 1772 and, reinforced by a detachment of service Cossacks, proceeded toward Yaitsk. On June 3 he was intercepted by a force of Yaik rebels who set fire to the grassy steppe in an effort to stop him, but smashing his way through the flames, Freiman pressed on by forced march to Yaitsk, which he seized with few casualties. Severe repressions followed. Dozens of Cossacks had their nostrils slit, scores were beaten with the knout, and more than a hundred were exiled with their families to Siberia. Moreover, the commander of the Yaitsk garrison, Lieutenant Colonel Ivan Smirnov, replaced the regular *ataman* of the Host, which was saddled with a heavy fine. The mutiny was crushed. But discontent smoldered, and barring a cessation of government encroachments, a new rebellion seemed inevitable.⁵

2. The "Third Emperor"

When Russians are unhappy, as Kliuchevsky observed, the way is opened for a pretender. At about this time, rumors arose among the Cossacks of the reappearance of Peter III, who had been murdered in 1762 by a group of Catherine's favorites. Peter's violent death at the hands of the aristocracy conjured up the traditional myth of the good tsar martyred for the people, and murmurs of his resurrection and imminent return gained widespread acceptance.

In many respects, Peter was an unlikely candidate for the role of a "people's tsar." A German by birth and culture, he harbored an ill-concealed aversion for the Orthodox church and Russian traditions. His idol was Frederick the Great, and for Prussian institutions, especially the Prussian army, his admiration was boundless. Yet there was ample reason why, at least in retrospect, he should have emerged as a popular ruler. During his brief reign he had reduced the onerous salt tax, abolished the secret police, and converted ecclesiastical serfs into state peasants. He had also forbidden merchants to buy serfs for factory labor, a sop to the nobility which nevertheless endeared him to the peasantry. More

than that, he had permitted Old Believers who had fled abroad to return to Russia and settle in the southeast, particularly along the Irgiz River in Saratov province, a statute, we shall see, of which Pugachev was to make use. The schismatics, in addition, were given freedom to worship as they pleased, which together with the other reforms convinced many citizens that Peter had "a heart inclined to goodness."⁶

His most celebrated act, however, was to emancipate the gentry from compulsory service. By the manifesto of February 18, 1762, noblemen were permitted to retire to their estates, to travel freely abroad, and even to enter the service of a foreign government. It was a revolutionary step which aroused immediate hopes among the peasants that their own emancipation was in the offing. The conversion a few weeks later of monastic serfs into state peasants seemed a prelude to this general emancipation. But it failed to materialize. Instead, Peter was dethroned and assassinated by a court conspiracy, and the peasants concluded that the nobility had murdered him in order to keep them in chains.

So it was that Peter III, whatever his defects as a ruler, came to be regarded as a martyr in the people's cause. His short-lived reign, his decrees favoring peasants and schismatics, his sudden and mysterious disappearance all contributed to his reputation as a "just tsar" betrayed by the wicked aristocracy. Next to his wife, Catherine, he seemed, despite his own German birth and upbringing, the very model of an Orthodox sovereign. Catherine was an uncompromising Westerner, a self-proclaimed daughter of the Enlightenment, whose foreign ways, like those of Peter the Great, aroused widespread resentment. As a woman and a usurper, with neither Russian blood nor legal claim to the throne, she could hardly inspire the customary reverence among the people for their anointed father and protector. On the contrary, she incurred their profound hostility and suspicion. One of her first measures was to return the ecclesiastical serfs to their former masters, an act which set off such violent disturbances, with tens of thousands of participants, that she was forced to reverse herself and restore them to the state peasantry. In 1767, when she summoned the Legislative Commission to prepare a new code of laws, rumors of a general emancipation quickly revived, only to be denounced in a notorious decree which not only upheld the existing system

but also prohibited serfs from petitioning the crown against their masters on punishment of the knout and forced labor for life in Siberia. The following year the Legislative Commission was dissolved, and hopes of reform turned to disappointment. Far from being liberated, the peasants were subjected to tighter restrictions, heavier exactions, and closer supervision by their lords. At the same time, the most hateful policies of Peter the Great—war, expansion, and bureaucratic repression—were revived, with their attendant burdens of increased taxation and recruitment.

Small wonder that ordinary Russians, as their grievances accumulated, looked back to Peter III with increasing nostalgic affection. Small wonder, too, that during Catherine's reign more than twenty pretenders appeared to haunt the empress and her supporters. In the decade preceding the Pugachev rebellion no less than ten impostors came forward. In fact, rumors that Peter III was still alive began to circulate almost immediately after his death. He had liberated the serfs, it was said, but the gentry had suppressed the decree and tried to murder him; like the Tsarevich Dmitri, however, he had escaped his assassins and a soldier who resembled him had been buried in his place.

Rumors of this sort found especially rich soil along the southern frontier where dissident elements were heavily concentrated—where peasants, Cossacks, and schismatics, yearning for their old way of life, had long hoped that a good tsar would someday appear and by the stroke of his pen grant them freedom, happiness, and prosperity. Old Believers, with their apocalyptic cast of mind, were particularly prone to believe in the coming of a messiah who would deliver them from their oppressors, and they did much to encourage the rumor that Peter III, who had shown them leniency, was about to reclaim the throne. As early as 1762, the year of Peter's death, word spread among the Yaik Cossacks that the tsar was hiding among them, and in the village of Chesnokovka, near Ufa, a focal point of Pugachev's revolt a decade later, the local priest and sexton recited prayers for his miraculous resurrection. Before long, rumors swept through the Ukraine that the "third emperor [i.e., Peter III] did not die" but was "traveling to Kiev to inspect Little Russia."⁷

The first pretenders on record, a Ukrainian peasant and an Armenian trader, made their appearance in 1764 but only very

briefly, the former being arrested and the latter fleeing to an Old Believer colony across the Polish border where Pugachev himself was to take refuge. Like their numerous successors, both men were uprooted wanderers who tramped from village to village in the outlying areas of the empire, armed with a sackful of bogus manifestoes. The typical impostor was a runaway serf, deserter, Cossack, or free homesteader from the so-called *odnodvortsy*, who like the Cossacks, were fighting a losing battle to retain their former privileges. In 1765 a runaway soldier from this homesteader class (about which more will be said later) appeared in Voronezh province and, claiming to be an emissary of Peter III, distributed a decree which suspended taxes and recruitment for a dozen years. The response was electric and peasants from the surrounding area flocked to greet him. Emboldened by his success, he began to claim that he himself was the emperor, but he was seized by the authorities, publicly knouted in each village where he had spread his false tidings, branded with the words "Deserter and Impostor," and banished for life to the Nerchinsk mines of Siberia. Four years later another runaway soldier of homesteader origin posed as the slain tsar, but he too was quickly arrested and deported to Nerchinsk, where he continued to call himself Peter III, attracting a considerable following among the exiles.⁸

During the late 1760s and early 1770s the borderlands spawned a whole series of impostors—Cossacks, homesteaders, soldiers, peasants—who suspended taxes and recruitment, converted serfs into state peasants, promised to restore the old ritual, and sparked off disturbances among the poor. Between 1762 and 1772, according to one estimate, there were forty serious outbreaks in the rural districts of the south, many of them triggered by pretenders or false manifestoes.⁹ As in Razin's day, village priests played an important part by reading the manifestoes to their parishioners or by recognizing the pretenders and performing the traditional rites in their honor. One by one, however, the impostors were hunted down, arrested, and banished to forced labor in Siberia. A bizarre case occurred in far-off Montenegro, where a wandering stranger was rumored to be the Russian emperor seeking refuge from his would-be murderers. It was said that he wept on hearing the name of the Grand Duke Paul and on

seeing a portrait of Peter III; and though he seemed to know no Russian, many accepted him as the deposed tsar who was honoring Montenegro with his presence, a thought which thrilled the popular imagination and fed hopes of liberation from the Turkish yoke. In 1773, however, the stranger was murdered and his movement collapsed.¹⁰

Inside Russia itself, the pretender who attracted the widest attention before Pugachev was a runaway serf named Fedot Bogomolov, a typical drifter who (like "Tsarevich Petrushka" in Bolotnikov's time) had worked as a Volga boatman, lived among the Kalmyk tribesmen, and finally joined the Volga Cossacks, who in 1772 recognized him as Peter III when he showed them the "tsar's signs" (scars in the shape of a cross) on his body. Actually he bore not the slightest resemblance to the late emperor, but "the passing of many years had changed him," his followers explained.¹¹ Supported by Cossacks, boatmen, parish clergy, and urban poor, Bogomolov started a rebellion in Tsaritsyn which spread through sections of the lower Volga valley, but when the tide turned against him he was betrayed by his fellow Cossacks and handed over to the authorities. Branded, whipped, his nostrils slit, Bogomolov died en route to Siberia, where he was to have served a life sentence at hard labor.

In November 1772, while the memory of Bogomolov was still fresh, Emelian Ivanovich Pugachev arrived on the Yaik and identified himself as Peter III. The last of the great Cossack rebels, he was the first to style himself tsar. Thirty years old, he was of medium height, broad-shouldered and narrow-waisted, his face slightly pockmarked and with a short dark beard already flecked with gray. A disgruntled Cossack with Old Believer sympathies, a deserter from military service, a fugitive from justice, a wanderer on the outskirts of society, he fit the pattern set by earlier pretenders of Catherine's reign. By an odd coincidence he came from the same Don settlement (*Zimoveiskaya Stanitsa*) as Stenka Razin. At the age of seventeen, already married to a Cossack girl from Esaulov, he was called to the army and received his baptism of fire in the Seven Years' War against Prussia. He became the orderly of Colonel Ilya Denisov (who was to help crush his rising fifteen years later) but was "mercilessly whipped" for allowing the colonel's horse to get away during an enemy raid.¹²

Trivial though it may seem, this is just the sort of incident which rankles and, with the accumulation of similiar grudges, may set a man on the path of rebellion.

In January 1762, with the accession of Peter III, Russia withdrew from the war, and Pugachev was able to return home. In 1764, however, he was called up again and sent to recover fugitive Old Believers across the Polish border, where he himself was to seek refuge when hunted by the authorities. In 1768 he was mobilized a third time with the outbreak of war against Turkey. Now a noncommissioned officer, he took part in the siege of Bender under General P. I. Panin, another future opponent in his revolt. After Bender, he fell ill with pains in his chest and legs and was sent home to recuperate. Though his illness persisted, his application for early retirement was refused, and he tried in vain to flee to the Terek. After two arrests and two escapes, he made his way across the Polish border to the Old Believer colony at Vetka, which his unit had raided in 1764.

Founded in the late seventeenth century, Vetka had since been conducting a lively trade with the Ukraine and White Russia and supplying numerous communities on the Don and the Volga with Old Believer icons and crosses. From the time of Peter the Great, however, it had been raided repeatedly by Russian troops, who crossed the border in violation of Polish sovereignty. During the attack of 1764 the colony was largely destroyed, but many refugees were allowed to return to Russia under an amnesty of Peter III, of which Pugachev himself now took advantage. From Vetka he made his way to a border post in White Russia where returning schismatics were processed and, claiming to be an Old Believer, applied for resettlement in the Irgiz valley. By now the idea of posing as Peter III had already been planted in his brain. Characteristically, it was a runaway soldier at the internment center who remarked—probably with mischievous intent—that Pugachev resembled the late emperor; and a merchant suggested that he go to the Yaik and deliver the Cossacks from their tormentors. Actually, Pugachev looked no more like Peter III than did his predecessor Bogomolov. Neither eyewitness descriptions nor contemporary portraits of the dark and solidly built Cossack bear any similarity to the tall, fair, and round-shouldered emperor, who had in any case been born fourteen years earlier than

Pugachev. Nevertheless, by the time he received his passport, the idea of styling himself tsar had taken firm root. And no one, least of all Pugachev himself, could have foreseen the consequences.

3. The Urals

When he reached the Irgiz, Pugachev stopped at an Old Believer monastery that served as a way station for dissidents fleeing to the Yaik. Its abbot, a former Moscow merchant named Filaret, maintained close contact with a network of fellow schismatics around the country, who formed a sort of underground railway for fugitive religious nonconformists. To Filaret, Pugachev revealed his plan to pose as Peter III and lead the Yaik Cossacks to some happier land—perhaps Turkey, perhaps the Kuban—farther south. This, of course, was the route which Nekrasov had taken in 1708 and which the Yaik Cossacks had themselves been considering since the 1720s, after their subordination to the War College by Peter the Great. For the Cossack rank and file, as for other discontented elements of Russian society, relocation was a powerful urge, nourished by their messianic expectations and by their belief in a Promised Land to the south, nearer the Holy Land where Christ was born, a New Jerusalem where no authority would tamper with their ritual or inhibit their freedom. Both these myths—of a deliverer and of a Promised Land in the south—were embodied in Pugachev's plan, and Filaret proved a sympathetic listener. He told Pugachev about Bogomolov's rising and about the recent disturbances on the Yaik. Though he did not think Pugachev resembled the tsar, the Yaik Cossacks were profoundly unhappy and ready for a deliverer to guide them to the "land of the Golden Mosque."¹³ For Pugachev himself the urge to resettle in a happier place was very strong, a fact to which his long odyssey bears testimony. Encouraged by Filaret, he assumed the guise of a fish merchant and began to put his plan into practice.

He arrived on the Yaik in November 1772. An experienced soldier, a man of physical strength, restless energy, and compelling

character, he was well endowed with the qualities of a leader. And he came at a favorable moment, barely a month after the sentences against the murderers of Traubenberg had been announced: sixty-two condemned to death and hundreds to be beaten with whips, shorn of their beards, and sent into the army. If ever a deliverer was needed it was now, and Pugachev began to announce himself as the tsar. But before his movement could get off the ground one of his confidants betrayed him and he was taken to prison in Kazan. His confinement was brief. Claiming to be an Old Believer persecuted for "cross and beard," he won over a guard who helped him to escape. He returned at once to the Yaik, where he found the Cossacks more agitated than ever. The sentences against the mutineers, though much reduced by the government, had been carried out, arousing a strong desire for revenge.

Somehow Pugachev established contact with a group of dissidents who were hiding out to avoid punishment. Appearing before them, he assumed the role of Peter III, who had come to redress their grievances. Nor was it hard to win their support; imitating Bogomolov, he exhibited marks on his body which he said were the tsar's. He then delivered an extraordinary speech into which all the rumors and legends about the late emperor were woven—that the gentry had tried to remove him because of his sympathy for the people, that he had escaped his assassins and gone into hiding, that he had wandered a dozen years but had now returned to claim the throne, liberate the poor, and punish their oppressors.

I was in Kiev, in Poland, in Egypt, in Jerusalem, and on the Terek River. From there I went to the Don and then came to you. And I hear that you have been wronged and that all the common folk have been wronged. There is great reason why I am not loved by the gentry: many of them, young men and others of middling years . . . though fit to serve and given posts, went off into retirement and lived at their will off the peasants in their villages and quite ruined them, poor folk, and they alone almost ruled for themselves the whole empire. So I began to compel them to service and wanted to take away from them their villages, so that they serve only for wages. And the officials who judge suits unjustly and oppress the people I punished and wished to hand over to the block. And so, for this they began to dig a ditch for me. And

when I went to take a row on the Neva River they arrested me there and they made up a false tale about me and they forced me to wander over the face of the earth.

He had returned, however, for he "wanted to see how the common people were faring and what oppressions they have suffered from the officials." Now he would join his son Paul (reputed to be on bad terms with Catherine) and go to St. Petersburg and send Catherine to a nunnery or back to her own country. But "if she meets me with bad words, I know already what to do then."¹⁴

The speech was precisely what the Cossacks wanted to hear. It played upon their nativist hostility toward the German empress, their hatred of Muscovite landlords and bureaucrats, their yearning for justice and retribution, and their sympathy for the peasants, who, in contrast to the gentry with their arrogance and foreign ways, were of their own kind and faith. Moreover, it appealed directly to their own vanity and self-interest. "If God helps me to gain the throne," said Pugachev, "then Yaitsk will be the capital instead of Moscow or Petersburg, and the Yaik Cossacks will enjoy superiority over everyone else." In addition, to quote a contemporary, Pugachev "was artful enough to take advantage of their religious prejudices, which he openly professed to espouse and protect."¹⁵ That he was in fact an Old Believer seems doubtful. Indeed he himself later denied it, although the British ambassador calls him a "schismatic Cossack" and Pushkin says the same in his history of the rising.¹⁶ He had, it is true, professed the old ritual in Vetka and on the Irgiz and in Kazan prison, but this was doubtless for reasons of expediency. And if now, before the Yaik Cossacks, he promised to uphold the "cross and beard" and to replace the four-pointed cross of the Nikonians with the eight-pointed cross of the dissenters, he would later promise the Moslems to respect their faith and, when passing through predominantly Orthodox territory, would refrain from promoting schismatic demands.

For the moment, however, he firmly defended the old ritual, and the Cossacks gave him an enthusiastic reception. Whether they truly believed he was the "third emperor," however, is open to dispute. That he bore no resemblance to Peter has already been

indicated, but the Cossacks, already on the verge of open insurrection, needed little convincing to win them over. His closest supporters, men like Ivan Zarubin, Maksim Shigaev, and Timofei Miasnikov, appear to have been knowing accomplices rather than dupes. General Bibikov, Pugachev's most formidable opponent, went so far as to call him their "puppet," while Pugachev himself later testified—possibly to minimize his own guilt—that his confederates "did as they pleased."¹⁷ Veterans of the mutiny against Traubenberg, they were anxious to resume their rebellion and saw the advantages of a pretender to attract a larger following. As Miasnikov testified, "we accepted him as the deceased sovereign, Peter Fyodorovich, so that he would restore our customs and destroy all the boyars, who think they are so clever in everything. We hoped that our undertaking would be supported and our power multiplied by the common folk, who also are oppressed and headed for ruin." The government, he added, was trying "to introduce a new kind of military state that we have never agreed to accept. . . . It does not matter to us whether he is the sovereign or not. Out of mud we can make a prince. Even if he does not seize the Muscovite throne, we shall make the Yaik our own kingdom."¹⁸

The mutineers began spreading the news that Peter III had come to restore their former independence, and hundreds of Cossacks flocked to his banner. On September 17, 1773, to attract further adherents, Pugachev issued his first manifesto to the Yaik Host. Since he himself was illiterate, it was drafted by an accomplice, Ivan Pochitalin, and appealed to immediate Cossack interests: "I the sovereign, Peter Fyodorovich, pardon you of all your sins and grant you the river from its source to its mouth, the earth and the grass, and a subsidy of money, lead, powder, and grain. All this grant I, the great sovereign and emperor Peter Fyodorovich."¹⁹ The same day Pugachev marched on the Cossack capital of Yaitsk. The rebellion had begun. Yaitsk, however, with its large garrison and strong fortifications, proved too difficult a target, so he bypassed the town and, advancing along the Yaik River in the direction of Orenburg, seized a series of isolated outposts with their artillery and munitions. At each stockade his messengers preceded him, waving their hats and shouting to the defenders that "all should rejoice because [the tsar] has risen and

is now coming here." To those who were ready to join him Pugachev promised immediate deliverance. "I shall grant you eternal freedom, the rivers and seas, and all sorts of benefits and subsidies, food, powder, and lead, rank and honor, and liberty for centuries to come," reads one of his early proclamations.²⁰ Those who would resist, on the other hand, were threatened with torture and execution, which was usually enough to dispel any doubts about his true identity. On September 21 the town of Ilets, with a garrison of 300 service Cossacks, surrendered without a fight. With church bells clanging, the residents came out to greet the "emperor," while parish priests with icons and crosses kissed his hand and offered the traditional welcome of bread and salt.

One by one forts and settlements took the oath to the impostor, and by early October he could boast more than 2000 followers and a large arsenal of cannon and rifles. Resistance was sporadic. At Fort Ilyinsk, when the rebels demanded entry in the name of the tsar, the gatekeeper replied: "We have in Russia the Sovereign Empress Catherine Alekseevna and her heir the Grand Prince Paul Petrovich. Aside from them we have no other sovereign." Taking the fort by storm, Pugachev rounded up the officers and asked why they had opposed their sovereign. "You are not our sovereign," they replied, "and we do not recognize you as such. You are a bandit and an impostor"—whereupon they were hanged on the spot.²¹

The rebels met with stiffer opposition at Fort Tatishchev, which guarded the crossroads to Orenburg and Yaitsk. Perched on a hill high above the Yaik, it was the main strongpoint on the southeastern defense perimeter, with large stores of supplies and equipment and a well-armed garrison of a thousand soldiers under the command of Colonel Fyodor Elagin. A few days before Pugachev's arrival the garrison was reinforced by 400 soldiers under Brigadier Christian von Bülow. Sent from Orenburg to intercept the impostor, Bülow learned that Pugachev had already collected some 3000 followers and a sizable quantity of guns, so he retired to Tatishchev to join forces with Elagin. As usual, Pugachev's messengers preceded their leader with warnings not to resist him. But while some of the defenders defected, the fort had to be taken by storm. Using a familiar tactic, the rebels set stacks of hay

ablaze and breached the walls while their opponents were occupied with extinguishing the flames. The garrison surrendered, Elagin and Bülow were put to death, and the jubilant Cossacks celebrated their triumph in a three-day debauch.

The fall of Tatischev made a great impression on the surrounding population. It was the first major victory for the insurgents and, as in past uprisings, drew a swarm of fresh adherents to their camp. In addition, it opened the way to Orenburg, the main administrative center of the region. But why bother about Orenburg? Why not make directly for the heartland, arouse the peasantry, and catch the government off balance? A similar choice had confronted both Razin and Bulavin in the early stages of their risings, and both had chosen the peripheries, where the government was weakly entrenched and where they, by contrast, enjoyed the support of the people and an intimate knowledge of the terrain. To Pugachev not only did the same considerations apply with equal weight, but the driving force of his rebellion was the Yaik Host, for whom Orenburg, with its decrees and tax collectors, its recruiting parties and punitive expeditions, was the direct source of their misery and the chief object of their hatred. Now they would settle accounts.

Orenburg girded itself for the attack. Fortifications were strengthened, bridges were destroyed, and the people were mobilized and armed. Yet the governor, General Ivan Reinsdorp, remained apprehensive, for his garrison had fewer than 3000 men, only a fraction of whom were regulars, the rest being an assortment of Cossacks, Tatars, Kalmyks, and new recruits, many of them overage and poorly equipped. As for his officers, remarked a contemporary, "it is best to remain silent."²² Pugachev's agents had already penetrated the town, sowing dissension with the news of "Peter Fyodorovich's" approach. To scotch the rumors Reinsdorp denounced Pugachev as an "impostor, scoundrel, and monster," which merely added to the fear and confusion.

The siege began on October 5. At first the populace was plunged in despair. "All the inhabitants thought about death," noted a local priest in his diary, "and there was great wailing and disconsolate sobbing."²³ But the panic faded as quickly as it came, and the residents settled down to endure the siege, which lasted nearly six months. Meanwhile, as winter set in, a particu-

larly severe one even by Russian standards, the rebels blockaded the city in an effort to starve the population into submission. Cannon deployed around the walls subjected the defenders to a continuous bombardment, which was answered in kind from within. While the siege dragged on, Pugachev established headquarters in the village of Berda, about three or four miles north of Orenburg. There he reigned as Peter III, at the head of a rebel "government," while keeping Reinsdorp beleaguered all winter. At the same time, like Razin at Simbirsk and Bulavin at Cherkassk, he sent out riders in every direction to scatter the sparks of sedition. Hundreds of leaflets were issued, in Arabic, Tatar, and Turkic as well as Russian, promising freedom to those who cooperated and death to those who resisted. For the rural and urban poor it was not a difficult choice, and each week hundreds of new recruits flocked to Berda to serve the "third emperor."

Throughout the southern Urals the air was filled with messianic expectations. Each day the conviction grew that "Peter Fyodorovich is alive," risen like Christ from the dead to save the humble and punish their oppressors. "Our time has come," said the common folk. "Now we shall get to the top, and we have nothing to fear."²⁴ Cossack bands roved the countryside raiding gentry estates and announcing that the tsar had sent them "to give the peasants freedom." Villagers were ordered to cease toiling for their masters or be impaled. "Why do you work for the landlords when the sovereign, Peter Fyodorovich, has given you liberty?" demanded the Cossacks.²⁵ A reward of 100 rubles was offered for the death of a landowner and the destruction of his home; and for ten gentry victims—1000 rubles and the rank of general. Village priests were upbraided by the Cossacks for conducting services with the three-fingered sign of the cross, and were threatened with execution if they did not follow the old rites.

"I know that the common people will greet me with joy once they hear of my coming," said Pugachev.²⁶ And his prophecy was correct. In a few weeks he had raised a large if motley army: Cossacks and serfs, schismatics and priests, miners and foundry workers, and a variety of tribesmen—Bashkirs, Tatars, Kalmyks, Kazakhs—streamed to his standard. To these must be added a host of vagrants of every description—army deserters, escaped

convicts, unfrocked monks, highwaymen, political exiles, and even a few ruined or disgruntled noblemen, as well as officers of the Polish Confederation who joined in November and December when the revolt spilled over into their place of banishment in western Siberia. "Great and small, poor and rich—all will be esteemed as one class by the sovereign and merciful tsar," proclaimed one of Pugachev's early manifestoes.²⁷ No wonder, given such disparate origins, the rebels were from the outset plagued by dissension. But they were united in their opposition to the existing order, with its infringement of traditional liberties, and their lives being wretched or their ambitions keen, they were eager to follow a leader who promised salvation.

During the early stages of the rising, Pugachev's most numerous and effective supporters, apart from the Yaik Cossacks, were the Bashkirs and the factory peasants of the Urals region. The seminomadic Bashkirs, who differed markedly from the settled agricultural peoples of the Volga valley, gained their livelihood chiefly by hunting, herding, trapping, and beekeeping. Of Magyar stock, Turkic language, and Moslem religion, they fell increasingly under Russian domination after the fall of Kazan and Astrakhan to Ivan the Terrible in the 1550s. The founding of Ufa in 1586 heralded a wave of Russian colonization in Bashkiria, and over the next two centuries the pace of expansion quickened as settlers streamed in from the west, noblemen carved out estates, garrisons sprouted up, and officials imposed tribute, monopolized the salt trade, recruited native horsemen, and demanded provisions for their new stockades and forts.

At the same time, every device of persuasion or force was used to convert the tribesmen to Christianity. Missionaries were dispatched, tax concessions granted, mosques destroyed, and whole villages baptized at gunpoint. As if these outrages were not enough, from the time of Peter the Great, Russian industry began moving into the area on a large scale, and the tribesmen, beyond their normal tribute of furs and honey, were compelled to supply wood for factory furnaces and hay for factory horses. Step by step, with the seizure of grazing lands and game preserves, with the leveling of forests used for trapping and beekeeping, the Bashkirs were deprived of their traditional means of subsistence, and no relief was in sight. Colonization and industrialization con-

tinued on their relentless course. Indeed, with the founding of Orenburg in 1735, new enterprises sprang up at an unprecedented rate, causing a rapid change in the social and economic structure of the region.²⁸

The impact of these developments on a nomadic people is not hard to imagine. Nor, indeed, is the ferocity with which the intruders were resisted. From the 1640s to the 1770s accumulating social, religious, and national grievances touched off half a dozen major risings, each more furious than its predecessor, till in Pugachev's time the whole of Bashkiria raged out of control in a last-ditch struggle for independence. The first serious outbreak of the eighteenth century coincided, as we have seen, with the revolt of Bulavin under Peter the Great and continued for the better part of a decade. For the Bashkirs, however, there was no relief. In fact their situation continued to deteriorate at such a rate that the founder of Orenburg, Ivan Kirillov, warned of a new explosion if a "clever rogue like Stenka Razin" should appear to lead them.²⁹

No new Razin was destined to appear for another generation, but the Bashkirs were unable to wait. In 1735 they rose against Kirillov himself to prevent the construction of Orenburg as a new center of Russian colonization. The Russians, said the insurgents, "want to own all the land," and if Orenburg is built "there will be no more freedom."³⁰ After a savage six-year struggle a tsarist army subdued the Bashkirs, with orders "to crush them to death and raze their dwellings." Nearly 30,000 tribesmen were tortured and executed or died in prison or were given into bondage. Thousands were forced to convert, and the tribal aristocracy was decimated. Some 400 settlements were burned and countless animals, along with goods and money, were seized as booty. But the Bashkirs refused to capitulate. In 1755 they rose again under the mullah Batyrsha Ali in a renewed effort to expel the intruders. Orenburg was sacked, mines and foundries were destroyed, and hundreds of settlers were massacred. In the end, however, arrows and spears were no match for the cannon and rifles of the enemy. The rising was crushed in blood, followed by burning and looting in which thousands of natives were killed and hundreds of villages destroyed.

Faced with vastly superior arms, the Bashkirs were doomed to

defeat so long as they fought unaided. Their only hope lay in an alliance with other discontented groups, Russians of course included. Thus when rumors began to reach them that Peter III was alive and was summoning all the oppressed into one united army, many of the tribesmen, however skeptical of his real identity, were eager to respond. For with the return of the "male sex" to the throne, they believed, their troubles would come to an end. "Whether or not Pugachev is the tsar does not interest us," they said. "Pugachev is against the officials, the generals, and the boyars—that for us is enough."³¹ Pugachev, for his own part, was anxious to have their support. In October 1773 manifestoes reached the Bashkirs from the "sweet-tongued, merciful, soft-hearted tsar," promising to restore their former way of life: "I grant you hereafter the lands, the waters, the forests, the fisheries, the dwellings, the meadows and seas, the grain, your own faith and law, the crops, bodily nourishment, garments, subsidies of lead, powder, and provisions—in a word, everything that you have desired all your lives. Be again like the untamed animals of the steppe."³² Yet his appeal, for all its magnanimity and eloquence, had a mixed reception. Among the Bashkirs, as among the Cossacks, there were deep-seated divisions which the government had long been exploiting in order to impose its control. Rather than join a rebellion which might threaten their privileged position, many of the tribal elders remained aloof or even, during a later stage of the fighting, cooperated with the government against the insurgents. The divisions, moreover, cut across class lines. For most Bashkirs, whether needy or prosperous, cooperation with the Russians was no easy matter. And they disliked not only the landlords and officials but also the simple peasants who settled on their lands, the ordinary workmen who labored in the foundries, the Yaik Cossacks who helped put down their rebellions—in short the very groups who constituted Pugachev's main supporters. On the other hand, they shared with these groups common grievances against the state, a common hatred of the gentry, a common desire to recapture a golden past; and for some this was enough to set aside, at least temporarily, their religious and national differences.

The most prominent of Pugachev's early Bashkir adherents was an elder named Kinzia Arslanov, who joined him in October with

a few hundred men. It was a modest beginning, but Kinzia, determined to win further adherents, sent to the villages agitators armed with Pugachev's manifestoes and with bogus news that the Tsarevich Paul was about to join his father with a large force of Don Cossacks. Kinzia's efforts were so successful that Pugachev made him a "colonel" in charge of a Bashkir regiment that took part in the siege of Orenburg. By the end of November, Bashkirs made up nearly half of Pugachev's entire army and had laid siege to Ufa, the capital of Bashkiria, assisted by Tatars, Mari, and Russian peasants, so that the three principal towns of the southern Urals—Yaitsk, Orenburg, and Ufa—were now in danger of capture.

The discontents of the Bashkirs were equaled, or perhaps exceeded, by those of the factory peasants, whose participation in the *Pugachevshchina* added a distinctive new element, a sort of incipient proletariat, to these primitive mass upheavals. The industrialization of the Urals, already begun on a small scale in the late seventeenth century, assumed major proportions under Peter the Great and his successors. Rich beds of copper and iron as well as an abundance of woodlands for fuel and of rivers for transportation favored a rapid development of the area. Mines, furnaces, and smelting works, founded by the state or by resourceful merchants and gentry, such as the Demidovs, the Stroganovs, the Tverdyshevs, and the Miasnikovs, sprang up in every corner, reaching a high-water mark during the 1740s and 1750s, when the number of enterprises more than doubled, so that a hundred factories dotted the Urals by the time of Catherine's accession in 1762.³³

It is here that one must look for the prototype of the Russian working class—not in the towns of European Russia, apart from the state arsenals of Petersburg and Tula, but in the mines and foundries of the Urals, where a factory life akin to that of the next century was already beginning to emerge. This labor force, as in agriculture, was founded on the institution of bondage. In 1721 Peter the Great permitted merchants with industrial establishments to purchase villages of serfs, who were bound to the enterprises rather than to the owners. In addition, whole villages of state peasants, largely from the middle Volga, were "ascribed" to Urals factories as seasonal laborers. And as the need for labor

increased, paupers, vagabonds, convicts, dissenters, tribesmen, and other combustible elements were recruited for the metal works and mines. Finally, by a decree of 1736 all free workingmen, together with their families, were converted into bondsmen and tied forever to the factories, completing the legalization of forced labor.

The period of rapid industrialization in the mid-eighteenth century saw a sharp rise in the number of ascribed workers, who made up the bulk of the Urals labor force. From 100,000 in the 1740s the figure more than doubled by the time of Pugachev's outbreak. As unskilled peasants, the ascribed workers were saddled with the heavy tasks of mining ore, felling trees, and hauling wood and charcoal, at which they toiled under appalling conditions and for little reward. The climate was severe, the hours were long, the wages were meager and often in arrears, the factories were shoddily built with damp, earthen floors, leaky roofs, and poor lighting and ventilation. Crowded into squalid huts or dormitories, the workmen were ill-clothed, even worse fed, compelled to pay exorbitant prices at factory stores, and subjected to extortions, fines, and beatings by callous foremen and administrators. Worse still, they were sometimes ascribed to enterprises 300 or 400 miles from their native villages, requiring weeks of travel with no pay.³⁴

By Catherine's reign the ascribed peasants had been reduced to "utter squalor and ruin," to quote from one of their numerous petitions to the authorities. "Just look at the factory workers," wrote an army officer to the empress, "especially the ascribed peasants, who have been sacrificed completely to the factory owners, and those predators think about nothing but their own gain and greedily devour all the property of the peasants."³⁵ Government inspectors concurred and recommended drastic reforms, but none was forthcoming. Yet, for all their grievances, there was little solidarity or class feeling among the Urals workers. Like their Cossack and Bashkir allies, they formed two distinct groups whose interests seldom coincided. There was a nucleus of more or less skilled workmen who lived permanently at the factories (in which they were employed the whole year round) and were considerably better off than the ordinary seasonal laborers. As artisans or foremen, not only did they receive

higher wages and have less tedious duties, but they also received an allotment of free grain (akin to the *zhalovanie* of the Cossack hierarchy) and were allowed to engage in trade outside working hours. Although their lives were far from easy, they acquired a certain stake in their enterprises and, while eager for improvements, were not opposed to factory life as such. For the uprooted peasants, by contrast, the routine and discipline of factory work was hard to accept after the seasonal cycle, the rhythm of hard and slack labor, and the freedom of the outdoors to which they were accustomed. It was a dismal existence, tantamount in their eyes to penal servitude, and they found adjusting to it difficult. Rather than better conditions, they wanted to rid themselves of the factories and return to their rural life, which, for all its hardships, seemed a lost paradise by comparison. They yearned to be restored to the state peasantry, which they considered their rightful status, but their petitions to the government were unavailing.

Small wonder that, in contrast to the skilled workers, they should have resorted to violence as an outlet for their grievances. During the 1750s and 1760s a wave of riots and disturbances swept the Urals region. At one Demidov factory in 1760, troops were called in and ordered the peasants to return to work. "We do not want to work at Demidov's," was the reply, "and we will not listen to any decrees. You can send ten decrees and as many soldiers as you like, but we will not go back to work as long as there is no decree from the senate with the personal signature of the empress."³⁶ When such decrees were not forthcoming, the peasants began to manufacture their own, or to circulate bogus edicts brought in from outside. In 1762, following Peter III's emancipation of the gentry, counterfeit manifestoes appeared liberating the ascribed workers from the factories and restoring them to the state peasantry. When Peter prohibited the further acquisition of serfs by factory owners, these manifestoes gained wide credence and workers began returning to their villages. "If we are hunted down and forcibly sent back to the factories," they warned, "there will be killing on both sides."³⁷

A special trouble spot in those years was the Avziano-Petrovsk iron works, one of the largest enterprises in the Urals and a center of worker discontent since its construction in the early