

Chapter 9

The Time of Troubles, 1598–1613

Upon the death of Fedor (1584–1598), Ivan IV's son and the last of Moscow's Daniilovich line, a Time of Troubles began. This period included a horrendous famine, struggles for the throne, two phases of a civil war (1604–05 and 1606–1612), the Bolotnikov rebellion of 1606–07,¹ and foreign intervention. Finally, in 1613, the Time of Troubles came to an end with the selection of a new ruler, Mikhail Romanov.

BACKGROUND: RUSSIA UNDER FEDOR (1584–1598)

Fedor was born to Ivan IV's first wife Anastasia in 1557. Frail, feeble-minded, and pious—labeled the “bell-ringer” because of his frequent presence at church services—he lacked the strength needed to deal with Ivan the Terrible's sorrowful legacy. Deserted villages and abandoned estates left the government and army short of tax revenues and manpower, and the Crimean Tatars, Poland (or, more exactly, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth), and Sweden remained as threats to Russian security and ambitions.

With a weak tsar at the top, a boyar struggle began to determine who became the power behind the throne. From the outset, Fedor's brother-in-law, the intelligent and resourceful Boris Godunov, then in his mid-thirties, was in a favourable position. He had risen through the *oprichnina* administrative ranks and had favorably impressed Ivan IV. Ivan had not only married Fedor to his sister, Irena, but also named Godunov an executor of his will. By late 1588, Godunov had successfully overcome the challenge of rivals such as the powerful Shuisky clan. For a decade, he remained the power behind the throne. On a more formal basis, his sister's powers also increased. In the 1590s, Fedor named Irena a co-ruler and she increased her involvement in government affairs.

¹Chester S. L. Dunning, *Russia's First Civil War: The Time of Troubles and the Founding of the Romanov Dynasty* (University Park, PA, 2001), p. 1, refers to this rebellion as the “largest and most powerful uprising in Russian history before the twentieth century.” In revising this chapter for a second edition, I have relied heavily on this work.

To deal with the “deserted village” phenomenon, Boris Godunov further restricted the peasants’ right to flee. He also attempted to increase state revenues by increasing taxes and taxpayers, partly by new restrictions on townspeople. But the economic crisis inherited from Ivan the Terrible only worsened by the end of Fedor’s reign. Part of the problem was bad weather, part of the “little ice age” that affected Europe at this time, which harmed the harvests and produced a serious Russian famine in 1588 that led to increased prices.

In addition, a tragic event occurred in 1591 that revealed its full significance only in subsequent years. This was the death of Fedor’s half-brother and possible successor, Dmitri of Uglich, offspring of Ivan’s last marriage. The young Dmitri died of a knife wound to the neck, and his mother, Maria Nagaia, charged that Godunov had masterminded the stabbing. Others, including some in Uglich, believed the charge.

In the nineteenth century, Alexander Pushkin and Modest Musorgsky immortalized Godunov’s supposed complicity in a play and opera, both entitled *Boris Godunov*. Yet, Godunov’s guilt remained unproved. In 1591, it was far from clear that Dmitri would succeed Fedor upon his death. Fedor himself might yet produce his own heir—in fact, a daughter was born to Fedor and Irena in 1592 (the baby died, however, in 1594). Furthermore, as the son of a marriage of dubious religious legitimacy, Dmitri’s claim as heir might also be challenged by Russian churchmen. Whatever the case, a commission headed by Godunov’s rival Vasili Shuisky, now back from exile, was sent to investigate the death and concluded that Dmitri had stabbed himself during an epileptic seizure. Of course, the commission’s verdict remains open to doubt, and Dmitri’s death will probably remain one of the great unsolved mysteries of Russian history.

Other important developments also occurred in the years that Godunov was the power behind the throne. In 1589, he persuaded Constantinople’s patriarch to ordain Metropolitan Job as the first Russian patriarch. By a war with Sweden, 1590–95, Russia regained some coastland along the Gulf of Finland that had been lost during the Livonian War. In 1591, Russian forces defeated a Crimean Tatar army that had penetrated almost to the walls of Moscow. Meanwhile, Russia continued advancing and propping up its position south and east of Muscovy. The government built new forts along the Don, Donets, and Volga rivers. It even strengthened its position along the Terek River. But attempts to gain dominance beyond the Terek, in the northern Caucasian regions of Kabarda and Dagestan, ultimately proved fruitless. In Siberia, however, Russia continued to advance. By Fedor’s death in 1598, Russian forces controlled the Ob River system, establishing new fortresses along it as they moved southeastward.

TSAR BORIS, CIVIL WAR, AND PSEUDO DMITRI

In January 1598, Tsar Fedor died without leaving an heir. Not even a brother survived him. For the first time since 1425, there was now a serious succession crisis. With no rightful heir, who was to succeed Fedor? The Tsaritsa Irena seemed to have the best claim. Patriarch Job insisted that Fedor wished her to come to the throne, and for a few days it seemed that she had. Some prominent Muscovites

swores an oath of allegiance to her, and she issued an amnesty proclamation for prisoners. But then, soon after her husband's burial, she gave up the throne and retired to the Novodevichii Convent, where she became a nun.

Her abdication facilitated Boris becoming tsar. Most levers of power were already in his hands, and besides his sister's support, he now had that of Patriarch Job. His main opposition came from some of his fellow boyars. But they could not unite around an alternate candidate. According to some reports, soon after Fedor's death, a boyar duma (council) suggested that it should itself assume authority; but, if so, nothing came of the idea. Godunov, with Patriarch Job's able assistance, orchestrated support from a specially convened *zemskii sobor* and from Moscow townspeople who demonstrated in his favor. At various times, both groups went out to the fortress-like Novodevichii Convent, where Godunov had settled, to petition him to be their tsar. The exact nature of the *sobor* is open to debate, but it seems to have had several sessions and not been especially representative.² In September, Boris Godunov was crowned the first non-Riurikid tsar.

Despite his questionable legitimacy, in more fortunate times Tsar Boris may have been a revered ruler. He was not only intelligent but also an experienced and able administrator who seemed at times to desire an honest, just, and compassionate government. Yet, in addition to the many problems he faced upon coming to the throne, three others helped plunge Russia into civil war. First, he was unable to establish harmonious relations with members of the boyar elite such as the Shuisky and Romanov clans. He forced, for example, the most important



FIGURE 9.1. Novodevichii Convent, Moscow, founded in 1524 to commemorate the gaining of the city of Smolensk.

²On the boyar duma, see Chapter 10; on the *zemskii sobor*, see Chapters 8 and 10.

Romanov, Fedor, to enter a monastery. The second problem was even more serious. Terrible weather in 1601–1602 produced a devastating three-year famine that killed perhaps one-third of Russia's population.

In addition to direct means of famine relief, Godunov took a number of indirect steps to ease the suffering. He temporarily reduced the taxes of peasants under direct royal or state jurisdiction and allowed up to two peasant households per landowner estate to transfer to another estate during the two-week period in late autumn when peasants had formerly been able to abandon their landowners' estates.

Yet the misery and discontent in the country only increased, as did brigandage and other lawlessness. Others in a position to dispense some relief—like many nobles, monasteries, and rich merchants—failed to display much compassion. Some even profited from the famine. Besides all the human misery caused by the famine, it helped undercut Godunov's legitimacy. The religious perspective of most Russians led them to believe that God allowed the famine to strike Russia. Many believed that God was punishing them for something, perhaps because of the sins of their ruler or because he should have never become tsar in the first place.

This mentality soon reinforced the third and most immediate problem leading to civil war, the appearance in the summer of 1604 of a charismatic leader in his early twenties claiming to be the rightful ruler of Russia. He seemed to believe he was Dmitri of Uglich, son of Ivan the Terrible. Although most historians agree that the real Dmitri died in 1591, this Pseudo Dmitri made believers, or at least followers, out of many of his contemporaries.

The reasons for his popularity are not difficult to discern. Even before the famine, many in the south resented Muscovy's attempts to tighten its control over them. And since famine and Godunov's reign seemed to be bringing only misery, people were inclined to accept the choice that their religious-political culture now seemed to offer. They increasingly believed that Tsar Boris had planned the murder of the child Dmitri, that Boris had come to power by evil methods and did not belong on the throne, that the child Dmitri had somehow miraculously escaped the plot against him or even been resurrected from the dead, and that the man who now claimed to be Dmitri was indeed the rightful heir that God intended to rule Russia.

Godunov, on the other hand, charged that this Pseudo Dmitri was actually a former Moscow monk, named Grishka Otrepev, who had been put up to his challenge by the Romanovs. Many historians have believed this explanation a plausible one; but while not discounting eventual Romanov involvement, Dunning has recently cast serious doubts on Otrepev being the impostor and suggested another possibility: the clan of the true Dmitri's mother raised someone after his death to believe he was Dmitri.

Beyond the support he had from within Russia, Pseudo Dmitri also received Polish and Catholic help. He had been in Poland before crossing the border into Russia, had secretly converted to Catholicism (perhaps mainly to obtain aid), and had recruited some supporters within the borders of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

A chief force supporting Pseudo Dmitri was the Cossacks. The term *Cossack* is of Turkish origin and was originally applied to free frontiersmen. Although by

Famine in Russia

One observer of the 1601–1604 famine was a French captain in Russian service, Jacques Margeret. The following excerpt is from his *The Russian Empire and Grand Duchy of Muscovy: A 17th-Century French Account*, trans. and ed. Chester S. L. Dunning, pp. 58–59. Copyright 1983 by the University of Pittsburgh Press. Although some dispute exists about the magnitude of inflation and famine deaths, Margeret's figures are on the conservative side, and his general description has been confirmed by other sources. Bracketed material and ellipses are mine.

In the year 1601 began the great famine which lasted three years. A measure of wheat, which sold for fifteen sols before, sold for three rubles [about a twenty-six-fold increase] . . . During these years things so atrocious were committed that they are unbelievable. To see a husband quit his wife and children, to see a wife kill her husband or a mother her children in order to eat them,—these were ordinary occurrences. . . . In short, this famine was so great that, not counting the number of dead in other towns of Russia, more than one hundred twenty thousand people died from it in the city of Moscow and are buried in three public places outside the city designated for this purpose. This was done by the order of and at the expense of the emperor [Godunov], who even provided shrouds for their burial. The reason for such a great number of dead in Moscow is that the Emperor Boris had alms given every day to as many poor as were found in the city . . . so that everyone, hearing of the liberality of the emperor, rushed to Moscow; this, even though some of them still had enough to live on. When they arrived in Moscow, they could not live. . . . So, falling into even greater weakness, they died in that city or on the roads leading out of it. Finally, informed that all too many hastened to Moscow and that the country was becoming depopulated little by little by those coming to die in the capital, Boris stopped giving alms to them. They could be found in the streets dead or half dead, suffering from cold and hunger. This was a strange spectacle. The sum that the Emperor Boris spent on the poor is incredible. Besides the disbursement which was made in Moscow, there was not a town in all of Russia to which Boris did not contribute something for the care of these poor. I know that he sent to Smolensk by a man known to me twenty thousand rubles.

1604 there were Cossacks in various frontier areas, including Siberia, the two largest concentrations were in the lower Dnieper and Don river regions. The first group's center was on an island south of the Dnieper cataracts, then part of Poland's Ukrainian territory (see Map 9.1). Here the Cossacks formed the Zaporozhian Host. Originally, most Cossacks, whether of the Dnieper or Don, were runaway peasants, primarily Ukrainian in the first case and Russian in the second. In both groups, additional nationalities were also present, as were other malcontents and individuals of other classes, including impoverished and adventuresome nobles. The Cossacks lived by various combinations of hunting, fishing, farming, herding, plunder, trade, and mercenary service. Mounted Cossack raids sometimes threatened Muscovite, Polish, or Tatar outposts or traders. Electing their own leaders, called hetmans or atamans, the Cossacks valued above all their free lifestyle.

Pseudo Dmitri crossed the frontier in 1604 and marched northeast with an army of Polish and Russian volunteers. His ranks swelled. Many peasants, townspeople, soldiers, and even nobles joined him. After suffering a defeat east of Novgorod-Seversk, he made his way to Putivl, which had gone over to him, and continued to generate support in the south. In battles against Godunov's troops, Dmitri proved himself a courageous leader and also won support by restraining his troops from plundering the local population. Then, in April 1605, Boris Godunov died. Although his health had been less than robust since 1602, his death was an unexpected boon for Pseudo Dmitri. Within a few months he triumphantly entered Moscow. Shortly before, a rebellion in Moscow had overthrown Godunov's heir and son, Fedor, and before Dmitri arrived both Fedor and his mother were killed.

Once in Moscow, the pretender firmed up his support with most boyar clans, but some, like the Shuiskys, plotted against him. For her own self-serving reasons, the mother of the true Dmitri, Ivan IV's last wife, Maria Nagaia (now a nun), agreed to recognize Pseudo Dmitri as her true son. In July 1605, in the Kremlin's Assumption Cathedral, this short, beardless man with one arm longer than the other and a wart near his nose, was crowned as the new Orthodox tsar—his attitude toward religion apparently as pragmatic as that of his French contemporary Henry IV, who had converted from Protestantism to Catholicism to obtain the French throne and was reputed to have said “Paris is worth a Mass.”

Although Dmitri's unconventional ways and toleration of Catholics and Protestants bothered some, for almost a year he remained a popular tsar who pursued enlightened policies. He made, however, two crucial errors. The first was neglecting to eliminate permanently the intrigues against him of the squat, bald, nearsighted Vasili Shuisky. The second was failing to deal effectively with the rising anti-foreign sentiments aroused by the behavior of many Poles who accompanied his future bride, the Polish Catholic Marina Mniszech, to Moscow in early May 1606. Shuisky was able to exploit these rising anti-Polish feelings, which increased during the wedding celebrations, to strengthen his conspiracy against Dmitri. On May 17, Shuisky and some of his followers made their way into the Kremlin and assassinated Dmitri. A few days later, backers of Vasili Shuisky declared him the new tsar.

TSAR VASILI SHUISKY AND RENEWED CIVIL WAR

From the beginning of his reign Vasili remained in an insecure position. Other boyars were envious of him; Dmitri's supporters remained on the scene; and much of the country refused to recognize Vasili as the true tsar, thus reigniting civil war.

To quell rumors that Pseudo Dmitri had miraculously escaped death, the Shuisky government declared him a sorcerer—a common charge against one's political rivals in this era—and publicly burned his body to ashes. To prove that the real Dmitri of Uglich no longer existed, Shuisky declared that the boy's saintly body had not decomposed and would be brought to Moscow for reburial and



MAP 9.1

canonization. A child's body, though not Dmitri's, was brought to the capital, miraculous powers were attributed to it, and his mother identified it as that of her son—after Pseudo Dmitri's death, she had reversed her previous recognition of him and denounced him as an impostor. Surely, Shuisky now undoubtedly hoped, people would realize Dmitri was really dead.

To appease his fellow boyars, Shuisky indicated that he would not execute them or their relatives or seize their possessions without a trial involving their peers. If the boyars would have been more united, these promises might have become more significant, but boyar disunity and infighting enabled the new tsar soon to violate his word.

Most discontented southern groups that had supported Pseudo Dmitri—Cossacks, townspeople, peasants, garrisoned troops, and even many minor nobles—once again rose in rebellion. On the middle and lower Volga, Tatars, Mari, Mordva, and Chuvash joined with Russian groups in resisting the new regime.

Although much resistance was spontaneous and without any central direction, several new leaders did emerge, uniting at least some malcontents. For a while nobleman Mikhail Molchanov, a follower of Pseudo Dmitri, claimed that Dmitri had not been killed but miraculously escaped and that he (Molchanov) was Dmitri. He escaped from Moscow, making his way to Putivl and then Poland. He not only helped keep the hope alive that Dmitri still lived, but appointed Ivan Bolotnikov, a strong, courageous Russian Cossack, once enslaved by the Turks, as the commander-in-chief of his forces. Proceeding from Putivl in the summer of 1606, Bolotnikov's rebel forces moved northward toward Kromy and then Kaluga, picking up support and winning battles along the way. By mid-fall, his forces were entrenched at Kolomenskoe, site of a tsarist summer residence near the outskirts of Moscow. Bolotnikov's army joined that of another rebel force already encamped there led by Istoma Pashkov, a minor noble. Before Bolotnikov had arrived Pashkov's troops had been augmented by other forces, especially those led by the Riazan noble Prokopi Liapunov. Although Bolotnikov was generally recognized as in overall command, some tensions developed among the various rebel forces, which Shuisky attempted to exploit during the rebel siege of Moscow.

The nature of these tensions has been disputed by historians. Shuisky's government and his strong supporter Patriarch Hermogen claimed that Bolotnikov spewed out manifestos encouraging Moscow's poor to rise against the rich and to seize their goods, and even slavemasters' wives. Such charges have inclined some historians to depict the tensions among the rebels as primarily a reflection of increasing social or class differences among them, but Dunning disagrees—in keeping with his general approach of downplaying class conflict in this period—and thinks that inducements Shuisky offered to Liapunov and Pashkov were probably more important.

Without doubt, however, rebellion against Shuisky's government did attract some lower-class elements wishing to liberate themselves from upper-class and government domination. One nobleman in the Tula region wrote that partly for his past "indiscretions," rebel brigands and peasants had burned down his estate, beat and tortured him, mutilated his hands, and stripped him of all his possessions. Some historians have even claimed that Bolotnikov led a "great peasant rebellion,"

but Dunning is correct in rejecting such a classification and viewing the rebels as against Godunov and then Shuisky within a much broader perspective that emphasizes the rebels' wide social diversity and their belief that Godunov and Shuisky were not the rightful tsars.

Whatever the cause of the tensions among the rebels besieging Moscow, Pashkov and Liapunov, along with some supporters, did desert and go over to the Shuisky side. These desertions, plus the victorious maneuvers of Shuisky's young nephew and military commander, Prince Skopin-Shuisky, helped defeat the rebels, who suffered heavy casualties. The absence in the vicinity of any plausible "Tsar Dmitri" to help shore up the rebel side was also significant.

Forced to retreat from Moscow, Bolotnikov's army was besieged first in Kaluga and then in Tula, where it united with other rebel forces, primarily Cossack, under the command of a new pretender. He claimed to be Tsarevich Peter, son of Tsar Fedor. Of course, no such son ever existed. The new pretender was a Cossack from the Terek region (in the north Caucasus) who claimed that he supported the rights of his uncle, Tsar Dmitri, who the pretender claimed was still alive. In both Putivil and then in Tula he alienated many by his cruel and even sadistic behavior.

Meanwhile, another pretender, Pseudo Dmitri II, had appeared in southwestern Russia. Although those already rebelling against Shuisky apparently helped arrange for this new pretender, it remains unclear who he was. He was, however, neither the true Dmitri nor the one who had ruled briefly, both of whom he claimed to be. In 1607, his army advanced toward Tula but not quickly enough to save the besieged rebels there. In October both "Tsarevich Peter" and Bolotnikov were captured by government forces. Taken back to Moscow in January 1608, Peter was hanged for all to see. Bolotnikov, however, after being sent into exile, was killed less openly by Shuisky's men.

After some setbacks and retreats, the forces of Pseudo Dmitri II advanced again in the winter and spring of 1608. They were composed of Poles, Cossacks, and other disgruntled elements, some of whom had fought for his predecessor. Although the new pretender suffered some setbacks and was unable to take Moscow, in mid-1608 he did commandeer for his headquarters the large village of Tushino, just twelve kilometers northwest of Moscow.

The Brigand of Tushino, as some referred to the new pretender, set up a rival government and began collecting taxes. His authority was strengthened when Marina Mnischek, the wife of Pseudo Dmitri I, now "recognized" the new impostor as her miraculously still-alive husband and began living with him. Some important Muscovite nobles also went over to him, most importantly Fedor Romanov, by now Filaret, Metropolitan of Rostov, and briefly patriarch before Shuisky had removed him from that higher position. In the fall of 1608, Pseudo Dmitri II once again named him patriarch of Russia. By late fall, over half of European Russia was loyal to or controlled by Dmitri's forces, including much of the northeast. But he and his rebels soon overreached themselves. The greedy and plundering ways of his commanders soon alienated the people in northern Russia between the upper Volga and the northern Dvina, and they rebelled against the Tushino government.

FOREIGN INTERVENTION, CONTINUED CIVIL WAR, AND THE SELECTION OF MIKHAIL ROMANOV

In early 1609, in exchange for a border district and fortress, Tsar Vasili obtained Swedish help. Skopin-Shuisky then brought Swedish-hired mercenaries and Russian troops from Novgorod toward Moscow. Although many of the mercenaries soon departed, Skopin-Shuisky's army grew larger as Russians who now joined it outnumbered the foreigners who left. Throughout the rest of 1609 and into 1610, Skopin-Shuisky won numerous victories over supporters of Pseudo Dmitri II, who himself fled from Tushino.

Swedish help stimulated Polish involvement. Poland's King Sigismund III, son of a Polish princess and Swedish king, had for a while held two crowns until ousted in Sweden by his uncle Charles IX. In late 1609, a Polish army invaded Russia and began a siege of Smolensk.

In early 1610, some nobles who had supported Pseudo Dmitri II proposed a deal to Sigismund. In exchange for certain political guarantees, including a prominent role for boyar and church councils, the nobles agreed to recognize Sigismund's son, Wladyslaw, as tsar of Russia. The nobles, who included Patriarch Filaret, also insisted that Wladyslaw would have to convert to Orthodoxy, but Sigismund's response to this demand is unknown.

Despite Polish intervention, Skopin-Shuisky's forces were still winning battles around Moscow, and Smolensk continued to hold out against Polish troops. Then in the spring of 1610, Skopin-Shuisky, still in his mid-twenties, mysteriously died. Support for Tsar Vasili now quickly disintegrated. As Pseudo Dmitri II reappeared with loyal Cossacks near Moscow, conspirators within the city acted to unseat Shuisky. Among the conspirators were Prokopi Liapunov, the Riazan noble who had once supported Bolotnikov, and Prince Vasili Golitsyn, who had helped overthrow Fedor II (Boris Godunov's son). The indefatigable Filaret Romanov, who earlier had been taken prisoner by pro-Shuisky forces, also called for Shuisky to step down. Amidst an orchestrated clamor for his abdication, he was seized in July 1610 and forced to become a monk. For the next three years, Russia remained tsarless.

After the removal of Shuisky, a council of seven boyars was formed to run the government temporarily until a new tsar could be decided upon—this time with provincial participation. Meanwhile, the council had to face not only social disintegration but also the Polish and Swedish interventions.

One of the council's first tasks was to deal with a Polish army that had reached the outskirts of Moscow. The army's commander negotiated with both the Council of Seven and Pseudo Dmitri II, to whom he suggested a coordinated attack of Moscow, but negotiations with the council bore first fruit. They centered on the idea earlier agreed to by Filaret Romanov and others that Wladyslaw of Poland would become the new tsar. The council agreed to the idea provided that Wladyslaw convert to Orthodoxy and respect noble rights—for example, nobles were not to be arrested or have their estates confiscated without boyar duma consent. In exchange for recognizing King Sigismund's son as their tsar, the Council of Seven and its supporters now counted on Polish troops to defeat Pseudo Dmitri II and help restore social order.

To complete the deal, a delegation including Filaret Romanov, Vasili Golitsyn, and monk Varlaam (formerly Tsar Vasili Shuisky) set off for a meeting with King Sigismund, who was with his troops still besieging Smolensk. Sigismund, however, proved less accommodating than his commander near Moscow had been. He wished to rule over Russia himself—and as a strong Catholic ruler. Negotiations soon broke down, and Sigismund arrested most Russian negotiators and dispatched them to Poland.

Moscow now found itself in a more desperate position than ever. Polish troops occupied the capital. Those of Pseudo Dmitri II, now headquartered in Kaluga, south of Moscow, still posed a threat. Social and political divisions were rampant. And in a political culture reliant upon a tsar, no consensus tsarist candidate appeared on the horizon. Nor did any traditional method for selecting a tsar exist. Before Godunov, heredity had taken care of the problem. The Time of Troubles reached its nadir.

Amidst the chaos of the time, and under the threat of a Polish Catholic monarch, one institution ultimately proved capable of leading a Russian revival—the Russian Orthodox Church. Its patriarch, Hermogen, though under arrest by the Poles, managed to appeal to the Orthodox faithful to resist Sigismund and the Poles. The murder of Pseudo Dmitri II in December 1610 by one of his own bodyguards helped simplify matters. Early the following year, provincial Russia and many Cossack and other supporters of past pretenders mobilized around the Riazan noble, Prokopi Liapunov, who had earlier supported and then deserted first Bolotnikov and then Vasili Shuisky.

By mid-1611, Liapunov's troops threatened the Poles in Moscow who, with some Russian collaborators, ruled over a resentful population. Although Liapunov was killed in a dispute with Cossacks in July, the national militia under the Cossack Ivan Zarutsky, an important commander under Bolotnikov and then under Pseudo Dmitri II, continued its siege of Moscow. But by the end of 1611, a major food shortage and the onset of winter finally led to the breakdown of the militia.

Foreign occupation and tsarist pretenders continued to plague Russia. In mid-1611, Smolensk had finally fallen to the Poles, and Novgorod to the Swedes. Cossacks under Zarutsky rallied around a new pretender, Ivan (or the Tiny Brigand), the infant son of Pseudo Dmitri II and Marina Mniszech. Others supported a Pseudo Dmitri III, who by the end of 1611 was headquartered in Pskov.

Again, however, Patriarch Hermogen, still a captive of the Poles in Moscow, fueled a new national revival. He secretly encouraged the people of Nizhnii Novgorod, by now a town of some 8,000 people, to reject the Tiny Brigand and revive Russia. Nizhnii Novgorod then provided the leadership for a second national army. A town butcher, Kuzma Minin, aroused the townspeople and convinced them to contribute money to help fund a new army. He also persuaded a local nobleman, Prince Dmitri Pozharsky, to head it. Pozharsky had earlier fought under Liapunov.

By early 1612, Minin and Pozharsky had won over the key city of Yaroslavl, only about 160 miles northeast of Moscow. There they set up a provisional government and announced their intention of convening a *zemskii sobor*, representing the country as a whole, to elect a new tsar. Many Volga towns had already

supported the Nizhnii Novgorod leaders, and the latter's promise to call a *zemskii sobor* with real provincial representation won them further backing.

The provisional government kept Sweden on the sidelines by clever diplomacy, and it ordered troops out to meet a new Polish army sent to relieve the Polish garrison in Moscow. Before the battle, Minin and Pozharsky persuaded some Cossack forces that had earlier opposed them to come over to their side—other Cossacks under Zarutsky refused to do so and retreated southward. By this time, Pseudo Dmitri III had also been arrested. Augmented by the loyal Cossacks, the provisional government's army defeated the approaching Polish troops. In late October 1612, the Polish garrison in Moscow surrendered.

Minin, Pozharsky, and Prince Dmitri Trubetskoi (leader of the loyal Cossack forces) now moved quickly to summon *zemskii sobor* representatives from throughout Russia. The exact number that gathered in Moscow in January 1613 is unknown, but reliable estimates range from about 500 to 800 delegates. What made this *zemskii sobor* stand out from previous ones was the high percentage of provincial and elected representatives and their social diversity. Merchants and free peasants (those still fortunate enough to have no landowner over them) deliberated along with rich and poorer nobles and clergymen.

In February 1613, they selected as their new tsar Mikhail Romanov, the frail sixteen-year-old son of Filaret Romanov, himself still in Polish captivity. Earlier, Godunov had forced both of Mikhail's parents into cloistered religious life, and for a while the boy had been separated from his parents. He was now with his mother, still a nun, at a monastery a few hundred miles northeast, near Kostroma.

Mikhail was clearly a compromise candidate, chosen only after weeks of debate and maneuvering. He was probably elected for the following main reasons. (1) Unlike some foreign candidates, he was Russian and Orthodox. (2) The Romanovs were a distinguished noble family, who had close ties with the last of the Daniilovich line—Filaret was a nephew of Ivan's "good wife," Anastasia. (3) Many Cossacks supported Mikhail, partly because his father had once been close to Pseudo Dmitri II and his rebel forces, which included many Cossacks. (4) Mikhail was not tainted by charges of being power-grabbing or self-serving or of collaborating with the Poles, as were some other boyars. Russians could see this young man as being, like themselves, a victim of the times. (5) Mikhail had a great advantage his father would not have had: He was young, inexperienced, possibly malleable, and less of a threat than his father might have been to other individuals or political factions.

With the election of Mikhail Romanov and his July coronation, the tumultuous Time of Troubles finally came to an end. Three centuries of Romanov rule now began.

CONCLUSION

Although some Cossack and foreign forces still confronted the new monarch, the worst was over. The accession of Mikhail Romanov in 1613 represented not only a victory of the Russian national spirit and of the Orthodox Church, but also of authority over freedom, of stability over chaos, of the people of the northern forest over those of the southern steppe, and of the upper classes over the lower.



FIGURE 9.2. Monument to Minin and Pozharsky, Red Square, Moscow, in front of St. Basil's Cathedral, 1818, by I. Martos.

During the Time of Troubles, boyars had attempted to restrain would-be rulers from the type of arbitrariness suffered under Ivan the Terrible—and to a lesser extent under Fedor and Boris. In 1613, a *zemskii sobor* represented the interests of a much broader spectrum of the population. Yet, despite the prominent role of boyars under the new tsar, especially early in his reign, the Time of Troubles did not weaken the foundations of Russian autocracy. Having weathered more than a decade of fierce storms, it now more than ever seemed the only alternative to chaos. The lesson many learned was perhaps similar, although much more painful and protracted, than one the Greek historian Herodotus related: in ancient Persia after a king died, five days of anarchy were allowed to demonstrate the value of kings and laws.

SUGGESTED SOURCES*

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*See also work cited in boxed insert.