



Chapter 10

The First Romanovs, 1613–1689

From 1613 until 1689, when Peter the Great's reign began, tsarist authority gradually increased. At first, the young Mikhail Romanov relied heavily on institutions like the *zemskii sobor* (land council) and boyar duma. By 1689, however, the former no longer existed, and the latter was increasingly being undermined by tsarist favorites and forces of change.

While tsarist authority was gradually strengthened, so too was the dominant social position of the nobles. The tsars recognized the royal need for noble support in running the country and fighting Muscovy's battles and in exchange for this support were willing to bestow favors upon the nobility. To take just one example, the Law Code of 1649 solidified the nobles' control over their peasants, who now became full-fledged serfs.

There were scattered rebellions against increasing state demands and noble privileges, and Tsar Alexei was forced into making some concessions, especially early in his reign. Yet no ideology was put forth to challenge autocracy. Even the greatest rebel of this period, Stenka Razin, claimed to be acting in the name of the tsar.

While tsarist powers and noble privileges gradually increased, Russia's territorial gains progressed more rapidly. By 1700, Russia was almost three times the size it had been in 1600. Each year of the century, it added on average a territory the size of modern-day Portugal. In the seventeenth century Russian military force and diplomacy gained most of Ukraine east of the Dnieper as well as most of Siberia. As always, one the chief reasons for this expansion was the economic gain the government hoped it would bring. In imposing heavy tribute on native Siberians, for example, the seventeenth-century Muscovite government applied long-established Rus and Russian practices to new peoples.

THE REIGN OF MIKHAIL, 1613–1645

Mikhail's first priority was to restore order and end foreign occupation of territories seized during the Time of Troubles. The first of these two tasks was soon accomplished. Most importantly, in mid-1614, the government captured near Astrakhan the Cossack ataman Zarutsky, his mistress, the Polish Marina Mniszech (wife of the first two Pseudo Dmitris), and her son, the Tiny Brigand. This little

"family" was brought to Moscow. There the Tiny Brigand was hanged; Zarutsky was impaled on a sharp stake; and Marina was sent off to imprisonment and died shortly afterwards.

Regaining lost territory was not so easy. Sweden continued to rule over some northwestern lands, including Novgorod. Only in 1617, with the "eternal peace" of Stolbovo, did the Swedish king, Gustavus Adolphus, agree to give back Novgorod. In exchange, however, he received a 20,000 ruble indemnity and the right to retain Karelia and Ingria, thus keeping Russia back from the Gulf of Finland.

Dealing with Poland was even more difficult. Up until the end of 1618, Polish forces, including Ukrainian Cossacks, attacked Russian lands. After numerous raids, they launched a major campaign under Prince Wladyslaw, who hoped to seize Mikhail's crown. By late 1618, they were besieging Moscow itself; unable to take it, however, Poland agreed at year's end to the armistice of Deulino (a village near the also besieged Trinity Monastery). The truce stipulated the return of war prisoners, especially Mikhail's father Filaret, who returned the following year after eight years in Poland. Again, however, Russia failed to regain its prewar borders. Poland kept a broad belt of western land, including Smolensk and the Ukrainian city of Chernigov, both of which had been won by Russia early in the sixteenth century.

Before Filaret's return in mid-1619, Mikhail received frequent advice from leading boyars and from gatherings of the *zemskii sobor*. Early in his reign, the latter met almost constantly. Once Filaret returned, however, nonfatherly advice receded, and Filaret was proclaimed patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church and co-Great Sovereign. In his late sixties when he returned, this energetic father was much more authoritarian than his more passive son. There is little doubt that Filaret really ran the government up until his death in 1633.

Both father and son, however, relied on important boyars and helped enrich and restore to prominence some of the leading clans of earlier times. Thanks in part to tsarist land grants, the Cherkasskys, Romanovs, Sheremetevs, and Morozovs were among the wealthiest and most influential boyar families in the first half of the century.

To a lesser extent, the early Romanov rulers granted lands to other nobles, including provincial nobles, who were the backbone of the cavalry. In further steps to please the nobles, these monarchs heightened landowners' powers over their peasants and increasingly allowed nobles to treat their conditional landholdings (*pomestie*) as hereditary properties (*votchina*).

Filaret's eight years of captivity had heightened his hostility to the Poles, to their Catholicism, and to their Western culture. His main goal upon returning to Russia was to recover lands lost to Poland during the Time of Troubles. To improve the military, he raised additional revenues and attempted to coordinate Russian anti-Polish moves with those of Sweden and the Ottoman Empire.

King Sigismund III's death in 1632 seemed to present an opportune time for a joint anti-Polish campaign. Russian troops advanced on Smolensk, but unfortunately for them, the great Swedish king and military leader, Gustavus Adolphus, also died, and the new Swedish government rescinded his plans for attacking Poland. The Turks, then at war with Persia, were not much help either, although in 1633 they did order their Crimean Tatar vassals to make peace with Russia. This came, however, only after Tatar raids had reached into the Moscow district itself.

and diverted some Russian troops besieging Smolensk. Finally, to round off a bad year for the Russian government, Filaret died in the fall of 1633.

After suffering heavy losses, Russia agreed to the "eternal" Peace of Polianovka (1634). In it, Russia agreed to abide by the Polish territorial gains of 1618 and further to pay an indemnity of 20,000 rubles. But at least the new Polish king, Wladyslaw IV, finally abandoned his claim to Mikhail's throne.

The final decade of Mikhail's rule was a lackluster one. Perhaps most significant were the colonizing and fort-building activities sponsored by the government, both in the south and in Siberia. These efforts were later continued by his son Alexei and were important both for improving defenses against costly Tatar raids—which netted the raiders numerous captives to sell in slave markets—and in extending the Russian frontiers.

THE REIGN OF ALEXEI, 1645–1676

Although Alexei came to the throne at the same age (sixteen) his father had, he was better prepared. His body, mind, and character were more lively than those of his father, and his tutor, the boyar Boris Morozov, had encouraged his intellectual curiosity. Many Russian historians, such as Soloviev and Kliuchevsky, have emphasized Alexei's goodness. Fedotov stated that "Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich was perhaps the only one [tsar] worthy of wearing the sacred crown. Humble, devout, almost a saint—he astounds us with the strength of his faith."¹

Yet this same tsar admired much of the work of Ivan the Terrible and inflicted brutal punishments on some of his subjects. While encouraging his boyars to take seriously their Christian obligations toward the sick, poor, and homeless, he also told them to be severe with criminals.

The key to Alexei's personality lies in understanding the political conditions and ideas that most influenced him. He lived in a century of European turmoil. Religious differences and increasing demands of centralizing governments, often fueled by military costs, frequently sparked rebellions. In Russia, the century began with the Time of Troubles. When Alexei came to the throne, England was in rebellion against its king, Charles I, and in 1649 executed him. Alexei was well aware of these events, and in 1648, he himself faced a serious rebellion.

According to Philip Longworth, Alexei's response to his disorderly age was to stress that "everything must be done with good order, discipline, and exact arrangement [for] . . . without good order nothing can be made secure or strengthened." This belief and his conviction that God chose him to rule Russia as a good Christian *autocrat* help explain his emphasis on centralization, obedience, and conformity.²

¹George P. Fedotov, *St. Filij, Metropolitan of Moscow—Encounter with Ivan the Terrible* (Belmont, Massachusetts, 1978), p. 167.

²Quote is cited by Philip Longworth, *Alexis, Tsar of All the Russians* (London, 1984), p. 229, from Alexei's introduction to his own *The Rules of Falconry*. Paul Bushkovitch in his *Peter the Great* (Lanham, Md., 2001), p. 64, notes that a similar belief in "the moral harmony of tsar and subjects," which stressed the tsar's moral obligations as well as those of his subjects, was the main Russian political ideal of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Tsar Alexei: Goodly, Stern, and Pious

One of the best contemporary descriptions of the mature Alexei was by his personal physician from 1660 to 1669, the Englishman Samuel Collins. The following selection is from his *The Present State of Russia: In a Letter to a Friend at London* (London, 1671), pp. 110, 116–117, 121–123. I have modernized spellings and punctuation, and bracketed material and ellipses are mine.

I shall now give you a further description of the tsar. He is a goodly person, about six feet high, well set, inclined to fat, of a clear complexion, lightish hair, somewhat a low forehead, of a stern countenance, severe in his chastisements, but very careful of his subjects' love. . . .

In the night season the tsar will go about and visit his chancellors' desks and see what decrees are passed and what petitions are unanswered. He has his spies in every corner, and nothing is done or said at any feast, public meeting, burial, or wedding but he knows it. He has spies also attending his armies to watch their motions and give a true account of their actions. These spies are gentlemen of small fortunes who depend on the emperor's favor and are sent into armies and along with ambassadors and are present on all public occasions. Tis death for anyone to reveal what is spoken in the tsar's palace. . . .

As to the tsar's religion, he is of the Greek [i.e., Orthodox] faith and very strict in the observation thereof. He never misses divine service. . . . On fast-days he frequents midnight prayers . . . standing four, five, or six hours together and prostrating himself to the ground sometimes a thousand times, and on great festivals, fifteen hundred . . . [and] no monk is more observant of canonical hours than he is of fasts.

Along with the generally harsh conditions of seventeenth-century Europe, east and west, and government hopes that strong laws would deter crime, these beliefs of Alexei help explain the harshness of his laws and punishments. (See "Crimes, Punishments, and the Law" in Chapter 11.) Although his beliefs, plus his anger, could lead him to inflict severe punishments, he seems to have derived no sadistic delight from torturing or punishing criminals. The autobiography of the rebel Old Believer Avvakum, who was burned at the stake after Alexei's death, depicts Alexei as sad and burdened by the necessity (as the tsar saw it) of imprisoning and exiling him.

Rebellions and Dissent

From the early days of Alexei's reign to almost its end, Alexei was faced with scattered rebellions. Although they were all unique, they also had at least one thing in common: they reflected resistance to escalating government demands—whether fiscal, military, territorial, or religious. In Russia, as in much of Europe at this time, such demands often stemmed from government centralization efforts.

In the first five years of Alexei's reign, he faced numerous town rebellions. Three were especially serious, one in Moscow in 1648 and then two more in Pskov and Novgorod in 1650.

The first was due primarily to tax increases and resentment against the reputed

greed and corruption of the wealthy Boris Morozov and some of his assistants — Morozov had gone from Alexei's tutor to the leader of his government. (Morozov had also become Alexei's brother-in-law by marrying the sister of Maria Miloslavskaya, who ten days earlier had married Alexei.) After petitioning obtained no relief and *streltsy* troops displayed no inclination to stop them, Moscow rioters ravaged and burned boyar homes, including Morozov's. Further, they wanted blood, and Alexei sacrificed two of Morozov's officials to their blood lust. The tsar also promised to exile Morozov, which he finally did for a short time to a White Sea monastery. Further promises and gifts helped quell the rioters.

Although one wealthy boyar, Boris Morozov, was exiled, two others now came temporarily to the political forefront, Yakov Cherkassky and Nikita Romanov, both of whom were rumored opponents of Morozov. Under their leadership, the government convened a *zemskii sobor*, as requested by dissatisfied townsmen and nobles (especially among the service gentry). Moreover, the tsar agreed to issue a new law code (the *Ulozhenie* of 1649) that addressed upper-class interests. After these pacifying measures, Morozov was able to return to the capital and regain some of his lost power.

The Pskov and Novgorod revolts of 1650 were sparked by hunger. At a time when grain was in short supply, people in Pskov discovered that thousands of bushels of grain were being exported to Sweden. That this was being done as part of an earlier agreement made little difference to famished Pskovians. After individuals in Novgorod joined the rebellion, government troops were sent there. Once again, as in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, that luckless city felt the wrath of Moscow. Pskov, with the support of local peasants, held out for several more months. Its rebellion ended only after Alexei, prompted by another specially called *zemskii sobor*, promised amnesty.

In 1662, Moscow suffered still another disturbance—the "Copper Riot." In the late 1650s, Alexei's government minted millions of inflated rubles in copper coins. This minting was done to meet pressing fiscal needs, greatly increased by renewed war with both Poland and Sweden. To make matters worse, large quantities of counterfeit copper coins also soon appeared. All this money drove up prices, and many people suffered. Again Muscovites petitioned their tsar. After thousands marched out to his estate at Kolomenskoe and turbulently demanded that he hand over guilty officials, he answered their demands by unleashing loyal *streltsy* upon them, killing many. After returning to Moscow, Alexei ordered more retribution, including the exiling, beating, branding, and amputating of the arms or legs of thousands more Muscovites.

In the same year as the Copper Riot, another rebellion began, and again government attempts to increase revenues helped bring it about. This time it was among the Bashkirs, who lived in an area east of Kazan spreading into western Siberia. Upset over increased tribute payments as well as with corrupt Russian local officials and with colonists moving into their lands, the Bashkirs attacked Russian settlements and churches and sold many of their captives into slavery. After two years, Russian military force, the help of pro-Russian Bashkirs and other tribesmen, and the promise of reforms and concessions helped end the rebellion.

By far the most serious rebellion of Alexei's reign was that begun in the late 1660s by the infamous Don Cossack Stenka Razin. Then in his late thirties, he was

tall and his face was slightly pock-marked. He was also strong-willed, brave, energetic, restless, and prone to violence, especially after heavy drinking.

While Razin himself was from a well-established southern Don family, most of his followers were from more northern Don areas where population had swelled in recent decades. As landowners, tax collectors, and army recruiters increased their demands during the costly war against Poland (1654–1667), more peasants and other desperate Muscovites fled southward and became Cossacks. Government search parties trying, with mixed success, to round up runaway serfs only increased antigovernment hostility.

Because the Don Cossacks disdained farming and imported their grain, many newcomers to the Don regions turned from plowing to plundering. Piracy along the Don-Black Sea route and along the Volga-Caspian Sea route, however, made for a precarious existence, especially because the Ottoman Turkish and Russian governments stepped up efforts to curtail it. At the same time, the growing Don population and the needs of the armies fighting Poland drove grain prices up and supplies down. By the late 1660s, many in the northern Don regions were becoming increasingly desperate.

When Stenka Razin appeared on the scene, many in the Don region viewed him as a godsend. He formed a buccaneering band that in 1667 entered the Volga at Tsaritsyn (later Stalingrad and Volgograd) and sailed down to the Caspian. In 1669, he seized Astrakhan and in 1670 moved up the Volga, taking one town after another. He also sent out envoys and detachments to solicit support from other regions, including that of the Ukrainian Cossacks. In September, he attacked Simbirsk. His wrath was directed at nobles and government officials, but not the tsar. On the contrary, he claimed to be working for the tsar in striking out against the oppressors of the common people. He even pretended to have in his midst the tsar's oldest son, who in fact had died at the beginning of 1670. Not only did Razin have someone cloaked in red velvet impersonate the tsarevich, but also he had an impostor in black velvet impersonate the deposed Patriarch Nikon (see Chapter 12).

As Razin stormed up the Volga, he gained support from other discontented groups. Next to the Cossacks, the non-Russians were probably his most important supporters. Russian colonization and Christianization had alienated many among such peoples as the Mari, Mordva, and Chuvash. Razin also gained support from Russian peasants, townsmen, and low-ranking clergymen resentful of the upper classes. Women as well supported Razin. As Paul Avrich has pointed out, they acted not only as nurses, camp followers, and propagandists, but also in a few cases led rebel bands.

Razin's message was freedom and equality. In seized towns, he abolished taxes and established a more egalitarian Cossack-style order. In the process, the Cossacks, non-Russians, and lower classes often took their revenge on upper-class Russians. As tales of burned manor houses, looted property, severed heads, and captured noblewomen reached Moscow, both church and state condemned this brigand who threatened to tear apart the social fabric of Muscovy. More importantly, Tsar Alexei mobilized well-equipped troops to speed toward the Volga.

After besieging Simbirsk for a month, Razin was finally defeated in October 1670. The artillery, *streltsy*, and gentry cavalry of Prince Yuri Bariatinsky relieved

the besieged city fortress and routed Razin's more poorly disciplined and equipped Cossacks, commoners, and tribesmen. Although wounded in battle, Razin and most of his Cossacks escaped. But Simbirsk was the turning point. In April 1671, Razin was captured on the Don by more established southern Don Cossack elders and transported to Moscow.

The government's retribution was fierce. Razin was beaten, tortured, and quartered but died courageously and defiantly. While his arms, legs, and head were placed on stakes, what remained was thrown to the dogs. Nor was Razin alone in suffering such indignities. One anonymous English source described the fate of other rebels at the hands of government forces headquartered in the town of Arzamas:

The place was terrible to behold, 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 executioners put to death eleven thousand men, in a legal way, upon the hearing of witnesses.

Although the government could cut up, hang, and impale the bodies of Razin's rebels, they could not kill off his spirit. Some people refused to believe he was dead, and others thought that he would someday return from the dead. He became the most popular of Russia's folk heroes and became immortalized in many folksongs.

One final rebellion of Alexei's reign, joined by some of Razin's remaining rebels, was at the Solovetski Monastery, located on an island in the White Sea. It was kindled by a different fuel than that which had ignited Razin's wildfire. In 1667, it became a crime to maintain the "Old Belief" that went contrary to the new updated practices of the Russian Orthodox Church. Although we will later examine the resistance and repression that the new religious policies occasioned (see Chapter 12), for now we note only that the Solovetski rebellion (1668–1676) continued until streltsy troops finally brought it to an end shortly before Alexei's death.

Ukrainian Developments and War with Poland

One new territory that came under Alexei's control was most of Eastern Ukraine, formerly under Poland. Although Ivan III had gained some Ukrainian territory in 1503, since then Russia had lost more Ukrainian territory to Poland than it had gained—for example, the northeastern Ukrainian area lost in the 1618 armistice of Deulino. By the mid-seventeenth century, Russia held only a frontier area that became known as Sloboda Ukraine (see Map 10.1). In 1653 and 1654, however, Poland's inability to control eastern Ukraine handed Alexei a golden opportunity.

At the root of Poland's failure were religious differences and the Ukrainian Cossacks. Most Ukrainians were Orthodox, and they had seen their church

undermined by royal and other lay appointments of their hierarchy and clergy by conversion to Catholicism of many Ukrainian nobles, and finally by the Union of Brest (1596). The last-mentioned created a Uniate (or Greek Catholic) Church, which allowed Ukrainians to maintain their Orthodox rites and customs, such as the marriage of priests, in exchange for recognizing the supremacy of the pope. Although most of the hierarchy went over to the Uniate Church, the great majority of Ukrainian Orthodox laity and priests, especially in eastern Ukraine, condemned the action of their hierarchy.

While undermining Orthodoxy, the vigorous Catholic challenge, led increasingly by the Jesuit order, also inadvertently stimulated an Orthodox backlash and revival. By the 1620s and 1630s, this was nowhere more evident than in Kiev. A key element in the Orthodox revival was the Ukrainian Cossacks. By the early seventeenth century, they were divided into three categories: the Zaporozhian Host, registered Cossacks, and nonregistered town Cossacks. The first group was composed of about 5,000 to 6,000 men—no women or children were allowed in this brotherhood. Centered in their island fortress south of the Dnieper cataracts, these tough frontiersmen were the least susceptible to Polish control. The second group consisted of only about 3,000 Cossacks. In exchange for being a border militia for the Polish government and restraining the nonregistered Cossacks, they were officially registered as a separate class and granted rights of self-rule. Many of these men were well-to-do and had families. The third group, the nonregistered Cossacks, were by far the poorest and largest—some 40,000 to 50,000 by about 1600.³ Most of them lived in the many frontier towns—often hardly more than wooden fortresses—that had sprung up in recent decades in eastern Ukraine.

The Polish government used Cossacks from all three groups to help protect its borders from Tatar raids, and it sporadically recruited Cossacks in its wars against foreign foes. Cossacks also took it upon themselves to raid Crimean Tatar and even Ottoman Turkish lands. This was especially true of the Zaporozhian Host. Such raids complicated Polish relations with the Tatars and powerful Turks. Polish-Ukrainian tensions were further fueled by Cossacks' resentment of Polish and Polonized Ukrainian nobles' attempts to dominate them and the territories and politics of eastern Ukraine.

In 1620, the hetman of the Zaporozhian Host took two steps that further united and strengthened the two main anti-Polish Ukrainian forces—Orthodoxy and the Cossacks. First, he enlisted the Zaporozhian Host into the Kiev Brotherhood, which was an Orthodox benevolent and enlightenment organization. Second, he helped bring the Orthodox patriarch of Jerusalem to Kiev to consecrate a new metropolitan and bishops, thus further reinvigorating the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

In 1625, the Kievan metropolitan petitioned Tsar Mikhail of Russia to become overlord of Ukraine. Although the Russian government did not then wish to war with Poland over the matter it foreshadowed things to come. From 1620 to 1648, the Ukrainian Orthodox and Cossacks became steadily more difficult for the Polish Commonwealth to control. The 1620s and 1630s were especially marked by

³All Cossack estimates are from Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History*, 2d ed. (Toronto, 1994), pp. 110–111.



MAP 10.1

Cossack-led revolts and fierce struggles between Uniates and Orthodox over church properties.

After a decade of “peace,” the great Ukrainian revolt of 1648 erupted. It was led by the Cossack hetman Bogdan (Bohdan) Khmelnitsky. At about age fifty, he had become involved in a bitter dispute with a Polish nobleman who claimed his estate and killed one of his sons. After fleeing to Zaporozhian headquarters in 1648, he was elected hetman and began his revolt. Before the end of 1648, Khmelnitsky, his supporters, and allied Crimean Tatars had swept over Ukraine like a tornado. Ukrainian peasants and townspeople joined the revolt and attacked Polish noblemen, Catholics, and Jews.

Although gaining major concessions from the new Polish king, John Casimir, in 1649, Khmelnitsky was unable to maintain all his gains after his forces were defeated by a Polish offensive in 1651. After Khmelnitsky attempted to obtain Turkish support by promising to recognize the sultan as overlord in 1651, Russia’s Tsar Alexei became more attentive to Khmelnitsky’s similar proposition to him. As a result, after consulting in 1653 with the Russian Orthodox patriarch and a *zemskii sobor*, Alexei agreed in 1654 to become overlord of Khmelnitsky’s Ukraine.

The crucial agreements reached at Pereiaslavl and in subsequent negotiations later that year have been greatly debated by historians. What does seem almost certain is the following: (1) Khmelnitsky, his Cossacks, and other Ukrainians in more than 100 towns pledged their loyalty to Alexei and his successors. (2) In exchange for modest revenue from Ukrainian lands, Alexei agreed to provide



FIGURE 10.1. Monument to the Reunification of Ukraine with Russia, Kiev. This monument, opened in 1982 by Soviet authorities, glorified the seventeenth-century “reunification.”

some financial assistance to Cossack forces and overall military protection. (3) Alexei promised to respect traditional Ukrainian rights, including Zaporozhian rights to their own courts and to elect their own hetman. (4) Alexei recognized the hetman's right, with certain limitations, to receive foreign envoys.

As was expected, the agreements led to a Russian-Polish war, which lasted intermittently from 1654 to 1667. At first, the war went well for Russia. Alexei himself led Russian troops and was joined by Ukrainian Cossacks. He proved himself to be a most able military commander. Smolensk fell to him in 1654. By mid-1655, most of Belorussia was under his control and part of Lithuania. Then Swedish competition with Russia over Poland-Lithuania and Russian desires to gain a foothold on the Baltic led to a Russo-Swedish war (1656–1661). This conflict and further Ukrainian developments after the death of Khmelnitsky in 1657 helped deflate Russia's Polish gains.

In 1667, after thirteen years of war, plagues, and flight had taken a great toll on Muscovy's population, the Russians and Poles signed an armistice at Andrusovo, south of Smolensk. By it Russia received Left-Bank (east of the Dnieper) Ukrainian lands, plus Kiev for two years, which Russia subsequently refused to relinquish. The Zaporozhian Host was to be under joint Russian/Polish control. Smolensk was to remain in Russian hands during the course of the armistice, which was set for thirteen years.

Basically the agreement meant that Russia gave up, at least temporarily, most of its claims to Belorussia and the Ukrainian territories west of the Dnieper, but solidified its control over Left-Bank Ukraine. Its Ukrainian gains since 1654 were added to the Sloboda Ukraine region already previously under Russian control. To strengthen frontier defenses, Mikhail and then Alexei encouraged Ukrainian colonizers to enter this latter area and eventually granted them special privileges. Despite subsequent Tatar raids, the Ukrainians and Russians in the area were gradually able to build new defensive lines, extending like an arrowhead south of Kharkov (founded 1656).

Meanwhile, both Khmelnitsky and Tsar Alexei grew increasingly distrustful of each other. Then, after Khmelnitsky's death in 1657, Ukraine underwent a time of troubles of its own. Internal social and political divisions were compounded as different factions sought assistance from different powers, and Polish, Russian, and Moslem Tatar and Turkish troops became involved in Ukrainian struggles. By Alexei's death in 1676, the turmoil in Ukraine had not yet subsided, but his tsarist successors maintained his gains. The political, economic, and cultural effects of this addition to Muscovy proved to be of utmost importance, both for Russians and Ukrainians.

FEDOR III AND SOPHIA, 1676–1689

When Alexei died in 1676 at age forty-six, he left behind a troubling legacy of two marriages and two clans, the Miloslavskys and the Naryshkins. As usually happened following the marriage of one of their clan to the tsar, relatives of each wife had become prominent among boyar advisers and the court aristocracy. Alexei's first marriage to the pious Maria Miloslavskaya, who died in 1669, had produced

thirteen children, five of them sons. By 1676, only two of these sons, both sickly, were still alive. The oldest was Fedor, who at fourteen became Fedor III.

This third, and last, Tsar Fedor was no more memorable than the first two. Like Fedor I, son of Ivan the Terrible, he was not only frail, but also pious; like Fedor II, the unfortunate sixteen-year-old son of Godunov, he was fond of books and learning.

According to Bushkovitch, the boyar elite, the Miloslavsky clan, and Alexei's sister Irina (who died in 1679) helped determine the government's early policies, which included exiling Artamon Matveev to the Arctic region and weakening the Naryshkins, to whom Matveev was close. He had, for example, helped arrange the marriage of the young, vivacious Natalia Naryshkina, the daughter of a friend, to Alexei in 1671.⁴ Of the three children of Alexei and Natalia, the most important was the future Peter the Great, born in 1672.

By the end of the 1670s, Fedor III was relying more on his own favorites including a few lesser nobles and Prince Vasili Golitsyn, a talented man from a prestigious clan of long-standing. One of Golitsyn's most important contributions was working with Fedor to abolish the cumbersome *mestnichestvo* system of precedence, which had come into existence toward the end of the fifteenth century. It was intended to prevent a ruler from disgracing a noble by appointing him to serve in a high government or military position beneath someone whose family was lower on the precedence ladder. Although the tsars had circumvented this system in some ways, it still hampered their power of appointment.

When in the spring of 1682, Fedor's frail life ended, just short of twenty-one, the battle between the Miloslavskys and Naryshkins once again erupted. The Miloslavsky tsarist candidate was Fedor's younger brother, Ivan, the only remaining son of Alexei and Maria Miloslavskaya. He was fifteen, half-blind, and retarded, an unfortunate contrast to the robust Naryshkin candidate, his half-brother, the ten-year-old Peter. At first, the victory seemed to go to the Naryshkins and Peter. The patriarch and a hastily convened assembly—scholars disagree on whether it should be considered a valid *zemskii sobor*—approved of him as the new ruler, with Natalia as his regent. A few weeks later, however, a *streltsy* rebellion reversed the fortunes of the Naryshkins and of the Miloslavskys.

The exact causes of the revolt are difficult to determine. *Streltsy* dissatisfaction with some of their officers and with government officials who refused to act on their complaints was certainly one cause. After Fedor's death, the *streltsy* no doubt realized that the rivalry between the Naryshkins and Miloslavskys provided them an opportunity to redress their grievances. Rumors and *streltsy* fears also played a part. The word spread among the more than 20,000 *streltsy* stationed in Moscow that the Naryshkins had murdered Fedor and Ivan and that Natalia and Artamon Matveev, already on his way back from exile, would favor Western merchants and even Western religious heresies. Because many *streltsy*

⁴Many historians have claimed that Matveev had earlier been a guardian of Natalia and raised her in his home, see e.g. Lindsey Hughes, *Sophia, Regent of Russia, 1657–1704* (New Haven, 1990), pp. 36–37. Paul Bushkovitch, however, raised doubts about this in his presentation "The Origins of the Naryshkin Faction, 1671–1677" at the 1998 National Convention of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies.

were engaged in trade when not fighting and because many were also Old Believers, they especially resented any Western competition, whether to their profits or their faith.

Exactly what role the Miloslavskys, especially Ivan's energetic twenty-four-year-old sister, Sophia, played in spreading these rumors remains unclear. They certainly had motive enough. Some accounts also accuse them of dispensing bribes and vodka to the *streltsy*.

Inflamed by rumors, and perhaps by vodka, the *streltsy* marched on the Kremlin and began demanding that Matveev, some of the Naryshkins, and a few other "traitors" be turned over to them. When one of the "traitors," Prince Mikhail Dolgoruky, threatened to beat them, they rushed the staircase where he stood and pitched him down onto the upturned pikes of their comrades below. A similar fate soon befell Matveev and others. Natalia and her son Peter, however, were spared.

Within two weeks, the *streltsy* pressured a gathering of boyars and another quickly convened *zemski* (land) assembly to name Ivan senior and co-tsar. Peter was designated the other co-tsar and Sophia their regent. Symbolizing the new arrangement was a dual throne especially adapted for the young co-tsars, complete with a curtain and a hiding place behind, from which Sophia or a surrogate could whisper instructions to the boys.

Although many unsubstantiated charges have surrounded Sophia's historical portrait, what we do know is that she was intelligent, forceful, and a most capable politician. She certainly was better educated than most of Moscow's noblewomen, who were still raised and lived out their lives in the *terem*. One of her teachers was the monk, poet, and enlightener Simeon Polotsky (see Chapter 12).

For the next seven years (1682–1689), Sophia remained in power, until finally unseated by her younger half-brother Peter. Despite benefiting from *streltsy* fears of the Naryshkin clan's westernizing sympathies, her internal policies, like those of Fedor III, generally continued the moderate modernizing ones of the earlier Romanovs. Western contacts and influences continued to grow. And her chief adviser, the brilliant and cosmopolitan Vasili Golitsyn, appreciated Western culture. Already shortly after coming to power, Sophia made it clear, to the dismay of many *streltsy*, that she had no sympathy for Old Believers. In September 1682, she had the *streltsy* commander and Old Believer, Prince Ivan Khovansky, executed—he was later immortalized in Modest Musorgsky's opera *Khovnichchina*.

Sophia's foreign policy also was in line with that of her father Alexei and her brother Fedor. After more than 100,000 Turks and Tatars had attacked the Russians in Ukraine in 1677, Fedor's armies had retaliated vigorously, in the first major Russo-Turkish war. Following the peace of 1681, which recognized most of Russia's Ukrainian gains, the Turks turned their full force on Austria and Poland in 1682 and besieged Vienna itself in the summer of 1683. In 1686, the Poles appealed to the Russians for help, and in a Russo-Polish "eternal peace," signed that same year, Russia agreed to send an army southward against the Crimean Tatars. In exchange, Poland recognized as permanent the 1667 armistice's territorial terms and the loss of Kiev and Smolensk to Russia.

Thus, in 1687, Vasili Golitsyn led Russian troops to battle the Tatars. Unsuccessful, he tried again in 1689, only again to fail. Although the two campaigns led to tens of thousands of Russian deaths, in the summer of 1689,

Sophia proclaimed the returning Golitsyn a victorious hero. Combined with Sophia's increasing pretensions—she had begun calling herself autocrat (*sovnoderzhitsa*)—and her half-brother Peter's continuing growth and discontent, Golitsyn's failed campaigns helped bring about her fall in the late summer of 1689.

GOVERNMENT AND ADMINISTRATION, 1613–1689

For almost a decade after Mikhail became tsar in 1613, the *zemskii sobor* met frequently, primarily because the government needed help in raising money, especially for military purposes. Delegates (mainly nobles and merchants) probably sometimes voiced their own concerns too. Preventing peasant flight and curtailing foreign business competition were two such matters.

In the decade before 1632, no *zemskii sobor* assemblies are recorded, but then war with Poland (1632–1634) led to sessions in both 1632 and 1634. The possibility of a war against the Turks in 1642 led to another important gathering, and there were perhaps several less significant ones between 1639 and 1645. Most, if not all, the assemblies' delegates from 1632 to 1642 were appointed by the government and initiated no legislation or actions. Mikhail's government, however, did follow their advice in 1634 to seek peace with Poland and in 1642 not to risk war with the Ottoman Empire—after the Don Cossacks offered Tsar Mikhail the fortress of Azov, seized in 1637.

The *zemskii sobor* of 1648–1649, called by Alexei as a partial response to the Moscow riot of 1648, was the most significant since 1613. It featured almost 350 delegates, chosen from more than 100 towns, some in contested elections. They met in two chambers, the upper consisting of representatives of the Orthodox hierarchy and Moscow's elite service class, and the lower and much larger chamber dominated by provincial townsmen and service gentry. The *sobor* considered numerous petitions from disgruntled groups, both in the towns and in the countryside. It also helped mold a new law code (the *Ulozhenie* of 1649). The code's stipulations finalizing serfdom and granting greater trading prerogatives to urban merchants and craftsmen were indicative of the assembly's influence.

Alexei, however, preferred to rule without being pressured by petitions or *zemskii sobor* delegates. The new law code prohibited several types of direct petitioning to the tsar. And after a 1653 assembly, called to consider the annexation of Ukraine, Alexei convened no more *zemskii sobory*.

A more durable and powerful body than the *zemskii sobor* was what has sometimes been labeled the "boyar duma" (council). Poe and some other historians have avoided using the term because it is not found in the contemporary sources and seems too formal to describe the composition of the group sometimes referred to as "duma men." By the reign of Mikhail they included not only boyars, but holders of three lesser ranks including that of state secretary. For most of the seventeenth century, they collectively acted as the highest advisory body to the tsar, helping him direct his ever-increasing *prikazy* (bureaus) and sometimes acting as a court of appeal. Not all of its members, however, resided in Moscow; for example, some governors of important regions were duma members.

Although senior members of long-standing boyar clans frequently became duma men and helped direct government affairs, they often did so only after extensive military or other state service. As the century progressed, however, it became increasingly possible for those without distinguished aristocratic backgrounds to receive appointments to the duma ranks.

The best opportunity for previously undistinguished provincial nobles to rise quickly in Moscow social and political circles was to be part of the clan of a new wife of the tsar—most of the early Romanov brides came from the provincial nobility. Other powerful connections also helped: Patronage was an important part of Muscovite political life, and having an influential dignitary as a patron was probably more important than possessing talent. But such paths of advancement were nothing new. What was new in the late seventeenth century was the increasing number of individuals from nonboyar families who were appointed to duma ranks because of their expertise. Two examples were the statesmen Afanasi Ordyn-Nashchokin and Artamon Matveev, who respectively directed Muscovy's Foreign Office and acted as chief minister during the final decade of Alexei's reign.

Under Mikhail the number of duma members remained fairly constant, usually in the thirties, but by 1676 (the year of Alexei's death) the number had increased to 96. In the fifteen unstable years that followed, the number shot up to 168 (all figures from Poe). The increase reflected the overall growth of the tsar's much larger court and tsarist attempts, especially after Alexei's death, to deepen and broaden support for insecure tsars by honoring old and new families with duma positions. Many of the duma members appointed in the late 1670s and 1680s, including some from clans like the Cherkasskys and Sheremetevs, differed from earlier appointments in being younger and having much less service experience. Partly as a result of its growth, the duma as a whole grew less influential as the century proceeded. As it became larger, the tsars began depending more on selected individuals within it including lesser nobles the tsars made duma men such as Artamon Matveev.

Just as duma numbers increased, so too did central government officials in the *prikazy*—although these officials still numbered only a few thousand by 1689. The *prikazy* themselves went from twenty-two in early 1613 to about forty by 1682. In the seventeenth century, they were generally headed by a member of the duma who supervised a bureau's other officials and clerks. The *prikazy* were created as the need arose, sometimes for only a temporary period. Many dealt with military matters—*streltsy*, Cossacks, armaments—or with collecting revenue, more than half of which was spent for military needs. Other *prikazy* oversaw areas such as justice, slaves, service lands, foreign relations, or administering territories—for example, the Siberian Prikaz. Among the most colorful named *prikazy* were the Prikaz of Big Revenue and the Prikaz of Secret Affairs. Not quite as intriguing as it sounds, the latter was created by Tsar Alexei to deal with private concerns, such as his estates and falcons. Eventually, however, it expanded to become his own private political bureau, which he sometimes used to bypass the boyar duma.

By the early seventeenth century, local government was overseen by Moscow-appointed *voevody* (military governors), who ruled over about 150 districts or regions of various size. The wide variety of areas—Russian and non-Russian,

interior and frontier—make generalizations difficult, but these men were generally seasoned military officers, and their chief function was to collect revenues for Moscow and suppress disorders. For these basic functions a governor depended on a small military garrison and small administrative staff. Without the cooperation of serfowners, the real day-to-day local government for most Russians, even these basic tasks would have been impossible.

Although Moscow favored the idea of sending governors with no local ties to provincial capitals, Kivelson found in a study of five seventeenth-century Vladimir-Suzdal provinces that this principle was violated about one-fourth of the time. The governors were also supposed to serve for only short periods, generally two years, but again the actual term of service was sometimes longer. While Moscow's central government sent them directives and governors had to seek Moscow's approval for all sorts of actions—Kivelson quotes, for example, one governor seeking tsarist permission to rebuild a burned-down town hall—it was much harder to insure governors' compliance. They sometimes allied with local interests, and their reputation for enriching themselves was notorious—the taking of bribes seems to have been more the rule than the exception among government officials, partly because of low government salaries. It is hardly surprising that delegates to the 1642 *zemskii sobor* complained that the governors were stripping them bare.⁵

THE CONTINUING DEVELOPMENT OF AUTOCRACY

Two major approaches have characterized the scholarly treatment of Muscovite autocracy. The older and more traditional one stressed the legally unlimited powers of the tsar; a more recent approach has been to emphasize the various limitations on the tsar's actions. Although some leading scholars such as Hellie still remain closer to the first view, the popularity of the second one has increased in recent decades. As Kivelson wrote in 1997, the idea that autocracy "functioned within powerful ideological limits and won the willing support of its subjects" was becoming the new "accepted wisdom" among historians.⁶

This latter viewpoint has challenged the traditional one on several points. Ostrowski, for example, insists that the Muscovite rulers needed the approval of the boyar duma before laws or decrees could be issued and that foreign affairs could not be conducted in the duma's absence. In dealing with seventeenth-century Muscovy, Boris Mironov has written not only that the boyar duma, but also the *zemskii sobor*, the patriarch, and custom limited the tsar's power. This has led him to go so far as to write that "Muscovite custom and tradition carried greater

⁵Valerie A. Kivelson, *Autocracy in the Provinces: The Muscovite Gentry and Political Culture in the Seventeenth Century* (Stanford, 1996), pp. 133–143. For interesting reflections on the relationships of governors to local communities and the role of *kormlenie* (see Chapter 6) and bribes, see Brian Davies, "The Politics of Give and Take: Kormlenie as Service Remuneration and Generalized Exchange, 1488–1726," in C&I, pp. 39–67. On *kormlenie* and bribes, see also Kivelson's essay "Political Sorcery in Sixteenth-Century Muscovy," *ibid.*, pp. 280–282.

⁶Valerie Kivelson, "Merciful Father, Impersonal State: Russian Autocracy in Comparative Perspective," *Modern Asian Studies* 31, no. 3, (1997): 655.

force than the will of the sovereign" and that "the elements of rudimentary democracy are plainly apparent in the Muscovite state and society of the time."⁷

An emphasis on the limits imposed by customs, traditions, and informal arrangements has also characterized the approaches of scholars such as Nancy Kollmann and Daniel Rowland. The former, who admits there "were no legal limits on the power of the tsar,"⁸ has popularized the term "facade of autocracy" and emphasized the rulers' dependence on their boyars, whose powers were considerable in a patriarchal system based more on personal and family ties than on law. She has also stressed the rulers' pragmatism and willingness to tolerate considerable diversity. In a similar vein, other historians have stressed how autocracy was not so much about absolute power, but rather a system in which the tsar and "ruling class" cooperated for their mutual benefit and coopted others from peasant heads of households to non-Russian frontier leaders to maintain stability and wide-spread support.⁹ Similar to Bushkovitch (see above, note 2), Rowland has argued that most religious and lay thinkers from the mid-sixteenth to the mid-seventeenth centuries shared a belief that an ideal tsar should be pious, willing to listen to wise advisers, and be a preserver of both Orthodoxy and the traditional political order. Despite the relative political weakness of the Orthodox Church, as compared to the papacy, Rowland has noted that Metropolitan Philip and others spoke out against Ivan the Terrible when they thought he acted in a damnable way and that most political thinkers of the era were against obeying a tsar acting contrary to God's will.

In recent years other scholars have emphasized additional ways in which autocracy, both in the Muscovite period and later, was more limited than once thought. Poe has pointed out that Muscovite nobles were not really as slavish toward the tsar as some of their rituals and words led foreigners to believe. Kivelson and Stevens have indicated how provincial nobles and "soldiers of the steppe," among others, often evaded strict adherence to Muscovite laws. Other historians have stressed how little power the tsars exercised over rural and peasant life in the two centuries after serfdom was finalized in 1649. Steven Hoch, for example, has written that "the autocracy may have monopolized political processes as understood in the traditional sense, but its ability to effect change . . . was small. The role of the state in the rural social and economic order was almost negligible."¹⁰ Another way of viewing the limits of the tsars' powers is to note that even when groups supported the concept of autocracy, they might oppose a specific tsar—the rebellions against various tsars in favor of pretenders being good examples.

Although some of the differences between the two major approaches to Muscovite autocracy result from differing interpretations of ambiguous materials

⁷Boris Mironov, with Ben Eklof, *A Social History of Imperial Russia, 1700–1917* (Boulder, 1999), Vol. 2, pp. 10, 13.

⁸Nancy Shields Kollmann, *By Honor Bound: State and Society in Early Modern Russia* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1999), p. 17.

⁹See, e.g., John P. LeDonne, *Absolutism and Ruling Class: The Formation of the Russian Political Order, 1700–1825* (New York, 1991); David Moon, "The Problem of Social Stability in Russia, 1598–1698," in *RiR*, pp. 55–56; and Maureen Perrie, "Popular Monarchism: The Myth of the Ruler," *ibid.*, p. 160.

¹⁰"The Serf Economy, the Peasant Family and the Social Order," in *IR*, p. 205.

and documents, the major difference seems to be whether to stress the absence of laws and institutions that would have *formally* limited tsarist powers or to highlight the importance of custom, tradition, and informal arrangements that did limit them in a practical sense. Perhaps Western scholars traditionally had not emphasized enough the significance of the latter and been too quick to condemn whatever was perceived as failing to follow the Western path of "progress," but we should still be cautious about regarding autocracy as little more than a "facade." We can acknowledge the power of boyars (or later on in Russian history of a noble "ruling class") without excessively downplaying that of the monarch. In considering the subject, it is helpful to recall the admonition of Dominic Lieven that "the term 'autocracy' is often used confusingly in the Russian context and with various meanings. In reality, however, the word ought to imply no more nor less than the obvious fact that the Russian tsar's power was unconstrained by a constitution, by laws or by representative institutions."¹¹ The absence of any significant legal limitations on the monarch's powers and the weakness of other safeguards against despotic behavior were important, lay at the very core of autocracy, and paved the way for its further strengthening during the eighteenth century.

In describing the views of eighteenth-century Russian historians, Cynthia Whittaker observed that "they equated Russian autocracy (*samодержавие*) and European absolutism (*единовластие*) and used the terms interchangeably."¹² And twentieth-century Western historians often compared and contrasted early modern Russian autocracy with the European "absolutism" of such rulers as the French "Sun King," Louis XIV. During the 1990s, however, the validity of using the term absolutism to characterize the rule of such monarchs came under increasing fire.

Despite such differences on what terms, if any, should be used to characterize early modern Western European monarchies, both similarities and differences with Russian autocracy existed. Although continuing to be limited by numerous practical difficulties, some, but by no means all, Western European rulers weakened non-monarchical elements of government and strengthened the central government's powers over financial, legal, political, and cultural aspects of life.

Although Russia's government by 1689 still was relatively small and dependent upon noble landowners to control most of the country's people, it also had moved in this direction. The fading away of the *zemskii sobor*, the decline of the boyar duma's importance, and the abolition of *mestnichestvo* were accompanied by the increase of all of the following: government officials and economic activities, taxes, military strength, and government power over the Orthodox Church. The Law Code of 1649 and other legal developments helped tighten state, as well as landowner, control over the population.

Yet Russian autocracy remained unique in many ways. The three estates of Europe—clergy, nobles, and townsmen—remained much stronger in the West than in Russia. In some Western countries, such as England and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, parliamentary bodies with strong legal powers existed. Partly due to relatively little Roman legal influence in Russia, there was

¹¹ Empire: The Russian Empire and Its Rivals (London, 2000), p. 251.

¹² "The Idea of Autocracy among Eighteenth-Century Russian Historians," in IR, p. 36.

less emphasis on individual or collective rights than in the West. Especially shocking to many European visitors was the fact that even nobles seemed to have few rights and, up until the late eighteenth century, could be flogged. Moreover, the Law Code of 1649 went much further than Western legislation in restricting its people. Not only did it permanently enserf landowners' peasants, but also it prohibited most townspeople from leaving their towns (see Chapter 11). Even nobles could not leave the country without government permission. Antigovernment crimes, including economic offenses such as cheating on taxes, had to be reported to authorities. Failure to report a conspiracy against the tsar was punishable by death, even for wives and children of such "traitors."

CONQUEST OF SIBERIA

Even more dramatic than the growth of tsarist government was that of Russia itself. Although some expansion occurred in the west and southwest, far more occurred in Siberia.

By the mid-seventeenth century, the Russians had reached the Pacific Ocean and had subjugated most of Siberia in less than three quarters of a century. Their feat compares with the Western European overseas explorations and conquests that marked the years 1400 through 1650 and with the later American expansion across the American continent to the Pacific.

In moving Russia's boundary eastward over 3,000 miles, the Russians were aided by an excellent river network (see Map 10.2). Although rivers like the Ob, Enisei, Lena, and Kolyma flowed northward into the Arctic Ocean, they also possessed excellent east-west tributaries. Although frozen half the year, the great rivers and their tributaries even then provided smooth, icy roadways for fast sleigh travel. The eastward movement was also facilitated by the relative flatness of western and central Siberia. Primitive conditions, cold temperatures, and thick forests, however, presented hard challenges.

When the Russians began their advance, there were only some 200,000 natives spread across vast Siberia. These peoples spoke more than a hundred languages or dialects. Except for the Yakuts and the peoples of the southern Siberian steppes, both of whom seasonally migrated with their cattle and horses, most other native Siberians based their economy on the reindeer. It provided not only food, but also skins for clothes and shelter. Some peoples hunted wild reindeer, whereas others relied on domesticated herds. With bows and arrows and spears, native peoples also hunted other game; and they fished and gathered berries, nuts, and roots. Although most were nomadic or seminomadic and private landowning did not exist, differing peoples usually respected each other's traditional hunting, fishing, and grazing grounds.

Most natives except in the far northeast were organized into clans, which recognized a common ancestor. Men generally married outside their clan. The most prevalent native religion was shamanism—the shaman being a combination priest, medicine man, and soothsayer. He was thought capable of communicating with nature's many spirits, including that of the brown bear, venerated by many clans. Like most native Americans, the native Siberians had a great respect for nature and its spirits and generally lived in harmony with it.

Attracted primarily by furs ("soft gold"), Russian entrepreneurs and government forces quickly subjugated native peoples. According to Basil Dmytryshyn, the yearly *yasak* (tribute) quota per adult male native in the early seventeenth century was twenty-two sables and at midcentury, because of sable depletion, five. If sables were not available, the government demanded other forms of tribute, usually other furs. To make such payments less distasteful, the government often distributed "sovereign's compensation," which might include such items as axes, tobacco, and especially colored crystal beads. The furs collected, plus tithes from Russian hunters and merchants in Siberia, became a major source of tsarist revenue.¹³

Besides the entrepreneurs and government officials and forces, including Cossacks and *streltsy* troops, a host of other groups also poured into Siberia in the century following Ermak's first incursion. They included state peasants and runaway serfs (Siberia itself remained virtually free from serfdom), clergy, and exiles, such as prisoners-of-war and religious and political dissenters.

Government officials and troops generally resided in strategically placed wooden fortresses that sometimes blossomed into frontier cities. These new outposts advanced along the great river system of Siberia and included Tobolsk (1587), Tomsk (1604), Yakutsk (1632), Okhotsk (1647), and Irkutsk (1652). By 1662, there were some 70,000 Russian men in Siberia.

Because most Russians who went to Siberia were men, there was a shortage of Russian women, especially in the more remote eastern Siberia. This helped lead to a slave trade in native Siberian women and to many children being born of mixed parentage. Native men captured in battle and children also sometimes were enslaved.

Russians treated native Siberians much like other conquerors the world over treated other natives. Superior weapons and state power helped eventually subdue any Siberian natives who dared resist the tribute payment. As in Spanish America, more natives died from diseases contracted from their conquerors than from death in battle. Epidemics like smallpox and measles sometimes wiped out more than half a people's population. Although the Russian Orthodox Church wished to convert natives to Christianity, government authorities were not so eager because conversion ended the obligation to pay *yasak*.

Yet even if not converted, native Siberians witnessed the undermining of their cultures. In exchange, they obtained the advantages and disadvantages of gradually being absorbed into a more "advanced" civilization.

As with the white conquest of Native Americans, the Russians succeeded in subjugating most Siberians because of scant competition from outside powers. Only China prevented Russia from gobbling up all of Siberia. By the Treaty of Nerchinsk in 1689, Russia agreed to recognize China's claims to the Amur River area and northward up to the Stanovoi Mountains. Only in the mid-nineteenth century was Russia able to gain the northern Amur region.

¹³For much of this section, I am indebted to essays by Dmytryshyn, James Forsyth, and others contained in Alan Wood, ed., *The History of Siberia: From Russian Conquest to Revolution* (London, 1991).

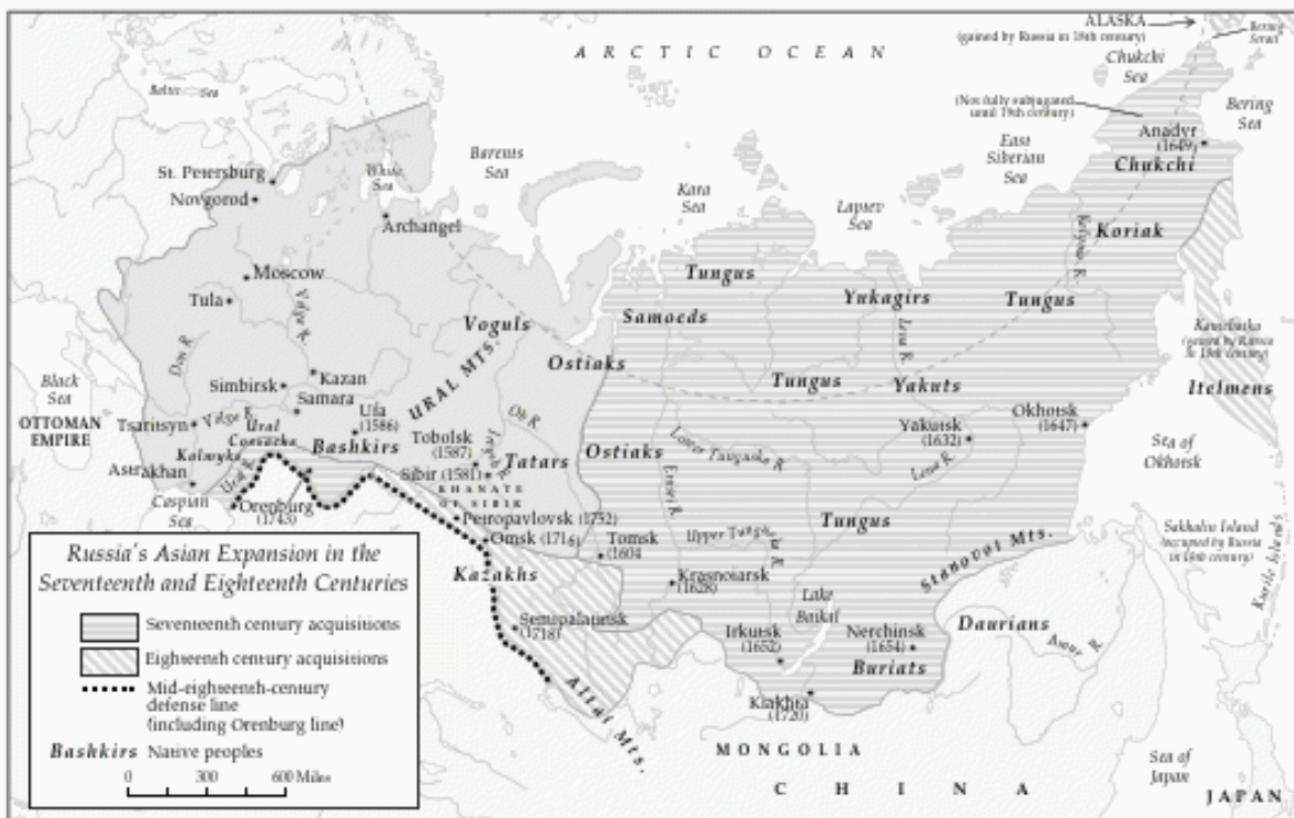




FIGURE 10.2. The Tungus from Siberia did not bury their dead in the ground. They sometimes laid them on boards resting in tree trunks, as in the upper left of this picture. (From Ian Grey, *The Horizon History of Russia*, American Heritage Publishing Company, New York, 1970, p. 43.)

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