
PUGACHEV'S USE OF PROPAGANDA AS A STRATEGIC WEAPON

ABSTRACT

Master of Arts

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Pugachev's Use of Propaganda and Agitation as Tactical and
Strategic Weapons

This thesis examines the origins, development and performance of the Pugachev rebels' peculiar brand of propaganda warfare. The impostor's personal rebellious struggle, broadening out to include that of his fellow Cossacks, then that of the downtrodden masses of the Russian Empire as a whole, provides the thread of continuity in the analysis. Pugachev's emergence in arms adds the essential complementary weapon of force to buttress his positive popular appeal, but only in such measure as the need for adequate leadership can be met. The losing struggle of Pugachev and his associates to realize the full potential opened up by their propaganda successes is traced through the vicissitudes of their campaigns: the siege of Orenburg, the winter of expansion, stagnation and defeat, the revival in Bashkiria, the flight-offensive west of the Volga, the failure on the Don and the final collapse. The main conclusion is that Pugachev's agitational techniques were very successful in themselves, but could not compensate for the rebel leaders' strategic failure to organize for victory.

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AND STRATEGIC WEAPONS

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
and Research in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts.

Department of History,
McGill University,
Montreal,
1972.

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INTRODUCTION

The modern reader of literature on Pugachev is struck by three remarkable aspects of his rebellion and by the seemingly paradoxical blend of violent revolution and monarchist legitimacy which they contain. First there is Pugachev's own improbable-seeming role as a tsar who preached and practised a bloody social upheaval, a class war of poor against rich. Then there is the widespread use of written propaganda leaflets and other supposedly "modern" agitational devices. Finally there is the lightning speed with which the false tsar was able to raise up new thousands to replenish the ranks of his popular army overnight, even as he fled from one crushing defeat to another. The task of this thesis is to demonstrate, by analyzing the origins and course of the rebellion, that the third of these phenomena was closely connected with the first two. The effectiveness of the rebels' propaganda and agitation in generating instant massive popular support was the key to their military successes, and Pugachev's role as a people's tsar was the key to that effectiveness. Conversely, in the long run, strings of disastrous defeats caused by the rebel leaders' weaknesses as strategists and organizers tended to undermine the effectiveness of Pugachev's appeal.

A word on sources is in order. Although archival research is still naturally very desirable, it has been made less essential than before by the emergence of an important body of published documents and other works on Pugachev which has grown significantly in recent years. These published books and articles have provided most of the material needed for this thesis.

Pushkin's pioneering book, Istoriya Pugacheva, broke the long official silence about the rebellion that Catherine II had imposed. The book is too short and sketchy and it contains many inaccuracies. Its deficiencies, however, are offset by the author's quotable insights and his original research, which included interviews with a few aged Ural Cossacks who had been eyewitnesses to the insurrection.

The next great milestone is Prof. N. F. Dubrovin's Pugachev i ego soobshchniki, published in 1884. In three volumes and 1200 pages Dubrovin produced an exhaustive and lively narrative that remains one of the best single works on the subject. The book's only serious fault is a paucity of footnotes that sometimes leaves important facts or quotations undocumented.

One very interesting and original little book on the Pugachev rising was published around the time of the Russian Revolution. Prof. N. N. Firsov's Pugachevshchina: opyt sotsiologo-psikhologicheskoi kharakteristiki ("The Pugachevshchina: an Experiment in Socio-psychological Characterization") contains worthwhile insights into the well-springs of Pugachev's popular mass appeal as Peter III.

The Bolshevik revolution released those documents, notably the Panin papers, that had been locked up in private family collections and brought a new, passionately partisan interest to stimulate the study of Pugachev's and other Russian "peasant wars" as primitive ancestors of the revolution. The resultant stream of published documents and Marxian analyses in the Soviet Union has greatly advanced the study of the Pugachev phenomenon, although the accompanying suppression of non-Marxist work is very regrettable.

The first and still the greatest single Soviet contribution is Pugachevshchina, a large three-volume collection of documents of both the insurgents and their government adversaries, which was published between 1926 and 1931 with M. N. Pokrovsky himself acting as general editor and author of the preface to Volume I. While Pugachevshchina was still incomplete, in 1930, S. I. Tkhorzhevsky brought out his important little book Pugachevshchina v pomeschichei Rossii. Based on extensive research in local, provincial archives of the Saransk - Penza - Tambov area, his study supplements in depth the coverage of that phase of the rebellion given in Pugachevshchina. Two more important contributions were made in 1935, with the publication of Pugachev's lengthy Moscow testimony, reprinted in the journal Krasnyi arkhiv, and M. Martynov's collection of documents entitled Vosstanie Emelyana Pugacheva ("The Uprising of Emelyan Pugachev").

The post-Stalin era has produced a second wave of Soviet scholarly works on the Pugachev rebellion. In 1961 A.P. Pronshtein, an expert on the history of the Don Cossacks, threw intensive light on another phase of the rising with his collection of documents, Don i nizhnee povolzhe v period krestyanskoi voyny 1773-1775 godov ("The Don and the Lower Volga Country in the Period of the Peasant War of 1773-1775"). That same year also marked the launching of an ambitious project, headed by Prof. V. V. Mavrodin of Leningrad University, to produce a thorough Marxist-Leninist study that would be the last word on Pugachev. The first of a projected three volumes appeared in 1961 and the second was published in 1966, under the title Krestyanskaya voyna v Rossii v 1773-1775 gg: Vosstanie Pugacheva. The year 1966 was the greatest single year yet for publications on Pugachev. Besides Mavrodin's second volume, it saw the publication of

Pugachev's Yaitsk testimony in the journal Voprosy istorii and the emergence of two very worthwhile little books by Prof. I. G. Rozner of Kiev, Yaik pered burei ("The Yaik before the Tempest") and Kazachestovo v krestyanskoi voine 1773-1775 gg. ("Cossackdom in the Peasant War of 1773-1775"). Finally, in 1969, came the posthumous publication of A. I. Andrushchenko's exhaustively documented study in depth of yet another phase of the rebellion, Krestyanskaya voina 1773 - 1775 gg. na Yaike, v Priurale, na Urale i v Sibiri ("The Peasant War of 1773 - 1775 on the Yaik, in the Uralside Country, in the Urals and in Siberia").

The year 1969 also saw the satisfaction of a great need with the appearance of John T. Alexander's Autocratic Politics in a National Crisis: The Imperial Russian Government and Pugachev's Revolt. This book provides not only an exhaustive and up-to-date non-Marxist interpretation, but also offers the first significant study of the Pugachev rebellion in English. What Alexander has accomplished from one vantage point has furnished a valuable model for what this writer has tried to achieve from another.

As for the unpublished, archival documents: Unfortunately, due to circumstances that were beyond his control at the time, this author was able to spend only about three months in the TsGADA archive in Moscow. This length of time, in view of the extreme difficulty encountered in deciphering most of the material, proved no more than adequate for the investigation of several series and parts of series omitted in Pugachevshchina. That task, at least, accomplished its purpose: The integrity and wisdom of the collection's editors were confirmed, for little of value was found that did not merely repeat or supplement their published documents.

The transliteration system used in this thesis for romanizing Russian words is basically that of the Library of Congress. In deference to common English usage, however, diacritical marks have been omitted and the letter "y" has been used in place of "i" before vowels and in place of the "ii" ending on masculine proper names.

CHAPTER I

THE FORGING OF THE WEAPON: PUGACHEV AS PETER III

Pugachev's propaganda weapon was formed by the reappearance and fusion, amid the favourable conditions of the 1760's and early 1770's, of three traditionally essential ingredients for mass insurgency in seventeenth and eighteenth century Russia. Once again the genius of an exceptional Don Cossack agitator brought together imposture, this time as Peter III, and leadership of a Cossack uprising, this time on the Yaik, to produce a movement that could shake the throne of Catherine II.

Emelyan Ivanovich Pugachev was born in 1742 to poor Cossack parents of Zimoveisk Stanitsa (Cossack village) on the Don.¹ It was the same settlement that had nurtured Stepan Timofeevich ("Stenka") Razin, greatest of all Don Cossack rebel heroes, a century before. Perhaps this was what first influenced young Pugachev to seek to fulfill his lifelong urge to "distinguish himself above others" by following Razin's example.² Young Emelyan may have been baptized, as he says, into the Orthodox church rather than the raskolniki (schismatics), but he was also steeped in the folk tales and songs of Razin's legendary exploits as adventurer and rebel leader. Besides, the fact that the rest of the illiterate lad's education was acquired behind the plow or in the saddle, meeting the hardship and deprivation which were the lot of the poor Cossack, kept the continuing validity of Razin's mission always before him.³

The young Pugachev would have learned that Razin's movement had been only the greatest of several such upheavals associated with the Don over the past century and a half, and he would have acquired a working

knowledge of the formula that had governed all of them. Popular revolts had broken out during the times of greatest crisis in Russia's past, when the burdens of hardship and oppression the common people had to endure were especially severe, and when dynastic crisis and wars combined to further aggravate popular discontent. Under such conditions, with the weakening of the regime's power to control unrest by force, riots and local uprisings flourished, as did impostors who strove to attract support by taking advantage of popular disillusionment with the real monarch in order to present themselves as the "true tsar". Rebellion and imposture especially flourished on the wild southern steppe frontier, where government control was weakest. There, Cossack rebel leaders tried to win their struggle against the encroachments of Moscow and their own wealthy starshiny by exporting their Cossack revolution to the masses at large. Insurgent propaganda, diffused through numerous agitators and written proclamations, presented all the other deprived populations - the serfs, poor townsmen, religious dissenters, and natives - with an irresistible combination. They were called upon to rise up, slay their hated lords and officials, and live as free Cossacks, all in the name of an impostor. The authority and title of a "peasant tsar" legitimized and sanctioned the bloodiest class warfare so that it no longer seemed like insurrection to those who flocked to answer the call.⁴

This, in general, was the pattern that had been established during the Time of Troubles by the movement which the Don Cossacks Ivan Bolotnikov and False Peter had led. It was, as Pugachev knew, the pattern which had also characterized the second great installment of rebellion under Razin and also, to a great extent, Kondraty Bulavin's rising on the Don in 1707 - 1708. All of these movements had failed. Each had been followed by brutal

repressions and by more stringent government measures to tame the Don by reducing its autonomy, encircling the voisko ("host" - the Cossack army or territory) with forts and cultivating the starshiny ("elders" - the Cossack officers) as a privileged, dependant elite.⁵ As a result, by Pugachev's time, it was no longer possible to launch a general uprising on the Don. Nevertheless, as Pugachev well knew, all the provocations necessary to a traditional Cossack impostor revolution were thriving in his own day once again, and beyond the Don there were other Cossack voiska who might yet be able to take up the Don's old rebel mission.

The tightening grip of the starshiny on the Don was paralleled by that of the dvoriane (gentry) in Russia proper and all over the empire. The latter had established themselves as the chief villains in the eyes of the lower classes and were squeezing out even their peers, the church hierarchy, wealthy merchants, and native chieftains. They owned half the population outright as their serfs, in a bondage that differed less and less from slavery and was still expanding as if to take in the rest of the people.⁶ Even as it was, most of the remainder of the population were exposed to the rule of the gentry in their capacity as state officials, factory lords, and military officers.

Against this many-headed tyranny, the people, whether poor townsmen, serfs, or natives, were still rebelling in the name of the sovereign; and as their stubborn resistance backed by petitions to St. Petersburg failed, they were taking their vengeance by murder, theft, destruction of property, and flight. Escaped serfs and others were still fleeing to the Cossacks or gathering to form their own Cossack style robber bands along the forests and rivers of the steppe frontier.⁷ Old Believers and sectarians were likewise taking refuge on the frontier. The native peoples themselves in

this Volga-Ural region - whether Muslim Tatars, Bashkirs, and Mishars, Pagan Mordva, Chuvashes, Mari, and Udmurts, or Lamaist Kalmyks - were still being subjected to heavy-handed attempts at conversion to Orthodoxy.⁸ Furthermore, if their lands were not stolen by Russian monks or gentry, they were now likely to be stolen by industrialists for their factories. This latter injustice had most recently been forced on the plucky Bashkirs, who had already been rebellious enough. From the turn of the 1740's, their mineral-rich lands in the South Urals had been attracting more and more Russian mining and smelting complexes. This intrusion introduced thousands of bitterly discontented peasant workers into Bashkiria as a further addition to the rebellious population. The result was that Bashkiria was in an almost perpetual state of uproar from the 1740's onward.⁹ Finally, immediately south of Bashkiria lay the country of the Yaik Cossacks, where mounting unrest also prevailed. They were undergoing the same fate as the Don, but because of their comparative remoteness and smallness, the struggle between the starshina faction and the larger popular voisko party was just entering its crucial phase as Pugachev reached manhood.

In 1759, at age 17, Pugachev had to enlist in the local Don Cossack regiment in place of his ailing father. The next year, just a week after his marriage, he had to ride off with the other Cossacks to the Prussian wars. Moving through Russia, Pugachev saw now at first hand the miseries of the people, especially the serfs, to which he would often refer years later in his rebel agitation. Then, serving in Count Zakhar Chernyshev's division against Frederick the Great, Pugachev added wide battle and travel experience to his education. But he also experienced a very bitter blow which soured the heady wine of adventure and success, and which may have launched him on the road to rebellion. Pugachev fought so well that his

Don Cossack colonel, Ilya Denisov, mentioned him in a report for his "outstanding quickness" (otlichnaya provornost') and took him into ordnance. Yet Pugachev soon learned how little this meant. For having let one of his colonel's horses run off during the confusion of a night skirmish, he was ordered to be "flogged mercilessly". A chastened young Pugachev endured the rest of the Prussian campaigns. Indeed, as he relates in his testimony, neither saber nor ball touched him. When he finally returned home to the Don in 1762 the only battle scars he bore were still the welts raised by his own colonel's whip.¹⁰

Just before returning homeward, Pugachev, along with his comrades, received news of the death of the emperor Peter III, after only six months on the throne, and the accession of his widow as Catherine II. Then and there he was administered the oath of allegiance to the new sovereign along with the other troops. At the time no thought of impersonating the late emperor entered the Don Cossack's mind.¹¹ But the fact that such thoughts entered some other minds, producing the greatest crop of impostors since the Time of Troubles, assured that this expedient would still be available to Pugachev years later.

At first glance Peter III seems a most unlikely candidate for the traditional role of the "good tsar" the empire's masses never ceased hoping for, let alone the model for the impostor Pugachev and his social rebellion. In fact he had remained the impudent young Holstinian prince to the last, contemptuous of everything Russian while worshipping Russia's enemy Frederick the Great; the preposterous martinet, seeking to impose Prussian-style discipline on his guards regiments. These qualities had earned him the hatred of most people with whom he came into personal contact, including another ambitious German princeling, his consort Catherine, who plotted with powerful guards, officers, and courtiers to overthrow her husband.¹²

The vast majority of the empire's people, however, had never even seen Peter III, let alone get to know him and his obnoxious behavior. They knew only the remote, awe-inspiring figure of the tsar as seen in the favorable light of several long overdue reforming ukazy (edicts) which raised their hopes to unprecedented heights.

Under autocracy the lower classes had long been accustomed to grasp at straws from the despot, to seize upon any phrase of an ukaz that could possibly be construed as legitimizing their struggles for justice. This was not just because of the so-called "myth of the tsar", the popular belief that the autocrat was really on the people's side and was struggling to reach and help them through the hostile intervening layer of the nobility and officialdom.¹³ Indeed it is impossible to be sure how much the lower classes really naively swallowed such a myth. Naturally the impression of such naivete is given by the servile tone which the masses were obliged to adopt in their petitions to the monarch. As their last resort and the last desperate hope for justice, he was worth humoring. But, questions of belief aside, the people had ample practical motives for rebelling on the strength of some ukaz. It was a legitimizing pretext which they needed to keep their movements from seeming like rebellions and to remove the burden of fear and guilt so they could attract more followers and face their formidable foes with more confidence. If no suitable ukaz was forthcoming the protesters could always forge one of their own, as was sometimes done.¹⁴ Finally, from accepting false edicts, it was a short, logical and tempting step to accept a false tsar issuing such edicts in the people's favor. The case of Peter III is a perfect example of that continuum in action. While he reigned his real ukazy seemed so exceptionally promising that many could not help believing that here at last was a genuine "good tsar".

In an ukaz of February 18, 1762, Peter III granted a long term aspiration of the pomestie serfs' masters by freeing the latter from compulsory state service. In so doing, he broke the social contract established by Peter I. The serfs reasoned that if their masters no longer had to serve the tsar then they should no longer have to serve their masters.¹⁵ On March 26 another imperial ukaz secularized the established church's vast holdings, removed the ecclesiastical serfs from their hated monkish taskmasters and placed them under the government "Economic College" with a status resembling that of the "free" state peasants. The pomestie serfs became all the more restless, for they knew that this emancipation had been obtained at least partly by years of grim struggle in anticipation of the ukaz. The serfs did not know, or did not care, that Peter's primary motivation had been a desire to enrich his treasury with church wealth while weakening the Russian Orthodox Church for further protestant-style reforms.¹⁶ An edict of March 29 checked serfdom from another direction by forbidding any further purchases of serfs by the merchant factory owners. This measure excited both the serfs and the adscribed factory peasants to further unrest, although the emperor's real motive had been not so much to help them as to appease the gentry by consolidating the latter's exclusive privileges.¹⁷

It was not only the bondsmen who were filled with hope. In March 1762, Peter's Military College finally acceded to the pleas of Ivan Loginov and his "voisko party" Yaik Cossacks. A commissioner was sent out to investigate alleged graft and oppression on the part of the voisko ataman, Borodin, and his starshina clique.¹⁸

Finally, Peter enacted religious toleration for the Old Believers and sectarians, a measure of enlightened self interest which would lure many thousands of Russia's most enterprising farmers and merchants back from their refuges in Poland or on the wilderness frontier. The dissenters, who had great influence among the lower classes, responded by jumping to the conclusion that this tsar was no Anthichrist, for a change, but a true good tsar, sanctioned by God. They laid the foundations for the messianic myth of Peter III that would soon come to fruition after his overthrow and death.¹⁹

In reality, Peter III cared nothing for the masses and probably had no intention of freeing the serfs. On June 19, 1762, he sanctioned a stern ukaz ordering the rebellious bondsmen to obey their masters as before.²⁰ But this move came too late to either damage the popular myth, or gain him dvoriane support, for Peter was dethroned and assassinated just a week later. However, after such a short reign of promise for the lower classes, Peter's downfall, amid such mysterious and sinister circumstances, assured he would not lie easy in his grave. It was the perfect touch to complete his image as a popular messiah and allow him to haunt Catherine in the form of persistent rumors and impostors for half her reign.

The rumors had just the right blend of truth and wishful thinking to make them irresistible. Despite official explanations that Peter had died of natural causes, gossip persisted that a dvoriane plot had toppled him and raised Catherine. This story fused readily with an earlier rumor which provided the motive of the wicked "boyars", that Peter III had been deposed and slain to stop him from liberating the pomestie serfs. But was he really dead? Popular fancy could not resist jumping to a further conclusion: If the authorities had lied about the manner of Peter's death, they could also have lied about the very fact of his death. After all, how could God have

allowed his temporal representative on earth to be killed before his mission had been completed? Peter III, then, was not dead. He had escaped from Schluselburg and either another man or a wax dummy had been buried in his place. The emperor was now hiding and wandering in disguise among his people, observing and sharing their sufferings. Soon he would dramatically reveal himself and lead them to overthrow the common enemy, the great lords.²¹

Such rumors spread through the length and breadth of the empire even before the year 1762 was out, cropping up especially in trouble spots. They reached the distant Yaik just when the voisko Cossacks, having seen their commissioner from St. Petersburg bribed and bought off by the starshiny, were grimly preparing to escalate further the bitter struggle that would lead to both the Yaik rebellion and Pugachev's debut among them as Peter III ten years later. It was said that a mysterious stranger calling himself a merchant had visited the Cossack Ilya Ulyanov and had "become brothers" (pobratalsya) with him, giving him a gold cross. It was the same disguise Pugachev would use and the same Cossack who would be one of his leading henchmen.²² By the following year, 1763, just ten years before Pugachev launched his campaigns, word that Peter III was hiding among the Yaik Cossacks had spread all over Orenburg guberniya, giving rise to another strangely prophetic incident. At Chesnokovka, the village where Pugachev's lieutenant Ivan Chika-Zarubin would make his headquarters for besieging Ufa and directing rebel operations throughout Bashkiria, a priest got into trouble for having offered a prayer of thanks for the "miraculous delivery" of Peter III from death.²³

By 1764, if not earlier, actual impostors were appearing to feed the rumors. Over the next eight years at least six known false Peter III's and even one false Peter II would precede Pugachev. All of these impostors were of humble origin, whether soldiers or peasants or odnodvortsy ("one-homesteaders", the small freeholders, mainly on the southern steppe frontier, who formed the lowest rung of the Russian gentry). Yet at least one, Gavril Kremnev of Voronezh guberniya, showed an astounding indifference in his agitation to the vital necessity of linking his imposture with the wellsprings of the Peter II myth's appeal and strength. Far from indulging the aspirations of the masses at large and particularly the serfs, he did the exact opposite: He promised to bestow "people" (i.e. serfs) on his lieutenants, who were also odnodvortsy.²⁴

But even for others who did not commit such glaring ideological blunders, conditions were not yet ripe in the 1760's. The flurry of popular unrest in the opening months of Catherine's reign was caused not so much by indignation at Peter's overthrow as by the usual hope or excuse that the new sovereign might favor the people. While the possibility that Peter still lived was held in reserve the people's practical common sense preferred to give Catherine a chance. False ukazy in her name as well as impostors of Peter III appeared on the scene to justify uprisings.²⁵ It was only after she had completely exhausted the masses' long suffering patience by not only failing to help them but also heaping further burdens on them, that an explosion became inevitable.

Catherine began her reign with a manifesto promising reforms and just, enlightened rule. It is true that when the serfs tested her with a deluge of petitions against their masters, the only reply they got was a stern ukaz

of December 1762. They were ordered to obey their masters without question, and the strict ban of earlier monarchs on petitions from serfs was renewed. This ukaz, together with the floggings and other harsh punishments meted out to petitioners, produced a sharp drop in the flow of petitioning serf delegations. Still that flow and the hope that inspired it never dried up completely, for the serfs' sheer desperation caused the occasional delegation to win a measure of justice. Besides, Catherine's confirmation of Peter's reforming ukazy during the first two years of her reign had stimulated the rumors of impending liberation and the numerous disturbances among the serfs and the Ural factory peasants that had been raging since 1760.²⁶ In 1766 - 1767 Russia was swept by excited talk that the empress had ordered the transfer of all serfs oppressed by their masters' high obrok (quit-rent) to her own personal care as court peasants (dvorovye). At the same time serfs on barshchina (soccage) were agitated by rumors that Catherine had ordered that they should work only one day a week for their lords.

Above all, the serfs and indeed all the lower classes were excited to a pitch of expectation by Catherine's summoning of a great "Commission for the Drafting of a New Law Code" (Kommissiya dlya sostavleniya novogo ulozheniya) and by word that serfdom and other ills were being debated in its secret sessions.²⁷ To be sure, the serfs were bitterly disappointed that they, the largest and most sorely aggrieved class in the empire, were not allowed to elect deputies to present nakazy ("instructions"; briefs) to the Commission like other groups. Thousands in the Volga country tried to remedy that by showering Catherine with petitions when she toured the region in May 1767. She merely handed them back, ordering the serfs to obey their masters. In August, a senate ukaz finally and absolutely outlawing any serf

petitions to either sovereign or government was issued and ordered read by all parish priests in their churches for a month. The great assembly, moreover, turned out to be a farce, dominated by the dvoriane deputies who had been given the lion's share of seats though they were only two percent of the population. Few deputies from the odnodvortsy, peasantry and Cossacks dared even to suggest any reforms that might limit gentry privilege.²⁸ Such developments gave the lie to the fine-sounding enlightened liberal phrases, mostly plagiarized from Montesquieu and Beccaria, with which Catherine had greeted her Commission. But they did not stop the serfs from using rumors about the Commission as pretexts for the greatest wave of manorial uprisings and murders of landlords in years.²⁹

It is true that after Catherine removed this focus for grievances by proroguing the Commission in December 1768, popular unrest seemed to die away. The next three years saw hardly a single serf disturbance.³⁰ In reality, though, this was only the calm before the storm, for the very development that had given the empress the excuse she needed to dissolve her Commission, the outbreak of war with Turkey, had also supplied the final necessary precondition for mass rebellion: a protracted, exhausting foreign conflict.³¹ By 1771 the excitement and diversion of a military adventure had worn off, as the growing burdens imposed by the war exhausted the lower classes' patience and weakened the empire's internal defences. The stage was set for both rebellion in the sovereign's name and imposture to re-emerge in earnest, and the Yaik Cossacks of the voisko side and Emelyan Pugachev were already preparing to assume those roles.

The year 1771 witnessed the terrible "Plague Revolt" (Chumnyi bunt) in Moscow, a direct consequence of the Turkish war in which crazed mobs looted the city, killed the archbishop and even tried to storm the Kremlin.³² It

also saw the desperate attempt of the Kalmyks, exasperated by harsh treatment, to recross the Yaik River and return to their old homeland on the northern steppes of the Chinese Empire. They succeeded in crossing the Yaik only because the majority of the rank-and-file Yaik Cossacks refused to stop them.³³ Meanwhile on the distant war front, Pugachev gave his first sign of awakening to the possibilities of imposture. Serving well again, this time under Count Peter Panin, he won promotion to the rank of khорунzhii (Cossack ensign) at the siege of Bendery. Later, drinking one night with some comrades, he suddenly leapt to his feet, drew his fine saber, and boasted that it had been a present from his "godfather" Peter the Great.³⁴

The Kalmyk episode was only one of several on the Yaik which the war helped provoke both by aggravating the Cossacks' grievances and giving them more leverage with which to press for justice by withholding military services. But they had been frustrated at every turn by the collusion between the rival starshina party and government officialdom. The head of the Military College, Count Zakhar Chernyshev, and his underlings were hopelessly biased to begin with, as evidenced by their ready adoption of the terms "obedient side" (poslushnaya storona) for the starshiny and "disobedient side" (neposlushnaya storona) for the voisko. The college had sent out a series of investigating commissioners in response to successive voisko side petitions, but most had been bought out by the wealthy starshiny.³⁵

Still the voisko Cossacks struggled on, emboldened by the hope or at least the pretext that the empress was on their side and would yet satisfy all their complaints against starshina graft and oppression. Catherine had contributed to this hope or pretext by seeming to approve most of the voisko demands in principle and then by letting the Cossacks get away with their

determined refusal to fulfill new military demands. First the demand for more border troops for Kizlyar, then the attempt to incorporate Yaik Cossacks into the new Moscow Legion were stubbornly resisted, and not only because the Cossacks were withholding their services pending redress of their grievances. These measures were hateful to the Cossacks in themselves, because they brought closer the regulyarstvo (regular military service) which they so dreaded. Then when Catherine suddenly gave in and issued ukazy in September and December 1772 granting all the voisko's demands, including their exclusion from the Moscow Legion, it seemed that the Cossacks' reliance on her had been justified and that they had won at last.³⁶

In fact, the long-awaited ukaz only served to ignite rebellion. It had come too late to impose its settlement before the two sides were beyond the point of no return in their feud. The voisko side Cossacks were maddened by the delays of General von Traubenberg and Captain Durnovo in implementing the reforms. Under the circumstances, the Cossacks could no longer resist rising up in a body to enforce the ukaz themselves, especially since the copy brought back by their petitioners from St. Petersburg had one phrase slightly altered to render it still more appealing. In this version, Catherine seemed to be releasing the voisko not merely from service in the Moscow Legion but also from all compulsory military service whatsoever in future.³⁷

Von Traubenberg finally ignited this classic example of a popular rebellion in the sovereign's name and under the legitimizing cover of a doctored ukaz. On January 13, 1772, he rashly ordered his gunners positioned around the voisko chancellery to open fire on a great mob of ikon-carrying demonstrators who had refused to disperse. Instead of scattering, the mob, led by Ivan Kirpichnikov, Maxim Shigaev and other

future Pugachev lieutenants, quickly produced weapons and rushed the cannon. The Yaik Cossack - style revolution was accomplished in a matter of hours. Traubenberg, Ataman Tambovtsev and several starshiny were dead. The rest, including a wounded Captain Durnovo saved from death only by Shigaev's intervention, were prisoners. The homes of the wealthy Cossacks had been looted by drunken mobs committing the usual excesses of revolutionary exuberance and vengeance. A revitalized krug, with its elected ataman and other officers, had been restored to its old free, independent status. But from the first, its tumultuous sessions were torn by a desperate problem: how to cope with the imperial regime so as to preserve the victory.³⁸

The troubled year 1772 had also opened with another Cossack rebellion--the personal one of Emelyan Pugachev. By the time news of the Yaik upheaval reached his ears, he was already a fugitive living among the Terek Cossacks in the Caucasus, busy trying to launch some sort of movement of his own from this remote base.

Pugachev had been invalided home from the front with painful ulcerated flesh wounds gnawing at his leg and chest. He had hoped that this would at least win him a discharge but had been turned down by Ataman Efremov's chancellery in Cherkassk. This setback had been the last straw. Soon afterward, he had plotted escape to the Terek with his sister, her husband and other Cossacks. All were bitterly discontent with the growing suppression of the old Cossack ways by regular military organization, and Pugachev had advised them to flee with him to the Terek, where life was reported to be much freer and easier and where other Don Cossacks had established themselves. Pugachev had bungled this first of many ventures at launching illicit enterprises with his agitation. He had deserted the others and returned home, but their vengeful testimony against him after their capture had

forced him to flee to the Terek after all, alone.³⁹

On the Terek Pugachev immediately began a second attempt to place himself at the head of a protest movement. The Don Cossacks there, irate at receiving a smaller salary than the native Terek Cossacks, elected him as their khodotai (petitioner) to St. Petersburg. On February 8, he set out. Rozner suggests that beneath this seemingly guileless and haphazard facade of fleeing and petitioning Pugachev was really preparing to return to the Don and raise the Don Cossacks in rebellion. At any rate, this second venture also proved abortive. Pugachev was caught by the authorities at Mozdok, questioned and marched off under guard to face punishment in Cherkassk.⁴⁰

Again Pugachev put his agitator's talent to work to get himself out of a tight situation: he talked his guard into escaping with him. On the night of February 14, they fled. Pugachev made his way back home to Zimoveiskaya and tried to live there secretly. Informed on and arrested again before he had a chance to develop whatever plan he had for the Don, he found himself once more being escorted under guard, this time to Cherkassk. But again his luck and his smooth tongue came to his rescue. He met an old comrade from the Prussian wars, persuaded him to take over the responsibility of delivering him to Cherkassk and then easily escaped, leaving his custodian and the local starshina who had permitted the change to face severe punishment for their carelessness.⁴¹

While Pugachev fled westward across the Ukraine Cossack unrest and imposture were rapidly coming to a head and converging in the ripe situation that would lure him back. Ataman Efremov's rebellious conduct on the Don, Fedot Bogomolov's imposture as Peter III among the Volga Cossacks and the rebellion on the Yaik were playing out their losing tragedies side by side,

generating the apocalyptic atmosphere which would give Pugachev his opening as impostor.⁴²

Aside from the option of a Nekrasov-style exodus from the empire, only two possible alternative policies offered the Yaik rebels even the remotest chance for survival, and both demanded skilful propaganda work.⁴³ One would have been to turn boldly outward and export the Yaik revolution to neighboring populations, so as to strengthen the rebel cause while keeping the government off balance. The other, the one basically followed by the relatively conservative, timid men who gained control in the krug, was defensive and cautious. It sought to soothe St. Petersburg's wrath by insisting that the Cossacks had done nothing more than to enforce the empress' ukaz: complete peace and order had been restored, eliminating any need for the punitive force which the government was preparing to send. Accordingly these moderate rebel leaders tried to restrain the revolution, and placed all their reliance in bombarding St. Petersburg with delegations and petitions. In their eagerness to acquire, by hook or by crook, a protective cloak of legitimacy, then even compelled the wounded Captain Durnovo to sanction their new officers and to sign their petition.⁴⁴

But it was naive to think that the government would forgive such excesses as the killing of Traubenberg, or to continue counting on Catherine. The arrival of a stern personal ukaz from the empress in mid-April ordering immediate unconditional surrender and the turning over of all "ringleaders" should have made the hopelessness of any conciliatory strategy very clear. The krug leaders managed to answer with a ringing slogan of solidarity, "Not just a few but all of us are guilty". However, they still did nothing more than send off another petitioning delegation and take a few half-hearted defense measures.⁴⁵

It took the arrival, a month later, of the grim news that General Freiman was approaching with a punitive force to finally jolt the Yaik leadership out of its complacency. There was a frantic flurry of last-minute preparations: men, arms, and ammunition were gathered, an urgent request for aid was rushed off to the neighboring Kirghiz khan, Nur-Ali, and the krug, in a turbulent session of May 28, even adopted a compromise resolution influenced by the position of the more radical element:

The majority of the Cossacks resolved to offer armed resistance to the government armies and in the event of victory . . . "seizing every weapon" to move into the heart of Russia (v glub' Rossii), "invite the serfs (pomeshchie lyudi) to flee and receive them into the voisko".⁴⁶

The rebel Yaik movement did not survive long enough to carry out even this watered-down version of the radical expansionist alternative. Even defensive, let alone expansive, efforts were crippled and sapped of effectiveness by the rebels' lack of resolution. Outright sabotage was being conducted by certain starshiny who had been unwisely admitted to key administrative positions. Many of the rebel voisko side were having their resolve and courage still further undermined by their dependence on an external and hostile sovereign as their supreme authority. This fatal weakness, which moved many to murmur "This business goes against God" (Delo eto bogoprotivnoe) was the Achilles' heel of the Yaik rebels.⁴⁷ It brought on their defeat by General Freiman at the Embulatovka River on June 3 and 4. Then it spoiled both of the alternatives by which the insurgents might still have rescued their movement. Those who had evacuated Yaitsk and begun a Nekrasov-style exodus toward Persia let themselves be lured into returning by Freiman's honeyed promise that "God and the sovereign will pardon you."⁴⁸ This premature surrender, in turn, frustrated an eleventh-hour chance to try the opposite alternative, expanding the movement so as to

outflank the general. Ivan Zarubin-Chika and other "radical" leaders had regrouped three or four hundred of the Cossacks who had been scattered in the battle. They planned to raise up the rest of the voisko and strike boldly westward across the Volga, but their messengers were captured by Freiman. By the end of June the general's patrols had caught most of them and forced the remaining fifty or sixty to scatter and hide.⁴⁹

By that time the men of Yaitsk had ample cause to regret their naivete in continuing to trust in the empress and her representatives. Once firmly in control of the town, Freiman had moved swiftly to crush not only the full Cossack freedoms as restored by the rebels but also those residual ones that had existed on the eve of the rising. The krug was "temporarily" dissolved, never to be summoned again with the authorities' consent. The elective offices of voisko ataman and esaul were abolished. In their place a regular army colonel, I. Simonov, was installed as the first government commandant of Yaitsk, and a leading starshina survivor was named as his "chief of police" (politsiimeister). Entrenched in the newly-fortified stone chancellery building and protected by his garrison soldiers and trusty Cossacks of the starshina party, Simonov settled down to enforce the government's version of a new order on the Yaik. The jails of both Yaitsk and Orenburg filled to overflowing with political prisoners, while the whole voisko trembled in anticipation of further punishments.⁵⁰ As a final blow, word arrived that their petitioners in St. Petersburg were being hunted down and imprisoned with the knowledge and consent of the empress.

The voisko Cossacks' bitter disillusionment with Catherine and her government was now complete. Yet they did not lose hope. Their despair merely prepared them to welcome the mythical people's tsar who was the

alternative to the discredited real sovereign, at the very time when exciting new rumors from the Volga heralded his arrival among the Cossacks. Stories of the presence of "Peter III" (Bogomolov) in Tsaritsyn jail may already have helped to inspire Chika's abortive attempt to reach the Volga in June; they certainly arrived on the Yaik by July. There they spread during the summer and fall, while dozens of prominent rebels remained in hiding and Emelyan Pugachev assumed his mission to carry imposture the rest of the way to the Yaik.

Pugachev had become familiar, during his campaigns, with the haunts and habits of the Old Believers in West Russia on both sides of the Polish border. Now as a fugitive he was using this knowledge to lose his pursuers and to develop and promote his own rebel ambitions. From the Don, Pugachev had made for the Koisukh River in the Ukraine, where many raskolniki repatriated from Poland had been resettled. There, introducing himself as a man in search of "God-fearing people", he had gained much more than the trust and help of a few isolated individual peasants. He had gained admission to a sort of informal semi-underground network which a century of persecution had created in a frugal, closely-knit subculture. From then on, Pugachev had moved swiftly from contact to contact by the underground railroad of the Old Believers which had shuttled so many fugitives from place to place.

Pugachev stole across the Polish border and mixed with some Old Believer refugees preparing to take advantage of the amnesty which Catherine had offered. With them he recrossed the border legally at Dobryansk, underwent quarantine and obtained a new passport permitting him to travel to and settle in a specified district. Here, for the second time, Pugachev had an ideal chance to stop running and begin life anew, if that

had really been his intention. But now, more than ever, his only thought was to advance his rebel career. By the beginning of August at Dobryansk, if not before, Pugachev's own experiences and the promptings of his Old Ritualist acquaintances had persuaded him to try imposture and had convinced him that "on the Yaik, since all the Cossacks were in a state of rebellion, they would receive him."⁵² Accordingly he chose a passport to the Irgiz River district. It would carry him, under the innocent-looking pretext of an intention to settle in that favorite haunt of Old Believers and resettled fugitives, to the very edge of the Yaik Cossack country and to his next raskolnik contact, the igumen (abbot) Filaret.⁵³

On his way to the Irgiz and Filaret, Pugachev passed through some of the same upper Don stanitsy where two Don Cossack supporters of Bogomolov were trying to raise enough men to liberate their "sovereign". Whether he actually met with them to plan any joint action is not known, but he did learn, at Glazunovsk stanitsa, the story of their "Peter III".⁵⁴ Then from Filaret, if not before, he learned of the other main development of the summer that had complicated, yet ripened the situation for him: the defeat of the Yaik rebels. The igumen, a former Moscow merchant with wide connections among his fellow Old Ritualists, was well qualified to brief his important guest and hand him on to new contacts. Filaret probably heard out and approved Pugachev's plan for stirring up the Yaik Cossacks. Then he provided his visitor with horses, money and a local peasant to accompany him on to Yaitsk.

Travelling in the guise of a fish merchant, Pugachev met still another valuable Old Believer contact when he stopped at the Talovyi umet (inn) half way along the road to Yaitsk. The proprietor of this isolated place was a runaway himself, a former soldier-farmer (pakhotnyi soldat) named Stepan

Obolyaev, or Eremina Kuritsa, as his friends called him in jest. Aside from his ordinary work as innkeeper, "Kuritsa" seems to have been mainly preoccupied with using his strategic location to act as a kind of informal placement center for other fugitives. Two or three escaped serfs, for example, would arrive, having been directed there by the Old Believers on the Irgiz. They would stay temporarily at or near the umet while Obolyaev sounded out Yaik Cossack passers-by to find them opportunities for shelter and employment. "Kuritsa" was ideally situated to shelter this "merchant", paint for him the latest black picture of conditions on the Yaik, reconfirm his plan of action, and introduce him to Yaik Cossacks of the voisko side.⁵⁵

Immediately Obolyaev produced two such men who had been living in a nearby sod hut (zemlyanka), the Zakladnov brothers. Pugachev got his agitation off to a solid, objective start, asking "What are your grievances and taxes, Cossacks?" Their reply confirmed everything Pugachev had heard and his own plan as well, for they told him that the voisko were still plotting escape to Astrabad in Persia.⁵⁶

Pugachev sent the Zakladnovs into Yaitsk a day ahead, so that by the time he arrived, everything had been arranged. He stayed at the home of Denis Pyanov, one of the rebels still at large, who had only recently slipped back into Yaitsk. Pyanov had in fact been a fairly prominent rebel and a close companion of Chika-Zarubin.⁵⁷


By now it was late November and the Yaik Cossacks' fall catch was in. Pugachev visited the market-place in his merchant guise, using his fish buying as a cover for taking the pulse of the Cossacks. He heard and no doubt contributed to the furtive discontented talk and the rumors of Peter III at Tsaritsyn. Then, talking privately with Pyanov, he introduced his plan gradually to test his host's reaction. Pugachev scolded, "How are you, Yaik

Cossacks, not ashamed to tolerate such oppression of your privileges?"

He broached his plan to lead the whole voisko to freedom on the Loba River in Turkish-held territory. He told his host that Peter III had escaped from Tsaritsyn and that another had been tormented to death in his place. Finally, Pugachev imperiously "revealed" himself as "the sovereign Peter III". He fended off Pyanov's scepticism with a fantastic story of wanderings, privations and mission to save his people which could have been drawn from his own background as much as from the Peter III myth.

The impostor ordered Pyanov to pass on his proposal, in strict secrecy, to other trustworthy elders of the voisko side. Pyanov agreed and suggested that Pugachev should return in a month's time, at the end of December, when most of the Cossacks would be out on their winter ice-fishing expedition, the bagren'e. This was the next of their quarterly fishing excursions, the only occasions when a great part of the voisko could congregate away from the town and Colonel Simonov's immediate control. It was the ideal time for the "sovereign" to stage a sudden, dramatic appearance and capture the whole voisko with his appeal at one sweep. Pugachev readily agreed. On his way back to Mechetnaya sloboda and the Irgiz to prepare, he stopped over again at the umet and divulged the plan to Obolyaev.

No doubt this daring plan would have succeeded, given the opportunity, and Pugachev's rebellion would have begun nine months earlier and on a much stronger footing than it did. But the plan was disrupted when Filippov, his peasant travelling companion, lost his nerve and informed on Pugachev. On December 19, shortly after his return to the Irgiz country, Pugachev found himself arrested on charges of conspiracy to lead the Yaik Cossacks out of the empire. Vehemently protesting his innocence, he was carted off to the



Simbirsk provincial chancellery and then to the guberniya capital, Kazan, where he was put in irons on January 4, 1773.⁵⁸

December 1772 had proven a hard month for impostors, for it had also marked the end of the road for Fedot Bogomolov. In Tsaritsyn Pugachev's less resourceful and less fortunate precursor had finally been knouted, mutilated and marched off to perpetual exile at hard labor in Siberia. He died on the way.⁵⁹ Even so, his passing was not in vain, for it left the field clear for Pugachev - provided the latter could escape custody again.

In Kazan jail, Pugachev had to wait nearly as long as Bogomolov had waited before the dreaded arrival of a similar Senate ukaz naming his punishment. But there was one difference: by the time Governor von Brandt received the ukaz, on June 3, 1773, Pugachev was far away. Once again the slippery agitator had used his arts to redeem himself for another try. While innocently playing the model prisoner so as to obtain permission to beg and go on work gangs outside, Pugachev had been hatching an escape plan with a fellow prisoner and a guard. When all was in readiness the trio had simply got the second guard drunk and driven out of town on a wagon.

Pugachev resumed his mission with as much speed as prudence would allow. First he lay low for five weeks in a Tatar village at the home of an Old Believer whom he had met while in Kazan jail, while the immediate hue and cry passed over. Then, purchasing a horse and cart from his host, he drove openly to Yaitsk in the guise of a peasant.

Pugachev had intended to drive boldly right into the town, so as to resume direct agitation among the voisko side underground there. But news from another traveller that soldiers were at the gates demanding passports obliged him to fall back on his alternative plan. He veered and lurched out

to the Talovyi inn and Stepan Obolyaev.⁶⁰

As Pugachev soon learned there from conversations with Obolyaev and others, his setback had been of little consequence, for he could hardly have better timed his reappearance among the Yaik Cossacks. The impression he had made with his first appearance had had all winter and spring in which to grow in an atmosphere charged with mounting hope as well as fear. Pyanov, though obliged to flee Yaitsk again on hearing of Pugachev's arrest, had remained at large, while stories of how the sovereign had visited him and promised to return in the spring had continued to spread. Then, finally, in early July had come the dread punishments from St. Petersburg, confirming the Cossacks' fears and their disillusionment with the empress. At the inn Pugachev learned the details from several Cossacks who were fleeing from the fines of 30, 40, or even 50 rubles apiece that were being imposed on all voisko side men to pay the damages claimed by their starshina adversaries. Sixteen voisko party leaders had been knouted, had had their faces branded and their nostrils torn off and had been exiled to forced labor for life in Siberia. Thirty-eight more had been flogged and exiled with their families to Siberia. Another twenty-five had been flogged and conscripted into the regular army, and five more had been conscripted without the lash. The Yaik runaways lamented to Pugachev, "Now there's no one left to take our part, for they've knouted and exiled our sotniki who always took the part of the voisko." They told him how the voisko side had again planned an exodus, this time to a place on the Persian border called Zolotaya Mechet', but had again abandoned the scheme in discouragement.⁶¹

Perhaps the fugitives also told Pugachev of the defiant prediction which some of their knouted leaders had hurled at their tormentors as they were being carted away: "You haven't seen the last of us! We'll shake

Moscow yet!" For it was this fighting prophecy of renewed struggle rather than despondency that Pugachev was about to fulfill with his apocalypse-like second coming during what seemed like the last days of the Yaik. No doubt Pugachev's return is just what these exiled convicts had in mind. Although the impostor did not know it, much less command it, they were already spreading word of the appearance of Peter III at Yaitsk in every settlement they passed through as they trudged in chains via Orenburg to Tobolsk.⁶²

Pugachev now proceeded with Obolyaev as he had with Pyanov the previous November. He assumed the identity of Peter III and told his host, "If Yaik Cossacks of the voisko side, wise men, would come to me I would confer with them." As it happened, a familiar Cossack was already on his way there. "Kuritsa" formally presented Grigorii Zakladnov to his "sovereign" and the newcomer was sent off to find some of his comrades. The next day two more Cossacks sent out by Zakladnov, Denis Karavayev and Sergei Kunishnikov, rode up to the inn.⁶³

Again Pugachev showed how well he knew the true source of his strength by reinforcing his imposture from the very first with a show of concern for his subjects' plight. "What's this now, my friends?" he asked. "Why have you come to me? What is your need?" The Cossacks answered, "We, your Royal Highness, are sent to you from the elders to welcome you so that you will take our part, and we'll take yours." Pugachev replied, "Good, my friends, if you wish to take my part then I'll take yours, only tell your elders to carry out all that I command." Thus, the fundamental nature of the relationship between Pugachev and the Yaik Cossacks, a contract of mutual advantage operating under a cloak of tsar commanding and subject obeying, was already established. Further discussion soon hammered out the details. Karavaev spelled out the Yaik Cossacks' "need", which amounted to a restoration of

all the old freedoms, on the legitimizing pretext that they had still existed under the impostor's "grandfather" Peter the Great. In other words, Pugachev was to earn the Cossacks' support by granting all the voisko side demands, thus assuming the legitimizing role they had tried in vain to make Catherine undertake.

Pugachev's reply shows how seriously he took his role: It was the gist of the ukazy he would soon grant the Yaik Cossacks:

I give you my promise to endow your voisko like the Don voisko: with twelve rubles in salary and with twelve chetverty of bread (i.e. grain). I endow you with the River Yaik and all its tributaries, with the fisheries, the land and benefits (ugodyami), haying rights without taxes or dues: I will distribute salt on all four sides, I will deliver it wherever you wish, and I will endow you as did previous sovereigns, and you serve me truly and justly for this.⁶⁴

Pugachev had dropped his earlier proposal to lead the voisko into exile. That program had been tailored to fit the merchant guise in which he had first cautiously sounded out the extent of the rebellious spirit on the Yaik. It did not suit his new role as the emperor Peter III. It would remain in the background only as a last resort, to come into play again when the impostor had been badly defeated and finally when he was at the mercy of his inquisitors, trying to minimize his guilt.⁶⁵

The sweeping commitments Pugachev had made to the Yaik Cossacks through Karavaev and Kunishnikov proved to be irresistible. This is not to say that either Karavaev or the men he brought out from Yaitsk - Maxim Shigaev, Ivan Zarubin-Chika, and Timofei Myasnikov - were so naive that they could not soon recognize a simple Cossack like themselves by his speech and manners. They bowed deeply, heard out Pugachev's fantastic tale of escapes and wanderings in foreign lands, saw the scar on his chest which he called his "marks of the

tsar" (tsarskie znaki) and remained sceptical. Soon they obliged the false tsar to retreat to his merchant guise, and then to admit his true identity.

These men knew, however, that it was Pugachev's role that really mattered. Karavaev told Chika, "this is no sovereign, but a Don Cossack, but he'll take our part in place of a sovereign. It's all the same to us, now, as long as it's for the good". Chika readily agreed, "So be it, for this is necessary for the voisko men as a whole," and took the lead in urging that Pugachev still be accepted as Peter III. Chika knew that the Cossacks might not dare to rise again unless led by a figure great enough to sweep away the growing sense of guilt and fear that had crippled their last rebellion, and unite them all in the assurance of the justice and success of their cause.⁶⁶ Pugachev, going further, interjected a reminder that "under his (Peter's) name I can take Moscow, for I'll first pick up strength along the way, and I'll have many men, and there are no troops in Moscow".⁶⁷

Maxim Gorshkov, another early Yaik Cossack accomplice of Pugachev's would later, in his testimony, best enunciate the real, practical reasons for adopting the impostor as a leader and reveal their deep roots in an urge to general social rebellion: Gorshkov says that, "by many consultations and discussions, we detected in him quickness and ability, (and) got the idea of taking him under our protection and making him ruler over us and restorer of our oppressed and almost downfallen ceremonies and customs. The spark of malevolence against such injustice had still remained hidden in us until such time as the opportune chance and time should appear." According to Gorshkov, moreover, the Yaik Cossacks desired to exterminate "the boyars, who were the brains behind that business (i.e. the crushing of the Yaik rebellion - L.H.M.)." The Cossacks hoped and expected, he said, that their

"undertaking would be supported by and would gain strength from the black people (chernyi narod, i.e. the masses - L.H.M.)" who were also "oppressed by the lords and completely ruined."⁶⁸

Pugachev's appeal had passed its acid test very well, demonstrating his ability to make up with his revolutionary program whatever he lacked in personal credibility as Peter III. Or so it seemed. There was, however, a darker side to this bright picture. Not all of the conspirators remained unperturbed at learning their "sovereign" was really an impostor. One, at least, Maxim Shigaev, was apparently shaken at first by the revelation. This was a danger signal of how the resolve of many other cautious moderates might be sapped in future if they should learn the truth about Pugachev, even though many more might, like Karavaev and Chika, derive all the moral support they needed merely from pretending to believe that Pugachev was really the emperor. Therefore, the impostor's confidants resolved to guard their secret carefully and to do all they could when in public to bolster Pugachev's masquerade.⁶⁹

There were other, still more serious problems associated with Pugachev's being a mere Cossack among Cossack accomplices. He lacked the authority to exert the strong leadership which was needed to keep his lieutenants in hand and compel them to make the moves that would best further their revolution. But most basic of all was the simple fact that being just another illiterate Cossack, Pugachev himself was imprisoned by the same limitations of vision and ability as were his Yaik Cossack accomplices. Like them, he paid lip service to the ultimate aim of taking Moscow. At the same time, right from the beginning, he was also indulging the fatal local preoccupations of his retainers with irresponsible talk that casts doubt on his own seriousness of purpose as a revolutionary: "If God helps me to regain the throne, then to

Yaitsk will go the place of Moscow or St. Petersburg and to the Yaik Cossacks, primacy over all."⁷⁰ Judging from Pugachev's subsequent campaign record, his words to his inquisitors exhibiting the same lack of seriousness of purpose may not have been just whitewash spoken in hopes of winning clemency:

He had no further intention than to conquer the whole Russian tsardom, for in view of his illiteracy, he did not consider himself capable of ruling. He just proceeded on the strength of this: to live if he should succeed, otherwise, to be killed in battle. "After all, I deserved death, so better to die fighting."⁷¹

With such unskilled and irresolute men guiding it, Pugachev's attempted revolution was foredoomed to go astray and ultimately be destroyed. However, it would be many months before he and his followers would be brought face to face with that fact. In the meantime, preparations for his grand debut in arms and his march on Yaitsk were moving forward swiftly under the guidance of Zarubin.

There was no time to waste, for once again the element of surprise and the easier, more preferable plan, that of presenting Pugachev to the voisko during the next fishing expedition, had been thwarted by Colonel Simonov's vigilance. Pugachev and his small party had to flee from the Kozhevnikovs' khutor (Cossack rural homestead) to elude capture. On the banks of the Usikha River, a small tributary of the Yaik, they prepared their alternative strategy, less desirable because they were still so small and weak. They would gather what men and arms they could from the surrounding settlements and then move directly on Yaitsk, trusting to Pugachev's appeal as Peter III to rouse the voisko party majority inside to deliver up the town.⁷²

This plan demanded skillful and energetic agitation and propaganda work, but by now, Pugachev had received welcome reinforcements toward that

end. His first adherents of native origin, all unbaptized men in Cossack service, had joined him. The tatar Iderkei Almet'ev, or "Idorka" as the Cossacks called him, his three Tatar companions and a Kalmyk named Syuzuk Malaev would prove invaluable in helping Pugachev to arouse the native peoples of the frontier. Also, the impostor had received a suit of the best Cossack finery, seven or eight red banners sewn with the plain white raskolnik cross that had been used in the rising of the previous year, and a semi-literate Cossack youth, Ivan Pochitalin, to act as his secretary.⁷³ Still, though, Pugachev had only eight men as he rode, on Chika's advice, for the Tolkachevs' khutor, about 50 miles downriver from Yaitsk.⁷⁴

Nevertheless, this is when Pugachev's first small but important propaganda victory over an armed force was won. Sgt. Dolgop'olov, intimidated by exaggerated reports of Pugachev's strength, hung back and asked for reinforcements when he could easily have nipped the impostor in the bud had he attacked at once.⁷⁵

The remaining preparatory step was taken as the insurgent nucleus neared the khutor. Turning to his young secretary, Pugachev commanded, "Well, now, Pochitalin, write pretty!" "Pretty" indeed was the result, Pugachev's first manifesto, which Pochitalin read out at the Tolkachev khutor on the morning of September 17, 1773, to a crowd of 80 or 90 Yaik Cossack, Tatar and Kalmyk volunteers gathered from neighboring settlements.⁷⁶

Of the autocratic emperor, our Great Sovereign Petr Fedorovich of All Russia: etc., etc., etc.

In my personal (im'yannyi) ukaz (the following) is represented to the Yaik voisko:

As you, my friends, served former tsars to the last drop of your blood, your grandfathers and fathers, so you also, serve your fatherland for me, the Great Sovereign Emperor Petr Fedorovich. When you take a stand for your country your Cossack glory and that of your children will never fade. Be endowed by me, the Great Sovereign: Cossacks and Kalmyks and Tatars. And those who were guilty before me, the Sovereign

Imperial Majesty Petr Fedorovich, I, the Sovereign Petr Fedorovich, forgive of all sins and I endow you with the river from its source right to its mouth, and the land, and the grass (i.e. grazing and haying rights - L.H.M.), and a money salary, and powder and shot, and grain provisions.

I, the Great Sovereign Emperor Petr Fedorovich, endow you.

1773, September the 17th day.⁷⁷

Here was the essence of the old Cossack freedom the rebels had been fighting to restore, granted as the gift of a tsar in the words of a perfectly proper, legitimate-sounding royal edict. Just as Chika and Karavaev had predicted, the Cossacks found such a combination irresistible. When Pugachev shouted "Well, is it good? Did you hear that, now?", they roared, "it's good, and we heard and we're ready to serve you!"⁷⁸ Many, like Pugachev's inner circle, must have doubted his authenticity at once, but they gave him the benefit of the doubt and "believed or pretended to believe", as Mavrodin puts it, because "Pugachev suited the voisko side as a 'good tsar'. It was necessary to believe in him."⁷⁹

Pugachev's propaganda had passed its first vital hurdle: it had called into being, by the sheer popularity of its appeal, a voluntary nucleus of an armed force with which he could now take the field. Now he had the indispensable auxiliary weapon of agitation and propaganda: coercion and terror with which to assure the confounding of his enemies and the unification of the people behind his movement.⁸⁰ It was now up to him and his colleagues to organize, discipline, and direct these weapons so that they would function efficiently enough to produce victory, the best propaganda of all, in the real tactical and strategic situations of war. Time would tell whether Pugachev would be able to succeed here where all his precursors had failed.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER I

1. S. Piontkovsky (ed.), "Dopros E. Pugacheva v Moskve v 1774-1775 gg.", Krasnyi arkhiv, 1935, No. 2-3 (69-70), p. 161. Hereafter cited as "Pugachev's Moscow testimony". R.V. Ovchinnikov (ed.), "Sledstvie i sud nad E.I. Pugachevym", Voprosy istorii, 1966, No. 3, p. 132. Hereafter cited as "Pugachev's Yaitsk testimony, No. 3 (or No. 4)".

2. Pugachev's Simbirsk testimony, in M. Martynov (ed.), Vosstanie Emelyana Pugacheva (collection of documents), Leningrad, 1935, p. 87. The importance of a "craving for recognition" in the formation of leaders of mass movements is noted by Eric Hoffer in his book The True Believer: Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements, New York, 1951, p. 121. V.V. Mavrodin, Krestyanskaya voina v Rossii: vosstanie Pugacheva, Vol. II, Leningrad, 1966, p. 69. No doubt the coincidence of birthplaces contributed later on to the folk belief that Pugachev was the reincarnation of Razin, come back to bring his rebellion to a triumphant conclusion. (See M.T. Florinsky, Russia: A History and an Interpretation, New York, 1953, Vol. I, p. 286.

3. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, pp. 196-164.

4. S.F. Platonov, Drevnerusskie skazaniya i povesti o smutnom vremeni kak istoricheskii istochnik, (Vol. II of Sochineniya Prof. S.F. Platonova), St. Petersburg, 1913, pp. 61-63. Michael Cherniavsky, Tsar and People: Studies in Russian Myths, New York, 1961, pp. 70-71. A.A. Novoselsky (ed.), Krestyanskaya voina pod predvoditelstvom Stepana Razina (collection of documents), Vol. II, Moscow, 1957, pt. 1, pp. 65, 75, 91, 101, 141. Generally, for a recent Soviet study comparing all four Russian "peasant wars", see I.I. Smirnov et. al., Krestyanskie voyny v Rossii XVII-XVIII vv., Moscow, 1966.

5. A.P. Pronshtein, Zemlya donskaya v XVIII veke, Rostov-on-Don, 1961, pp. 121, 169, 224-229, 232.

6. V.I. Semevsky, Krestyane v tsarstvovanie Imperatritsy Ekateriny II, St. Petersburg, 1903, Vol. I, pp. VIII-XXVII, 198-229, 318-319. V.O. Kliuchevsky, Kurs russkoi istorii, pt. 4 (in Vol. IV of Sochineniya), Moscow, 1958, pp. 302-329.

7. Semevsky, vol. I, pp. 394-418, S.I. Tkhorzhevsky, Pugachevshchina v pomeschichei Rossii, Moscow, 1930, pp. 30-33. Mavrodin, Vol. I, pp. 339-393.

8. N.F. Dubrovin, Pugachev i ego soobshchniki, St. Petersburg, 1884, Vol. I, p. 254. Tkhorzhevsky, pp. 16-18. A.I. Baranovich et. al. (eds.), Ocherki istorii SSSR: period feodalizma: XVIII v., vtoraya polovina, Moscow, 1956, pp. 646-655. Mavrodin, Vol. I, pp. 487-488, 498.

9. Testimony of Yulai Aznalin, TSGADA (Tsentralnyi Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Drevnikh Aktov), Gosarkhiv, razryad VI, delo 427, listy 17-22. Dubrovin, Vol. I, pp. 252-254, 255-272. Semevsky, Vol. II, pp. 306-330. A.P. Smirnov et. al., (eds.), Ocherki po istorii Bashkirskoi ASSR, Ufa, 1956, pp. 169-218. Ocherki istorii SSSR: SVIII v., 2-aya polovina, pp. 655-660.

10. Pugachev's Yaitsk testimony, No. 3, pp. 132-133. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, p. 164. Mavrodin, Vol. II, p. 71.

11. Pugachev's Yaitsk testimony, No. 3, p. 133.

12. V.I. Vodovozov, Ocherki iz russkoi istorii XVIII-go veka, St. Petersburg, 1897, pp. 221-231.

13. N.N. Firsov, Pugachevshchina: opyt sotsiologo-psikhologicheskoi kharakteristiki, Moscow, 1921, pp. 7-8.

14. Semevsky, Vol. II, pp. XXII, 245-246, 323. Mavrodin, Vol. I, p. 442.

15. Semevsky, Vol. I, p. 419. Jerome Blum, Lord and Peasant in Russia from the Ninth to the Nineteenth Century, Princeton, 1961, p. 554.

16. Semevsky, Vol. I, p. 440; vol. II, pp. X, 199-237. Mavrodin, Vol. I, p. 412.

17. Semevsky, Vol. I, p. 459. S.M. Soloviev, Istoriya Rossii s drevneishikh vremen, Moscow, 1965, bk. XIII, Vol. 25, p. 13, Kliuchevsky, Vol. IV, part 4, pp. 345-346.

18. Dubrovin, Vol. I, p. 8.

19. Firsov, pp. 48-49.

20. Semevsky, Vol. I, p. 419.

21. Firsov, pp. 49-51. Mavrodin, Vol. II, pp. 81-82. Cherniavsky, p. 97.

22. Testimony of Ilya Ulyanov, TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 422, l. 34.

23. Dubrovin, Vol. I, p. 367.

24. Soloviev, Vol. 26, bk. XIII, pp. 432-433. Mavrodin, Vol. I, pp. 469-472.

25. Semevsky, Vol. II, pp. 245-246.

26. Ibid., Vol. II, pp. XXII, 237-254, 344-361, 371-372, 434-435.

27. Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 66, 432-442.

28. Martynov (pp. 12-33) gives several representative nakazy from the native peoples and the "adscribed" factory peasants which illustrate their typical grievances against the landlords and officials. Mavrodin, Vol. I, pp. 547-556. Blum, pp. 569-570. Andrushchenko, pp. 101-110. An exhaustive and lively account of the serf question in the Legislative Commission is given by M.T. Belyavsky in his book, Krestyanskii vopros v Rossii nakanune vosstaniya E.I. Pugacheva, Moscow, 1965, pp. 72-249.

29. Firsov, pp. 42-43. Semevsky, Vol. I, pp. 373-375, 414-414, 434-435, 440-442.
30. Semevsky, Vol. I, p. 443.
31. Belyavsky, pp. 252-253. Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, A History of Russia, New York, 1963, p. 287.
32. Vodovozov, pp. 288-293. Mavrodin, Vol. I, pp. 455-460.
33. Dubrovin, Vol. I, pp. 46-47. I.G. Rozner, Yaik pered burei, Moscow, 1966, pp. 109-110.
34. Pugachev's Simbirsk testimony, Martynov, p. 87.
35. Dubrovin, Vol. I, pp. 20-21; Vol. II, p. 130. Rozner, Yaik, pp. 102, 103, 109-110.
36. Testimony of Maxim Shigaev, TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 506, l.76. Testimony of Ivan Ponomarev, in M.N. Pokrovsky (ed.), Pugachevshchina (collection of documents), Vol. II, Moscow and Leningrad, 1929, No. 37, p.120. Dubrovin, Vol. I, pp. 22-24, 32-42, 43, 44-45.
37. Dubrovin, Vol. I, pp. 46, 49, 50-52. Rozner, Yaik, pp. 113-115.
38. Dubrovin, Vol. I, pp. 67-73. Rozner, Yaik, pp. 138-140; (same author), Kazachestvo v krestyanskoi voine 1773-1775 gg., Lvov, 1966, pp.20-21.
39. Pugachev's Yaitsk testimony, No. 3, pp. 133-134. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, pp. 165-169.
40. A.P. Berzhe, "Pugachev na Kavkaze v 1772 g.", Russkaya starina, 1883, vol. XXXVII, pp. 167-170. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, primechaniya, p. 225. Mavrodin, Vol. II, pp. 75-76. Rozner, Kazachestvo, pp. 25-26. For some unknown reason Pugachev does not describe the Terek episode in any of his three testimonies.
41. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, pp. 169-170. Khudyakov's testimony, Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, No. 58, pp. 184-185.
42. Stepan Efremov was no social rebel, but his scheming to revive the Don's independence and his intrigues with the Crimean Khan got him into trouble with St. Petersburg. Fedot Bogomolov was an escaped serf from Saransk uezd ("riding" county) who had joined the Volga Cossack voisko in January 1772 and then, at the end of March, had declared himself Peter III and had staged an abortive attempt to overthrow Ataman Persidsky. For that he had been arrested and imprisoned in Tsaritsyn. (Dubrovin, Vol. I, pp. 106-115. Mavrodin, Vol. I, pp. 474-475.

43. Ignaty Nekrasov, a fellow Don Cossack and close associate of Bulavin, had escaped the consequences of the rebel defeat in 1708 by leading several hundred Cossacks and their families, mostly Old Believers, into exile in the Turkish-held Kuban steppe. (A. S. Pushkin, Istoriya Pugacheva, in his Polnoe sobranie sochinenii, Leningrad, 1937-1959, Vol. IX, pt. 1, pp. 17-18. M.A. Poltoratskaya, Russkii folklor - Russian Folklore, New York, 1964, pp. 280-290.
44. Dubrovin, Vol. I, pp. 71-72, 75-76. Mavrodin, Vol. I, p. 514. Rozner, Yaik, pp. 122-125, 133, 135, 138-140. Shigaev, one of the four petitioners, relates the story of the delegation's hostile reception and arrest in St. Petersburg in his testimony. (TSGADA, G.A. r. VI, d. 506, l. 76.
45. Dubrovin (Vol. I, pp. 71-72, 75-76) shows how St. Petersburg and Orenburg collaborated to lull the rebel Cossacks into a false sense of security, so that they would be less likely to undertake extensive defence measures and would thus be all the easier to crush.
46. Mavrodin, Vol. I, p. 515. Rozner (Yaik, pp. 140-146) mentions no resolution even so strong as that cited by Mavrodin.
47. Rozner, Yaik, pp. 148-149, 151. Dubrovin, Vol. I, p. 91.
48. Dubrovin, Vol. I, pp. 99-100.
49. Rozner, Yaik, pp. 164-167. The fugitives took refuge among the Old Believers on the isolated Irgiz and Uzeni Rivers of the Kalmyk Steppe. (Testimony of Ivan Ponomarev, alias Samodurov, Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, No. 37. pp. 120-122). The Kazakhs whose aid the rebels had solicited came, but only after it was too late, at the end of June. Seeing that government troops were already in control in Yait'sk, the Kazakhs could do nothing but turn back. (Rozner, Yaik, pp. 165, 168).
50. Dubrovin, Vol. I, pp. 103-104.
51. Rozner, Yaik, p. 182.
52. Pugachev's Yait'sk testimony, No. 3, pp. 134-135. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, pp. 171-173.
53. The role of the Irgiz as a haven for Old Believers and runaways is noted by Semevsky (Vol. I, pp. 405-406 and Pugachevshchina (Vol. II, dopolneniya, p. 375).
54. Dubrovin, Vol. I, pp. 118, 132. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, pp. 174-175. Andrushchenko, p. 21.
55. Pugachev's Yait'sk testimony, No. 3, pp. 134-135. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, pp. 175-176. Stepan Obolyaev's testimony, TSGADA, G.A. r. VI, d. 506, ll. 38-41.
56. Testimony of Ivan Zarubin-Chika, Martynov, p. 62.
57. Mavrodin, Vol. II, p. 84, Rozner, Yaik, p. 164; Kazachestvo, p. 22.

58. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, pp. 176-179. Pyanov's testimony, Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, No. 35, pp. 115-117. Dubrovin, Vol. I, pp. 156-157.

59. K.V. Sivkov, "Samozvanchestvo v Rossii v poslednei treti XVIII v.", Istoricheskie zapiski, XXXI, 1950, pp. 116-117. Alexander, p. 40.

60. Mavrodin, Vol. II, pp. 86-88. Pugachev's Yaitsk testimony, No. 3, pp. 135-138. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, pp. 179-184.

61. Pyanov's testimony, Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, p. 117. Zarubin's testimony (TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 422, l. 33) has Pugachev telling Pyanov just before the former's departure that he would return as Peter III the next spring. Dubrovin, Vol. I, pp. 183-185. Rozner, Yaik, p. 180. Pugachev's Yaitsk testimony, No. 3, p. 138.

62. Pushkin, p. 16, Andrushchenko, pp. 209-213.

63. Pugachev's Yaitsk testimony, No. 4, p. 111.

64. Karavaev's testimony, TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 512, Ch. 1, ll. 226-248. Dubrovin, Vol. I, p. 93. Mavrodin, Vol. II, pp. 92-93.

65. Pugachev's Simbirsk testimony, Don i Nizhnee povolzhe, No. 102, pp. 180-181.

66. Rozner (Yaik, pp. 185-186; Kazachestvo, pp. 36-37) sees a continuation of the struggle between the supposedly "conservative" and "radical" factions of the Yaik Cossack voisko side - the stariki (old men) and the molodye (young men) - in their first meetings with Pugachev. He has Chika and Myasnikov, representing the radicals, riding out more or less as uninvited guests to force the hand of the vacillating moderates, Shigaev and Karavaev, and to get Pugachev away from the latter. This Zarubin did, explaining, "We already have a place prepared for him." There seems to be an element of truth in Rozner's interpretation, but one wonders at times if he is not carrying it too far. If, for example, the passage from Ilya Ulyanov's testimony cited below (Chapter II, p. 86) is true, one wonders if there was really so much difference between Zarubin-Chika and Shigaev.

67. Zarubin's testimony, TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 422, ll. 18, 33, 33 ob. The balance of evidence seems to confirm that the inner circle of conspirators, at least, knew Pugachev's real identity. It was in the interest of the others to maintain, as Shigaev did, that they had not known, in order to shift the burden of guilt from their own shoulders to Pugachev's alone. Similarly it was in Pugachev's interest to maintain that they "knew very well that he was not the sovereign, but a Don Cossack" so as to spread the blame as widely as possible. (Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, No. 74, pp. 229-230.)

68. Gorshkov's testimony, TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 421, l. 2-2 ob.

69. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 36. Ponomarev's testimony, Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, No. 37, p. 122.

70. Pugachev's Yaitsk testimony, No. 4, p. 113.
71. Pugachev's Yaitsk testimony, No. 4, p. 123.
72. Shigaev's testimony, TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 506, l. 80. Zarubin's testimony, TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 422, ll. 18-19. The plavnnya, the Yaik Cossacks' autumn river fishing expedition, usually began at the end of September and lasted through October and into November. (Dubrovin, Vol. I, p. 224.)
73. Rozner (Yaik, pp. 51-52) notes the presence of such Kalmyks, Tatars and other natives on the Yaik, serving without the regular Cossack pay or privileges as so-called sverkhkoshtnye or sverkshtatnye Cossacks. Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, pp. 132-133, 208, 219, 333. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, pp. 188-190, 229.
74. Zarubin's testimony, TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 422, l. 19. Pugachev's Yaik testimony, No. 4, p. 113. Dubrovin (Vol. I, p. 241) has Idorka, not Chika, suggesting the exact site that was chosen, the Budarinsk zimovya (wintering-shack) near the Tolkachevs' khutor.
75. Dubrovin, Vol. I, pp. 243-244. Rozner, Yaik, p. 187.
76. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, pp. 188-189. Zarubin (TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 422, l. 19.) stresses that this initial audience were all volunteers, and this seems likely, for Pugachev, with only a handful of men, could not have recruited a crowd by force even if he had wished to.
77. Pugachevshchina, Vol. I, No. 1, p. 25.
78. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, p. 189.
79. Mavrodin, Vol. II, p. 97.
80. Hoffer (pp. 97-101) stresses the importance of terror which, in driving home the mass movement's propaganda, actually enhances the very credibility of that propaganda.

CHAPTER II

THE SIEGE OF ORENBURG

On September 18 and 19, as Pugachev advanced up the left bank of the river toward Yaitsk, his joint weapons of propaganda and coercion swung into action. Already they established the basic pattern for all his movement's future successes, multiplying his following, winning his first military objectives, and claiming his first victims.

The route of advance was as well chosen as the agitation itself to ensure a strong beginning. It was important to feed the movement a series of easy successes at first. In this way it could achieve as much momentum as possible and grow not only in strength but also in self-confidence and in psychological impact on both its enemies and its potential converts before the first real test, Yaitsk, should come.

If Pugachev's force was small and weak, the government's presence in these tiny settlements was even less significant. That left a clear field to the bands of agitators (podgovorshchiki) who rode up to every khutor and outpost in Pugachev's path to shout word of his generous ukaz and demand submission. The majority of voisko side sympathizers were free to respond openly to the appeal and did so, while the starshina side minority were in no position to resist. Thus, as Chika notes in his testimony, "the Cossacks from these khutory joined him (Pugachev-L.H.M.), and were from [both] the voisko and the starshina sides."¹

The first fortified government position to fall to the insurgents was Budarinsk forpost, on the evening of September 18. Its commander, a Yaik Cossack esaul named Konovalov, had planned to resist but changed his mind

and yielded along with his twenty Cossacks when he saw that their favorable mood toward Pugachev, combined with the insurgents' superior numbers, made any resistance useless. By the next day, when the rebels reached the fishing station (urochishche) of Zolotaya Luka or Kushum, about 40 versts south of Yaitsk, their force had swelled to about 400 men, including a contingent of Tatar Cossacks brought in by Idorka.²

Pugachev and Chika were quick to use these Tatars to repeat the Yaik rebels' attempt to broaden their movement, first of all, by getting support from their Kirghiz-Kazakh neighbours across the river. As it turned out, this first attempt to contact Khan Nur-Ali not only failed but also damaged the insurgent's drive for Yaitsk by robbing them of whatever element of surprise they had still retained. The delegation of Tatar Cossacks that Pugachev sent off with an ukaz to Nur-Ali were captured by the Yaik Cossack starshina Akutin and his patrol and taken to Yaitsk. There, under interrogation, they revealed Pugachev's numbers and location, and an alerted Col. Simonov prepared to advance against the rebels in force. A similar fate befell Nur-Ali's emissary to Pugachev, the mullah Zabir, who was also caught and interrogated as he tried to return to his lord with a message from the imposter.³

However, there would be plenty of time for other, successful, contacts with Nur-Ali. In the meantime Pugachev had made the most of the events surrounding the mullah's visit to further strengthen his imposture. Zabir had brought rich gifts from the khan to the false tsar. Moreover, the mullah himself had solemnly assured Pugachev's crowd that their leader was indeed the emperor Peter III. Pugachev had graciously replied with a "personal order" (imyanoe povelenie) commanding the khan to be as good as his word and send at once "a sultan, one of your sons, with a hundred men, as

evidence of your loyalty."⁴ Even the offending starshina Akutin, who caught Pugachev's messengers to Nur-Ali, found himself called on, as one who had seen Peter III, to come and recognize his sovereign. Needless to say, he declined the privilege.⁵

Akutin's decision was a wise one, for the other, more substantial device by which Pugachev enhanced his appeal to his rebel followers was his indulgence of their fierce class hatred of all starshiny and dvoriane. That hatred, anxious to even the score after the penalties suffered during the past year, had already claimed one of Akutin's scouts as the first known victim of the rebellion. Some of Pugachev's Yaik Cossacks had caught the starshina Skvorkin, dragged him before the impostor and demanded his execution as an evil man who had done them many great wrongs. Pugachev had acceded to their demands and Skvorkin had promptly been hanged.⁶

Men like Skvorkin who had earned the Cossacks' violent personal hatred could expect no other fate. Some other starshiny, gentry or army officers, however, did have a chance of surviving capture if they would renounce their class as well as their empress and accept a rank under the rebel tsar. The precedent for this was also set now, as Pugachev advanced on Yaitsk. Sgt. Nikolaev, who had been sent by Col. Simonov to alert the lower Yaik outposts against the rebels, was caught and brought before the impostor, but he earned forgiveness by yielding, publicly recognizing Pugachev as Peter III, and serving him as an assistant to his secretary, Pochitalin. Clearly, the impostor's clemency was motivated by much more than the simple humanity which he implies in his later testimonies. Nikolaev was valuable to the insurgents. His public acknowledgement of Pugachev as Peter III was just as impressive as Zabir's, because of the prestige Nikolaev enjoyed as a soldier and as a former enemy converted to the cause. Moreover, as a literate Nikolaev, gave

the insurgents a badly-needed reinforcement in one of the indispensable organizational and propaganda skills which were all too rare among the common people.⁷

Nikolaev was absorbed just in time to participate in the first significant victory of Pugachev's propaganda weapon - the bloodless victory gained over Col. Simonov's expeditionary force from Yaitsk.

Already, those of Pugachev's conspirators who had returned to Yaitsk as agitators had stirred up enough unrest to put Simonov on the defensive. Even though the Colonel still had far greater numbers and arms at his disposal than did his adversary, he dared not venture forth with the majority of them. If he did, he feared, his absence would spark a rebellion behind him in the town that would place him between two fires. As a result, Simonov stayed in Yaitsk and concentrated on internal security measures. To face Pugachev at the Chagan River, about ten versts south of Yaitsk, he sent Major Naumov's 271 regulars, 40 Orenburg Cossacks, and five small cannons, together with about 500 Yaik Cossacks under the starshiny Akutin, Nazarov and Vitoshnov. Normally, it should have been child's play for such a force to scatter a mob half its size and devoid of artillery. In fact, Naumov should have been able to do that easily with just his own small corps. But the major's weakness as a commander, and the fact that many of his Yaik Cossacks had not come out for the purpose of fighting Pugachev, combined to produce a different outcome.

When Naumov, preparing to advance against Pugachev, ordered his Cossacks to don armbands to distinguish them from the insurgents, there was a great uproar. Most of them refused, arguing that this was a sign of warfare and they wanted to avoid bloodshed. Naumov sent Capt. Krylov with 66 dragoons

and 30 Orenburg Cossacks to restore order among the Yaik men, but to no avail. The unruly men obeyed Krylov's order to advance only because it accorded with their desire to get closer to the rebels so as to communicate with them. When Krylov tried to make the customary speech before battle, he was drowned out by shouts demanding that a delegation of starshiny or sotniki be sent across to parley with the other side. When he indignantly refused, the Cossacks persisted with their demands and began to break up into small bands to spread their agitation.

Meanwhile the insurgents were moving in to take advantage of their opponents' disarray. The sight of the rebel advance further increased the uproar among Akutin's Cossacks. Then two Pugachev messengers rode up, shouting to Akutin to change sides and waving a new false manifesto which they presented to the starshina and asked him to read aloud to his men. Instead, Akutin promptly handed the paper to Krylov, who pocketed it and ordered the rebel couriers arrested. However the fact that the eloquence of the impostor's secretaries was lost to their intended audience hardly diminished the propagandic value of the incident. The Cossacks, furious at Akutin and Krylov, crowded around the messengers to help them escape.⁸ Then, led by Ovchinnikov, Lysov, Yakov Pochitalin and Fofanov, about 100 men bolted the government lines and went over to the rebels. Their action heartened the insurgents, who now advanced in earnest. Krylov tried to dramatically regain control of the situation by ordering all who wished to "stand bravely" to move to the right. When only twenty responded, while the rest began to surround his small corps, he had no choice but to beat a retreat back to Naumov's lines.⁸

The rebels now crossed the Chagan River and surrounded a 300-man Yaik Cossack patrol commanded by the starshina Andrei Vitoshnov. While 200 fled, the other 100 eagerly joined the rebels. In response to the demands of the majority, the eleven starshiny in the contingent were tied up and sentenced to execution. As the insurgents camped for the night of September 18-19 the victims were hanged. Only one of them, Vitoshnov himself, was pardoned by Pugachev, because of the strenuous intercession of one of the Cossacks in the contingent, Maxim Shigaev.⁹

The insurgents' propaganda superiority, however, had won only a qualified victory: one that was not good enough to give them the prize they sought, Yaitsk. The majority of the Yaik Cossacks from the town, though openly sympathetic to Pugachev, had still not gone over to his side or at any rate had not stayed with him.¹⁰ The most likely explanation for this is that they feared for their homes and families. Simonov's ruthless policy of reprisal against the next of kin of all deserters, instituted on September 18, was proving to be a very effective dampener of rebellious enthusiasm.¹¹ The only way Pugachev could counter it was by going beyond mere agitation to launch a convincing attack on Simonov. He tried on September 19 but failed miserably. Pugachev had Nikolaev pen another ukaz to the Yaitsk authorities urging them to change their minds and receive him as "great sovereign", but the messenger he sent in did not return and the only answer he received was cannon fire. With only 700 men and no cannon, he could not get near the walls of Yaitsk under a hail of government artillery fire.

Clearly there was nothing Pugachev could do but move on, if only to get cannons and more men to bring back against Yaitsk. Turning to his highest-ranking Yaik Cossack companions he said, "Why lose you in vain, my friends? Let's go farther, where they'll receive us." They agreed, "Let's go then,

Your Majesty, along the line as far as Ilets'k." Without even dismounting the impostor and his followers veered to the northeast and rode on.¹²

Even in retreat, though, the terror which the mass movement inspired in the authorities won a kind of victory. Simonov, still fearing a rising in Yaitsk, remained on the defensive. Instead of sending a detachment to pursue the rebels, he sent messages to Stavropol and to Orenburg, pleading with each to send him reinforcements of at least 500 men. At the same time he began the construction of an emergency "retrenchment" around the chancellery, church, and several other buildings in the center of the town. This inner fortification would shelter the administration, garrison and starshiny from the hostility of the majority in the town if and when Pugachev should return.¹³

At Belye Berega, about twenty versts above Yaitsk, Pugachev halted and summoned a krug. This session accomplished two purposes in one for Pugachev. Its election of a full Cossack-style administration fulfilled his pledge to restore Cossack liberty even as it gave organization to his rapidly growing movement. Andrei Ovchinnikov was elected voisko ataman; Dmitry Lysov, colonel; Andrei Vitoshnov, esaul; Alexei Kochurov, Fedor Chumakov and several others, khorunzhie. The Cossacks were divided into hundreds and enrolled by Yakim Davilin.¹⁴ An oath of allegiance to the impostor, written by Nikolaev in faithful imitation of the style of genuine tsarist oaths, was unveiled and administered.¹⁵ Finally, in another bid to make contact with the Kirghiz-Kazakhs and obtain support from them, Pugachev sent an ukaz to one of their grandees, Abul Khairov.

In this edict, for the first time in writing, the impostor went beyond the conventional Cossack-style endowments to speak of freeing the poor and enslaved in general. Besides his usual titles he styled himself "liberator

of all small and great", "protector of the great, protector of the small as well", and "enricher of the poor", and he made it clear to Abul Khairov that he intended to give "freedom to all of mine, free and unfree, who revere me."¹⁶ Generally, as the insurgents moved along the line-forts, toward Iletsk, their agitation increasingly reflected the feeling that their struggle was not directed only against their own starshiny, but against the whole Russian aristocracy as a class. Pugachev's men would ride up and shout to their Cossack brothers defending these outposts, "Don't obey the boyars, surrender voluntarily!" In every case the appeal worked; with Pugachev growing stronger all the time, resistance would have been even more useless for these tiny, weak posts than for those below Yaitsk. But weak though they were, these posts still supplied Pugachev with his first small cannon and more reinforcements with which to take Iletsk.¹⁷

Iletsk, with its 350 to 400 Cossacks and twelve cannons, was both the second largest and the northernmost town of the Yaitsk voisko. Its capture would give Pugachev the prestige and military strength he needed to return to Yaitsk - or to venture further afield.

As the insurgents approached Iletsk, on September 22, the power of their terror and propaganda weapons showed what a difference rebel experience and the lack of a government garrison made from the situation at Yaitsk. When the Iletsk ataman, Lazar Portnov, called an emergency krug session to denounce Pugachev as an impostor, his Cossacks rumbled with discontent. One even sprang up to denounce Portnov's words and reaffirm the rumor that it was the true tsar Peter III who was approaching. Portnov did succeed in wrecking the bridge which Pugachev would have to cross, but the impostor's appeal easily jumped the gap. This time the insurgents made sure to get two copies of their ukaz to the townsmen. When Portnov predictably

refused to read the ukaz which Ovchinnikov sent across to him from the other end of the ruined bridge and returned to town, an Iletsk Cossack agitator who had been planted among his fellows sprang into action and a second copy of the false ukaz appeared. Its message closely resembled that given to the Cossacks of Yaitsk; it promised that "whatever you wish in all benefits and salaries shall not be refused you, and you and your descendants as well shall be the first with the Great Sovereign". An impromptu krug, after some debate, decided to welcome the "sovereign". Led by Ivan Tvorogov and Maxim Gorshkov, the Iletsk Cossacks repaired the bridge and arrested Portnov during the night. Thus Iletsk became the first objective of any consequence to be captured by Pugachev, and it fell bloodlessly to the power of his agitation.¹⁸

The next morning, September 23, Pugachev was received into Iletsk with all the ceremony befitting a tsar. It was a scene that would often be repeated in other places. Old men bearing the traditional Russian symbols of welcome, bread and salt, and priests with ikons and crosses filed out to greet the impostor. He accepted the gifts, kissed the religious objects and entered the town at the head of his army, to the ringing of church bells. In the church Pugachev attended a special service in his honor, in which his assumed name, Peter III, replaced that of Catherine in the ectene. Next, Pugachev's oath of allegiance was administered, first to the head priest (protopop), then to the other clergy, then to the rest of the inhabitants. Finally, the impostor presided over the execution of Portnov.¹⁹

The crowning event of the festivities, however, was a remarkable speech which Pugachev delivered to the townspeople. This speech marked an important milestone in the evolution of Pugachev's agitation to build a mass movement. For the first time in any public statement he went beyond the mere indulgence

of local aspirations to speak of bringing a general social revolution to the whole empire. He told the people of Iletsk that he had come to relieve them of "oppression and poverty" and he went on,

"When God brings me to Petersburg, then I'll shut her [Catherine - L.H.M.] up in a convent and let her pray to God for her sins. And I'll take the villages away from the boyars and I'll pay them [the boyars - L.H.M.] money salaries. And those by whom I was deprived of the throne I'll hang without pity. My son is a young man so he does not know me. God grant that I may get to Petersburg and find my son well!"²⁰

Such words would seem to indicate that Pugachev was preparing to fulfill a promise he had made to his early Yaik Cossack fellow conspirators, that if he should fail to take Yaitsk he would move on at once across the Volga into central Russia. The next few days' events also seemed to reinforce that impression. Pugachev took every one of the 400-odd men in Iletsk who were fit to bear arms and pushed on upriver, leaving the Yaik Cossack lands behind. At a special krug session of their own not far above their town Pugachev's Iletsk Cossacks were formed into his "Iletsk Regiment". Acting on Ovchinnikov's recommendation they elected Tvorogov as their colonel and Gorshkov as his assistant.²¹ Then, at the next two line-forts along the way, Rassypnaya and Nizhne-Ozernaya, Pugachev seized his first chance to demonstrate the broadened program of liberation which he had alluded to at Iletsk.

Not only were these two forts Pugachev's first objectives outside Yaik voisko territory and the first to be captured by storm; they were also the first to contain a serf population as well as the usual Cossacks, soldiers and officers. Responding at once to this altered social composition, Pugachev's manifesto to the inhabitants of Fort Rassypnaya put "everlasting freedom" (vechnaya volnost) at the head of his promised endowments.

Unfortunately for the rebels, this ukaz fell into the hands of the fort's commandant, who naturally did not proclaim it. Nevertheless, the impostor soon made up for that after the fort was taken. While the officers were condemned and hanged for refusing to acknowledge Pugachev as Peter III, the rest of the inhabitants were declared "free Cossacks" and Cossack-style democratic institutions were set up.²²

This liberation of serfs, the key to achieving a true mass movement which Pugachev had introduced barely one week after raising his standards, set a pattern that was to be repeated at every fort or settlement which the impostor or his wide-ranging Cossack bands passed through. The testimony of a serf of Orenburg uezd, Karp Kolesnikov, paints a vivid picture of one of many such incidents.

One day around the end of September, a band of eleven armed Yaik Cossacks rode into his village, demanding, "Is the pomeshchik home?" The landlord, fortunately for himself, had already fled. Then the Cossacks gathered all the serfs together, proclaimed them free men in the name of Peter III, ordered them on pain of death to serve no lord in future but their "sovereign", and took all the valuables and supplies they could carry away with them. The peasants readily obeyed, knowing full well that if they should ever be called to account they could excuse themselves, as Kolesnikov did: "We were frightened of the Cossacks' sabres and lances." Next they followed the Cossacks' suggestion and elected deputies to go to see their "sovereign" for themselves. These peasants found Pugachev's camp, obtained an audience with him and received an ukaz which they, at least, interpreted as a declaration of emancipation. They returned to their village and their priest read out the impostor's ukaz which began, "Greetings, orthodox people, from the sovereign, Peter Fedorovich."²³

The formula for inciting serf rebellion had been tested and proven. All Pugachev needed to do now was to apply it on a massive scale by moving from the frontier, with its sparse serf population, into the interior, and by proclaiming his emancipating mission at large.

The possibility of Pugachev's taking such a westward turn and succeeding with it was also enhanced by another pioneering inroad which his agitation made at forts Rassypnaya and Nizhne-Ozernaya: the first defection of government troops. On the road between the two forts Pugachev encountered a company of soldiers and 100 Cossacks who had been sent by the Commandant of Fort Nizhne-Ozernaya in response to a frantic appeal for reinforcements from his counterpart at the lower fort. The rank-and-file all went over to Pugachev and delivered up their commanding officer, Capt. Surin, for hanging.²⁴

The inclusion of government troops in their number gave the rebels small arms and a body of men accustomed to the indispensable infantry warfare of field and siege and the discipline it required. This was the very aspect in which the rebels were weakest, for it suited neither the wild Cossack and native cavalry nor the unarmed and inexperienced peasant levies. Soldiers would also lend prestige and credibility to Pugachev's imposture, for as he himself would later testify, "The muzhiks (peasants) believe soldiers sooner than Cossacks."²⁵ All that was needed was to win and keep the genuine loyalty of these soldiers so that they would be trustworthy and would do their best for Pugachev, and to attract as many more as possible around this initial core. The chance for this would soon come, for the defection that had just occurred was no mere isolated incident. It was the first stage in the impostor's destruction of Governor Reinsdorp's attempt to trap and defeat him.

When Maj. Kharin at Fort Nizhne-Ozernaya heard of the defection he sent word at once to Brig. Baron von Bilov, who was drawing near with relief forces from Orenburg, to come quickly. Bilov had been sent out with his 410 foot, cavalry including 160 Orenburg Cossacks, and eight field guns, by Gov. Reinsdorp on September 22, as soon as Reinsdorp had received Simonov's report on Pugachev's appearance before Yaitsk. On the same day the governor had also ordered Simonov to send Major Naumov with his corps and Yaik Cossacks after Pugachev. In this way Reinsdorp fully expected to crush Pugachev between the hammer and the anvil. He would have, had it not been for the speed of the impostor's onslaught and the paralysis of terror which it inspired in the governor's subordinates.

Bilov could have smashed the rebels alone if he had dared to call their bluff and attack them vigorously. Instead he shrank back to the security of Fort Tatishchev, leaving Fort Nizhne-Ozernaya as easy prey to Pugachev. But Tatishchev proved less secure than Bilov expected. On September 27, the same day that Col. Simonov was just sending Naumov off from Yaitsk with 246 soldiers and officers, 328 "obedient" Cossacks, 50 Orenburg Cossacks and four cannons, Pugachev's wiles took the fort.

Tatishchev, with its twelve cannons, was the most formidable obstacle Pugachev had encountered since Yaitsk. With von Bilov and his men inside, it had a garrison of over 1000 men. However, many of that number were Cossacks, rendered so unreliable by Pugachev's propaganda that Bilov did not dare sally forth. Again the insurgents seemed to waste their time and eloquence on an ukaz to an immovable commander, but as before they knew that his breach of their edict would agitate his men almost as much as his observance of it would have done. Besides, the rebels followed up their propaganda this time with an effective assault. Cartloads of hay served first as

movable shields for the advancing insurgents, then as torches with which they ignited the fort's wooden walls. The distraction created by the fire was enough to allow even a mob composed mainly of Cossacks, unskilled and undisciplined for siege warfare, to storm the fort. Then Bilov's Orenburg Cossacks, led by Timofei Padurov, a Legislative Commission deputy, changed sides.

Within minutes Bilov, the commandant and his family had been slaughtered - except for an attractive daughter whom Pugachev took as a concubine. There followed Pugachev's version of a tsar's treatment of captured rebels. The soldiers of the garrison were herded outside, forced to kneel before loaded rebel cannons and given the choice of submission or death. Those few who held out were taken aside and shot. The rest, about 200, were proclaimed "state Cossacks" and were given the distinctive Cossack tonsure.²⁶

The insurgent army paused for three days at Tatishchev to revel, rest and plan their next move. More than ever, it was important that they plan wisely and strike swiftly, for Tatishchev was by far the most strategically important point that Pugachev had yet taken. The fort was the principal anchor-pin linking the Yaik and Samara fortified lines, and as such it marked a crossroads for the impostor. He could either move westward along the Samara to the Volga, carrying his movement directly toward the vital heart of Russia, or continue up the Yaik to attack the main political and military centre on the southeastern frontier, Orenburg. There are a few inconclusive pieces of evidence which seem to indicate that Pugachev was considering the western alternative. For example, on September 26 a rebel agitator had entered Fort Novo-Sergeevsk, the second fort out the Samara line, and had ridden up and down, waving his cap and shouting to the inhabitants to rejoice, for Peter III was drawing near.²⁷ Also, in these last days of September, a band of eleven Yaik Cossacks is known to have

penetrated Stavropol province at least as far as the village of Lyakhovo, liberating the serfs in the name of Peter III.²⁸

Certainly the government authorities expected that the impostor would veer westward. Anxious to get a head start on Pugachev, they were already sounding their alarms as quickly as they received the news and taking military and propagandic steps which they hoped would undermine the movement and confine it to Orenburg guberniya. Already on September 24 Governor Reinsdorp had alerted the commandant of Fort Buzulutsk, half way out the Samara line, of the danger that Pugachev might be planning to move in that direction. Then on the next day Reinsdorp had broadened his warning by writing to the governors of Kazan and Astrakhan. He had told his opposite numbers of rumors that Pugachev planned to penetrate central Russia at once and raise the serfs with promises of liberation. This message prompted Governor von Brandt of Kazan to pass on the warning to St. Petersburg, in a report of October 3, adding his opinion that naturally the impostor would move not on Kazan, as rumoured, but to the Don, where he could greatly strengthen himself for a drive on Moscow.²⁹

Despite this opinion, however, Von Brandt dared not take chances with the restless population of Kazan guberniya. In a letter of the same day, October 3, to Governor Prince Volkonsky of Moscow, Von Brandt stressed the effectiveness of Pugachev's social agitation and the great general danger it posed.

Whenever he comes to a fort, he always makes a display of his sympathy to the mindless rabble, like [that of] a real sovereign for his subjects, supposedly having known nothing of their oppression and poverty until now. And with these lying words and promises he catches up these stupid people. Wherefore, because of the fickleness of the common people, if he is not soon destroyed and bursts into Kazan guberniya [the situation] is not without danger.³⁰

The governor of Kazan took the danger seriously enough to call out his strongest propaganda weapon in an attempt to head it off. Since the governor could make no positive promises to undercut those of Pugachev, he did the next best thing: He had his greatest cleric hurl the ultimate spiritual thunderbolt to try to frighten his people away from the rebels. On October 5 Archbishop Venyamin of Kazan formally anathematized Pugachev and announced that all priests of the guberniya would be required to sign a pledge to do everything in their power to influence their parishioners against the impostor. Special priest-emissaries were sent out at once to visit the village churches and make sure that the anathema was properly read and explained.³¹

St. Petersburg likewise reacted at once upon receiving Von Brandt's message and a report from Reinsdorp that Pugachev was closing in on Orenburg. On October 14, the empress appointed General Kar to head a punitive expeditionary force against the insurgents. On October 15 she and her council ordered emergency measures to be taken to shield the Don from any penetration by rebel agitators. On October 16, Catherine issued her first anti-Pugachev manifesto. The document was careful not to mention the extent of the impostor's successes thus far, so as to neither alarm nor incite the volatile masses needlessly. It dwelt on the falsity and wickedness of Pugachev's imposture as Peter III. The "disobedient" were commanded to "leave off this madness", "come at once into a genuine repentance" and return to the appropriate "slavish obedience" to their true sovereign, Catherine II.

Two hundred copies were printed and no effort was spared to make sure that this imperial thunderbolt, hurled from the pinnacle which the upstart Pugachev had dared to claim as his own, would reach the ears of all people in the frontier region.³² It remained to be seen, however, whether the extra

weight conferred to this ukaz by the name of the reigning monarch, the printed format and the sanction of officialdom would be enough to outweigh the alluring program with which Pugachev bolstered his own tsarist bombast. There was another advantage, however, from which the government were already benefitting in mid-October, though they did not yet know it, and which Pugachev himself was freely giving them. Instead of anticipating their response and moving boldly against them to onset it, the impostor was still dallying before Orenburg.

In his Simbirsk testimony a year later, Pugachev would claim that he had only assumed the name of Peter III so as to raise the Yaik voisko for a Nekrasov-style exodus. Then only because he had been "led on by successes and by circumstances" he had "expanded his evildoing."³³ Such a weak and opportunistic attitude on the part of the leader would at least partly explain why he allowed his movement to drift off course in the way that Dubrovin so well describes:

The position of Tatishchev gave Pugachev the possibility of moving on either Orenburg or Kazan, and naturally, if he had possessed enough sense, then, seeing such great [popular - L.H.M.] sympathy for him, he would have moved not along the frontier of Russia, against Orenburg, but to the center, to Kazan and then, in view of the absence of troops there, could have produced such chaos that the result is hard to predict...But...no acumen ruled Pugachev: he went wherever he was led by the Yaik Cossacks, in whose understanding the taking of Orenburg, as the main point of the region, was the first and most important goal. Also, they moved on Orenburg because in case of failure they had an escape route and could flee to Zolotaya Mechet ["Golden Mosque", a place on the Persian frontier - L.H.M.], Persia or Turkey, to which Pugachev had summoned them.³⁴

It was not only by failing to turn westward and develop his serf rebellion that Pugachev showed signs at Tatishchev of losing control of the situation and drifting away from the course of all-Russian revolution which

he had proclaimed at Iletsk. Tatishchev was also the setting for the drowning of Sgt. Nikolaev by Yaik Cossacks jealous of his influence with Pugachev. When the impostor found out and began to reproach them they retorted, "What's this now, Your Majesty, are you thrusting us away, now, and starting to take in dvoryane?"³⁵

Admittedly there were sound propaganda and agitational reasons to justify Pugachev's making an attempt on Orenburg, though not his staying there. Since it was near at hand, the town was vulnerable to the momentum the rebels had just achieved with their victory at Tatishchev and was almost as suitable as the latter for a pivotal point around which to turn westward. Moreover, Pugachev, having come so close to Orenburg, could not realistically avoid dealing with the military and administrative center of the whole southeastern frontier. Orenburg had extensive earthworks, twelve foot-high stone walls, twelve bastions, 55 guns. She had a garrison of nearly 3000 soldiers and over 1000 Orenburg Cossacks, not to mention the several thousand Tatar and Bashkir auxiliaries and soldiers from the upper Yaik line whom the Orenburg governor was already working frantically to collect.³⁶

Should Pugachev turn away from such a challenge he could reasonably expect to receive a fatal stab in the back before he could even reach the Volga. If, on the other hand, he continued to accept the challenge - to drive for Orenburg while racing with Reinsdorp for the allegiance of the surrounding population - he could expect to exploit the negative side of the town's military and civil importance. He could rally all the natives, Cossacks and peasants of the guberniya against the chief center and symbol of their oppression. If he could take Orenburg with their help he would reap by far the greatest gains yet in propaganda prestige, in strategic posture and in

the morale and confidence of his own leadership and following. Having captured one of the empire's greatest fortresses and having thereby firmly established himself on a frontier base, the impostor would then be able to turn with confidence toward the center and the prospect of storming even Moscow and St. Petersburg. If, on the other hand, he should fail to take Orenburg, the acid test for his conventional and propaganda weapons, there seemed to be little point in even trying to penetrate the center - defeat would be inevitable.

This latter idea, however, is a mistaken one. It does not necessarily follow that failure at Orenburg would have meant failure in the larger centers as well. Most of them were much more weakly fortified and defended than was Orenburg, and Pugachev would have had the added advantage of massive popular support many times greater than he could ever hope to acquire on the sparsely populated frontier. Yet Pugachev was obsessed with this idea of taking Orenburg as a sine qua non, no matter how much time or resources might be required.³⁷

This obsession is symptomatic of the real problems of the rebels at Orenburg: their lack of a sense of strategic timing or proportion, their lack of a deep commitment to penetrate the centers of power and overthrow the regime, their lack of sufficient leadership and technical skills. Because of these shortcomings they first struck too slowly, missing the optimum time for success, then compounded their error by making the sedentary siege of Orenburg their main operation and committing far more time and men to it than its strategic importance justified.

If Pugachev had known enough to strike immediately at Orenburg after the fall of Fort Tatishchev, it is very likely that he would have taken the gubernatorial capital. He would have caught Governor Reinsdorp still in the

midst of frantic stopgap preparations of fortifications and a garrison whose sad state of decay was not revealed by the impressive statistics.

Of the fortress's 2906 garrison soldiers only 174 were regulars. The rest were militia or old soldiers of doubtful value at best. The great walls were in such disrepair that Pugachev could have literally ridden through the gaps into the fortress. As for Reinsdorp's Cossack and native auxiliaries, they had already demonstrated their complete unreliability. By now, several hundred Orenburg Cossacks, 500 Bashkirs and 300 Tatars whom the governor had sent downriver against Pugachev had all changed sides, and his remaining irregulars were agitated by the news of Tatishchev's fall and Pugachev's approach.³⁸ Incidents arose among Orenburg's garrison and townspeople. A soldier got himself into trouble for drunkenly boasting to the people in the market place that he had carried a letter in German from Reinsdorp to Pugachev and had returned with a reply, also in German, and an oral command to the governor to host the impostor for a banquet in Orenburg.³⁹

Pugachev, however, did not realize how desperate Reinsdorp's position was. This was partly the fault of the impostor himself and his commanders, because of their ineffective espionage work as they approached Orenburg. A Cossack spy, sent ahead to explore the situation in the town failed to even enter Orenburg. The second-hand tidings he brought back conveyed accurately enough the dissension in the town, with many wishing to welcome "Peter III", but gave a false picture of the military situation. Pugachev got the impression that Orenburg's defences were already very strong, and, therefore, decided to spend a few more days gathering additional support before closing in on the fortress.⁴⁰

At least two other factors also helped to induce the impostor to make this crucial error. Reinsdorp had managed to destroy the bridge across the

Sakmara River at Orenburg, rendering a direct approach very difficult. It was much easier for Pugachev to continue up the right bank of the tributary to the next bridge at Sakmarsk - especially since that route would also take him through the Tatar sloboda of Kargala (or Seitovsk). Kargala was undefended, yet had a sympathetic population at least as large as that of Orenburg itself. This, of course, was no valid reason for giving it precedence over Orenburg as an immediate target, as Dubrovin very properly points out: "Pugachev...had [only] one goal in mind: to increase his mob."⁴¹

At least the impostor's drive on Kargala and Sakmarsk was a brilliant success for what it was worth. The Tatar sloboda, in fact, had been eagerly awaiting Pugachev's coming ever since some Tatars who had witnessed his debut at Budarinsk had brought the exciting news. Now, instead of obeying Reinsdorp's orders to destroy the bridge at Sakmarsk and supply a brigade of fire-fighters for Orenburg, the Tatars obeyed the ultimatum of their "sovereign". On October 1 they welcomed him with all the slavish oriental pomp normally accorded a "White Khan", and contributed 500 men to his army.⁴²

The example of this success encouraged Pugachev to follow the urgings of his Tatars and Bashkirs and of Orchinnikov, and extend his appeal into Bashkiria. Accordingly, on the same day, October 1, native couriers galloped northward with several new false ukazy in the Tatar tongue, addressed to prominent Bashkir chieftains of the "Nogai Road" - the nearby, southern part of Bashkiria. Again the insurrectionist leaders were only observing the social and ideological realities of their environment when they disguised what were really revolutionary appeals under the legitimizing cloak of tsarist manifestos and sent them to the people via their established leaders rather than directly, over the latters' heads. However, Pugachev knew that

his secretaries' eloquence was much less likely to be wasted on the Bashkir starshiny than it had been on Russian military officers.

Even the wealthiest and most powerful native leaders were being wronged by the imperial regime and were not really accepted by the ruling establishment. A common bond of membership in an underprivileged minority partially cut across class barriers and tended to link both rich and poor natives in a common struggle for more freedom. That is why Pugachev could issue a combined appeal to both. His manifestos were addressed "to the starshiny, village elders and to all small and great". He adjured them to beware of "boyar commands". As with the Cossacks, he appealed to a warrior people's proud tradition and promised to bestow every freedom in exchange for loyal military service. Yet he reinforced this with a practical, contemporary measure of social revolution, commanding the Bashkir chiefs "to release all held in jails and by various owners (khozyaev) in bondage, without exception." In conclusion, Pugachev invited all to live again "like the wild beasts of the steppe" and declared, "I free all of you in this world and give liberty forever to your children and grandchildren."⁴³

Such an appeal provided plenty of spark to ignite all Bashkiria in furious flames of rebellion. Even though three of these manifestos were intercepted and sent in to Reinsdorp by loyal starshiny, the message found a way into Bashkiria and immediately began paying dividends in fierce mounted warriors. It was just two days later when the starshina Kinzia Arslanov, soon to become one of Pugachev's most trusted advisors, led the first response to the false tsar's appeal, a contingent of 700 Bashkirs, into the insurgents' camp at Sakmarsk.⁴⁴

On that same day, October 3, another important propaganda victory and another valuable addition also came to the impostor at this Cossack town

which had just welcomed him the previous day: Afanasy Sokolov, better known by his nick-name, Khlopusha, joined the insurgents.

Khlopusha's defection was the second of two disastrous propaganda blunders which Governor Reinsdorp committed as Pugachev bore down on Orenburg and which the false tsar hastened to exploit. The first was an ill-advised falsehood written into the anti-Pugachev ukaz which Reinsdorp was having the priests read in the churches throughout his guberniya. In its eagerness to discredit the impostor in the eyes of the people, the edict declared that he had the mutilated face of a convict. Since this was not true, the manifesto actually worked in Pugachev's favor. The impostor even had a copy of it read publicly to his following to prove to them that he could not possibly be Pugachev. Reinsdorp's use of the clergy was also backfiring on him. The first zlobeiskie popy ("malefactor - priests") were already appearing. One was the village priest of Lyakhovo, Ivan Fedorov, who rode around in post-carts, administering Pugachev's oath to the people of nearby settlements.⁴⁵ The governor's attempt to mock the false tsar by sending out the mutilated convict, Khlopusha, with letters to him and his followers failed similarly. Khlopusha no sooner found Pugachev, at Sakmarsk, than he prostrated himself before the impostor, publicly acknowledging him as Peter III and begging forgiveness. Not only did Khlopusha win pardon and acceptance into the rebel army; he soon became, thanks to his outstanding ability and his twenty years' experience as a factory worker and bandit in the region, one of Pugachev's commanders.⁴⁶

Now at last, on October 4-5, Pugachev and his colleagues felt strong enough to move directly against Orenburg. But it was already too late for an easy victory. Their needless five-day delay had given Reinsdorp time to burn the outer town to deprive the rebels of cover, repair his walls, and

receive Major Naumov, who managed to scurry into Orenburg with his 246 foot and 378 Cossacks just as the insurgent army was approaching.⁴⁷ Thus Reinsdorp had recovered his military superiority and had even maintained his numerical advantage over Pugachev, who still had only 2000 or 2500 men. The impostor soon learned to his chagrin the extent of this deficiency and the fact that no amount of propaganda alone could offset it enough to deliver Orenburg into his hands.

The direct propaganda duel between Pugachev and Reinsdorp had begun several days before when the impostor, continuing his familiar policy of keeping up legitimate appearances, had sent copies of a new ukaz to both the governor and ataman Mogutov of the Orenburg Cossacks. Even though the rebels had designed both these edicts so as to appeal as much as they could to officers, with adjurations to loyal service and promises of still higher rank in the services of "Peter III", they failed to win any results. Reinsdorp even showed himself to be ahead of his adversary in one aspect of agitational technique: his answering manifesto of October 2 was aimed not at the insurgents' leaders but over their heads, directly at their followers. Reinsdorp repeated his unmasking of Pugachev's imposture and promised the insurgents a free pardon if they would seize, bind and deliver up their leader.⁴⁸

This was all any spokesman for the government side could say, lacking the lures of the Peter III myth and the program of social revolution that were available to the insurrectionists. Such an appeal was bound to be powerless against a movement that was still young and growing vigorously. Its day would come only if and when it could be driven home by decisive military victories.

Fortunately, for Reinsdorp, however, the fact that government military superiority already prevailed inside Orenburg's walls undermined Pugachev's

attempt to reply in kind with a manifesto to the town's garrison. The impostor admonished the soldiers to "come into my obedience", and "abandoning forced obedience to disloyal commanders who are corrupting you and depriving you", to "show your loyal faithfulness to me, the Great Sovereign", "Laying down your arms before my banners". Yet the defenders, Shigaev testifies, rejected this appeal as well, "with scorn".⁹⁹ Its failure brought on the rebels' first attempt to storm Orenburg.

That attempt was bound to fail, because of insufficient rebel preparation. The impostor now had roughly 500 Yaik Cossacks, 300 Iletsk Cossacks, 600 Orenburg Cossacks, 500 Tatars and Kalmyks, 540 garrison soldiers turned "Cossacks", and at least 700 Bashkirs, together with twenty or thirty cannons of varying calibre and quality. He was rapidly overtaking Reinsdorp's numerical superiority, but numbers alone mean even less in siege warfare than in the field. More meaningful indicators are the facts that the rebels still had only ten kegs of powder and still lacked the discipline or expertise needed to conduct a major siege operation.⁵⁰ Again, as at Yaitsk, Pugachev spread out his men so as to create the illusion of great numbers, but again theatricals proved no substitute for adequate firepower and discipline. A withering bombardment from the walls forced the attackers to fall back beyond cannon range. There they camped and made plans for a more effective bombardment and assault.

Pugachev was lucky again, as at Yaitsk and Tatishchev, that there was no really dynamic military commander in Orenburg. Such a man could probably have inspired enough esprit-de-corps in his garrison to attack the rebels with real determination to win. However, neither Reinsdorp himself nor his main subordinates, Maj. Gen. Wallenstern and Maj. Naumov, was such a man.⁵¹

The next day, October 6, Naumov ventured forth with 1500 soldiers together with Cossacks and artillery, but had to retreat before a determined attack by Pugachev with 2000 men and eight cannons. This failure had a powerful impact on the defenders, sapping the confidence of the leadership while rendering Reinsdorp's natives and Cossacks still more unreliable. This effect was reinforced, moreover, as Pugachev set up batteries in several stone ruins in the burned-out suburbs and unleashed a heavy barrage on the town. Such impressive displays of armed might made many inside Orenburg pay serious attention to the persistent rumors that the man besieging them really was Peter III. Unrest was so pronounced that Reinsdorp and his council, fearing the consequences of another failure, decided to postpone their second Sally from October 9 to October 12. Even so, this Sally also failed miserably. Naumov this time took 2000 soldiers and Cossacks and natives besides, but all, especially his Cossacks, were reluctant to fight the insurgents and hung back in the shelter of his artillery. His losses are revealing: 22 dead, 31 wounded, six captured and 64 deserted.⁵²

Still Pugachev did not decide to follow up this series of successes with another assault attempt. This was at least partly because they had really been only qualified successes, thanks to the continuing inefficiency of the insurgent commanders. The chief goal of the bombardment, the starting of a major fire in Orenburg to serve as a distraction while the rebels stormed its walls, was not achieved. Apparently this was because the insurgent gunners, soldiers from Bilov's force, remained secretly loyal and spiked their bombs before firing them. The impostor's attempt to make up for this failure by sending several agents in to fire the town and murder Reinsdorp also failed. Their capture only served to alert the governor all the more and to discourage

the rebels from making further such attempts which might well have succeeded. Finally, even the victories over Naumov's allies had not been complete. The major had still managed to inflict much higher casualties on his foes than his own forces suffered, and to withdraw safely to the shelter of the fortress. As for defection, the testimony of Shigaev affirms that it was a two-way street. Pugachev followers deserted to Orensburg as well as vice-versa.⁵³

By this time Pugachev and his henchmen should have realized that they could not hope to take Orenburg quickly and that the attempt had already cost more in men, resources and, above all, precious time, than the objective was worth. They should have seen that it was high time they broke away from this diversion, retraced their steps to Fort Tatishchev and resumed in earnest the real task which they had been putting off: expanding into central Russia and raising the serfs. Yet they did not. The temptation to stay just a few more days before Orenburg - long enough to gather more men and munitions and try another assault - was overpowering. It was reinforced by all the natural human weaknesses of both the rebel leaders and their followers. Inertia - the desire to take the easier way of rallying around a convenient fixed location, vengeance - the desire to settle accounts at home first, and fear - the reluctance to become inextricably involved far from home; all combined to entangle the insurgents more deeply at Orenburg.

October 14 was a fateful day in the evolution of the Pugachev rebellion. That day witnessed an event of which the insurgents would have no knowledge for the rest of the month but should have expected; the empress' launching of an expedition against them. October 14 also saw an event which the rebels did experience directly and which should have brought home to them the fact that time was a-wasting: the first snowfall at Orenburg.⁵⁴ Yet this was the

day when Pugachev launched his first great wave of propaganda and agitation centered on Orenburg.

Leading Pugachev henchmen were sent out in every direction with new false edicts. Khlopusha was dispatched to the northeast, to the nearby Avzyano-Petrovsk foundries, to "talk the peasants over to his side" and to have the master craftsmen cast mortars and bombs for use in a second assault on Orenburg. Pugachev sent after him a specially altered copy of his ukaz of October 17 "to our governor, Reinsdorp".⁵⁵ Dmitry Lysov was sent to the court of Khan Nur Ali, to continue the insurgents' efforts to counter Reinsdorp's diplomatic efforts and to win real support from the cautious khan. Maxim Shigaev rode up the Yaik with a Pugachev ukaz to raise the Cossacks of the line forts there, while a few other Cossack agitators headed in the opposite direction to further rebel agitation along the Samara line. The impostor's trusty Tatar lieutenant, Idorka, galloped northward with a new ukaz aimed at the whole Muslun population of Bashkiria - Tatars and Mishari as well as Bashkirs.⁵⁶

As usual, the agitator's essential tools of social revolution and terror were worked into this tsarist message. It appealed "to the Bashkir starshiny, small and smaller, orthodox warrior - heroes (bogatyry) and Cossacks and to all my subjects." Styling himself "sovereign and gracious tsar, protector of the great and small in one class, enricher of the poor", Pugachev warned his hearers not to obey or believe anyone disloyal to him "as a downright malefactor" (yako sushchago zlodeya), for "if anyone does not obey me, then he shall suffer execution for it."⁵⁷ At least this great new propaganda offensive proved very successful in itself, even though it was misdirected. By now, further appeal to the Bashkirs was hardly even necessary; most of them did not have to be told, let alone told twice, to join the rebels. From the

first days of October bands of their mounted warriors had been spreading the rebellion all over their country, to Russian peasant and Cossack settlements such as Nagaibatsk, as well as to their own people.

If Pugachev's own propaganda still failed to convince certain wealthy chiefs and other warriors, then leading Bashkir agitators did not hesitate to embellish the story even more. For example, on October 17 Kinzia Arslanov sent this message to another Bashkir starshina, Ablai Murzagulov: "The tsar and great sovereign who had been lost from the earth, Petr Fedorovich himself, is really approaching, I swear to God, with his son, Pavel Petrovich and 72,000 Don Cossacks." That same day Kinzia delivered 5,000 Bashkirs to Pugachev, who made sure to receive them with great honor and to reward them with a ruble apiece from his treasury of loot. He created Kinzia "colonel-in-chief" of his Bashkirs. In response Arslanov made sure to publicize the generosity of the "gracious sovereign" in a new "personal ukaz" which he sent his Bashkir countrymen on October 20.⁵⁸ Another 600 Bashkirs and 500 Mari gathered by Idorka arrived soon after.

Meanwhile, Khlopusha was also meeting with great success in his agitation of the factory peasants.

As with the Bashkirs, the mere news of the approach of the "sovereign" before Orenburg ten days before had sufficed to re-kindle the smouldering fires of rebellion among the peasant-workers. On October 5 a dozen miners from the smelting complex nearest to Orenburg, the Voskresensk works, had fled to Pugachev. Returning a few days later with a rebel ukaz, they had raised 100 more miners and spread the movement to the foundry workers themselves. Then on October 16, Kinzia Arslanov and 70 Bashkirs, sent with another ukaz by Pugachev, arrived to finish pushing through the rebellion at both Voskresensk foundry and the Voznesensk works not far to the east. Voskresensk

had yielded not only the usual cannons, muskets, powder and shot, but also 30,000 rubles for Pugachev's treasury and some able peasant-worker leaders, notably Grigory Tumanov - who were later to make their mark in the impostor's service.⁵⁹

Thus, by the time Khlopusha reached the Avzyano-Petrovsk foundries, just north of Voznesensk, the ground was already prepared for him. First he arrested the factory prikazchik (clerk) and his staff and had a priest flogged for having read out a government ukaz ordering the workers not to obey Pugachev. Next Khlopusha had read to the inhabitants a manifesto of the impostor in which "all the peasant benefits were written." The workers cheered in response, "We'll gladly serve the sovereign!" Khlopusha addressed the crowd. He promised not only the usual Cossack liberties, but also a new one which was calculated to please state peasants and which the insurgents would often use on them in the months to come: He declared that Peter III, on ascending his throne, would free them from all taxation for seven years. A hundred factory workers immediately volunteered for service. Khlopusha took them, together with all the artillery pieces, powder and shot he could find, 120 horses with harness, 300 lambs, 77 steers, and two poods (72 pounds) of silver plate, and hurried back to present his haul to Pugachev. The impostor, delighted, rewarded Khlopusha with the highest rank he had yet given to anyone of non-Cossack origin: He made the ex-convict colonel of a new "factory peasant" regiment.⁶⁰

In fact, though, Khlopusha's mission fell short of complete success, because of the limitations of the rebel agitation and organization. Pugachev's granting, in his ukaz of October 22, of permission for the adscribed peasants among the workers to return home contradicted his desire to maintain arms production and brought work almost to a standstill. As for the master-

craftsmen, most of them had apparently fled, taking their indispensable skills with them. As a result Khlopusha never did manage to organize any new production at the Avzyano-Petrovsk works.⁶¹

At Beloretsk works, just to the northeast, where Khlopusha's ukaz was next circulated, but without his presence to support it, the resultant uprising proved unable to sustain itself. As soon as the homegrown rebel leaders there departed with a large number of the workers to join Pugachev, the small minority of government supporters were able to procure the release of the jailed factory administration. The latter immediately trekked across the Urals to Fort Upper Yaitsk and brought back a detachment of soldiers with which they re-imposed a firm government control which would not be broken until the rebels finally got around to attacking the foundry in earnest, in mid-January.⁶² As much as any other group among the lower classes, the factory peasants were incapable of maintaining their upheaval unless the rebel commanders supplied a push, as well as propaganda, from outside.

These two failures mark the beginning of a general trend which the insurgents would prove unable to reverse. It would cripple all their subsequent attempts at arms and munitions production, despite the rebel enthusiasm of the great majority of the Ural workers, and thus contribute to their subsequent military failures.

The only one of the insurgents' agitators who failed to bring back any support was Lysov. The shrewd, cautious Kazakh Khan wanted to be sure which way the wind was blowing before committing himself. He continued his policy of privately assuring each side of his support, but hedging and stalling about delivering it, while his raiders took advantage of both sides and crossed the Yaik. Lysov did at least win a kind of negative diplomatic victory, though, for Reinsdorp finally gave up his own efforts in disgust and

determined to get along without the Kazakhs' aid.⁶³ Besides, Pugachev was getting so much support from elsewhere that Nur-Ali's fence-sitting seemed to be no obstacle to taking Orenburg.

Shigaev brought back 100 Cossacks from the Yaik outposts above Orenburg. Three hundred Stavropol Kalmyks arrived from the east bank of the Volga. A hundred more Orenburg Cossacks deserted from the besieged fortress. Hundreds of serfs from the outlying country districts continued to pour into Pugachev's camp, bringing provisions and fodder and swelling his mob.⁶⁴

Pugachev's superior propaganda was compensating for its failure against government strongholds by achieving an overwhelming triumph throughout the intervening countryside. The rising tidal wave of rural rebellion which had penned up his enemies in Yaitsk, Orenburg and a few other forts now promised to engulf them. Even Catherine's anti-Pugachev manifesto proved so impotent that the impostor actually dared to have a copy of it, found in some mail destined for Orenburg, publicly read to his men, just as he had done with Reinsdorp's letter. As the reading finished Pugachev shouted, "See now, how they call me Emelyan Pugachev! All right, I'll put up with it for now, but they'll find out I'm the real tsar!" Zarubin's description, in his testimony, of the great impression this display supposedly made on him shows how such theatricals provided self-vindicating excuses even for those followers who were only pretending to believe in the impostor. He claimed he had thought, "How could a Cossack, now, take on such an undertaking!", and had therefore disbelieved Catherine and believed Pugachev all the more.⁶⁵

Meanwhile, Reinsdorp had written to General Dekolong and Brigadier Korf at Fort Upper Yaitsk, ordering them to stay there rather than come to his aid. The astounded Dekolong concluded that Reinsdorp was trying to assure himself sole credit for defeating Pugachev. Later, when the governor realized that

he needed help, he would not be able to get a message through. Yet Reinsdorp may have had a valid reason for issuing such an order: the serious unrest that already existed behind Fort Upper Yaitsk, in Isetsk province and western Siberia. There, the stories spread by Ivan Loginov and the other Yaik Cossack exiles were now being supplemented by rumors and agitators coming directly from the rebellion itself. The Cossacks of Fort Chelyabinsk had already demonstrated extreme reluctance to serve against the man rumored to be the true emperor. The rebellious economic peasants of the Dolmatov monastery were being stirred up by peasant agitators who told them that it was no Cossack impostor but Peter III himself who had appeared on the Yaik.⁶⁶

On October 22, Pugachev began his new attack, subjecting Orenburg to the heaviest bombardment yet while his men advanced under cover of a dense fog. But still the attempt failed. The rebel hot shot did not start more fires than Reinsdorp's men could control, so that his garrison were free to drive back the attackers with withering fusillades.

Still the rebel leaders would not abandon their mad obsession with Orenburg. They tried to keep up their initiative by a feint attack on October 27, and launched another assault, the greatest and best-prepared yet, on November 2-3. It brought them tantalizingly near to success. The propaganda section was a predictable failure, since it merely wasted more letters on ataman Mogutov of the Orenburg Cossacks and ataman M. Borodin of the Yaik Cossacks in Orenburg. But the rebel bombardment, their biggest yet, cost the defenders 1800 rounds to answer, caused considerable damage and made a great psychological impression. This time, moreover, the attackers advancing under cover of the cannonade had moveable siege-towers to protect them and to help them over the walls. Reinsdorp only managed to beat them

off by getting a few field guns across the frozen Yaik to catch the rebels in a cross-fire, while his light cavalry made a flank attack.⁶⁷

Having tried his very best and still failed, Pugachev should have realized now, at least, that there was no point in tarrying before Orenburg. His army badly needed to be put on the move and given some victories, to offset the demoralizing effects of stagnation, winter hardships and successive military failures. Yet the false tsar and his advisors did the exact opposite. They determined to starve Orenburg into submission, if need be, and dug into new, permanent winter quarters in and around Berda, a Cossack suburb a few miles to the north, on November 5. Pugachev installed himself in the largest house there, which was styled his "palace". It was a more fitting residence for a folk emperor who continued to reinforce his imposture by weeping before a portrait of his "son" Paul, relating the wanderings and sufferings which the boyars' treachery had imposed on him, and talking of his plans to march on Kazan and then Moscow as soon as Orenburg should fall.⁶⁸ Then, on the following day Pugachev introduced greatly expanded and reformed administrative machinery so as to better direct his growing movement from this "capital". Ironically, these were the very institutions which, properly used, could have led his rebellion to the heart of Russia.

The impostor first completed the organization of his growing host into Cossack-style regiments. Ovchinnikov, formerly "head ataman", was made colonel of Pugachev's Yaik Cossack regiment. Similarly, Tvorogov was made Colonel of the Iletsk Cossack regiment; Bildin, of the Isetsk Cossacks and Padurov, of the Orenburg Cossacks. Khan Derbetev became colonel of his Stavropol Kalmyks, while Mussa-Aliev and Kinzia Arslanov received the same rank over their respective Kargala Tatar and Bashkir contingents, which were also organized as regiments. Khlopusha was colonel of his factory peasant

regiment, and the Yaik Cossack Chumakov was made colonel of a new artillery regiment. Attempts were made to introduce a greater degree of regular military order and discipline. There were regimental muster-rolls which tried to keep track of the impostor's ever-shifting following, a password, "Cossack!", and salaries whenever the rebel treasury could spare the money.⁶⁹

Next, to round out his chain of command and take the growing burden of everyday administrative details off himself, Pugachev ordered the creation of a "Military College". Such a choice of name appears strange, but apparently the name of the government department which had ruled the Cossacks under the tsar was no more a symbol of oppression for the rebels than was the name of tsar itself, or the title of "colonel" or "regiment". On the contrary it was, like these other titles, a valuable symbol of prestige and legitimacy for the rebels to make their own. It was the final link in their rebel version of the chain of command familiar to the Cossacks. Besides, as the ordinary insurgents knew very well, their "Military College" had no more in common with the real government body of that name than did their colonels and other ranks elected by democratic votes in krug sessions. It was really just an impressive name for the council of their own popular leaders helping their own tsar to govern.

What these ordinary followers may not have realized so well is that the establishment of the College seems also to have marked the clear ascendancy of certain untrustworthy men among their leaders who had gained Pugachev's favor and even the favor of the majority by virtue of their superior ability or influence. Vitoshnov, the nominal head of the College, was a Yaik Cossack starshina who had opposed the 1772 rebels and had been saved from hanging in September only by Shigaev's intervention. Maxim Shigaev, the real head of the College, as well as its treasurer and intendant in charge of supplies and

provisions, was a cautious waverer. Ivan Tvorogov was one of the wealthiest Cossacks of Iletsk. These were the men who, together with Skobochkin, composed the "judges" (sudya) of the College, over-shadowing Ivan Pochitalin, the dumnyi dyak ("minister") and Maxim Gorshkov, the secretary, not to mention others such as Zarubin, Myasnikov and Arslanov who were not even included in the College. Only two of the College members were even semi-literate: Pochitalin and Tvorogov. Even Pugachev himself, though he of course deliberated most important matters with his College, could now be kept ignorant or misinformed on others if his henchmen so desired. Similarly, the tight control that Yakim Davilin, as the impostor's dezhurnyi (duty officer), and a picked bodyguard of Yaik Cossacks exercised over access to their "sovereign" could have been intended to isolate him as much as to protect him. One is tempted to conclude, with Rozner, that these entrenched "moderate" Yaik Cossack rebel leaders were deliberately holding in check Pugachev himself and his more "radical" colleagues who supposedly wished to take advantage of their overwhelming propaganda superiority and advance across the Volga at once.⁷⁰

At any rate, whether all or only part of the rebel leaders were behind the fixation on Orenburg, they had organized just in the nick of time, for the approach of General Kar was bringing them the most serious reminder yet of the folly of that policy. Since Pugachev had failed to carry his war to the center, the center was coming to him, putting him on the defensive and jeopardizing his movement's very existence only a month and a half after its birth. At least this challenge took the insurgents' minds off their boredom and discouragement and jarred them into frantic activity. To meet the threat Pugachev sent out all the forces he could spare from the Orenburg siege, spearheaded by 500 of his best Cossack cavalry and six field guns under two of his best commanders, Ovchinnikov and Zarubin-Chika.⁷¹

Pugachev was lucky - too lucky, in fact, for his own good. General V.A. Kar's expedition was inadequate in strength, preparation and leadership. Because of the slowness of communications and the rapidity of the insurrection's growth, neither the government nor Kar himself realized how formidable an enemy he would have to face. No one worried about the fact that no regulars could possibly be obtained from the Turkish front before January. Kar's strength of 3468 men seemed more than adequate to the task of scattering a few thousand disorganized and unarmed rabble, even though it included only 606 regulars. Indeed, Kar imagined that his worst problem would not be beating the rebels but catching them. Accordingly he thought nothing of sacrificing thoroughness to speed in order to reach Tatishchev in time to cut off Pugachev's escape route.⁷²

The farther he advanced along the New Moscow Road, however, the more General Kar felt like an invader in some hostile foreign country. It was the same frightening sensation that Governor Von Brandt had experienced a while before, when he had cautiously explored the same road via Kichuevsk and Bugulma as far as Buguruslan. He had found the villages empty; all the men were either away serving Pugachev or in hiding to avoid serving the governor. He had done his best to drive home the message of Catherine's ukaz of October 14, but the small, shaky detachments of farmer-soldiers he sent around the villages were not able to make much of a show of force.⁷³

Now Kar was finding that even his own strength was insufficient to make up for the inferiority of the official propaganda he distributed. As Dubromin puts it, "the manifestos of admonishment from the empress had no effect whatsoever." At Iletsk the rebel Cossacks arrested the general's messenger. At Yaitsk, Simonov reported that the reading of the empress' manifesto provoked a great uproar. On another occasion a rebel band accepted and read

a copy, but rode off mocking it and shouting that their manifestos were "truer". Finally, as if all this were not enough, Kar was ill. He had been plagued with poor health for years, and now, under the harsh conditions of a winter campaign, it quickly returned to sap his efficiency.⁷⁴

Even so, Kar would still have triumphed easily if he could have gotten word to Reinsdorp in Orenburg and to Brigadier Korf and General Dekolong on the Upper Yaik line to attack Pugachev in conjunction with him. But because of the difficulty in getting messages through and the laxity and timidity of the generals, which the frenzy of rebellion created, they remained ignorant of each other's strength and position. Pugachev was left free to attack Kar in isolation.⁷⁵

Major Shishkov's advance patrol was the first element of Kar's force to clash with the insurgents. Then Kar and his main army spent a miserable night of November 7-8 penned up in the village of Yuzeev, deterred from sending out night patrols by the obvious unreliability of their native auxiliaries. The next morning they found themselves surrounded by 600 rebels with artillery, loudly urging them to submit to their rightful "sovereign". Kar managed to disperse his tormentors, for the time being, with a few volleys, but his rearguard of grenadiers was less fortunate. Ovchinnikov and his men caught them sleeping on their sledges and wakened them to the tune of bullets and shouts urging them to submit "to the sovereign, Peter III". The men panicked and threw down their muskets, whereupon their officers were also obliged to surrender. Chika and Ovchinnikov wisely kept up the pressure, shifting it back to Kar's vanguard which was now in full retreat back up the New Moscow Road. For the rest of the day they pursued Kar, harassing him with 2000 men and artillery fired well enough to put the government guns out of action. At least 30 of General Kar's men were killed, as opposed to only

five insurgents. The astonished and frightened general wrote, "These malefactors scatter over the steppe like the wind and do great damage with their artillery, not firing as one would expect of muzhiks." Later, back at Berda, Ovchinnikov would explain to a vexed Pugachev that the only reason Kar had gotten away at all was that the rebels had run out of ammunition.⁷⁶

On the following day the news of Kar's defeat, conveyed by rebel messengers, was enough to persuade 1500 Bashkir levies under Prince Urakov to desert their commander and change sides. Among them was a young warrior who was soon to become his people's most outstanding leader under Pugachev - Salavat Yulaev.⁷⁷

The captured grenadiers who were escorted back to Berda were brought before Pugachev and given the same alternative that had been given the captured soldiers at Tatishchev. Rather than die as soldiers of Catherine most of the rank-and-file chose to live as "Cossacks" of Peter III and to cross themselves in the schismatic fashion, with two fingers, rather than have the third one chopped off. Several older soldiers also went along with the game of "identifying" Pugachev as Peter III, for the sake of saving their skins. Most of their officers, on the other hand, preferred to die and were promptly executed. At least one, though, chose to serve Pugachev. Ensign Mikhail Shvanovich, literate in German and French as well as Russian, was a valuable new addition in the impostor's struggle to enhance his authenticity as Peter III. Shvanovich was made colonel of a new regiment of soldier-rebels and was also taken into the false tsar's secretariat, to help write his manifestos.

Such a victory as this made Pugachev's men less likely than ever to pay any attention to a new manifesto Reinsdorp sent out, especially since its arrival was closely followed by yet another rebel triumph. On the morning

of November 13 Colonel Chernyshev, commander of the southern prong of Kar's offensive that had been ascending the Samara river, was ambushed by a Pugachev force. Although the incident took place within sight of Orenburg, Reinsdorp sent no help. Responding to the rebels' gunfire and shouting urges to submit to the "sovereign", the colonel's 500 Kalmyks and 100 Cossacks promptly changed sides. Seeing this, his 600 garrison troops, on the order of Major Estifeev, followed suit. Later, at Berda, Chernyshev and 32 of his officers were publicly condemned by Pugachev himself, who scolded, "You know that I am your sovereign" and reproached them for having betrayed him when it was their special duty as officers to set an example in loyalty for their men. Even in this negative way Pugachev did not miss a chance to reinforce his impostor's pretence before his mob. He even went among his newest converts, Chernyshev's men, telling them of his supposed wanderings to Egypt and the Holy Land.⁷⁸

The insurgents had broken the back of General Kar's expedition, but once again their familiar shortcoming, lack of sufficient discipline and organization, intervened to cheat them of full victory. While they lowered their guard and plunged into a drunken orgy of celebration, Brigadier Korf was nearing Orenburg from the east with his 2495 men and 22 guns. Alerted by scouts, Pugachev promptly ordered Zarubin-Chika to gather a force and head off Korf. But Zarubin neglected to obey and continued carousing. When Pugachev learned this he bellowed, "Cossacks to horse!", and galloped off, but it was too late. Korf was already entering Orenburg. Furious, the false tsar threatened to hang Chika, who was only saved by the intervention of his Yaik Cossack colleagues.⁷⁹

Now, thanks to rebel carelessness, Orenburg was strong enough to make its most powerful effort yet to break the siege from within. On the next day,

October 14, General Wallenstern again sallied forth, with 2400 men.

Pugachev took no chances: summoning every available rebel, he swamped the Orenburg force with over 10,000 men and 40 cannons mounted on runners.

Terrified by the prospect of being surrounded and slaughtered by this sea of yelling rebels armed with everything from clubs and home-made pikes to rifles and cannons, Wallenstern and his men formed a square and retreated back into Orenburg.⁸⁰

Pugachev and his host celebrated another hollow victory. They had failed to destroy Wallenstern's force, the only way they might have made up for their failure to stop Korf and brought Orenburg to terms. Yet they had also proven again that they had little to fear from Orenburg's forces in the field. They should surely have seen by now, if they were ever going to, that there was neither any reason for remaining before Orenburg nor for fearing to leave it and move on across the Volga.

The news of the insurgent victory over Kar was already spreading a tremendous propaganda and psychological impact deep into central Russia. The retreating general, as Dubrovin says, "understood that he was surrounded on all sides by a hostile population and that in every common person a pugachevets (Pugachev follower) must be seen". His arrival back in Kazan threw the city into confusion. It confirmed the truth of the rumors which had already been spreading among the inhabitants, sowing panic among the upper classes and eager anticipation among many of the poor. Von Brandt's and Archbishop Venyamin's new attempts at counter-propaganda had no effect. Terror-stricken, full of restless convicts and Polish confederate prisoners, Kazan was even more vulnerable to the Pugachev terror than she had been a month earlier. By the time Kar's successor, General Bibikov, arrived on December 25 he found Kazan half empty; all the gentry, civil servants and even the governor himself had fled.⁸¹

From Kazan the devastating news travelled across the Volga with Kar and with dozens of amateur agitators and gossipers. One of the latter was the monk Filaret himself. He was eventually informed on, arrested and interrogated under the lash for having spread rumors of Kar's defeat while travelling in Kazan and Syzran, ostensibly for the purchase of ikons. Meanwhile, certain Tatars from Kazan guberniya were using exaggerated tales of Pugachev's victory and strength to further their intrigues with the Porte and its vassal, the Crimea.⁸²

Kar's arrival in Moscow, much to the displeasure of the government, produced the same sensation as in Kazan. Pushkin relates the desperate situation which greeted Kar's successor as he passed through in mid-December:

Arriving in Moscow, Bibikov found the old capital in [a state of] fear and despondency. The inhabitants, recently witnesses to rebellion and plague, trembled at the prospect of new afflictions. Great numbers of dvoriane were fleeing to Moscow from the guberniya...the slaves [khology] brought by them spread news around the squares of freedom and of the extermination of masters. The numerous Moscow chern, drinking and shuffling through the streets, awaited Pugachev with open impatience.⁸³

In fact the whole countryside west of the Volga, from Kazan to the Don, was being stirred up by rumors and agitators whose activities had been greatly stimulated by Pugachev's triumph. Government couriers noted that many peasants along the roads between Samara and Penza and between Arzamas and Moscow, for example, were whispering that Peter III was alive and was bringing them freedom.⁸⁴ Pugachev manifestos were being smuggled in, copied and circulated by agents of the impostor like Vasily Chirkin. A merchant from Ufa, he journeyed via Kazan and Moscow to Arkhangelsk, supposedly to sell sailcloth. He carried a copy of the ukaz Pugachev had used at Sakmarsk,

and whenever he stopped in a village or township he quietly contacted the local deacon or other literate peasants, showed them the manifesto and let them copy it. Governor Volkonsky of Moscow uncovered the results of Chirkin's agitation at Serpukhov, just south of Moscow, and launched a determined investigation, but the crafty agitator was never caught. Neither was the perpetrator of the most audacious, albeit futile, insurgent propagandizing exploit of all - the person who left a copy of a Pugachev ukaz in a corridor of the Imperial Winter Palace itself, in St. Petersburg. The discovery of this paper, on January 1, filled Catherine and her government with rage and fear.⁸⁵

The rumors also agitated Pugachev's own homeland far to the south. At the beginning of 1774 one Petr Emelyanov, a serf from near Moscow who was travelling on business, got into trouble for spreading careless talk among the Don Cossacks. He had been telling them of the "great commotion back home in Moscow now" and of the reason for it, the appearance of the "sovereign Petr Fedorovich" at Orenburg, his having "collected an army of 70,000", and his plans to "take all the peasants away from the boyars". Rumors became so rampant on the Don that the voisko chancellery had to redouble its efforts to catch suspected agitators. Moreover, this Cossack unrest was not confined to the Don; it was equally evident on the Terek, in the Ukrainian Zaporozhie voisko, and even among some units at the front.⁸⁶

Pugachev would have received wide popular support and would still have caught his enemies relatively weak and unprepared if he had followed up his victory over Kar by turning westward even now, in November-December. But he did not.

There is, admittedly, some evidence that Pugachev and his Yaik Cossacks now, in mid-November, made up their minds to leave the rest of their mob to

hold down Orenburg while they moved on. However, they intended to move not deeper into Russia but back to Yaitsk. The extent of their naivete is conveyed by a conversation which one of their number, Ilya Ulyanov, relates in his testimony:

While drinking in Berda, Chika, Shigaev, Yakim Davilin, Kuzma Fofanov and others said amongst themselves that they were rascals (zlodei), "and what's this impostor to us, anyway, sovereign or not? Why, we can make princes out of the mud, here at home. Even if he doesn't conquer the Moscow tsardom, we'll still be able to make our own tsardom on the Yaik."⁸⁷

In view of this, the answering demand of the Bashkirs that Pugachev remain with them at Orenburg takes on almost a positive, rather than a negative, light:

"What! You assured us that you are the Sovereign and promised that when Orenburg is taken you will do away with the guberniya and our subjection to it; but now you want to flee and leave us to the same ruin that our fathers suffered for just such a mutiny as this, who were put to death. And so we will not let you go anywhere as long as you have not really fulfilled your promise."⁸⁸

As a result, Pugachev compromised. He remained before Orenburg, but also took steps to attack the other major government centers on the frontier in order to placate his Yaik Cossacks, Bashkir and factory peasants as well as to increase his own strength. Whether at Orenburg, Yaitsk or elsewhere, the rebel leaders still clung to the frontier. They persisted in foolishly deluding themselves that St. Petersburg would undertake no further winter offensives against them; at least none that they could not handle as easily as they had handled Kar's. They continued to become more and more involved with their Orenburg siege and their frontier uprising, much to the relief of Catherine.⁸⁹ The impostor's enemies were left free to prepare a second and far stronger offensive against him.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER II

1. Ivan Pochitalin's testimony, G.A. r.VI, d. 506, l. 190; d. 515, l. 80 ob. Zarubin's testimony, Martynov, p. 67. Dubrovin, vol. II, p. 3.
2. Rozner, Kazachestvo, pp. 40 - 41.
3. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 1 - 2. Rozner, Kazachestvo, pp. 40 - 41.
4. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, p. 192. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 1 - 2.
5. Ibid., pp. 6 - 7.
6. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 41.
7. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, pp. 192 - 193.
8. Zarubin's testimony, TSGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 422, l. 20. Andrushchenko, pp. 37 - 40, gives the best account, based largely on a previously untapped source he discovered: Major Naumov's report of September 20.
9. Zarubin's testimony, TSGADA, G.A. r. VI, d. 422, l. 20. Testimony of I. Kuznetsov, Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 81, p. 136. Shigaev's testimony, TSGADA, G.A. r. VI, d. 506, l. 82.
10. Rozner (Kazachestvo, p. 43) sees another negative side to these defections: their leaders were mainly "moderates" who at once began crowding out the impostor's "radical" advisors. Rozner also claims that by defecting these "moderates" were ruining the original and far superior plan - that they remain in Yaitsk so as to lead a rising there as a diversion while Pugachev attacked from without.
11. Andrushchenko, p. 40.
12. Pugachev's Yaitsk testimony, No. 4, p. 115. His Moscow testimony, pp. 193-194. Rozner (Kazachestvo, p. 49) sees even this decision to move on Iletsk as a deflection of Pugachev from his plan to advance next on Moscow, and blames it on the growing influence of his "moderate" henchmen.
13. Ivan Kharchev's testimony, Pugachevshchina, vol. II, No. 39, p. 124. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 46.
14. Rozner (Kazachestvo, p. 49) stresses that all these elected officers were of the "moderate," "collaborationist" faction. He makes much of the apparent dissatisfaction of "radicals" such as Myasnikov and Gorshkov, with the choice of the unknown Ovchinnikov in particular. Yet Rozner cannot deny that the majority favored the choice.
15. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, p. 193. Zarubin's testimony, TSGADA, G.A., r VI d. 422, l. 28 ob. Here is one version of the oath, from TSGADA,

G.A., r. VI, d. 416, ch.I, otd. 18, l.3:

I the undermentioned promise and swear by Almighty God before His Holy Gospel that I wish to and must loyally and undeceivingly serve and obey in all things, unsparing of my own life to the last drop of blood, His Imperial Majesty the Sovereign Third Emperor Petr Fedorovich, Autocrat of All-Russia, and His Imperial Majesty's most beloved son the Tsarevich and Grand Duke Pavel Petrovich, lawful successor to the All-Russian throne and his consort, the orthodox Grand Duchess Natalia Alekseevna, so help me Lord God in spirit and body. In conclusion of this my oath I kiss the Word and the Cross of my Savior. Amen.

16. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, No. 3, pp. 26 - 27.
17. Pushkin, p. 25.
18. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, p. 194. Pugachevshchina, vol I, No. 2, pp. 25 - 26; vol II, No. 44, pp. 141 - 142 (Tvorogov's testimony). Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 50.
19. Tvorogov's testimony, Pugachevshchina, vol II, No. 44, pp. 141 - 142. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 15 - 16. The ectene (Russ. ektenie) is a series of long supplicatory prayers forming part of the eastern orthodox liturgy, in which prayers for the health and long life of the reigning sovereign and his or her family were included.
20. Pugachev's Yaitsk testimony, No. 4, p. 115. Dubrovin, vol. II, p. 16.
21. Pugachev's Yaitsk testimony, No. 4, p. 115. Zarubin's testimony, TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 422, l. 20. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 51.
22. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 17 - 20. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 53.
23. Testimony of serf of Orenburg uezd, Karp Kolesnikov, Pugachevshchina, vol. III, No. 4, pp. 8 - 9.
24. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, p. 196. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 54.
25. Pugachev's Yaitsk testimony, No. 4, p. 117.
26. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, pp. 196-197. Zarubin's testimony, TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 422, l. 20. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 24 - 28.
27. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 54.
28. Karp Kolesnikov's testimony, Pugachevshchina, vol. III, No. 4, pp. 8 - 9.
29. Rozner, Kazachestvo, pp. 52 - 53, 54 - 56.
30. Cited by Dubrovin (vol. II, p. 52) from Arkhiv Glavnogo Shtaba.

31. Dubrovin, vol. II, p. 50.
32. Ibid., vol. II, pp. 65-66. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 55.
33. Pugachev's Simbirsk testimony, Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 102, p. 186.
34. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 28 - 29. Rozner (Kazachestvo, pp. 54, 55, 57) has the same interpretation, except that he blames Pugachev's "moderate" henchmen for this strategical error.
35. Pugachev's Yaitsk testimony, No. 4, pp. 115 - 116.
36. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 63 - 64. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 63.
37. Months later, as late as the next February, Pugachev would still be harboring the delusion, as his conversation with his Yaik Cossack bride, Ustinia, shows. (See Chapter III, p.143).
38. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 23, 30.
39. Pugachevshchina, vol. II, dopolneniya, pp. 386 - 387.
40. Dubrovin, vol. II, p. 37.
41. Ibid., vol. II, p. 45.
42. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 58.
43. TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 415, l. 27. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, No. 5, 4, 6, pp. 27 - 29, 30 - 31, primechaniya, p. 225.
44. Rozner, Kazachestvo, pp. 58 - 59. Pugachev's Moscow testimony (p. 198) has Yaman-Sarai and Kinzia each bringing in about 500 Bashkirs around October 8 - 9.
45. Zarubin's testimony, Martynov, p. 68. Dubrovin, vol. II, p. 35.
46. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, primechaniya, p. 229. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 37, 48. Pushkin, p. 31.
47. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, primechaniya, p. 229. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 37, 48.
48. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 46 - 48.
49. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, No. 7, pp. 31 - 32. Shigaev's testimony, TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 506, l. 84.
50. Dubrovin, vol. II, p. 72. Rozner, Kazachestvo, pp. 60 - 61.
51. Pushkin, p. 30, Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 74-75.
52. Pushkin, p. 32. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 76-77. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 63.

53. Andrushchenko, p. 68. Dubrovin, vol. II, p. 76. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 64. Shigaev's testimony, TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 506, l. 87, ob. Testimony of two captured Bashkirs, Pugachevshchina, vol. II, No. 85, p. 255.
54. Dubrovin, vol. II, p. 86.
55. TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 506, l. 29. Shigaev's testimony, Pugachevshchina, vol. II, No. 32, p. 107. Ibid., vol. I, No. 10, pp. 33 - 34.
56. Zarubin's testimony, Martynov, p. 67. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 84-85.
57. TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 415, l. 24. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, No. 9, p. 33.
58. Andrushchenko, p. 144. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, No. 167, p. 143; No. 168, p. 144. Zarubin's testimony, TsGADA, G.A., 4. VI, d. 422, l. 21 - 21. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, p. 199.
59. Pugachevshchina, vol. II, No. 134, P. 350. Andrushchenko, pp. 242 - 243. Pugachev's Yaik testimony, No. 4, p. 117.
60. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, p. 198. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 84 - 85, 90 - 91. Andrushchenko, pp. 71, 247. Pugachevshchina, vol. II, No. 85, p. 258.
61. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, No. 212, pp. 176-177. Andrushchenko, pp. 80-81.
62. Andrushchenko, pp. 245 - 246.
63. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, No. 202, pp. 169 - 170.
64. Zarubin's testimony, TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 422, l. 21. Dubrovin, vol. II, p. 86. Shigaev's testimony, TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 506, l. 84. Ivan Pochitalin's testimony, Pugachevshchina, vol. II, No. 33, p. 108.
65. Zarubin's testimony, TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 422, l. 21.
66. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 71 - 72. Pugachevshchina, vol. II, dopolneniya, p. 412, Andrushchenko, p. 180.
67. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 87 - 90. Rozner, Kazachestvo, pp. 64 - 65.
68. Gorshkov's testimony, Pugachevshchina, vol. II, No. 34, pp. 112-113, 114.
69. Shigaev's testimony, TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 508, ch. 2., l. 26 ob. Tvorogov's testimony, Pugachevshchina, vol. II, No. 44, pp. 143-144. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 133-135. Pugachevshchina (vol. II, Dopolneniya, p. 389) and Andrushchenko (pp. 70 - 71) correct Dubrovin's error of supposing that Pugachev's army had no regimental muster-rolls. Such rolls did exist but were destroyed by fire, along with many other Pugachev papers, after his great defeat at Tatishchev in March, 1774.

70. TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 506, l. 85 (Shigaev's testimony); l. 194, 215 - 216. Gorshkov's testimony, Pugachevshchina, vol. II, No. 34, p. 113; No. 44, p. 143. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 136 - 138. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 66.
71. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 68. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 90 - 91.
72. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 95 - 99.
73. Ibid., vol. II, pp. 94 - 95.
74. Ibid., vol. II, pp. 62 - 63, 97. Pushkin, p. 38.
75. Dubrovin, vol. II, p. 100.
76. Ibid., vol. II, pp. 100 - 102, 104. Zarubin's testimony, TsGADA, G.A. r. VI, d. 422, l. 22 - 23. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, p. 201.
77. Salavat Yulaev's testimony, Pugachevshchina, vol. II, No. 100, p. 277. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 68. Pugachevshchina (vol. II, No. 85, pp. 256, 257) gives more insights, in an extract of reports from the Ufa Chancellery to Reinsdorp, into the poor coordination of the government commanders and the unreliability of the Bashkirs.
78. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 102-103, 107-109. Zarubin's testimony, TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 422, l. 22-23. Pugachevshchina, vol. III, No. 80, p. 170. Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 50, p. 90. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, pp. 199 - 200.
79. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, p. 200. Zarubin's testimony, TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 422, l. 31 ob. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 70.
80. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 111 - 112.
81. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 154-157, 163. Pushkin, p. 49.
82. Pugachevshchina, vol. II, No. 12, p. 300.
83. Filaret's testimonies, TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 506, l. 30 - 30 ob.;
84. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 180 - 181.
85. TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 415, l. 8 - 12; l. 57 - 60, 75-76.
86. Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 12, pp. 27 - 33, 38 - 39. Rozner, Kazachestvo, pp. 73 - 74.
87. Ulyanov's testimony, TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 422, l. 34.
88. Pugachevshchina, vol. II, dopolneniya, pp. 415 - 416.

89. Catherine wrote to Volkonsky: "In this misfortune it can be counted as fortunate that these rascals tied themselves for two whole months to Orenburg, and went nowhere further." (Cited in Pugachev's Moscow testimony, primechaniya, p. 230.) The English ambassador Robert Gunning also perceived the probable fatal consequences of Pugachev's dallying before Orenburg, as Rozner notes (Kazachestvo, p. 76.)

CHAPTER III

EXPANSION, STALEMATE AND DEFEAT

While the central government authorities were reacting to the shock of Kar's defeat, Pugachev was busy launching his biggest expansion yet, but one still centered on Orenburg and fated to do little more than multiply the stalemate that had entangled him there.

On November 17 the impostor's secretariat, straining to produce its very best imitation of official tsarist jargon, issued another ukaz to "our governor, Reinsdorp":

You know well enough: from published [rebel - L.H.M.] manifestos you can see, how we were illegally deprived of the All-Russian throne by enemies of the general peace. But now the Almighty Lord, by his inscrutable true judgements deigns to raise us up, and puts the enemies of the general peace under our feet. Only you, blinded by ignorance or clouded by malevolence, do not come to your senses: you oppose our power with boundless bloodshed and you try to extinguish our most illustrious name just as before and to orphan like babies our loyal servants. Nevertheless we, by our natural paternal magnanimity to the loyal subject who even now rises from the darkness of ignorance and comes to his senses, zealously submitting to our power, most graciously pardon you and moreover, paternally grant you every freedom. But should you remain in such obduracy and harshness and not submit to the power given us by the Creator, then you shall unavoidably bring down on yourself our righteous wrath.¹

Needless to say, this edict made no more impression on Reinsdorp than its precursors and perhaps less, because it heralded no new assault on Orenburg.² It did, however, provide the base for a number of modified versions addressed to the public at large and used in the new series of expansive drives to which Pugachev now turned.

Already on the date of the impostor's new ukaz, November 17, one of his "colonels", the Bashkir starshina Kashkin Samarov, was laying siege to Ufa

with 500 Bashkirs, peasants and factory workers. Also around this time, in mid-to-late November, Pugachev was sending out small forces under several of his atamans - the Yaik Cossacks Vasily Elizarov and Ivan Chuloshnikov, the soldier Ivan Zhilkin and the serf Ilya Arapov. Their mission was to move down the Samara line, raising the locals and taking the forts. Similarly, Dmitry Lysov was sent west to help the rebel Stavropol Kalmyks incite the peasantry and take the forts in their area.³

These initiatives were moves in the right direction. They could have served not merely to appease the Kalmyks and Bashkirs and to swell and supply the principal rebel mob at Berda, but also to pioneer the long overdue westward offensive across the Volga. The capture of Samara and Stavropol would give the insurgents one beachhead on the Volga, and Ufa lay on land and water routes that could lead a second spearhead to the Volga at Kazan.

However, Pugachev's military college continued to be preoccupied with their attempts to break the deadlock at Orenburg. Most of whatever interest they did have in other operations went not to those against Ufa and Samara but to another, eastward drive launched around the same time, on November 18. Khlopusha's expedition up the Yaik against Forts Upper Ozerneya and Ilinsk was intended not only to tap a rich source of supplies but also to crush General Dekolong before he could join forces with Reinsdorp as Brigadier Korf had just done. To assure success the convict "colonel" was given a force of nearly 1000 men, including the rebel Iletsk Cossack regiment as well as his own regiment of factory peasants.⁴ Later on, Pugachev would come in person to help. Yet Khlopusha's offensive, as it turned out, diverted precious time and resources from its far more important westward counterparts only to set a pattern for them of initial promise followed by ultimate failure.

The drive began well enough, thanks to the universal appeal of the rebel propaganda and Khlopusha's talents as a leader. He picked up so much Tatar and Bashkir support along the way that he was able to leave his Kundravinsk Tatars to blockade Dekolong in Fort Upper Ozerneya while he went on to cut off the general's retreat by taking Fort Iletsk.

This latter task offered little challenge to Khlopusha. Korf had drawn off most of the Ilinsk garrison for his run into Orenburg. The remainder were too weak to stand up to the combined enticement and terror of the rebels' propaganda. They refused to fight, opened their gates and delivered up their recalcitrant officer, Lt. Lopatin, to be hacked to pieces. Khlopusha took the fort's guns, powder, money and supplies. Fraternizing with the rebels, the garrison Cossacks revealed the only reason they had not surrendered even sooner: they had feared to because of the presence of some regular soldiers in their midst.⁵

Fort Upper Ozerneya, however, was a different story, for it contained many more soldiers and officers. Only a quarter of its garrison was composed of Cossacks, Kalmyks and Bashkirs, and General Dekolong was careful to weaken these unreliable auxiliaries still further by breaking them up and scattering them among his troops. While the general's precautions undermined the attackers' propaganda offensive, their own laxity in discipline ruined the effectiveness of their conventional warfare. Their stealthy advance up ravines leading to the walls was well-conceived and would probably have succeeded, but someone fired his musket too soon and the defenders took warning. The rebel Cossacks' attempt to regain the initiative by riding up under the walls and shouting their usual oral agitation had little success. Most of the native and Cossack minority in the fort deserted, but the soldiers and even the Polish confederate prisoners stood firm. In failing to

propagandize the latter group the insurgents were throwing away a golden opportunity to reverse their fortunes, for it was these interned Polish patriot soldiers, ironically, who now formed the backbone of the fort's defence.⁶

After several more unsuccessful attempts Khlopusha sent for Pugachev, who left Berda on November 24 with Tvorogov and 100 Yaik Cossacks. The false tsar, however, had no better success against Fort Upper Ozernaya. The most he could do was to recapture Fort Ilinsk, which had been re-taken in the meantime by government troops under Major Zaev. This rebel victory of November 28 repeated the formula that had been established at Tatishchev, from the advance under cover of hay-carts to the slaying of Zaev during the attack, the conversion of the soldiers to "Cossacks" and the hanging of all the officers except one who was spared when his men intervened to protest, "The captain has been good to us." Pugachev netted 462 soldiers and some munitions and supplies, and headed back to Berda.⁷

It was the beginning of December and Pugachev had still won no decisive victory in his eastern adventure, while his western drives languished for want of munitions and guidance. While Zarubin, Ulyanov and Antipov, obeying the rebel military college's orders, went to Voskresensk metalworks to oversee the pouring of more cannon for the Orenburg siege, Kashkin-Samarov and his helper, the Ufimsk Cossack rebel leader Ivan Gubanov, failed in their assault against Ufa with 1000 men on November 29 - December 1 for want of artillery.⁸

Admittedly, the impostor's return to Berda seemed to produce a flurry of new measures in aid of the Ufa and Samara offensives. December 1 and December 2 saw the issuing, in rapid fire succession, of the first two insurgent manifestos to appeal at large for a general social rebellion. In an ukaz of December 1 Pugachev declared:

Moreover, by the power given me from God I promise that henceforth you shall bear no oppression. And if anyone does not observe this my restored grace, namely the pomeshchiki and votchinniki, deprive these, as downright lawbreakers and enemies of my imperial will, of all life, that is, execute them and take their homes and all their property as a reward. For this their pomeshchik property and wealth, as well as food and drink, was at the peasants' expense. Then they had merriment, but you had oppression and ruin.⁹

The manifesto of December 2, was merely a version of the November 17 ukaz to Reinsdorp, but it was adapted so that it could be "proclaimed to all the people". This was destined to become one of the most widely copied and distributed of all Pugachev's proclamations.¹⁰

Not only new manifestos but also new leaders, men and directives to support them were sent out from Berda in early-to-mid December. Unfortunately, however, the rebel high command had only partially learned their lesson. Though they had by now gathered over 20,000 men and 70 cannon, Pugachev and his advisors were still unprepared to even use all this strength against Orenburg, let alone take it westward.¹¹ Consequently, Arapov was sent against Samara, Chika-Zarubin and Ulyanov against Ufa, Tornov against Nagaibatsk and Gryaznov against Chelyabinsk virtually alone, armed with little more than their agitational skills and a few copies of Pugachev manifestos. Yet they were expected to gather enough men, arms, ammunition and provisions on their own to both take their objectives and send back a good portion to Berda. Even at that, the impostor had only sent Zarubin to help against Ufa after Kashkin-Samarov had come to Berda in person, bearing a petition signed by fifteen of his fellow Bashkir starshiny.¹² Moreover, by sending Gryaznov northeastward into Iletsk province just because it was rich in provisions for the great mob at Berda, Pugachev's military college diverted one of the most promising new rebel leaders from the essential westward expansion.¹³

In short, these new initiatives were still condemned to be little more than further extensions of an Orenburg blockade that had degenerated into a succession of Quixotic exercises in futility. On December 7 a party of rebel horsemen rode up under the town walls, shouting to the defenders to yield to the "sovereign", for Grand Duke Pavel Petrovich was drawing near with three generals and 30,000 men.¹⁴ In reality the only generals and troops approaching were those of a new government winter offensive, heading straight for a clash with the ill-supplied and misdirected rebel expansion.

On his arrival at Buzulutsk on November 30, Ilya Arapov had found the fort already taken by Elizarov. The strategic keystone and the main supply and munitions center of the line was in rebel hands. The way was clear for Arapov to raise, arm and provision a large force of garrison soldiers, serfs and natives and surge on to Samara. But this very richness of Buzulutsk had inspired Arapov's superiors back in Berda to interpose a higher priority. Obeying their orders, he stripped the fort and sent its stores back to the main rebel army, which was running almost as low on grain and powder as the fortress it was supposed to be reducing to submission by a starvation siege. Only then was Arapov allowed to proceed against Samara.¹⁵ Though one directive he received in early December cautioned him to introduce and observe Cossack-style democracy with election of officers, another order of December 16 made it clear that Berda's selfish interpretation of "Cossack duty" was unchanged. Arapov was ordered to seize and send back everything of value, especially grain, cannons and powder that he might find in Samara.¹⁶

Nevertheless the serf ataman made good use of Pugachev's December 2 ukaz, with its promise of "every freedom". He gathered 1000 serfs from the grain-growing lands of the Orlovs and his following multiplied as he moved along the remaining line-forts toward Samara.¹⁷

Captain Butrimovich, who had reconnoitered as far as Fort Buzulutsk, was obliged to retreat before the rebel advance. He testified, in a report of December 4, to the massive and spontaneous nature of popular support for the insurgents on the Samara as well as throughout Orenburg and Kazan gubernii. All of the "black people" (chern), he wrote, "say they'll receive freedom." Not only the Russian peasantry, but the native Tatars and Kalmyks as well were rising, "and all are tonsured as Cossacks". The danger to Simbirsk was acute and the poor of Samara could hardly contain their glee at the prospect of looting the rich.¹⁸

A similar picture was painted by the reports of General Freiman, penned up in Bugulma by hordes of rampaging Kalmyk horsemen and their peasant accomplices. He feared the infiltration of Pugachev-inspired rumours into his lower ranks and stressed, "The peasants not only do not oppose them [i.e. the rebel Kalmyks - L.H.M.], but also help them to sack manors and spread rumors that the whole maleficent Pugachev mob intends to move on Kazan."¹⁹

The Stavropol commandant, Brigadier von Fegazak, in a report of December 15, emphasized the role of Kalmyk terrorism in inducing the local peasants' rebellion. All the local gentry had long since fled across the Volga. Kalmyk "robber bands" had been raiding everywhere for two months and had "aroused such a fear in everyone that now the Cherkasses, the Tatars, the Chuvashes, Mordva and the seigneurial peasants have agreed to such looting and mutiny." He had to admit, though, that the peasants were making pikes and beating and robbing government officers sent out to them with copies of Catherine's anti-Pugachev ukaz. The Brigadier daily expected an attack on Stavropol and frantically pleaded for reinforcements of at least 200 soldiers to be sent to him immediately.²⁰

Stavropol did fall to the rebels a few days later, and so did Samara, to Arapov and his army, on Christmas Day, 1773. The voevoda (commandant) and chancellery officials had already lost their nerve and fled across the Volga. Left leaderless and exposed to the full force of the insurgents' combined terror and temptation, the merchants of Samara were in no position to resist. They opened their gates to Arapov and admitted him with all the pomp and ceremony befitting an official representative of the "sovereign emperor". Arapov declared Samara the capital of a new guberniya and ordered the vodka barrels rolled out. He sent back to his master at Berda the personal luxuries the voevoda had left behind - grapes, sugar, vodka, writing paper and crystal glasses. Significantly, however, his offering included neither of the commodities Pugachev craved most. Arapov had to report that "the malefactor Captain Balakhontsev" had carried off all the treasury money and all the gunpowder in Samara.²¹

Arapov, at Samara, was now in an ideal position to carry his offensive across the Volga. He probably intended to do so; his agitators were already on the west bank, stirring up some of the nearby peasant villages. The Don Cossacks were increasingly excited by rumors of Arapov's advance.²² Only one development stood in the way: the government was striking across the Volga first. Arapov's drive, with no time to organize and consolidate itself on the Volga and no support from the rebel center, suddenly found itself having to face the southern spearhead of the new government counter offensive.

St. Petersburg had learned from its mistakes much quicker and better than had Berda. Even the propaganda accompanying the second government offensive had improved.

Admittedly, Catherine's second anti-Pugachev manifesto, signed on November 29, and printed in 1200 copies which Governor Volkonsky handed over to Bibikov at Moscow on December 18, was still no match for Pugachev's false edicts.

Neither Catherine's use of the awe-inspiring old Church Slavonic type nor her bombastic tirade comparing Pugachev to the False Dmitrys could compensate for the lack of any positive program to neutralize that of the rebels. The empress still did not dare to publish her manifesto to all her people. Like the first, this one was to be distributed only in the rebellious frontier region.²³ But just a week later, on December 23, the first open, empire-wide anti-Pugachev edict was published. It had been urged on and written for Catherine by her foreign affairs minister, Count Nikita Panin, who was anxious to deflate the wild rumors of Pugachev's successes that were raging both at home and abroad. The manifesto, however, went further than that. Its promise of liberal reward for all who should loyally serve against the rebels could have been interpreted as including even emancipation from bondage.²⁴ A further edict, released in the first days of the New Year, proclaimed the ceremonial burning of Pugachev's former house in Zimoveiskaya and the internment of his wife and children in Kazan jail. Another ordered that executioners publicly burn all captured rebel ukazy.²⁵ Such measures still suggest mere impotent rage, but a more effective one was taken on January 4, when an edict offering 10,000 rubles for Pugachev's capture was released for publication throughout Orenburg guberniya.²⁶ This time, too, the government had prepared effective practical measures to support its propaganda efforts.

Catherine had this time chosen, in General Alexander Bibikov, a commander eminently qualified for his task. Bibikov had proven his talents as a suppressor of popular dissent and had become familiar with the terrain in leading a punitive expedition against rebellious Ural foundry workers in 1764. As marshal of the Legislative Commission and as head of a military expedition against the Polish Confederates he had further developed and displayed these talents.²⁷ Unlike Kar, Bibikov had demanded and received

sweeping, dictatorial emergency powers over all civil and ecclesiastical, as well as military, authorities in the affected frontier region. Immediately he had begun making full use of these powers.²⁸

At the end of November Bibikov had helped Catherine establish a special secret commission of guards officers and civil servants who were to sit in Kazan and investigate rebel prisoners there.²⁹ Then, while hurrying to Kazan himself via Moscow and Nizhny-Novgorod in mid-December, he had accelerated the preparations, both military and psychological, for his offensive against Pugachev. The first priority had been decided. To halt and throw back the dangerous rebel advance to the Volga at Samara and to spearhead the southern prong of his offensive from Syzran, Bibikov had designated Major Karl Mufel.³⁰

Mufel's attack was the acid test for the new government offensive's tactics, and it succeeded brilliantly. The major's advance, it is true, was hampered by the same universal popular enthusiasm for the false tsar that had impeded Kar. Responding to Arapov's messengers who were proclaiming "His Imperial Majesty's happy manifesto", most villagers able to bear arms had gone to join the rebels, while the priests had replaced Catherine's name with that of Peter III in their services. Mufel, however, proved better prepared and more audacious than Kar, while his opponent's best efforts still failed to overcome the chronic rebel inferiority in battle tactics, firepower and discipline. Arapov tried to stop his foe with an impressive artillery barrage while taking him in the rear with Kalmyk cavalry. However, the government troops' unchallenged superiority in those ultimate weapons of eighteenth century warfare - the musket volley and the bayonet charge - carried the day in a hard-fought battle through the villages of Rozhdestvenskoe and Alexeevskoe.³¹

The turn of the battle against the rebels undermined the effectiveness of their appeal to the ordinary men of both sides. Instead of defecting,

Mufel's Volga Cossacks carried out their cavalry charge that helped turn the insurgent defeat into a rout. The people of Samara, abandoned by Arapov that same day without a fight, now grovelled for mercy and forgiveness to Mufel. Arapov's own mob was disintegrating. On January 4, having retreated to the nearest line fort, Krasnosamarskaya, he had to put off the Kalmyks' appeal for help, pleading that he had lost not only his artillery but most of his men as well. Arapov promised to come to these Kalmyks' aid as soon as he should receive reinforcements of 1000 men and artillery that he claimed were on their way from Berda.³² Yet all that came from Berda was an ukaz of January 8 which told the desperate Kalmyks, in effect, to save themselves: Khan Derbetev was ordered to collect more Kalmyks and others in the villages near Samara "for the uprooting of the Moscow army."³³

The Pugachev high command, still blind to the strategic priorities of their movement, were becoming more embroiled than ever in operations which only distracted them from their westward thrusts. First Pugachev had granted the request of Ovchinnikov, Lysov, Shigaev, Vitoshnov and other Yaik Cossack rebel leaders that he send Mikhail Tolkachev and the Tatar Tangaich off with manifestos. The first was to raise the Cossacks in Yaitsk; the second was to demand 200 men from the Kirghiz sultan Dusali.³⁴ Christmas time had seen Pugachev still preoccupied with his absurd attempts to convince Reinsdorp of his authenticity, this time by having Shvanovich write him a letter to the governor in German.³⁵ The impostor's attempt to follow up with new assaults on Orenburg, on December 26 and 27, had also failed dismally. In fact, the citizens of Orenburg had even had their morale lifted to new heights on January 1 by the news of a Russian victory over the Turks which Reinsdorp had exploited to the full by ordering cannon salutes and other celebrations.³⁶ Pugachev had soon found a new diversion, however, in the defection of Afanasy

Perfiliev and Ivan Fofanov, two of the last voisko side petitioners who had been interned in St. Petersburg after the start of the rebellion, then released on condition they procure Pugachev's betrayal.³⁷ Finally, and worst of all, the impostor had gone on to answer Tolkachev's request of December 30 for more men and arms with which to capture Yaitsk, rather than Arapov's urgent pleas of December 27 and later. Pugachev first sent Ovchinnikov with 100 or 150 Cossacks and three or four cannons to Yaitsk, then followed himself, arriving shortly after the ataman on January 7.³⁸ Within a few days Reinsdorp learned of Pugachev's absence from Berda and sent Wallenstern out with another great sally on January 13 - the last one the weakening defenders and their starving horses would manage. The rebel mob emerged triumphant, killing 400 defenders and forcing the rest to flee back inside the walls in full view of the townspeople. Yet still they failed to follow up such victory even by storming Orenburg, let alone sending aid to their hard-pressed western comrades.³⁹

Meanwhile, thanks to Berda's folly, Major Mufel was obtaining very favourable results as he tested General Bibikov's pacification policy on the villagers and on the townspeople of Samara itself. Acting on the general's orders, Mufel and his officers let the vast majority go free and arrested only the ringleaders, who were packed off to Kazan for interrogation and punishment by the Secret Commission. The only punishment the government officers meted out themselves was to have a few selected prisoners "mercilessly flogged" in public in Samara and the villages. Such acts of exemplary terror would be enough to strike fear into the hearts of the frightened and disorganized majority. The priests who had collaborated with the rebels were handled with special care, for fear that any public punishment of them might be misinterpreted by the people as persecution of the church. Therefore,

these clerical offenders were merely quietly arrested and spirited off to Kazan, to be replaced by others the government hoped would prove more reliable.⁴⁰

In all this General Bibikov was not introducing any startling innovation. He was merely following the age-old formula for repression which the Russians called the "knout and gingerbread" or "fright and caress" (strakh i laska). Even if there had been any chance of succeeding with mere propaganda appeals, Bibikov had already failed miserably as a propagandist. A manifesto he had given Governor Stupishin of Nizhny-Novgorod, to quiet the murmurs of the gubernia's peasantry, had gone over their heads. Another, addressed to the people around Kazan, where Bibikov arrived on December 26, failed to impress a largely Muslim or pagan audience with its talk of the need to safeguard the Russian orthodox church.⁴¹ The proven knout and gingerbread, however, soon made up for these failures.

It was well for the general's cause that they did, for there was no time to waste. His first task, he discovered, was not merely to organize his offensive. It was to save a panic-stricken Kazan from the second rebel westward thrust - the one organized by Zarubin, Ulyanov and Tornov-which seemed about to fulfill Pugachev's known intention to march on Moscow via the old Tatar capital.

Zarubin had opened his campaign with a powerful propaganda barrage supported by Berda. Pugachev's letter of early December had not merely ordered Chika to take over command of the languishing siege of Ufa; it had also authorized him to alter his name to "Count Ivan Nikiforovich Chernyshev."⁴² In this role as a junior partner in imposture, Chika could organize and extend the great northern, Bashkirian theater of the rebellion. Pugachev had also issued a manifesto on December 14, addressed to all Bashkirs, Tatars and

Meshcheryaks, warning them to stop "certain abuses" against the Russian inhabitants, or face "military action". If the natives would obey, his ukaz again promised a return to the supposed good old days under his "grandfather", Peter I, and concluded, "henceforth you shall never bear any oppression". Chika, in turn, reinforced the call for insurgent-style law and order with another, similar manifesto of his own which he had distributed ahead of him as he moved northward to take over direction of the siege of Ufa.⁴³

Zarubin and Ulyanov had struck out northward from Voznesensk works with only 30 rebel factory peasants. They had 500 men by the time "Count Chernyshev" took over Kashkin-Samarov's headquarters at Chesnokovka, on December 20. Within the next few weeks Zarubin's following would grow to 4000, then 8000 men.⁴⁴

Chika was applying the full range of propagandic and agitational, as well as organizational techniques which he had helped Pugachev develop at the rebellion's center. For the Russian population, he used village priests as agitators; men such as Danilo Ivanov, who travelled around the settlements reading out and distributing false manifestos and ukazy.⁴⁵ For the Bashkirs, "Count Chernyshev" issued an ukaz conscripting one warrior from every three homes. He did his best to harness the destructive fury of these wild native rebels to the needs of a positive, controlled terror program. Zarubin strictly forbade his Bashkirs, on pain of fines, floggings and death, from harming anyone, particularly Russian peasants and Cossacks, who loyally acknowledged and served "Peter III". Berda confirmed this with a Pugachev military college ukaz of December 20, sent in response to complaints of abuses relayed to Berda by the Ufa Cossack rebel leaders Gubanov and Grebenshikov. Soon other special edicts, or "protected sheets" (okhrannye listy) as they were popularly called, were pouring from Berda and Chesnokovka

to guarantee life, limb and property to the inhabitants of various industrial settlements that had submitted. On the other hand, all persons and places refusing to submit were left to the tender mercies of the wild Bashkir marauders.⁴⁶

With the fury of the natives driving it home, the insurgents' Cossack-style political and social revolution became more irresistible than ever. Zarubin had hardly reached Chesnokovka before his atamans and colonels with their motley bands were reaping a rich harvest of bloodless conquests from the Kama to the Urals.

December 22, in fact, saw the willing surrender of a major factory in each of those two industrial regions. The workers of Rozhdestvensk, on the Kama, welcomed a rebel contingent from the large mob of the Pugachev envoy Bakei Abdulov and his assistant Kudashev, after learning that the two main settlements above and below them, Osa and Sarapul, had already done the same. The factory peasants of Satkinsk, in the Urals east of Ufa, opened their gates to the Cossack Ivan Kuznetsov and his following.⁴⁷

On December 24 a written "instruction" (nastavlenie) of Batyrkai Itkinin and three other native "sotniki of His Imperial Majesty" recognized the new rebel-elected local administration (mirskaya izba) of Osa, headed by the starosta (bailiff) Ilya Dyakonov and the zemskii pisar (secretary) Mikhail Goldobin. Two days later the Rozhdestvensk workers elected their own Cossack-style council, headed by their ataman, Simon Volkov. On December 27 came the formal submission of one of the Yugovsk foundries, between Osa and Kungur, to Itkinin, followed by the election of Gavril Sitnikov as sotnik and Klementy Zverev as starosta. The pair were solemnly charged to rule justly, punish the guilty, report their activities and manufacture pikes for the rebels.⁴⁸

By this time the peasant-workers of the two principal remaining factories in the Kama region, Izhevsk and Votkinsk, were following the example of their brothers at Rozhdestvensk. Their mounting unrest had already produced work stoppages. The approach of Kudashev's contingent at their invitation and the proclamation by a rebel envoy of a Pugachev ukaz conferring freedom from the poll tax and compulsory factory work frightened the district factory commander, Ventsel, into flight on December 31. The following day the Izhevsk workers' envoy to Kudashev, Andrei Noskov, re-entered his factory settlements as joint leader of the rebel force and helped complete the typical Cossack-style revolution there. After taking Pugachev's oath, the inhabitants joined in releasing the prisoners, destroying the factory records of their debts, and collecting the 9000 rubles and 1700 "Cossack" conscripts that were promptly sent off to Zarubin. A few days later Noskov, now an ataman, collaborated with his esaul, a worker from Votkinsk factory, to accomplish a similar revolution there.⁴⁹

While some of Chika's contingents were acquiring men, money and arms from the upper Kama foundries, others were busy overrunning the lower Kama region between Ufa and Kazan. Immediately after reaching Chesnokovka, Chika had sent out Ulyanov and Vasily Tornov (Persiyanin) with a small force. Their mission was to take Nagaibatsk, a service Cossack settlement some 200 versts to the west, and they had little difficulty in carrying it out. Within a few days the Persian-born Tornov had assumed the duties of ataman in this fort that was his adopted home. Then, having expanded their force to 900 men, he and Ulyanov pressed on to take Zainsk, a settlement of retired soldiers only 200 versts from Kazan, at the turn of the new year. At about the same time Birsk fell to the rebels, opening an alternate route from the area of Ufa to the lower Kama via its tributary, the Belaya River.⁵⁰ Soon rebel bands, some

of which had already existed before Chika's or Tornov's offensive, were laying siege to Menzelinsk. Others crossed the Karma to attack Elabuga and Mamadysh by mid-January. The Tatar starshina Myasogut Gumerov, who had been operating and had been in communication with Berda since the beginning of December, expanded his mob from 300 to 3000 men and pushed further on toward Kazan, proclaiming Pugachev's manifestos, administering his oath and conscripting men in the villages as he went.⁵¹

Meanwhile, right from the beginning of January, advance patrols and agitators of the insurgents had been penetrating still closer to the old Tatar capital. On January 4, for example, eight mounted Bashkirs with sabres, calling themselves Cossacks and leading a mob of 200 Tatar peasants, entered Voznesenskoe (or Zavodskoe), on the Arsk road only 80 versts east of Kazan. They seized the local pomeshchik and carted him off to their ataman for judgement and, no doubt, execution. A few bold rebel outriders got as far as the outskirts of Kazan itself, and one of them even dared to hurl a defiant threat at General Bibikov in person. One day, while the general was out driving in his carriage, a lone Tatar horseman rode up and shouted, "Hurry up and end your tyrannies! We'll sieze you, and you can be sure we're men of our word!" Then he galloped away before he could be arrested, leaving the general shaken and depressed.⁵² Nevertheless, Bibikov did not relent from his "tyrannies"; he intensified his use of the knout and gingerbread.

The general's first care was to rally the demoralized natural allies of the regime in Kazan - the wealthy, including the higher clergy, the rich merchants and especially the dvoryane. On January 1 he called a meeting of the Kazan gentry who, encouraged by the general's presence and example, had been filtering back to their capital. He reminded them of their duty to lay down their property and even their lives for their empress, and of the

certainty of rewards from Catherine if they would obey. The assembled gentry responded enthusiastically: they undertook to form a corps of 300 uhlans (lancers) with officers drawn from their own gentry and rank-and-file from their serfs. Its commander would be General Alexander Larionov, Bibikov's half-brother. The example set by the Kazan gentry was promptly followed by the city's merchants, who offered to raise and equip a squadron of hussars, and by the gentry of Penza, Simbirsk and Sviyazhsk. Catherine herself followed it and gave a further boost to gentry morale as soon as she learned what had transpired in Kazan. She ordered that a contingent be raised from her own court peasants in Kazan guberniya and she proclaimed herself, in a letter to the Kazan noblemen, to be a "proprietriss (pomeshchitsa) of Kazan". The flattered Kazan dvoriane replied with an elaborate "speech of thanksgiving" composed by the young poet Gavril Derzhavin, overflowing with praise for Catherine and stressing the gentry's role as pillars of the autocracy.⁵³

General Bibikov knew very well that these gentry contingents were likely to be more of a liability than an asset from a strictly military point of view. However, he also knew that this was no ordinary campaign, but one of class warfare and counter-insurgency. Therefore he quickly recognized and accepted the gentry and merchant offers as valuable means of bolstering their badly sagging morale.⁵⁴

Meanwhile, Kazan's role as headquarters for General Bibikov and his Secret Commission was making the old city a focus for terror against the disloyal as well as encouragement for the loyal. On January 4 the Commission, which already had accumulated about 70 prisoners, began to mete out the same sort of selective, exemplary public punishments in Kazan as Bibikov had ordered his subordinates to carry out in the field. Two serfs, convicted of having helped the insurgents kill their mistress, met their fate. One was flogged

and packed off to lifelong exile at hard labour; the other was hanged and his corpse left on the gallows for two weeks. A few days afterward, hangmen in Kazan also began burning rebel manifestos in compliance with the imperial ukaz of January 4.⁵⁵

As Bibikov knew, however, more victories over his enemies would be the best deterrents of all. By mid-January he had concentrated sufficient forces in Kazan to begin trying to win them. Besides the Kazan gentry contingent he now had four regiments of cavalry and foot. These were apportioned among the three main prongs of the offensive which he now launched. General Prince Golitsyn, with the greater part of these troops and the heavy artillery, pushed off along the New Moscow Road towards Orenburg, while General Mansurov headed for Samara, to take overall command of Mufel's force and follow the southern Samara line route to the same destination. The general's nephew, young Colonel Yury Bibikov, branched off eastward to break up the threatening rebel salient east of Kazan and take Nagaibatsk as the staging point for a drive to relieve Ufa, prior to merging forces with Freiman and Golitsyn at Bugulma.⁵⁶ It was he, Col. Bibikov, who drew first blood.

On January 8, General Bibikov had reported a rumor that many of the Bashkir starshiny had only joined the rebels for fear of their lives.⁵⁷ The outcome of Col. Bibikov's first clashes with insurgent mobs seemed to confirm this precept and to extend it to take in a large proportion of the inhabitants in general. On January 14 and 16 Col. Bibikov's modest force of grenadiers and hussars easily scattered three successive attacks by much larger mobs of Tatars and Bashkirs and took Zainsk. After each victory the colonel applied his policy of studied terror. Several Tatar villages were burned and their inhabitants lashed past gallows. The retired soldiers of Zainsk were made to run the gantlet, while their priests were flogged. This measured frightfulness,

combined with offers of amnesty to the majority who had fled if they would come back and surrender voluntarily, produced impressive results. Hundreds poured into Zainsk to repent humbly, swear anew their loyalty to the empress and receive safe conduct passes to return home.⁵⁸

These first victories confirmed the soundness of General Bibikov's pacification policy, but they still gave him little comfort. The further his troops penetrated, the more their findings reinforced the general's worst fears about the depth of the rebellion's roots in two causes. His appreciation of the first, social unrest, is shown by his words in a letter to his friend the playwright Fonvizin, "It is not Pugachev that is important, but the general discontent."⁵⁹ In another letter, written to Count Chernyshev on January 21, the general's aristocratic and military bias gave pre-eminence to the second major cause for the rebel's successes: the cowardice and incompetence of the local authorities and commanders.

My patience grows shorter hourly in anticipation of regiments, for daily I receive terrible news; from the other side [i.e. the Siberian authorities - L.H.M.] that the Bashkirs, with all sorts of ruff-raff, are riding about in parties, sacking factories and committing murder. The voevody and authorities are running with fright everywhere and the stupid chern, upon the malefactors' enticement, eagerly run to meet them. I cannot describe to you in detail, my friend, the destitution and ruin of this region . . . The cowards and wretches of the local garrisons fear everything and do not dare to show their noses anywhere, sitting in the towns like marmots, and do nothing but send fearful reports. The audacity of Pugachev and his henchmen has surpassed all limits; everywhere they are sending manifestos and ukazy. Day and night I work like a convict....⁶⁰

Keenly aware of the key role which his subordinate officers had to play if the insurrection were to be suppressed, Bibikov determined to tolerate only efficient men in his organization and purge the rest. In another communication of January 21, a letter with reports to Panin of Zainsk and a few other small

initial victories, Bibikov heaped still more blame on the local officers. He maintained that "all the insolence of the malefactors...in this region have come not so much from the voluntary inclination of the inhabitants as from the abominable garrison staff and senior officers who have been, unfortunately, in command in various places because of the lack of others...". He told Panin that he had "ordered that they be immediately replaced everywhere with trustworthy and good officers."⁶¹ This was the remedy for incompetency which General Bibikov would later apply against Major-General Larionov, bogged down before Nagaibatsk, and would attempt to apply against General Dekolong in the east, in March.⁶² But this was only mild treatment compared to that which was reserved for officers who had actually collaborated with the rebels. Bibikov regretfully insisted that such officers must suffer exemplary punishments hardly less cruel than those given to ordinary rebel leaders, and Catherine agreed. In Kazan, in January and early February, four such officers were tried and condemned to death. As it turned out, all of these sentences were commuted, but one man still had to run the gantlet and another was flogged, after which both were exiled for life to Siberia.⁶⁸

General Bibikov expected his subordinate officers to proclaim the empress' "most high manifesto" everywhere and to strive "by intimidation and caress" to bring the people back into line. On January 25 his "proposal" to the Perm provincial chancellery suggested that they interrogate all the rebels recently captured there, publicly hang two or three, and release all who seemed to have been forcibly taken into the insurgent bands.⁶⁴ Above all, Bibikov demanded that his subordinates avoid inflicting any useless, excessive cruelty, for fear that it would destroy the balance between knout and gingerbread. This is well illustrated by a stern order of January 27 to Major-General Golitsyn. Bibikov said that complaints had reached him that some of Golitsyn's detachments

were abusing, looting and even killing peasants. He warned that these practices must stop at once and threatened "the cruellest punishments" to any who should disobey.⁶⁵

Finally, General Bibikov endeavored to apply his pacification policy to the natives, particularly the Bashkirs, with greater effect. To that end he had one of Catherine's manifestos translated into Tatar, and he sent Col. Lazarev, a man who knew the Bashkirs well and spoke their language, into their country to try to pacify them. On January 28 Bibikov sent Lazarev a "recommendation" (nastavlenie) that ranks and presents be showered on all natives who surrendered voluntarily: "You may promote them to sotnik, pyatidesyatnik, and other ranks, depending on their importance, and give cloth and sabres to the rest."⁶⁶

Bibikov still continued to fear the worst and to demand more troops throughout January, even as he perfected his pacification techniques. Yet all the while his policies and his commanders were accumulating a string of swift victories that wiped out the whole western flank of the insurrection. Col. Bibikov's initial triumph at Zainsk was followed by Col. Khorvat's recapture of Elabuga on January 23. Then Col. Bibikov occupied Menzelinsk, on January 30, and killed 400 rebels in a battle at Pyany Bor. Pursuing his retreating adversaries, he took Nagaibatsk on February 1 and even reached Baikaly, only 100 versts from Ufa, on February 11. Here Tornov finally managed to stop Bibikov and oblige him to fall back to Nagaibatsk, where Bibikov received orders to rejoin General Golitsyn's advance. But Col. Bibikov had already accomplished more than had been expected of him, and in the meantime Golitsyn had reached Freiman in Bugulma on February 4, and Mansurov had driven Arapov out of Fort Borskaya on February 6.⁶⁷

News of these victories prompted Catherine to turn down General Bibikov's request for more men in favor of pressing for a quick end to the Turkish war and to chide him, in a letter of February 16, "Well, m'lord, don't say you don't have enough men. It seems you're well provided for. It's time for you to finish up, which we continually await with impatience."⁶⁸

As Bibikov knew, though, he had been lucky to win such a string of quick and easy triumphs. He had won them only because his adversaries, even in the face of an obvious and growing mortal threat, still failed to surmount the parochialism which crippled their efficiency and strategy. While Pugachev and his central army added the new folly of a stalemate at Yaitsk to the old one at Orenburg, Zarubin compounded the error by duplicating it in his own preserve. As Dubrovin says, Chika became a second Pugachev, with Chesnokovka as his Berda and Ufa as his Orenburg.⁶⁹

Normally, a rebel leader of Chika's ability might have been expected to make short work of a small, weakly defended provincial town like Ufa. Unfortunately for him, though, the rampaging Bashkirs had inspired a fear and desperation among the defenders that even the presence of "Count Chernyshev" himself could not erase. The townspeople had even produced, in 23-year-old Ivan Dyukov, a popular hero and symbol of resistance to rally them behind the efforts of voevoda Borisov and Colonel Myasoedov.

Myasoedov had set up his 40 cannon in batteries to protect the landward side, while keeping the ice open in the Belaya River to prevent a rebel assault from that direction. Although the colonel had only 1650 men, of whom only 200 were regular soldiers, morale was high among most of the old soldiers, Cossacks, merchants and ordinary townspeople, as well as the gentry and serf refugees from the Bashkir terror who made up the balance of his force. Dyukov had even been able to publicly read out Kashkin Samarov's ultimatum demanding surrender and have his audience respond by cheering for Catherine.

There were, of course, exceptions to this impressive solidarity. A number, including the Ufa Cossacks Gubanov and Grebenshikov, had deserted and several subversive incidents had occurred. The Ufa authorities, moreover, realized that the rebel propaganda might soon have greater effect if supported by more than bows and arrows. Therefore, they had wisely taken measures to reinforce popular enthusiasm with terror. They had published a warning that anyone finding "brigand leaflets" (vorovskie listy - officialdom's standard derisive term for Pugachev edicts) must turn them in at once or risk death by hanging.⁷⁰

The Ufa garrison, supported by these measures, had even felt strong enough to sally forth several times to collect forage and scatter Bashkirs. On one of these expeditions, it is true, they encountered more than they had bargained for. Zarubin, attacking immediately after his arrival at Chesnokovka, put them to flight and captured fifty men.⁷¹ Still Chika's attempt to use these captives, released back into Ufa after promising to act as subversive rebel agents, failed miserably. Whether from loyalty to the empress or fear of detection and punishment, these men did nothing. When he returned to parlay on December 25 and got no response, an enraged Chika ordered a massive assault on Ufa. It was delivered on December 31, with up to 20,000 men and 23 big guns. Yet the assault failed, when the two rebel gun crews that had managed to cross the Belaya were immediately captured, and a sudden cavalry sally put Chika himself and his main force to flight.⁷²

On that note the real siege of Ufa ended. Yet instead of moving on toward Kazan, Zarubin merely settled down in Chesnokovka to continue blockading the town and preparing for a second attack, which came on January 25 and which also failed. This time the garrison's grapeshot put the rebels to flight so well that some Ufa leaders urged an immediate attack on Chesnokovka. Still,

the fact that they did not, for fear that "the smallest failure in an attack could deliver the town into rebel hands", indicates that Zarubin still had a chance.⁷³

Unrest was indeed growing in Ufa, thanks to the rigors of a starvation blockade that had reduced the garrison to half rations and the rest of the inhabitants to none. Many were deserting. Yet Chika failed to either take advantage of this situation to launch any more serious attacks on Ufa or to break away and move westward at last to face the growing threat of Bibikov's offensive.⁷⁴

Like his colleagues in Berda, Zarubin spent too much time with his drinking and his concubines when he should have been working desperately hard to save the movement.⁷⁵ Tornov's success in recapturing Nagaibatsk may have instilled false confidence in "Count Chernyshev" over a victory that owed more to government mistakes than his own or Berda's efforts. Chika had sent Ulyanov with 200 men, but had merely referred his cousin on to Berda when he returned for more men and arms. The rebel military college, in turn, had only given Ulyanov one keg of powder, which he had had to divide with Zarubin. Similarly, replying to a frantic request from Tornov, Chika had merely ordered that he scrounge his munitions locally as all his colleagues had to do. Unwilling to tolerate such treatment, Tornov had gone to Chesnokovka in person, but even then he had only been able to get two cannon and two poods (72 pounds) of powder.⁷⁶

The problem of controlling the wild natives, to which Zarubin condemned himself even more than Pugachev by staying in Bashkiria, proved to be insoluble. Bashkir excesses continued to terrorize even Russian settlements which had submitted, and to provoke desperate resistance from those which had not.

Some Bashkir chieftains made sure to extract their vengeance from a factory before its inhabitants could obtain a "protected sheet". The workers of Satkinsk complained bitterly in a "most humble report" to Yulai Aznalin that though they had submitted to forces of the "sovereign", they were still so plagued by Bashkir raiders that they could hardly go outside their stockade to collect forage without having men lanced and horses stolen. They begged Yulai to provide an armed escort for their delegation to "His Imperial Majesty" and to protect their settlement until their petitioners should return with a "protected sheet".⁷⁷

The workers of Rozhdestvensk factory complained to Chika that Semen Ilishev and his band had come and taken all their back pay, consisting of 2017 rubles, together with three cannons, 67 fuses and six horses. "Count Chernyshev", in an order of February 13, empowered the factory's ataman Volkov and esaul Zavyalov to go and take back the loot, arrest Ilishev and deliver him in irons to Chesnokovka. The following day he ordered Stepan Kuznetsov, rebel ataman of the Osa soldier-farmers, to reimburse Rozhdestvensk from his salt and liquor revenues. However, the hard-pressed factory men did not finally get their money until the beginning of April, on the very eve of their reconquest by government forces. In view of this, Volkov may really have been trying to sound out his enemies for a deal, not just undermine their resolve, when he sent a highly conciliatory letter to the attacking Votkinsk factory ruler, Klepikov, on March 15.⁷⁸

There were many other instances of continued abuses by the Bashkirs. Batyrkai Itkinin sacked the Yugovsk works, near Kungur, when he captured it bloodlessly early in January. The rebel peasants of Kundravinsk sloboda, near Chelyabinsk, were obliged to form an "armed company" to defend themselves from Bashkir raiders.⁷⁹

All these complications and distractions helped to assure that Zarubin's westward moves did not receive the priority they deserved, while those in other directions tended to become ends in themselves, rather than simply means to the end of promoting a westward offensive. Thus it was with the operations against Kungur, in the north, and those of Belobordov and Gryaznov in the east. It is true that these operations could have had great defensive value, had they succeeded. By cutting off and conquering western Siberia the rebels could have consolidated their power on both sides of the Urals, wiped out their eastern front and turned their full fury against Bibikov in the west.⁸⁰ However, there is some evidence to suggest that no such plan may have really existed. In attacking Kungur, Krasnoufimsk (Krasnoyarsk) and Ekaterinburg Chika may have only been accommodating several Bashkir starshiny of the Siberian road who claimed in late December that they could supply no men for the siege of Ufa because of the danger of attack from government forces in those towns.⁸¹ In any event, the scheme backfired disastrously. By late January - early February the consequences of the early government victories over rebel commanders in the west were returning, ironically enough, to help ensure defeat to Chika's other operations as well.

The blockade of Kungur had begun in late December when Batyrkai Itkinin, a Bashkir subordinate of Salavat Yulaev, had seized the abandoned suburbs and surrounded the town. He should have been able to take Kungur easily, for its voevoda, Miller, and his chancellors had already fled. But again the Bashkir terror intervened to frustrate the rebel leaders' best efforts. Itkinins' emissaries, such as Sitnikov at Yugovsk, had trouble recruiting men from the sotniki of local Russian settlements, let alone winning over the frightened merchants of Kungur. The latter, convinced that surrender meant slaughter and inspired by the leadership of one of their number, Khlebnikov,

resisted stubbornly. Itkinin tried to erode the merchants' influence and popular fear of his natives by sending in a Russian priest-agitator to read out a proclamation in the church, assuring the priests and townsmen that Batyrkai was only obeying an order of "His Imperial Majesty" to bring them to loyalty, peace and order. This priest and his proclamation, however, were seized before they could do their work.⁸²

Then, on January 6, the defenders' morale was strengthened still more by the arrival of Major Popov from Kazan. Popov's contingent was small but it contained voevoda Miller, whom the major had half-ordered, half-shamed into returning to reassure his charges. Besides, Popov at once proved himself to be a daring commander: he scattered the besiegers with discipline against disorder and firearms against bows and arrows. Following his example, the factory bosses Persidin and Bashmakov recruited makeshift forces and began to raid settlements throughout Kungur uezd that had gone over to the rebel side.⁸³

There is no better example, in fact, in all the annals of the Pugachev rebellion of the ability of capable leadership and plentiful munitions on the government side to offset rebel numbers and enthusiasm than the story of Government Assessor Bashmakov.

Sent out in November to organize the factories of Perm industrial region against the insurgents, he had labored tirelessly throughout December, while the tide of rebellion rose all around him. He had created a stronghold in the state Yugovsk works and whipped together a force of 900 local peasants and natives, 300 of them armed with muskets and the rest with various improvised peasant weapons. Like all his colleagues on the government side, Bashmakov had tremendous difficulty in drumming up and keeping loyal supporters. At one point, in early February, eleven of the fifteen local villages ascribed to his factory stronghold were on the rebel side. Desertion

was rampant, and Bashmakov himself said that he could put no trust in his men. Yet by skill and energy he overcame all these obstacles, in a struggle lasting throughout January and February. He disarmed the local population. He made his state Yugovsk works the arsenal of the government counteroffensive around Kungur. Enough food and munitions were concentrated there to supply not only his own men, but also all the government side forces of the whole region. Although the foundry was closed down because of the insurrection, Bashmakov made sure to pay good wages to the master craftsmen who worked at repairing his guns and pouring cannonballs. He also continued paying the ordinary laborers who were laid off. Even those who had joined the rebels were paid this partial salary, once they had been recaptured and had taken the oath of allegiance to Catherine. Finally, Bashmakov had a sufficient leaven of officers and reliable soldiers to help him keep control of his men, especially a highly mobile strike force of 120 men with which he terrorized the countryside and rushed help wherever it was needed.⁸⁴

Terrorized by this government resurgence in Kungur uezd, several village elders appealed directly to Pugachev for protection from "those ferocious and wild beasts", "malefactor boyars and officers" Bashmakov, Popov and the others. They reported that "these lords are already agitating us; they ply us with ukazy: whoever mentions the great name of Petr Fedorovich they consider a great malefactor and strike down to death."⁸⁵

Help was already on the way; by January 10 these same villagers were "receiving the regiments of His Tsarist Majesty's commanders with honor."⁸⁶ This new rebel initiative was supplied first of all by Salavat Yulaev and Kanzafar Usaev. They made a strong start with their bloodless capture of Krasnoufimsk, where Salavat, in a document of January 13, confirmed Makar Ivanov as ataman and Matvei Chigvintsov as esaul, and solemnly charged them

to rule justly and defend their town for their emperor."⁸⁷

The rebel capture of Krasnoufinsk opened the way not only for a further attempt on Kungur, but also for a totally new auxiliary drive on Ekaterinburg and its circle of munitions-rich factories. Salavat and Kanzafar yielded to this temptation at Shurtansk works. While they moved on toward Kungur with the bulk of their force, they diverted a 100-man contingent eastward. It was equipped with a Pugachev ukaz and a nastavlenie (directive). The latter ordered the hanging or beheading of all who should resist and the bestowal of Cossack liberty and tonsure and the oath of allegiance to "Peter III" on all who should yield.⁸⁸ The commander of this expedition was a rapidly rising new star among the rebel leaders, the sotnik (soon to be ataman) Ivan Naumovich Beloborodov.

Ivan Beloborodov was a crafty peasant who had served as a gunner in the Vyborg artillery regiment during the Seven Years' War, then worked in a gunpowder factory in St. Petersburg until he had managed to win discharge by feigning a limp in 1766. He had then returned east, married and settled down as a trader of wax and honey in the village of Bogorodskoe in Kungur uezd. It was here that Beloborodov had eagerly joined peasant and Bashkir outriders of Kanzafar who proclaimed a Pugachev ukaz and were welcomed with bread and salt on January 1.⁸⁹

Now, in mid-January, pushing eastward along the line of forts between Krasnoufinsk and Ekaterinburg, Beloborodov demonstrated a rare ability to reinforce rebel agitation with sound discipline and organization. Advancing through Fort Achitsk, whose garrison of 100 Ekaterinburg area workers had already joined the Bashkirs' drive on Kungur, he took Forts Bisertsk, Klenovsk, Kirgishansk and Grobovsk in quick succession and added 300 Cossacks to his ranks. On January 18 he took his first factory in the Ekaterinburg region

when the peasant-workers of Bilimbaevsk, whose overseers had already fled, welcomed the rebel force.⁹⁰

This last victory was a signal for all the industrial peasants around Ekaterinburg to rise in rebellion wherever they could, and Beloborodov tried to make it an example of strict discipline as well. While he readily accommodated the workers' clamor to "burn our debts" by presiding over the destruction of the factory records, he also had all wine casks broken. Beloborodov could give such an order without hypocrisy: his personal abstention from strong drink set an example of Spartan self-discipline almost unknown among the rebellion's leaders.⁹¹

On the following day, January 19, both the upper and lower Shaitansk works, with their rich supplies of food, welcomed Beloborodov with bread and salt. From there the ataman sent out a 30-man party which similarly succeeded in capturing the nearby Utkinsk state factory by the power of a Pugachev manifesto. A defecting minor factory official brought Beloborodov 1500 rubles, for which he was made a sotnik and sent back to recruit men. From Shaitansk Beloborodov also sent a delegation of ten men to Berda, to report his successes to Pugachev. They returned a few days later with an ukaz creating Beloborodov an ataman. Thereupon, he testifies, "believing what was said and seeing the impostor's graciousness to him, he began to serve him even more zealously and hoped to receive more rewards from him."⁹²

The ataman completed the organization of his army with a directive of January 31. To reduce national frictions he divided his following along ethnic lines into three sections, each headed by a sotnik. Semen Varentsov led the Russian factory peasants; Egafar Azbaev, the Bashkirs and Oskas Oskin, the Mari. Each sotnik was to uphold strict discipline, have his men flogged for ordinary offences and sent before Beloborodov for major crimes. The

ataman also called on his own knowledge of gunnery in organizing regular firing practice for his men.⁹³

By mid-February, Beloborodov's power had reached its greatest extent. Most of the factories in the region had welcomed his parties and manifestos. The authorities of the Demidov Utkinsk works had organized a defence force and answered the rebel's propaganda with one of Catherine's anti-Pugachev manifestos, but even they had been overthrown in a bloody battle of February 10. Only a few factory administrations still held out because of their remoteness or because of the strenuous efforts of rare industrialists like the titulyarnyi sovetnik ("titular counsellor") Alexei Turchaninov. He handled his workers with kid gloves and showered thousands of rubles on them before and after their repulsion of rebel assaults of February 4 and February 15.

Significantly, though, what finally decided Turchaninov's 700 Bashkir and 300 Russian assailants to withdraw was news that soldiers were approaching.⁹⁴ Although Beloborodov had increased his main army before Ekaterinburg from 600 men and five guns to 1500 men and 20 guns, his failure to attack the town decisively, apparently caused by a continuing shortage of powder, had let the opportune time slip by.⁹⁵

Ekaterinburg had been at its weakest in mid-to-late January. Its commandant, Col. Vasily Bibikov, showed none of the spirit of his more famous namesakes on the western front. Although he had gathered 1235 factory hands and had received 405 soldiers from Governor Chicherin by early January, Bibikov failed completely to exert the forceful leadership needed to counter the lure of the insurgents' appeal. Instead, he cowered in his town and did almost nothing to support his proclamations calling on the outlying population to be loyal to God, the fatherland, and the empress. As a result he had to

complain as early as January 12 that his people, especially the peasants, were committing acts of sabotage, displaying an "inclination to rebellion" and openly saying that the rebels were not malefactors because they were robbing only the rich factory owners and officials. The factory workers were assuring loyalty to Bibikov's patrols and then rebelling anew as soon as the patrols moved on. Peasants on the land were refusing to deliver goods to the town, while those in Bibikov's militia were deserting at the first opportunity. Demoralized by these failures, the commandant decided to collect all "noble" residents and abandon the town. The townspeople, in turn, became even less reliable when they saw the wagons being loaded at Bibikov's residence. The colonel was sure they were ready to receive and join the rebels' subversives at any moment.⁹⁶

At this desperate point, however, the tide began to change. While Beloborodov failed to press his advantage, a letter from Chicherin and the urgings of one of Bibikov's officials persuaded the commandant to stay in Ekaterinburg. Emergency ramparts were thrown up and armed with seventeen two-cannon batteries well stocked with powder and shot. Large amounts of money were showered on the essential minority of the population singled out for special cultivation - the recruits and the master craftsmen - "for the righting of their situation and [their] encouragement to better loyalty."⁹⁷ Above all, more help was on the way from outside, thanks to rebel failures in other quarters.

On January 31 Major Fisher arrived at Ekaterinburg with two companies from Fort Petropavlovsk, on the Upper Yaik line. By that time, too, Bashmakov and Pirogov were able to speed toward the Ekaterinburg factories with their terror and propaganda, for the second rebel siege of Kungur had been broken.⁹⁸

For a while Salavat Yulaev, Kanzafar Usaev and Chika's newly-appointed commander, Ivan Kuznetsov, had shaken the defences of Kungur with their clever propaganda assaults. Salavat told the townspeople that he had 15,000 Bashkirs. His "regimental campaign secretary", on January 19, produced a long and ornate "admonition" (uveshchevanie) addressed to "all men of goodwill" in Kungur. Its five points were a studied mixture of truth and falsehood. To the fact of the rebel capture of Krasnoufimsk the secretary added the exaggeration that "the factories, settlements, villages and forts of Sibir gubernia have all yielded", and the clear fiction that Ufa had likewise fallen to the "Chief Commander (glavnyi predvoditel) Ivan Nikiforovich Chernyshev", at the head of a Don Cossack army. Naturally, he concluded by condemning Major Popov and the merchant Khlebnikov as "subversives".⁹⁹

On the same day another talented and energetic rebel leader arrived to add his voice to this propaganda: Ivan Kuznetsov. Chika had diverted him from an intended mission to Chelyabinsk on learning that Berda had already sent Gryaznov there, and had given him command of the operations against Kungur. Kuznetsov's main task was to try to undermine the defenders' resistance by calming their fears of the Bashkirs. Already, on January 18, he had issued a stern directive to Chigvintsov at Krasnoufimsk, ordering him to hang all those, especially natives, who were caught looting or bullying Russian settlers. Now, in a long, elaborate "admonition" in nine numbered paragraphs dated January 20, Kuznetsov developed his tactic further. He told the people of Kungur he was not surprised they did not believe the Bashkir's stories; he himself had not believed in the "sovereign" at first. He expressed sympathy for those who had suffered at the hands of Bashkir raiders and assured them that he would punish the crimes of the "Asiatic peoples" against the church in particular. Even the falling away of many "new-baptized" natives

from Christianity was to be stopped and severely punished.¹⁰⁰

This last point is a strange-sounding one for a radical insurgent program and it rarely occurs elsewhere in the Pugachev rebels' propaganda. It may reflect bias and contradictions which the rebel leaders and perhaps Kuznetsov in particular had not outgrown, but it may also have been designed to appeal to the prejudices of the merchants of Kungur. In other respects, certainly, Kuznetsov's pronouncements remained faithful to the insurgents' program. His "admonition" went on to condemn Bashmakov and Khlebnikov, and an order of January 22 scolded Chigvintsov for having awarded a stolen horse back to its original owner, a dvoryanin.¹⁰¹

The besiegers' barrage of mingled threats and reassurance did make a considerable impact on Kungur. The townspeople began to waver and the chancellery nearly panicked, sending out a frantic appeal for aid without Popov's knowledge. But still Kuznetsov's admonishments went unanswered, and the rebels' failure once again to drive home their message with a successful assault assured their downfall. Despite their determination they still had too many bows and arrows and clubs against muskets and cannons. Not only was the attack repelled and the siege broken; one of the main rebel leaders, Salavat, was wounded and had to return home to recuperate. Now, to make matters worse, Salavat's departure, the frustration of defeat and an uncertainty as to who was now the head rebel commander before Kungur combined to produce a bitter quarrel between Yulaev's second-in-command, Usaev, and Kuznetsov.¹⁰²

While Kuznetsov was busy putting his Mishar rival in irons and travelling to Chesnokovka in person to complain to Zarubin, Major Gagrín and his small punitive force reached Kungur, on January 26. At once Gagrín and Popov joined forces to rout Chigvintsov, whom Kuznetsov had appointed as his acting commander, in an attack on Ordinsk blockhouse, on January 31 - February 1.

The rebels suffered heavy casualties and lost all their artillery and provisions. Then, on February 2, Yugovsk works fell to a lightning government attack, aided by "well-wishers" inside.¹⁰³

News of these disasters, relayed to him in Chigvintsov's urgent appeals for aid, alerted Beloborodov to the danger of a stab in the back. Still embroiled himself and short of powder, the ataman could offer little in his reply of February 6 except some sound precepts. These, however, expose the reasons for Chigvintsov's failure even as they illustrate Beloborodov's own qualities. According to the rumors he had heard, the ataman wrote, "the Kungur troops, winning out over His Imperial Majesty's army, profited from the weakness of the leaders' [i.e. Chigvintsov's - L.H.M.] not having sufficient order in his army, allowing the greedy to impious drunkenness."

"Therefore", Belobordov added,

...I am passing on to you my directive for the disposition and better rule of your army; if only as a help to yourself pick out, with the general agreement of the army, a loyal and brave man who will not be timid in time of need, for an army is always encouraged against the enemy by a single man of good disposition.

The ataman urged Chigvintsov to collect more men and attack Kungur anew.¹⁰⁴

Indeed reinforcements of 2000 Bashkirs and ten cannons were on their way from Satkinsk works, as a communication of February 14 shows. By then, however, the issue was not to attack Kungur but to hold Krasnoufimsk, where a pro-government faction, encouraged by rebel reverses, had raised its head again to menace the ruling insurgents from within. On the following day Chigvintsov reported, in another appeal to Beloborodov, that the approaching force of

Popov and Gagrin outnumbered his own by 2500 to 1000.¹⁰⁵ On February 19, they smashed the rebel esaul in a frontal assault. On February 23 Popov and Gagrin divided their troops, with Gagrin taking the better half as a mounted strike

force to rescue Ekaterinburg.¹⁰⁶

The two officers did not find their tasks easy. Advancing via Achitsk and the other line-forts, Gagrin found only empty settlements whose men had either joined the rebels or hidden to avoid serving the government expedition. Meanwhile, Popov soon found and complained that the removal of a capable government commander and his troops produced a new outburst of partisan-style rebel activity in Kungur uezd. Krasnoufimsk continued to hold out against him.¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, the die was already cast for Beloborodov.

On February 15 Lt. Col. Lazarev had arrived at Ekaterinburg with his small corps and had swung into action at once with his anti-Pugachev agitation in the surrounding countryside. The local authorities began to breathe easier; even Col. Bibikov ventured to send out a detachment to clear the rebels from the area of his town. Now, on February 26, Gagrin attacked Belobordov's stronghold at Utkinsk. The factory was well-fortified with ice ramparts and its garrison of 700, unlike most rebel contingents, was reasonably well armed with muskets and sabres. But the rebels' supplies of gunpowder were still very meager and Belobordov was not there to lead them. Consequently, their resistance had already collapsed by the time the ataman, who had been hurrying up from Shaitansk, arrived to join the fray with 425 men and one cannon. When Gagrin counterattacked, Beloborodov and his rebels scattered, leaving their cannons behind.¹⁰⁸

With 300 men, the rebel ataman fled southward along the Urals and entrenched himself in Demidov's Kaslinsk works, which his agitators had won for the insurgent cause in January. There, within a few days, his appeals built up his strength to a thousand Russians, Bashkirs and Tatars with artillery. But before his ice ramparts could be completed, Gagrin attacked and triumphed again, on March 12. Again Beloborodov had to fall back, this time southwestward across the Urals to Satkinsk works.¹⁰⁹

Throughout the Ekaterinburg region the rebel ataman's movements seemed to be collapsing with incredible swiftness, now that the balance of terror had shifted. Most of his peasants, unwilling to follow him so far from their homes and fearful of government troops, could not resist the authorities' offer of an amnesty in exchange for yielding and renewing their oath of allegiance to Catherine. Many even changed sides completely by going to serve in the Ekaterinburg garrison or in Gagrin's corps. Only the Bashkirs remained steadfast in the rebel cause. Their raids in Gagrin's wake covered Beloborodov's retreat by obliging the major to abandon Kaslinsk in order to drive the wild natives away from Kyshtym'sk works.¹¹⁰

Meanwhile, just to the south in Isetsk province, Ataman Ivan Gryaznov was also finding that not even the greatest propaganda victories in the east could escape the consequences of rebel failure in the west.

Gryaznov's original mission had been to capture Fort Chelyabinsk, one of a series of forts and the capital of the new Isetsk province that had been carved off from the Siberian gubernia after the Bashkir rising of the 1730's. The ground was well prepared for him as he crossed the Urals at the turn of the new year. Chelyabinsk had been under a virtual state of siege since December 12 by Bashkir and Russian mobs. Now the fort's Cossacks, who had been restless since first hearing of the rebellion in October, were preparing to revolt in anticipation of Gryaznov's imminent arrival.¹¹¹

Rumors that Gryaznov was approaching had prompted the Chelyabinsk Cossack ataman, Maxim Urzhumstev, to establish contact with the rebels and lodge a complaint against his voevoda, Verevkin. In reply, four rebel peasants slipped into town with a message from Gryaznov acknowledging the complaint. The time was ideal for a rebel coup: the feast of the Epiphany was at hand to distract the authorities' vigilance. On January 5, two hundred armed

Cossacks led by the khорunzhii Naum Nevzorov fell upon the voevoda's small guard, seized the six cannons in the square and occupied the chancellery.

All that remained was for the rebels to consolidate their victory throughout the town. But instead they fell into the old insurgent trap of indiscipline and short-sightedness: they wasted their precious time beating the voevoda and sacking his house, while duplicating his careless mistake in leaving too few men at the cannons. This gave Lt. Pushkarev, Verevkin's helper recently sent out by Governor Chicherin, the chance he needed to whip together a small makeshift force and put the rising down. The wave of arrests which followed effectively crippled the prospects for any future internal rising, even as Nevzorov fled to meet Gryaznov and the rebel ataman invested the town, on January 7.¹¹²

By this time Gryaznov's propaganda and terror had induced the peasants from the outlying factories and suburbs to come, often led by their parish priests, and join his mob, although Bashkirs continued to form the majority.¹¹³ On January 8 the insurgent ataman fired an impressive propaganda broadside designed to reduce Chelyabinsk as well. Two different ukazy were sent in; one to the voevoda, the other to the townsmen. The appeal to Verevkin followed the example of psychological warfare set in Pugachev's messages to Reinsdorp. It urged him to "come to his senses" and serve his true emperor before it was too late, so as to avoid both the shedding of his people's blood and the calling down of joint imperial and divine wrath on himself. The second manifesto, on the other hand, emphasized the social side of Pugachev's appeal. It urged the common people to join the besiegers in throwing off "the yoke of work" (igo raboty); that is, serfdom. The dvoryane, it accused, were violating the laws of God in treating their peasants "worse than their dogs". Peter III, the manifesto said, had been overthrown by these lords because of his desire

to liberate the serfs. Now he was returning to carry out this mission with his people's aid, and henceforth no dvoryanin would be allowed to own any bondsmen.¹¹⁴

The only trouble with the latter manifesto is that it was not well matched to the social complexion of its specific audience in Chelyabinsk. Only a minority of the defenders were even peasants, let alone serfs. The majority were Cossacks. This may be one reason why the appeal failed.¹¹⁵ Another reason is probably Gryaznov's failure to stop Major Fadeev's tiny party of 27 officers and men, sent from Tobolsk to take command of the Chelyabinsk "peasant Cossacks", from fighting its way into the fort. This exploit greatly lifted the defenders' morale, while correspondingly lowering that of the attackers. When Gryaznov tried to drive home his message with a bombardment and general assault, spreading out his still insufficient forces to give the illusion of greater numbers, the fort answered him round for round with its eighteen guns and forced him to retreat.¹¹⁶

Verevkin tried to follow up his victory on January 9 by sending a copy of Catherine's anti-Pugachev ukaz to the insurgents. This ploy failed; the insurgents merely shot back a point-by-point refutation of the manifesto, especially of its accusations of rebel desecration of churches and its comparison of Pugachev with False Dmitry. Yet again, when the rebels tried to press their argument with an attack, they failed. This time Gryaznov had 5000 men, including newly-arrived reinforcements of 500 men and eight guns from Kaslinsk and Kyshtym'sk factories. The battle lasted five hours, with the advantage changing sides several times. But finally Gryaznov had to abandon his blockade and withdraw to Fort Chebarkul'sk. Nevzorov was captured. He died along with Urzhumtsev in the Chelyabinsk chancellery on January 11, from the effects of "interrogation". Meanwhile, even in Chebarkul'sk Gryaznov

found no security. There again he was quickly and easily routed by General Dekolong, who stumbled upon him while hurrying to answer the desperate plea for help he had received from Chelyabinsk.¹¹⁷

Nevertheless, Gryaznov was far from finished. Dekolong's victory failed either to jar the rebellious enthusiasm of the local population or to bolster the timid general's own courage. When Bashkir and Mishar messengers sent to sound out their respective peoples returned with word that the rebel spirit was still strong, Dekolong barricaded himself in Chelyabinsk. There he cowered for three weeks, while Gryaznov resumed the initiative. The ataman extended his agitation over a wider range than ever, renewed the blockade of Chelyabinsk while stalling Dekolong with cease-fire proposals, and established his own Berda in the nearby village of Pershina.¹¹⁸ Dubrovin aptly characterizes the situation: "The surrounding population saw ... no protection by government troops as the rebels pillaged all loyal people and protected all who submitted." Village officials who had helped spread anti-Pugachev propaganda were hanged or flogged while new, Cossack-style officials - atamans, esauls, khurunzhiis and sotskiis - elected in their place were ordered to spread the rebel appeals and gather men and provisions.¹¹⁹

On January 30 Gryaznov again sent a copy of a Pugachev ukaz into Chelyabinsk, and on the following day he attacked again. Twice his assaults were repulsed, but when Dekolong tried a counterattack on Pershina, on February 1, he was driven back into Chelyabinsk. At that point the general lost his nerve. On February 4 he ordered "all loyal inhabitants" to prepare to abandon the town with him. Gryaznov soon learned of the plan and tried to block it, but Dekolong still managed to fight his way out on February 8, after hanging 186 rebel captives as a parting atrocity.

General Dekolong gained nothing by this exodus. Of the town's 2957

inhabitants only 464 chose to follow him. All of these were, by his own description, "better townsmen". Over half were merchants. The rest, as soon as Dekolong had left, opened their gates as the rebels captured Chelyabinsk by default. Gryaznov supervised the election of a Cossack-style administration in the town and left its ataman, the factory serf Grigory Tumañov, as his deputy with 500 men and six or seven cannons, while he moved down the Mias River after Dekolong.¹²⁰

The general found that wherever he went, Gryaznov's agitators had been there first. Even after he had crossed the new Siberian border, abandoning all of Isetsk province to the rebels, Dekolong found himself blockaded in Shadrinsk just as he had earlier been blockaded in Chelyabinsk. Meanwhile, not far up the Iset River, Gryaznov's men were reviving the unrest of the possessional peasants of the Dolmatov monastery which had last manifested itself in the "Dubinshchina" revolt of 1762. Local peasant "atamans" and "esauls" agitated their comrades to serve "Peter III" and compiled written complaints. Major Zavorotkov could do nothing with his economic peasant charges; when ordered to provide recruits for his struggle against the rebels, they replied, "We want to serve the sovereign" [i.e. "Peter III" - Pugachev - L.H.M.].¹²¹

As the uprising spread along the townships of the Iset and Tobol Rivers throughout February, energetic agitators sprang up like mushrooms. Two convicts, for example, mysteriously reappeared in Utyatsk on February 13 with the rank of khорunzhii and with manifestos obtained personally from Pugachev in Berda. They organized an overthrow there, broadcast messengers with copies of their manifestos to other settlements like Kurgan, and then disappeared.¹²² Other outstanding agitators were priests. One such was the notorious Father Zubarev. Another, Father Antonov, was one of the rebel leaders in Kurgan.

There 1900 peasants shrewdly let themselves be recruited and armed by Major Salmanov, then seized all their officers and delivered them up to the rebels for hanging.¹²³

By early March Gryaznov's rising had filled out most of the region enclosed by the Tobol and Tura Rivers, from the Kirghiz border to the outskirts of Verkhoture. An exasperated General Bibikov was trying to have General Suvorov recalled from the Turkish front to take Dekolong's place. As it turned out, nothing was done, because Field Marshal Rumiantsev felt that he could not spare his most brilliant young general.¹²⁴ But the knowledge of General Bibikov's displeasures no doubt combined with news of the victories around Ekaterinburg and elsewhere gained by lesser officers, to prod Dekolong into action.

Venturing forth at last from Shadrinsk, Dekolong surprised himself by smashing a rebel mob of 7000 men and 31 cannons on March 9. Next, two of his officers broke up the siege of the Dolmatov monastery on March 14. The general followed these victories with a wave of cruel mass reprisals against the peasants on the Iset. Because of this and because Gryaznov's main force was retreating back up the Mias, most of these peasants had no choice but to humbly yield, like those just to the west who had fought for Beloborodov.¹²⁵

Dekolong, however, still failed to press his advantage by resolutely following Gryaznov into Isetsk province. Gryaznov and Tumanov continued to hold Chelyabinsk throughout March, concentrating 5000 men there, including 2000 Bashkirs, while doggedly pursuing Bashkir renegades who continued to harass Russian peasants.¹²⁶

Thus Beloborodov and Gryaznov, misguided to begin with but unsuccessful only because of rebel failures elsewhere, still clung to the eastern slopes of the Urals. Little could they imagine that they would soon find a truly

vital purpose in helping to rescue the remnants of those central rebel failures who still ignored their appeals for aid, as a blind preoccupation with the sieges of Orenburg and Yaitsk was supplanted by frantic preparations to meet Prince Golitsyn's onslaught.

Arriving in Yaitsk on January 7, Ovchinnikov and Pugachev had found that Tolkachev's propaganda and terror had made a deceptively strong beginning. Indeed they had revolutionized the town in a single day, December 30 - except for Simonov's redoubt. Approaching Yaitsk, Tolkachev had absorbed an 80-man Cossack patrol sent against him and drowned its starshina in the river.¹²⁷ This and other tales of terror had served as either a genuine motive or a convenient excuse for other Yaik Cossacks to abstain from helping Simonov. When the colonel had sounded the alarm and only 70 Cossacks had answered it, he had abandoned the town proper and taken refuge in his "retrenchment".¹²⁸

In a way it was a great advantage to Simonov that so few Cossacks joined him there, for it meant that from the beginning he had almost no fifth column to contend with. The point is, however, that he was foolish to adopt such a fearful, defensive posture. Had he dared to sally forth resolutely at once, his overwhelming superiority in men, arms and ammunition - 1050 soldiers, 189 "obedient side" Cossacks, 18 cannons and 100 poods of powder against 300 rebels and a few small cannons - would doubtless have smashed his enemies.¹²⁹ Instead Simonov had cowered in his makeshift kremlin while Tolkachev had been welcomed into Yaitsk by its clergy and townspeople, proclaimed the return and generous bestowals of "Peter III" before an enthusiastic krug, presided over the drowning or hacking up of a number condemned as traitors to the voisko and the election of new officers, and led the rebel townsmen in a general assault.¹³⁰

It was the failure of this assault, resulting from Simonov's superior firepower and his success in firing the surrounding houses to deprive the rebels of cover, that had prompted Tolkachev's appeal to Berda which Ovchinnikov and Pugachev answered.

After having been welcomed with bread and salt and quartered in Tolkachev's house, the false tsar immediately launched a still more formidable edition of the same combination Tolkachev had used. He first tried to woo Simonov into surrender with a conciliatory ukaz while presiding over ten executions, one of them a quartering.¹³¹ Then, when this propaganda and terror brought no results, he helped organize and direct more careful preparations, including a sapping and mining operation against Simonov's wall, for another assault.

On January 20 the rebels set off their charge, only to find that they had miscalculated: the explosion failed to open a significant breach. Nevertheless, the confusion which it caused among his enemies and the overwhelming size and enthusiasm of his own following induced Pugachev to proceed with his assault. The impostor and his 400 best men advanced first, followed by peasants with siege ladders. Behind them surged and screamed virtually the entire population of Yaitsk: women as well as men; peasants, Kalmyks, Tatars, and Mishars as well as Cossacks. A fierce battle raged for over ten hours as the insurgents charged again and again. Finally, though, they had to abandon their assault. Their preparations still had not been thorough enough to cope with the defenders' grapeshot, musket volleys and bayonets, which took over 400 rebel lives.¹³²

Crestfallen, Pugachev shouldered the blame for the failure onto the Mordvinian peasant who had directed his sapping operation, and prepared to leave Yaitsk. However, he and his advisors still had not learned their

strategic lessons: Pugachev was going nowhere except back to Berda for a while, after which he planned to return to direct yet another attempt on Simonov's stronghold. Just before leaving, the impostor ordered the beginning of a new tunnel and staged a propaganda display designed to prepare the ground for victory as well as to remove the sting of defeat. In full view of the retrenchment Pugachev summoned a great krug to display the restoration of Cossack freedom which he had promised. First a Pugachev manifesto bestowing all the old rights was loudly proclaimed. Then the false tsar himself spoke to the crowd, "If it please you, Yaik voisko, to elect yourselves an ataman and starshiny, whomever you wish, according to your former custom, I leave it to you." The Cossacks responded by electing Nikita Kargin as ataman and Perfiliev and Fofanov as starshiny. They were sternly admonished to rule justly, punishing small offenders themselves and sending the greater culprits to Pugachev at Berda.¹³³

While Pugachev returned to the Orenburg blockade, Ovchinnikov moved further down the Yaik to seize the lower posts and the port town of Gurev with their considerable resources in men, supplies and powder. At Gurev, on January 26, he achieved another bloodless rebel victory when the townspeople, mostly of the voisko faction, opened their gates to him. The rebels then desecrated the church and hanged the priest, the local ataman, the commandant and several others who had taken refuge there. On January 29, Ovchinnikov headed back toward Yaitsk with fourteen kegs of powder, a considerable amount of shot and a number of Gurev men. Yet strangely enough he declined to recruit any of the boat-haulers who formed the largest group in the town and should have been ready insurgent material.¹³⁴

Ovchinnikov and Pugachev, moreover, arrived back in Yaitsk none too soon. By early February the besiegers' condition and morale had greatly deteriorated.

The rebels who were supposed to be reducing Simonov by siege and starvation found their own nerves worn thin by the colonel's artillery fire, spies and arsonists, and their bellies empty as a result of their own poor management and communications. Khan Derbetev's Kalmyks especially were almost starving. Kargin and Tolkachev had had to appeal to Berda for more provisions. Encouraged by rumors of his enemies' difficulties, Simonov had intensified his harassment, though one of his agents was caught and hanged by the rebels "to frighten others". On February 9 Simonov unleashed a powerful sally. His men were finally beaten back, but only after they had inflicted severe casualties and set more fires.¹³⁵

This hollow victory set the tone for all Pugachev's further efforts after his return to Yaitsk. He managed to restore vigorous work on the new tunnel, but only at the cost of a measure worthy of his enemies - the hanging of seven reluctant workers.¹³⁶

Next the impostor took a step which his own subsequent testimony, as well as those of his leading Yaik Cossacks, condemn as a very grave propagandic error: he married the young Yaik Cossack beauty Ustinia Kuznetsova and declared her his "empress".

Clearly, the testimonies of both Pugachev and his erstwhile colleagues try to use the incident as evidence for their attempts to thrust the responsibility for his imposture and its consequences on each other. Pugachev himself claims that he was reluctant to take Ustinia for fear of the damage it might do to his credibility as Peter III, but was pushed into it by his Yaik Cossacks, who thought only of binding their "sovereign" still closer to them by marriage.¹³⁷ His leading Yaik Cossacks - men like Shigaev, Gorshkov, Tvorogov and Padurov - confirm the bad effects on credibility which Pugachev had feared, but go to the opposite extreme in insisting that the marriage had

been the false tsar's idea and in placing themselves at the head of the many who were supposedly disillusioned by it. They testify that the move filled them and all Pugachev's following with grave doubts and fears about the authenticity of their "emperor". How, they claim to have wondered, could any true tsar flagrantly violate church law by marrying again while his first wife (Catherine) still lived? Moreover, how could he marry a commoner, a mere Cossack girl? Despite Shigaev's attempt to smooth out the awkward situation by publicly toasting the newlyweds, a tide of desertions is supposed to have begun at once.

The fact remains, however, that in spite of their supposed disillusionment none of Pugachev's henchmen bothered to join the deserters. They lamely try to explain this away by claiming that they continued to serve Pugachev merely "from fear". Gorshkov strikes closer to their true motives when he testifies that they were also driven by the continued lure of promotion in the impostor's service and by the hope for victory based on their observation that the masses continued to support Pugachev.¹³⁸

Perhaps there were some among the impostor's following who had literally believed in him as Peter III and were, accordingly, genuinely disillusioned by his marriage to Ustinia. For the rest it was useful, in the extremity of defeat and capture, to feign the reaction of genuine believers in order to transfer guilt for all they had done to Pugachev alone. As for the upsurge in desertion, it probably had less to do with Pugachev's marriage than with the discouragement caused by the failure of his second sapping and assault operation immediately afterward.

Though the tunnelling and mining had this time been done more carefully, the impostor's failure to bring either morale or security up to correspondingly high standards was his undoing. The krug resolution of February 18 to go

ahead with the new attempt was contested by a minority who wished to merely rely on a starvation blockade. News of the mining of the church belltower, where Simonov had located his powder magazine, was conveyed to the colonel by a young rebel deserter, Neulybin, just in time to let Simonov remove his powder before the mine was set off. As a result, though the tower was destroyed, 45 defenders killed, and a considerable breach opened, neither Pugachev nor his followers could make up their minds to attack.¹³⁹

This fiasco marks the end of serious rebel attempts to take Yaitsk by force. The siege settled down to a starvation stalemate, with occasional barrages of invective and cannonballs hurled in both directions. Perfiliev threw all his verbal ammunition into a message urging Captain Krylov to acknowledge and serve "Petr Fedorovich". He held out the promise of promotion: "Here you're a captain, but under him['Peter III' - Pugachev - L.H.M.] you might be a general." He used deliberate falsehood calculated to shake and impress: "...a Collegiate Assessor from Simbirsk is serving under him in Berda: which of us could know better than he whom he serves - sovereign or not?" Finally, Perfiliev appealed to folk logic: "And so, judge for yourself: when the sovereign and his consort quarrel we have no business getting mixed up in their affairs - they do whatever they wish between them, but still it's better for us to uphold the sovereign's side, because we swore first to serve him faithfully." In their desperation to hasten victory by means of propaganda the besiegers even resorted to such innovations as air-dropping leaflets by means of kites.¹⁴⁰ All their best efforts, however, were in vain, for not only was there no potentially rebellious elements for them to arouse in Simonov's preserve; there was no more aid from Pugachev.

On the same day as his second assault's failure, February 19, the false tsar had received a message direct from Ilya Arapov, informing him of the fall of Fort Buzulutsk to government forces on February 14. This alarm had finally jarred Pugachev from his complacency. Only a few days before, while conversing with Ustinia, he had confidently affirmed, "I'll soon take Orenburg, and then I'll be able to go to Piter [St. Petersburg - L.H.M.] unhindered." When his bride, displaying more strategic sense than her "emperor", had reminded him, "There are many other cities before Piter", Pugachev had still insisted, "Just let Orenburg be taken, and everyone there will bow to me."¹⁴¹ But now Arapov's message sent the impostor and Ovchinnikov galloping off toward Berda again with 500 to 700 Yaik Cossacks, never to return in arms. The same news which had brought on Pugachev's hasty departure also reached Simonov's men, to strengthen their conviction that time was on their side. It helped them to endure starvation and the disastrous failure of a sally on March 9, while Pugachev struggled to stem the tide of Bibikov's offensive.¹⁴²

Returning to Berda, Pugachev found that his absence, the knowledge that government forces were closing in while Orenburg continued to hold out, and the scarcity of food and ammunition had combined to produce a desperate situation. His main army was in a state of near-panic that was ruining discipline and morale and even bringing signs of treason to the surface. Pugachev went into action at once to restore some semblance of order. Most notably he had Dmitry Lysov hanged. The ostensible reason for this was a charge by some peasants that Lysov had lawlessly plundered and drowned their pomeshchik, against whom they had no complaint. The real reason was probably that Lysov had bungled an attempt to run Pugachev through with a lance from behind.¹⁴³

Working desperately now to make up for lost time, Pugachev and his Military College prepared to go out and meet Golitsyn as they had met Kar.

On March 6 Pugachev and 2300 men made a surprise attack on Mansurov's troops, who had recently occupied Fort Pronkina, on the Samara line. The rebels were winning until a desperate last-ditch rally directed by government officers inside the fort changed the tide and Pugachev's failure to answer with a stand of his own made the outcome certain. The impostor and his main army had suffered their first defeat, the pattern for others soon to come.¹⁴⁴

While Golitsyn joined forces with Mansurov at Pronkina on March 11, Pugachev and Arapov fell back to Fort Tatishchev. Knowing that they had to hold this key fort or see the sieges of Orenburg and Yaitsk isolated and destroyed on the brink of possible victory, they prepared as thoroughly as they could. While the impostor himself supervised the construction of ice ramparts and the placement of batteries in the burned-out fort, emergency reinforcements were rushed out from Berda, raising his strength to 8000 men and 36 cannon.¹⁴⁵

All was not well, however. The exorbitant demands for ammunition and especially food which the rebel military college was now making threatened to alienate the struggling peasants from the cause.¹⁴⁶ Worse still, Pugachev's Bashkirs learned the demoralizing news that he had procured several swift horses so as to make his escape in the event of failure, leaving them behind to face the wrath of the government troops. Still smarting from the cruel suppression they had suffered in the 1740's, the Bashkirs wanted no part of such treatment, and they made that clear to Pugachev again just as they had in mid-November. Plotting against Pugachev continued. Shigaev, Borodin and other "moderate" leaders decided to try to deliver the impostor up to the authorities to save their own skins if he should lose again at Tatishchev.¹⁴⁷

For a while, when the battle came on March 22, it did not look as if Pugachev would lose. His thundering barrages and his fanatical charge of

thousands shouting to the government troops to surrender combined to daunt Golitsyn's men so that their lines almost broke. They seemed on the verge of throwing down their weapons when the superior organization, discipline and firepower wielded by General Freiman and his officers turned the tide. Though the insurgents outnumbered Golitsyn's 6500 man force, they still could not match its supply of small arms and gunpowder or its 70 cannon. Neither could they match the rallying power of disciplined officers and troops. When the rebels finally began to run they were impossible to regroup, especially after they saw their "tsar" and his henchmen galloping off. Thousands tried to follow Pugachev's bad example, only to be cut down or captured by Golitsyn's cavalry. As the general noted, only "those rebels who did not succeed in fleeing resisted desperately within the fort and left 1315 dead".¹⁴⁸

Meanwhile, Chika was about to meet a similar defeat. From March 18, when General Bibikov's replacement for Larionov, the bold and energetic young Lieutenant-Colonel Ivan Ivanovich Mikhelson, fresh from operations against Polish partisans, had reached the scene with his St. Petersburg carbine regiment, the central sector of the government offensive had begun to move forward again. Tornov and Ulyanov, supported enthusiastically by local Mishars and Bashkirs but unable to procure any more guns or powder, had been obliged to fall back from Nagaibatsk to Bakaly and then to Chesnokovka. There they joined in Chika's feverish preparations to repel Mikhelson's advance. The decisive battle came on March 24. Charging with fanatical zeal, the 10,000 insurgents at first drove back Mikhelson's infantry, but soon the government troops' superior firepower began to tell. The rebels were smashed and scattered. Mikhelson killed 500, captured 1500, seized all of Chika's 25 cannons, recaptured Chesnokovka and relieved the siege of Ufa.¹⁴⁹

Zarubin, Ulyanov and a few other Cossacks fled southward with their treasury, hoping to link up with Pugachev at Berda. The psychological impact of defeat, however, proved to be their undoing. They were seized on March 25 and turned over to Mikhelson on March 28 by the erstwhile rebel ataman of Tabynsk, who had heard of Pugachev's defeat as well and, convinced that all was lost, resolved to win himself a pardon by his treachery. Tornov met a similar fate, betrayed by a wealthy Bashkir starshina.¹⁵⁰

Meanwhile, the northern part of Chika's empire had also collapsed. On March 14 Popov had entered Krasnovfimsk in triumph; on March 17 he had smashed Salavat Yulaev's Bashkirs at Bugalysh, just to the south. On March 25 the rebels had evacuated Izhevsk factory on the Kama.¹⁵¹ The insurgent cause seemed doomed, but still the struggle went on. The focus shifted again to the south, where Pugachev was able to regroup his scattered forces for a third trial of strength with his enemies.

On March 23, the morrow of his defeat at Tatishchev, Pugachev and his small band arrived back in Berda. The 5000 men he had left there in Shigaev's charge were sufficient to restore his army, but first the impostor had to struggle to reassert a leadership weakened and discredited by defeat. The men had discovered several wine-casks; Pugachev ordered them broken to prevent drunkenness. Next he frustrated a conspiracy of several leading Yaik Cossacks to bind and deliver him to Reinsdorp. However, Shigaev, the most prominent among the conspirators this time as before, again eluded detection and continued to put obstacles in the way of Pugachev's recovery. Furtively disobeying the impostor's order that all his followers move off with him from Berda, Shigaev continued to distribute money and discharge men, so that only 2000 rebels and ten cannons remained by the time Pugachev left.¹⁵² The false tsar had similar difficulty in inducing his colleagues to agree to proceed

north, as he wished, to join with the other main remnants of the movement in Bashkiria, rather than south, back to Yaitsk. However, his luck returned to make this possible.

The appearance of a government ski patrol gave Pugachev the excuse he needed to order his following to head back toward Sakmarsk. When Shigaev and his cronies still protested, Pugachev yielded to their demand for a krug. There he did his best to encourage them: "Well now, children, if we don't succeed in this region, then we'll go straight to Petersburg, for I hope that Pavel Petrovich will meet us." His words alone would not have been enough, but when Kinzia Arslanov and his Bashkir starshiny suddenly intervened to promise 10,000 men if the "sovereign" would come to their country, the impostor's proposal won the day.¹⁵³

One more stroke of luck assured Pugachev safe passage back up to Kargala and Sakmarsk: the impostor's approach still inspired enough fear of external attack and internal rebellion in Orenburg to make Reinsdorp refrain from placing a strong enough garrison in Berda to block the rebels' way. With that hurdle passed, Pugachev was able to reoccupy Kargala, much to the joy of its inhabitants, on March 26 or 27. There he emptied the jail and executed the treacherous starshiny who had bound and delivered up Khlopusha to Reinsdorp and the gallows just two or three days earlier.¹⁵⁴

Unfortunately for Pugachev, his luck did not hold up so well in the battle that ensued when Golitsyn, pausing only briefly for a hero's welcome in Orenburg, hurried on to engage the rebels at Kargala and Sakmarsk, on April 1. Again Pugachev suffered a crushing defeat: over 400 of his 5000 insurgents, including Vitoshnov, were killed, while over 2800, including Shigaev, Pochitalin, Gorshkov, Padurov and Zhilkin, were captured.¹⁵⁵

In St. Petersburg and all over the empire, the news of this and the

other victories over the rebels was being received with great relief and glee by the gentry and the rulers. Catherine showered promotions, pay bonuses and gifts on all the officers and men of the punitive forces, including, ironically enough, new bestowals of lands and serfs on Golitsyn and other high-ranking officers.¹⁵⁶ Though Pugachev was still at large, his capture and the final demise of his movement seemed only a matter of a few more days. Few if any could foresee the astonishing recovery that the rebellion would soon make around its Bashkirian Ural stronghold and its false tsar.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER III

1. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, No. 11, p. 34.
2. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 85.
3. Ibid., p. 81. Pochitalin's testimony, Pugachevshchina, vol. II, No. 33, p. 108; No. 32, p. 107.
4. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, p. 201. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 114-115.
5. Pushkin, p. 45.
6. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 116-117.
7. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, pp. 201-202. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 120-121. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 83.
8. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, No. 169, pp. 144-145.
9. Ibid., vol. I, No. 13, pp. 35-36.
10. Ibid., vol. I, No. 14, p. 37. Most of the extant copies are collected in TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 415, l. 31-51.
11. The size of the main rebel mob at Berda is hard to estimate accurately for any given time and seems to have fluctuated greatly. The figures given here, however, are minimal for the period in question. In a report of November 22, General Freiman had claimed that Pugachev by then had "over seventy artillery pieces and a mob which already numbered twenty-six thousand." (Pugachevshchina, vol. II, Dopolneniya, p. 386) Andrushchevko (p. 42) estimates the impostor's strength by the end of 1773 as 25,000-30,000 men and 100 cannon.
12. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 198-199. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 86.
13. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 93.
14. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 127-128.
15. Rozner, pp. 81-82; Pugachevshchina, vol. I, Primechaniya, p. 236.
16. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, No. 23, pp. 43-44, No. 24, p. 44.
17. Dubrovin, vol. II, p. 189.
18. Pugachevshchina, vol. II, Dopolneniya, p. 385.
19. Ibid., vol. I, No. 45, pp. 59-60; vol. III, No. 7, p. 13.
20. Ibid., vol. III, No. 8, p. 14.

21. Ibid., vol. I, Primechaniya, p. 236; No. 80, pp. 87-89. (Arapov's report to the rebel Military College)
22. Ibid., vol. I, No. 78, p. 86. Don i nizhnee povolzhe, p. 5, No. 1, p. 21, No. 4, pp. 27-28. Rozner, Kazachestvo, pp. 82-83.
23. Alexander, pp. 72-74. Pushkin gives the text of Catherine's ukaz, erroneously dated December 23, in his appendix, pp. 168-172.
24. Alexander, pp. 78-79. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 105. Pushkin has the text of Panin's ukaz in his appendix, pp. 165-168.
25. Don i nizhnee povolzhe, p. 7. The edict ordering the burning of Pugachev manifestos was issued first to the Don voisko on January 4 (Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 5, p. 29) and then to the general public on January 10 (TsGADA, G.A. r. VI, d. 415, l. 76).
26. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 106.
27. Ibid., p. 76. Belyavsky, pp. 14, 79, 151. Semevsky, vol. II, pp. 359-361.
28. Dubrovin, vol. II, p. 174. Alexander, p. 71.
29. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 177-178. Alexander, pp. 74-75.
30. Dubrovin, vol. II, p. 249.
31. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, No. 78, p. 86. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 249-250.
32. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, No. 199, pp. 167-168. Mufel's report of December 31 to Bibikov, Pugachevshchina, Vol. III, No. 9, pp. 16-18. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 83.
33. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, No. 47, pp. 60-61.
34. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, p. 203.
35. Ibid., pp. 202-203.
36. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 97.
37. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, pp. 203-204. Rozner, Kazachestvo, pp. 96-97.
38. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, p. 204. Dubrovin, vol. II, p. 270.
39. Rozner, Kazachestvo, pp. 98-99.
40. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 250-251.
41. Ibid., vol. II, pp. 175, 222-225

42. Chika's testimony, TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 422, l. 23, 32 ob. Dubrovin, vol. II, p. 197. Why it was felt necessary or even desirable for Zarubin to assume a name associated with haughty factory lords and generals is a mystery. There was no popular myth of a "good count" Chernyshev corresponding to that of the "good tsar" Peter III. It is impossible to know whether either Zarubin or his followers took his imposture seriously. Though all paid lip service to this pseudonym, Chika had only bothered to change the surname, keeping his own Christian name and patronymic: "Count Ivan Nikiforovich Chernyshev". (TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 422. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, No. 75, pp. 82-83, etc.)
43. TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 415, l. 28, 30; d. 506, l. 196 ob., Pugachevshchina, vol. II, p. 108.
44. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 197-198.
45. Ibid., vol. II, pp. 201-202.
46. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, No. 26, p. 46; vol. II, Dopolneniya, p. 416. Dubrovin, vol. II, p. 198.
47. TsGADA, G.A. r. VI, d. 416, ch. I, otd. 15, L.1, 2 ob, 6. Andrushchenko, p. 134. Rozner, Kazachestvo, pp. 91-92.
48. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, No. 85, pp. 91-92; No.222, p. 183; No. 242, 243, pp. 197-198.
49. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, No. 215, pp. 178-179; No. 252, pp. 204-205. Mavrodin, vol. II, pp. 385-387. Andrushchenko, p. 263.
50. Rozner, Kazachestvo, pp. 88-89.
51. Ibid., p. 89. Pugachevshchina, vol. II, Primechaniya, p. 427. Mavrodin, vol. II, pp. 383-385. Gumerov, as it turned out, never got much nearer to Kazan; he had to turn back on receiving orders to help with the siege of Menzelinsk.
52. Rozner, Kazachestvo, pp. 89-90.
53. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 230-233. Alexander, pp. 87, 89.
54. Dubrovin, vol. II, p. 233.
55. Alexander, p. 90.
56. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 249, 253-255. Col. Bibikov had four brigades of the Second Grenadiers, three squadrons of Izyumsk Hussars and two cannon.
57. Andrushchenko, p. 137.
58. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 256-257.
59. Cited by Pushkin, p. 57.

60. Cited by Pushkin, p. 131.
61. Pugachevshchina, vol. III, No. 116, p. 237.
62. See this chapter, pp. 136, 145.
63. Alexander, pp. 90-93.
64. Pugachevshchina, vol. III, No. 117, p. 238.
65. Ibid., vol. III, No. 118, pp. 239-240; No. 125, p. 249.
66. Ibid., vol. III, No. 119, p. 241. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 241-242.
67. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 257-260, 262-264.
68. Cited by Rozner, Kazachestvo, pp. 108-109.
69. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 199-200.
70. Ibid., vol. II, pp. 312-315. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, No. 170, pp. 145-146. Andrushchenko, p. 140.
71. Dubrovin (Vol. II, pp. 317-318) gives the date of the sally as December 12, but Andrushchenko (p. 138) shows that it was really about December 20. Therefore, eight days have been added to the later dates in December mentioned in the next entry.
72. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 316-319.
73. Ibid., vol. III, pp. 319-320. Andrushchenko, p. 142.
74. Dubrovin, vol. II, p. 320. TSGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 416, ch. I, otd. 7, l. 1-25.
75. Ibid., vol. II, pp. 199-200.
76. TSGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 422, l. 8. Andrushchenko, p. 145. The latter, like many Soviet historians, also suggests that Zarubin's failure to revolutionize some foundries was partly caused by his neglect to develop special appeals to the factory workers aimed at "satisfying their professional interests." Others, however, like Mavrodin stress that these workers were still peasants, with grievances, demands and methods of struggle little different from those of their brothers on the land (Mavrodin, Krestyanskaya voina, vol. I, pp. 449-453).
77. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, No. 238, p. 195.
78. TSGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 416, ch. I, otd. 15, l. 28-29. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, No. 224, pp. 184-185; No. 225, p. 186; No. 226, pp. 186-187; No. 231, p. 190; No. 229, pp. 188-189.
79. Andrushchenko, p. 166.

80. Catherine herself was alarmed at the danger of the rebels' overrunning Siberia. In a letter of March 7 to Bibikov she wrote, "For God's sake don't let those good-for-nothings (bezdelniki) roll forward (prokatitsya) into Siberia, or else the evil will be able to increase: that region is very dangerous." (Cited by Alexander, p. 106, and Andrushchenko, p. 185.)
81. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, No. 172, p. 147.
82. TSGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 416, ch. I, otd. 6, l. 5, 6, 7, 8; otd. 18, l. 4. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, Nos. 175, 176, p. 149.
83. Dubrovin, Vol. II, pp. 205-211.
84. Andrushchenko, pp. 282-286.
85. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, No. 246, pp. 200-201.
86. Ibid., vol. I, No. 247, p. 201.
87. Ibid., vol. I, No. 152, pp. 134-135. TSGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 416, ch. I, otd. 4, l. 2.
88. Boloborodov's testimony, Pugachevshchina, vol. II, No. 126, p. 327.
89. Ibid., pp. 325-327.
90. Ibid., p. 327. Andrushchenko, p. 192.
91. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 235-236.
92. Beloborodov's testimony, Pugachevshchina, vol. II, pp. 327-328. Andrushchenko, pp. 192-193.
93. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, No. 74, pp. 81-82.
94. Andrushchenko, pp. 277-278. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, No. 254, pp. 205-206.
95. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 95. Andrushchenko, p. 199.
96. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 367, 337-345. Andrushchenko, pp. 195-196, 285-286.
97. Andrushchenko, pp. 195, 201.
98. Ibid., pp. 195, 199.
99. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, No. 177, pp. 150-152.
100. Andrushchenko, pp. 163-164. Pugachevshchina, vol. II, No. 125, p. 323; vol. I, No. 72, pp. 76-79. TSGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 416, ch. I, otd. 6, l. 19.

101. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, No. 72, pp. 76-79; No. 124, pp. 118-119. Another example of a rebel document having overtones of religious bias is the ukaz which Pugachev's military college sent out on February 1 in reply to Chigvintsov's report and request for instructions. (Pugachevshchina, vol. I, No. 28, pp. 48-49.)
102. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 212-216, 328. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, No. 125, p. 119. TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 422, l. 12.
103. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, Nos. 139-143, pp. 127-130; Nos. 182, 183, pp. 155-156. Andrushchenko, p. 260.
104. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, No. 139, p. 127; No. 76, pp. 83-84; No. 82, p. 90.
105. Ibid., vol. II, No. 234, pp. 191-192; vol. I, No. 144, p. 130. TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 416, ch. I, otd. 17, l. 22.
106. Andrushchenko, p. 199.
107. Ibid., p. 199. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 333-334.
108. Beloborodov's testimony, Pugachevshchina, vol. II, No. 126, p. 329. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 347-349. Andrushchenko, p. 200.
109. Beloborodov's testimony, Pugachevshchina, vol. II, No. 126, p. 329. Andrushchenko, p. 271.
110. Dubrovin, vol. II, p. 349. Andrushchenko, p. 203.
111. Andrushchenko, p. 162. Pugachevshchina, vol. II, Dopolneniya, p. 412.
112. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 216-218. Andrushchenko, p. 168.
113. Dubrovin, vol. II, p. 217. Pugachevshchina, vol. II, Dopolneniya, p. 413.
114. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, Nos. 69, 70, pp. 73-75.
115. Andrushchenko, p. 167.
116. Ibid., p. 170. Pugachevshchina, vol. II, p. 413.
117. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 221-222. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, No. 71, pp. 75-76; vol. II, Dopolneniya, pp. 413-414. Andrushchenko, pp. 169, 171.
118. Dubrovin, vol. II, p. 352. Andrushchenko, p. 171.
119. Dubrovin, vol. II, p. 353. In contrast to Dubrovin's emphasis on rebel terrorism, Andrushchenko (p. 174) stresses the role of persuasion in winning these converts.
120. Pugachevshchina, vol. II, Dopolneniya, p. 414. Andrushchenko, pp. 172-173. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, pp. 122-123, 158.

121. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 360-367. Andrushchenko, p. 179. Pugachevshchina, vol. III, No. 16, pp. 27, 30-31.
122. Andrushchenko, pp. 218-220.
123. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 370-372. Pugachevshchina, vol. III, No. 86, pp. 180-181. Andrushchenko, p. 218.
124. Andrushchenko, pp. 225-229. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 358-360.
125. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 368-373. Andrushchenko, pp. 181-182.
126. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, Nos. 130-138, pp. 122-126; No. 189, p. 159; No. 191, pp. 159-160.
127. Andrushchenko, p. 44.
128. Dubrovin, vol. II, p. 269.
129. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 84.
130. Fedulev's testimony, TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 505, l. 14-15. Kharchev's testimony, Pugachevshchina, vol. II, No. 39, pp. 125-126.
131. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 98. Pugachevshchina, vol. II, No. 55, p. 181.
132. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 270-272. Rozner, Kazachestvo, pp. 99-100. Andrushchenko, pp. 46, 50.
133. Perfiliev's testimony, TsGADA, r. VI, d. 506, l. 369-372. Dubrovin, vol. II, p. 273. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 101.
134. TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 505, l. 2606. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 275-276. Rozner (Kazachestvo, p. 123) implies that Ovchinnikov may have deliberately refrained from recruiting any burlaki (boat-haulers) in Gurev because as a "moderate" he scorned and distrusted them.
135. Rozner, Kazachestvo, pp. 112-113.
136. Dubrovin, vol. II, p. 276.
137. Pugachev's Yaitsk testimony, No. 4, pp. 118-119. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, p. 205. Tvorogov's testimony, Pugachevshchina, vol. II, No. 44, p. 144.
138. Pugachevshchina, vol. II, No. 33 (Pochitalin's testimony), p. 110; No. 34 (Gorshkov's testimony), pp. 113-115; No. 60 (Padurov's testimony), pp. 188-189; No. 65 (Shigaev's supplementary testimony), p. 197. Chika's testimony (Martynov, p. 66).
139. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 281-282. Rozner, Kazachestvo, pp. 115-116. Andrushchenko, p. 48.
140. Dubrovin, vol. II, p. 285.

141. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 116. Ustinia's testimony, Pugachevshchina, vol. II, No. 66, p. 199.
142. Dubrovin, vol. II, p. 267. Rozner, Kazachestvo, pp. 49-50. Andrushchenko, p. 44.
143. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, p. 205. Ulyanov's testimony, Pugachevshchina, vol. II, No. 40, p. 127. The editors of Pugachev's Moscow testimony (p. 233) accept the impostor's account, while Rozner (Kazachestvo, pp. 126-127) prefers Ulyanov's.
144. Dubrovin, vol. II, p. 295.
145. Ibid., vol. II, pp. 298-299.
146. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, No. 29, p. 49; Primechaniya, p. 232.
147. Pushkin, p. 57.
148. Ibid., p. 61. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 302-303.
149. "Ivan Ivanovich Mikhelson, Pobeditel Pugacheva", Russkaya starina, vol. XV, 1876, pp. 194-195. Zarubin's testimony, Martynov, p. 69. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 310-311, 321-324.
150. Ulyanov's testimony, Pugachevshchina, vol. II, p. 127. TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 421, l. 34, 34 ob. Rozner (Kazachestvo, p. 143) notes how General Potemkin used Chika's arrival as his prisoner as propaganda to aid the government effort in other sectors. In an appeal to the Yaik Cossacks he affirmed that Pugachev's "main accomplice", "the Yaik Cossack Zarubin, or Chika, is now shackled in Kazan".
151. Rozner, Kazachestvo, pp. 141-142.
152. Ibid., pp. 136-138. Shigaev's testimony, Pugachevshchina, vol. II, No. 32, pp. 104-106. Pugachev's Yaitsk testimony, No. 4, p. 120.
153. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, p. 208. Shigaev's testimony, TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 506, l. 90 ob.
154. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 375-378. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, pp. 208-209. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 139.
155. Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 385-390.
156. Ibid., vol. II, p. 306. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 133.

CHAPTER IV

RESURGENCE IN BASHKIRIA

Not for long did Pugachev remain almost alone, directionless and helpless as he galloped northward from Sakmarsk. He soon found that not even this second consecutive disaster had destroyed his potential for attracting massive popular support wherever he went. For at once his magnetism as leader and impostor began to attract other fleeing remnants of his army. Before he had covered many versts Pugachev had collected about 500 men. He had a hundred Yaik and Iletsk Cossacks, including Chumakov, Davilin and Tvorogov, who now took Shigaev's place as head of the insurgent Military College. There were another hundred factory peasants, and Kinzia Arslanov came with his 300 remaining Bashkirs and Tatars.¹ A nucleus had been salvaged around which Pugachev could proceed to rebuild his army, just as he had planned, in the favorable environment of the Bashkirian Urals.

The Urals were no ordinary place of refuge; now, more than ever they were the backbone and the core of Pugachev's movement. They were the home ground of Kinzia, the trusted advisor who now guided Pugachev, and of the thousands of Bashkir warriors he continued to promise the impostor.² The Urals still sheltered many rebel factories that could be tapped once again for volunteers, supplies, arms and ammunition. Kinzia and Pugachev knew, moreover, that these same advantages that drew them into the Urals were likewise attracting other defeated rebel leaders with the remnants of their armies. They knew that Salavat Yulaev and Ivan Beloborodov were already there in the area of the Simsk and Satkinsk factories and that others were probably on their way. The appearance there of the "chief evildoer" would provide the essential focus needed to accelerate and co-ordinate this process of consolidation. Pugachev and his men also knew that they would have plenty of

time to regroup in the mountains, thanks to the approaching rasputitsa, the formidable Russian spring thaw. Its flood-swollen rivers and mud-choked roads would hinder the insurgents less on their high ground and isolate them from their encircling foes for the rest of the month.

The rebel leaders never dreamed, though, that the spring break-up was bringing them an even greater stroke of luck. On April 9, General Bibikov died of a fever at his campaign headquarters in Bugulma.³

This sudden removal of the government expedition's chief mastermind and driving force, on what seemed like the eve of his final and complete victory, was in itself a blow to government morale and a lift to rebel spirits. Moreover, Catherine and her council made matters worse by their failure to realize the gravity of the situation and to take swift and effective action to remedy it. The man who was first provisionally, then officially appointed as Bibikov's successor, General Prince F. F. Shcherbatov, reflected and shared this governmental slackness. In an "order" of April 20, Shcherbatov informed Major-General Prince Bagration that the rebels were finished and that the capture of Pugachev, who was "hiding in Bashkiria", was bound to come any day.⁴ Shcherbatov even assured the big landowner Major-General Smirnov, of Shatsk, that his offer to raise a "mounted corps" of local dvoryane was no longer necessary, because Pugachev was "vanquished".⁵ The new commander readily acquiesced in the government's revocation of Bibikov's emergency powers, which now seemed superfluous. Shcherbatov finally received his orders early in May, about the same time as the citizens of Orenburg received a gracious imperial ukaz granting a two-year holiday from the poll tax to all and relief from all taxes for the rest of 1774 to the merchants.⁶ By that time Pugachev had already come down from the mountains and launched his new rebel campaign.

It was the cumulative effect of all these advantages that made possible

the impressive insurgent revival which Andrushchenko characterizes: "The appearance in the Urals of insurgents headed by Pugachev in April 1774 served as a signal for a new, mighty resurgence of the rebellion. ...The punitive policy of the government proved powerless to forestall a new upsurge of the popular war."⁷ The impostor and his associates were turning a possibility into a reality by exploiting it with energetic agitation and organization.

Even with his crippled Military College, Pugachev managed to get his new wave of agitation and organization underway immediately as he moved into southeastern Bashkiria. Kinzia's outriders began to pick up their first new Bashkir support, despite the rival appeals which Reinsdorp's Bashkir and Mishar messengers had been broadcasting, which urged the natives to "cease their continued unrest and turbulence", "acknowledge their sins" and return to "due obedience".⁸ Meanwhile, special couriers galloped ahead to alert Salavat and Beloborodov.

At dawn on April 9, a rebel "express" rider (narochny post) caught up with Beloborodov at the Bashkir village of Verkhnye Kigi, on the road north from Satkinsk, and delivered a Pugachev Military College ukaz of April 4. The ataman, sending out his officers in all directions, had already raised his strength again to over 700 and had begun to move against Kungur. Nevertheless he changed his plans as soon as he read Pugachev's orders that he immediately collect "a great number of men" from the surrounding Russians, Bashkirs and Mari "for the filling out" of the new Main Army.⁹

At once Beloborodov, with his staff, plunged into an intensified agitational and organizational campaign of his own. Returning to the Satkinsk works to direct this operation, he sent out his Mishar starshina Bakhtiar Kankaev and other officers in all directions, with written orders

to spread the news of the arrival and the demands of the "sovereign" and to requisition men, munitions, supplies and transport from local rebel authorities. Honor and rewards were promised to all who complied and certain punishment to all who did not. Still the stern disciplinarian, Beloborodov also warned even Kankaev that any acts of oppression or extortion would be answered with the death penalty.¹⁰

While Beloborodov struggled to organize and recruit, Pugachev himself made rapid strides in narrowing the distance between them and in rebuilding both his army and his Military College. He was hopping northward from one Ural foundry to the next, using them as oases in which to rest, stock up and increase his following. From Tashly the impostor advanced to the Vosnesensk works. There he repeated the familiar pattern which his subordinates operating among the factories had established. Funds, supplies and arms were requisitioned and a good part of the rebel peasant-workers who welcomed their tsar were swept into his growing mob. Then Pugachev crossed the upper Belaya River and followed it upstream to his next goal, the rebel Avzyano-Petrovsk foundries, which he reached on April 8. There he spent three days collecting food, supplies and 400 more men from the local worker-peasants. Thus the impostor had already regained a strength of 1000 men or more by the time he reached the Beloretsk factory and established his headquarters there on April 13.¹¹

At these foundries Pugachev found not only the usual men, arms and supplies but also talented rebel leaders; some local, some newly arrived with the remnants of their followings. Immediately the false tsar used them to put his Military College back on its feet. Alexandr Sedachov, a workman from Avzyano-Petrovsk, became Pugachev's new povyotchik, while Ivan Shundeev, an Isetsk Cossack, was appointed secretary.¹²

Shundeev and Sedachev promptly drafted a new series of Pugachev ukazy, some aimed at the predominantly Russian-speaking factory peasants and some at the Bashkirs, Tatars and Mari. No effort was spared to give these documents an impressive look of authenticity. They even bore government-style red wax seals with the insignia of the impostor or his Military College. As usual, though, it was the content that really mattered. The insurgent leaders provided it by re-issuing now, on April 14, their popular ukaz of December 2.¹³

Copies of this manifesto were accompanied by separate ukazy, likewise issued on April 14 over the seal of the rebel Military College and the signatures of Tvorogov, Shundeev and Sedachov. One such edict ordered the Iletsk Cossack Ivan Shibaev to carry out systematic agitation along the fortified lines of the Orenburg and Siberian governments. He was to travel by post wagons, revealing the contents of the enclosed personal ukaz of the "sovereign" to the people at every stop. Also he was to let them make copies of it, "so that they, the inhabitants, may show most zealous and loyal fervor in their service to His Imperial Majesty, for which His Majesty intends to most generously reward them."¹⁴

False or exaggerated claims of Pugachev's victories and the current strength of his forces was another proven technique for raising the spirits of defeated men that was already being used widely by struggling rebel leaders. Such falsehoods were not merely products of idle or reckless fancy. They were calculated supplements to Pugachev's own manifestos and to the organizational efforts by which Pugachev's agitators strove to offset the terror and propaganda advantage which the government had built up with its long string of victories. A great number among the insurgent population, especially those who were now in immediate danger of government reprisals, had become fearful of giving the rebels any further aid. This was particularly true of some of

the native chieftains who had always been drawn more by the religious and national side of the rebellion than by its class warfare. As men of property with a stake in the established social order they had been frightened by the extremes of the insurrection. Now they were no longer sure that they would not be safer under the existing government in the long run, even with all its faults.

Big talk of course, even when supported by frantic activity, could only erase the stigma of defeat, as Beloborodov and his officers found to their chagrin. The rebel ataman was broadcasting news of fictitious triumphs of the "sovereign" which became still more colorful when relayed by his subordinates. His "regimental chief" (polkovoi starshina) Bakhtiyar Kankaev sent letters to other native chiefs of Kungur uezd claiming that his "sovereign" had taken Orenburg and installed Kinzia as its ruler, that he had 40,000 men in Berda and 15,000 more before Ufa, that "Lord Orlov" had been captured and flayed to death, and that "the Turks have surrounded Moscow". But one of these chiefs shot back a report dated May 4, opposing fictions with hard facts. He wrote that Beloborodov's house had been hauled off to Kungur and destroyed and that a powerful force with sixteen cannons was operating around that town, so that he, Mametkulov, and his small following dared do nothing for fear of reprisals. Kankaev encountered great difficulties in trying to carry out his orders to collect men and sulphur in Kungur uezd for making badly-needed gunpowder. Several prominent native chiefs there even used intimidation to make Bakhtiyar and his men leave them alone.¹⁵ The local Cossacks also hedged, claiming that they feared reprisals from government forces in the town. On April 16, Beloborodov had to repeat urgently an order summoning a sotnik in Kungur uezd, Kozma Konovalov, to come with his men, "for it is the pleasure of our Little Father, the Great Sovereign Petr Fedorovich, to proceed into this region."

But still Konovalov did not come, and Beloborodov had to repeat his order again on May 2, enclosing a copy of Pugachev's April 9 ukaz.¹⁶ Another version of Bakhtiyar's tall stories, this one relayed from Beloborodov via Salavat Yulaev, turned up in a letter of May 10 from Stepan Kuznetsov, erstwhile ataman of Osa, to his esaul, the former rebel head of Rozhdestvensk works, Vasily Zavyalov. But both men had already been isolated and dislodged, and now government troops intercepted their message as well.¹⁷ With all these difficulties, aggravated by his failure to find Salavat at Simsk in mid-April, Beloborodov found it impossible to assemble a really large and well-equipped "state military corps". By the beginning of May he still had no more than about 1000 men.¹⁸

Even these hardships, however, were not enough to keep the exciting news of Pugachev's presence in the Urals from rekindling the flames of rebellion near and far. The energetic propaganda activities of Shundeev and Sedachov still yielded enough returns so that Tvorogov could later testify, "the starshiny and factory prikazchiki eagerly contributed men."¹⁹

The Bashkir and Mishar leaders had a similar but more successful experience. Their peoples' traditional ferocity, mobility, Muslim zeal and hatred for the alien tyrants made them as tenacious in adversity as they had been obnoxious in victory. They had grimly carried on their struggle before Pugachev's arrival in their land just as they would continue to do after his departure. Lt. Col. Mikhelson had already been obliged to testify to their stubbornness in his reports. While claiming to be enjoying great success in his pacification of the Russian peasantry around Ufa he had had to make an exception for "the Bashkirs, in whom malice and hard-heartedness have taken root with such a fury that rarely has one given himself up alive." Whenever they were beaten they simply "went into the mountains".²⁰

Admittedly, Mikhelson had gradually been making some headway. As the days and weeks passed, more and more native chiefs, especially, had been yielding and attempting to swing their bands over to the government side. But now, with the spread of exciting stories about the arrival of the "sovereign" in the country, other starshiny who were still loyal to the rebel cause were already reversing that trend. On April 13, Mikhelson had to send Major Tyutchev with his company to Birsk, to try to capture several Bashkir starshiny who had collected a following of 500 and were spreading word everywhere that the government's claims to have beaten their "count" (Zarubin-Chika) and "sovereign" were untrue.²¹

In their mountains the fierce native horsemen rallied around their greatest leaders, whether Kinzia Arslanov, with Pugachev at Beloretsk, or Salavat and his father Yulai with their separate army just to the north, around the Simsk plant. Indeed Mikhelson's early resumption of his drive eastward, leaving Ufa on April 24, was not motivated merely by his desire to help Golitsyn, Freiman and Dekolong close their ring on Pugachev before he could move into Siberia. Its primary objective was to deal with Salavat, who was rumored to have collected 10,000 Bashkirs for a drive on Ufa.²²

In actual fact Salavat had only about 3000 men, and they were a mixed force of Bashkirs and Russian factory workers. Yulaev had always attached great importance to maintaining good relations between the various nationalities with which he had to work. Most recently this policy of tolerance had demonstrated its effectiveness at the Simsk factory. There a local priest had been struggling to organize armed opposition to the rebel takeover. But Salavat had overwhelmed him simply by proclaiming, in the name of the emperor Peter III, the liberation of all bondsmen and their enrollment as Cossacks. This move, especially since it had been reinforced by the presence of Salavat's

1000-man force, had been enough to counter any uneasiness the factory population felt at the prospect of admitting a largely Bashkir mob.²³

Salavat's best efforts, however, proved insufficient to beat Mikhelson and his small but well-armed, well-disciplined and well-led corps. Pressing doggedly onward across flooded rivers and swamps, encountering obstruction from the hostile local population, the Lieutenant-Colonel engaged Salavat's 500-man advance guard near Simsk on May 6. Mikhelson took the factory without a struggle and on May 8 attacked Salavat. The insurgent mob, numbering over 1500, counter-attacked with spirit but as usual the government troops' volleys and bayonet charge carried the day. Many of the Bashkir horsemen plunged into the swamp rather than surrender, while others escaped with Salavat to fight again.²⁴

Salavat had failed to defeat or stop Mikhelson but at least he was fighting a successful delaying action. Mikhelson had to spend weeks trying to pacify the surrounding Bashkir villages. He had the psychological advantage of the victor and all the tricks of Bibikov's knout and gingerbread technique at his disposal. He had the added support of a new manifesto from General Shcherbatov who, in his concern to check the epidemic of Bashkir raids, assured that all who surrendered voluntarily would be pardoned.²⁵ But the credibility of all such counter-propaganda had already been ruined by the stupidly cruel acts of some local authorities.

In an order of April 26, Shcherbatov had felt obliged to call Bashmakov's attention to the contrast between the continuing disorders in his northern factory region and the supposedly "pacified" condition of the area around Orenburg. The general had urged that if the collegiate assessor wished to obtain similar results he should stop burning the natives' homes and villages.²⁶ At the beginning of May, Col. Stupishin, the commander of the upper Yaik line,

had boasted in a report to Reinsdorp that he had given these Bashkirs and Meshcheryaki a lesson that would soon bring them to their knees. He had had the nostrils, ears and fingers of the right hand cut off a captured Bashkir. The victim had then been sent back home as a warning of the fate that awaited all others who did not give themselves up.²⁷ This kind of senseless brutality only served to validate Pugachev's dire propaganda warnings which, shrewdly playing on the natives' hatreds and fears, now forecast their extermination in the event of government victory.

Mikhelson only learned of this latest Pugachev propaganda trick after the battle of May 22 in which he finally forced a passage through the Urals. Now he knew why, as he noted in his report, "The Bashkirs fought desperately", and why he had been treated again to the spectacle of native warriors plunging into a lake to drown rather than be taken alive. At once he seized upon this chance to discredit some of the impostor's propaganda. Mikhelson worked hard to win the Bashkirs' trust by treating his captives well and sending them home with money, presents and written assurances of his leniency.²⁸ But by then a week had already passed since Mikhelson had finally learned of Pugachev's having launched a new campaign by taking Fort Magnitnaya still a week earlier. Pugachev and Salavat were about to shatter Mikhelson's pacification efforts to joining to stir up the Bashkirian hornets' nest again.

From near and far, in response to the impostor's appeals, isolated fragments of his former legions had been trying to reach him. Many failed. Perhaps the most dramatic losing struggle was that of Khan Derbetev and his Stavropol Kalmyks. To begin with, these nomads had been torn since March by a particularly severe form of the familiar internal tension between rich and poor rebels, with starving Kalmyks raiding the cattle of the well-to-do. The rebel ataman of Yaitsk, Kargin, anxious to use the Kalmyks to harry Mansurov

at Iletsk, had ordered that cattle be distributed to all. But now the fall of Iletsk on April 7 and Yaitsk on April 16 had left the rebel Kalmyks stranded, unless they could fight their way up to Pugachev.²⁹ On May 8, with a mixed mob of about 2000 men, the khan tried to break through the Samara line at Fort Sorochinsk. Major Mufel, however, counter-attacked with his Cossack cavalry and put Derbetev to flight. Gradually the khan's following was whittled down by losses and desertions in the course of the skirmishes that followed. Finally, he was killed in an encounter of May 23 and what little remained of his following was dispersed.³⁰

Enough other supporters arrived, however, to swell Pugachev's crowd at Beloretsk to a modest army of 3000 by the beginning of May. By then the abating of the spring thaw and the advance of Mikhelson made action imperative. Pugachev and his Military College had given up the earlier plan of attacking Ufa in favor of one that would follow the line of least resistance to the fringes of Siberia. This move would enable Pugachev to greatly multiply his strength from line forts and from a rebellious peasantry of proven enthusiasm while at the same time putting distance between himself and Mikhelson. It was decided to begin by seizing Fort Magnitnaya, just to the southeast, rather than the nearer Fort Upper Yaik, where Gen. Dekolong was known to be ensconced with his corps. On May 2 Pugachev and his army set out, while a messenger speeded northward with a Military College ukaz ordering Beloborodov to come at once and join his "sovereign" before Magnitnaya.³¹

As he left Beloretsk Pugachev did all he could to indulge the local Bashkir rebels, to intensify their rampage so as to ensure that it would continue as long as possible after his departure. This would create a maximum of destruction and confusion in his wake to further obstruct the progress of Mikhelson from the west and Freiman from the south. The impostor accordingly

made two concessions to these Bashkir starshiny that the insurgent leadership would never have made earlier, under less desperate circumstances. He turned over to them a number of unfit factory peasant recruits as prisoners, and he ordered them to burn the factory. This was the first of a number of factory burnings that Pugachev would order in the coming weeks.³²

Arriving before Fort Magnitnaya on May 5, the insurgents followed their usual procedure. Pugachev sent in an ukaz to the commandant demanding submission, and when it was ignored he attacked. This first attempt failed and Pugachev himself was wounded in the hand by grapeshot. But then he or his advisors showed that they had learned something from earlier failures. Attacking again by night and from all sides, they managed to storm the fort in spite of their lack of cannon. All who refused to submit - the commandant, his wife, a few other officers and a priest - were promptly hanged as Pugachev installed himself in the fort.³³

A few hours later the impostor and his court were alarmed by word that a corps of government troops was approaching. It turned out to be Beloborodov, who unlike Pugachev and other rebel leaders always kept his men well enough trained to march in regular military formation.³⁴ The ataman had been delayed by difficulties in crossing the swollen Miass River and by an episode which illustrates his moral superiority over even a trusted emissary of the impostor. Beloborodov had been obliged to arrest Shibaev, the deliverer of the rebel Military College's ukaz of May 2, for looting in the Kosotursk (Zlatoustovsk) factory. Shibaev had soon been released, but had found a way to even the score. Shortly after leaving Kosotursk Beloborodov had been confronted with a detachment bearing another Pugachev Military College ukaz. He was to be arrested on suspicion of having carried on negotiations with government authorities. With difficulty Beloborodov had managed to persuade his would-

be arrestors that the charge was groundless. Still he had to explain again to another detachment at Fort Chebarkulsk, and now once more to an angry and suspicious Pugachev.³⁵

The misunderstanding was soon cleared up and Pugachev was richer by one of his best commanders, now named a "colonel", his contingent of perhaps 2000 men, and six cannon. Nevertheless it was a while before Beloborodov was trusted completely by these envious Cossacks. He even found that his corps had been split in two and half of it placed under his pardoned enemy Shibaev, also promoted to the rank of "colonel".³⁶

Beloborodov was not the only late but welcome arrival to reach Pugachev at Magnitnaya on May 6. That same day, to the surprise and delight of the false tsar, his long-lost ataman Ovchinnikov and sotnik Perfiliev rode into the fort with 300 grizzled Yaik Cossacks and 200 factory workers. The Cossacks were survivors of the force besieging Yaitsk that had been driven off by Mansurov's approach in mid-April. They represented many hundreds of other Cossacks unable to come with them, for despite his easy capture of Iletsk, Yaitsk and Gurev and the betrayal of Tolkachev, Kargin and others to him, Mansurov had reported on May 2 that all the Cossacks were still rebellious at heart.³⁷ They had enjoyed better luck than Khan Derbetev in running the government forces' gauntlet to rejoin Pugachev. Giving Orenburg a wide berth, they had outrun their pursuers by riding hard day and night and commandeering fresh horses from the local population wherever they went. No doubt popular sympathy for them had smoothed their road. In any event these fleeing Cossack rebels had never been in too much of a hurry to neglect their agitational duties. Everywhere they had spread the word that they were only the advance guard of a great Cossack and Kalmyk army that was coming to the sovereign's aid.³⁸

Now Pugachev could restore his Yaik Cossack regiment, the old core of his army, and round out his Military College. Ovchinnikov and Perfiliev resumed their old positions of Head Ataman and colonel respectively, taking their places with Beloborodov and another outstanding member, Grigory Tumanov. Tumanov, who had fled to the Urals after being driven from Chelyabinsk by Major Gagrin on April 10, now replaced Sedachev as Pugachev's povytychik.³⁹

At once the talents of these rebel leaders were employed to the full at Pugachev strove to extract maximum propaganda advantage from his new victory so as to increase his following. The handful of Bashkir chiefs who came in response to the impostor's invitation were treated to the best semblance of royal pomp he could muster and to new propagandic statements catering still more to their aspirations.

Pugachev conducted himself very endearingly (laskovo) and knowing their hatred for Russians reserved for them full freedom to destroy all forts to the foundations, promising that in future all the land of Bashkiria would belong to the Bashkirs alone,⁴⁰ and all the Russian population would be removed.

While continuing thus to add fuel to the fires of the Bashkir insurrection, Pugachev did not forget possibilities further afield, or the special talents of his College members. Tumanov's knowledge of the Kazakh language was engaged in translating a Pugachev ukaz and composing a message to Khan Ablai. The khan was requested to forward to the impostor any Kalmyks he might find wandering near his territory.⁴¹

The response to Pugachev's propaganda from Magnitnaya was good. Thousands of Bashkirs, Mishary, Tatars and Russians poured in and his host may already have numbered 10,000 by the time he ended his three-day sojourn there and moved on up the Yaik.⁴²

The next fort, Upper Yaiksk, was too strong for Pugachev to risk trying to capture with General Dekolong and his corps inside. Still the impostor won

a vitally important victory in just getting past this fort, and he won it bloodlessly. Again Dekolong had exposed himself to accusations of cowardice and incompetence from his superiors, this time from Shcherbatov.⁴³ Perhaps that is why he now suddenly stirred into action and began to pursue Pugachev.

Once past Fort Upper Yaik, Pugachev made sure that Gen. Dekolong would not soon catch him. The impostor's advancing juggernaut absorbed everything and everyone in its path that it could take along and destroyed the rest, leaving a trail of burned forts and bridges in its wake. Less wise was the string of atrocities which Pugachev's mob, especially his rampaging Bashkirs, left behind in the smouldering ruins of the small line-forts spanning the headwaters of the Yaik and Ui Rivers. Apparently Beloborodov did not have enough influence to suppress such needless brutalities, even though he won much prestige when he risked his life and persuaded the commandant of Fort Karagaisk to surrender without a fight. A contemporary attributed this toleration of excesses to Pugachev's rage at having received his painful wound. Whatever the causes, it was very ill-advised from a propaganda standpoint. It provided new ammunition for government counter-propaganda emphasizing the negative, barbaric and destructive side of Pugachev and his movement. Specifically, it angered Dekolong's soldiers, so that they were in no mood to be merciful when they caught up to Pugachev's mob.⁴⁴

The encounter came at Fort Troitsk on May 21, and it surprised the insurgents in the midst of their drunken celebration of the fort's capture the day before. Dekolong's troops fell on them and began to slaughter them by the thousands. While Pugachev lay racked with fever in his quarters, Beloborodov struggled manfully to rally the rebels and launched a counter-attack with artillery support. Once again, though, the government troops' superiority in small arms won the day. Pugachev, hearing that the battle was

turning against him, managed to rise and mount his horse. This move, as usual, was not entirely selfless. First the impostor rode back and forth trying to encourage and rally his men, but when he saw all was lost he again used his swift horse to escape. The rest followed his example, scattering in all directions while Dekolong's cavalry mowed them down by the hundreds.⁴⁵

Once again Pugachev had been shattered. He had lost 4000 dead, a small number of captured including Tumanov and Shundeev, all 28 of his cannon and all 3500 of his prisoners.⁴⁶ But he had also escaped again. By this time the government authorities realized that was enough to assure that he would soon raise another rabble army if he remained at large, but they were not prepared for the breathtaking speed with which he did so.

As Pugachev fled northward from Troitsk the flames of rebellion which his appearance had rekindled in Isetsk province continued to grow. Col. Stupishin tried to counter the rebel manifestos with propaganda messages of his own aimed at the surrounding population, particularly the inhabitants of the forts. He reiterated all the familiar government side admonitions. He referred to the testimonies of certain soldiers who had seen the real Peter III and had sworn that this pretender was the "bandit and impostor" (vor i samozvanets) Emelyan Pugachev. He told the people that Pugachev's depredations were a punishment from God for their sins, yet ordered them to help fight him. He ridiculed the impostor's promises as lying "enticement" (prelshchenie), yet could offer no positive government program in their place.⁴⁷ These weaknesses, as usual, assured the failure of the government side appeals to seriously complete with those of Pugachev. Dekolong made matters worse by failing to reinforce Stupishin's propaganda or follow up his own victory with any effective pacification measures. Instead he shut himself up in Fort Troitsk and wrote reports pleading inability to deal with the ubiquitous raids of Pugachev's

Bashkirs.⁴⁸ As a result of all this Pugachev replenished his manpower almost overnight. As Chumakov and Tvorogov put it, "the last cannon was lost, but a great number of men remain, for in all the villages numbers of compelled (nevolnikov) but mainly volunteers were taken into his mob."⁴⁹

Pugachev was advancing along the road to Chelyabinsk, still apparently bound for western Siberia as he picked up fragments of his previous army and new supporters. But his pursuers, Gagrin and Zholobov, pressed him so hard that he had to veer westward, and there he collided with Mikhelson near Fort Koelsk on May 23.

This was the first of a series of battles in which the persistent Lieutenant Colonel would hound Pugachev throughout the rest of his campaigns. The impostor made a strong start: his following of 2000 was large enough and orderly enough so that Mikhelson, unable to believe that Pugachev could have recovered so quickly from utter defeat, mistook it at first for Dekolong's corps and sent out couriers. Mikhelson had to fight hard to win the day. When his pikemen attacking the government artillery were repulsed by bayonets, Pugachev charged with his cavalry and broke up the punitive force's left flank consisting of natives susceptible to his propaganda. The false tsar would probably have won, had not his lack of sufficient discipline intervened. When Pugachev's troops fell to looting Mikhelson's baggage train the government commander was able to regroup and counter-attack with the dreaded bayonet charge to which poorly armed and poorly disciplined mobs are so vulnerable. In the rout that ensued Pugachev saved himself, if not the situation, by again being "one of the first" to flee, whereupon his whole mob rushed to follow his example.⁵⁰

This defeat finally demolished any plans the impostor may have had for moving eastward into Siberia and confirmed his alternate plan of re-crossing

the Urals to move, at last, on Kazan and Moscow. That is why Pugachev readily acceded to the pleas of a Tatar delegation that he come and take Kungur next, so as to deliver them from the government raiding parties based there.⁵¹ Mikhelson guessed that Pugachev was now making for the nearest Ural factories to collect more men and provisions, and tried to get the co-operation of the other pursuing government detachments in surrounding and trapping his quarry. But again the rebel cause was saved by the excessive caution which its reign of terror inspired in the less resolute government commanders, and by Pugachev's sheer speed. Instead of complying with Mikhelson's request and playing his part in closing the net on the false tsar, Major Zholobov joined Dekolong, who was "defending" Chelyabinsk against a non-existent insurgent attack. Pugachev slipped through the missing sector of the trap and escaped into the Urals for the second time to renew his strength.⁵² In spite of himself Mikhelson had done the rebellion a great favor: he had literally forced Pugachev to resume the long-promised and long-delayed westward drive.

During the eight days that remained in May the impostor rebuilt his rabble army, or as he would later modestly put it in his testimony, "I picked up 10,000 Bashkirs and some factory peasants."⁵³ Pugachev also found more new and capable men to fill out the gaps in his Military College, of which Tvorogov was now the sole remaining original member. Shundeev's place as secretary was taken by a runaway merchant named Ivan Trofimov, alias Aleksei Dubrovsky, who had been with Pugachev since the Berda days. In place of Tumanov Pugachev named Beloborodov's former Russian language secretary, Gerasim Stepanov, as his new povyetchik.⁵⁴

At once the insurgent Military College launched a fresh propaganda and agitation offensive calculated to raise a wave of rebellion that would carry Pugachev across Bashkiria and Tataria to the Volga. Though they did not know

it, their task had already been simplified by another blunder of government local authorities. An ukaz from Ufa claiming that the impostor had been trapped and killed at Troitsk was already in circulation.⁵⁵ This would only serve to stimulate enthusiasm for Pugachev and correspondingly discredit government pronouncements when the people of Bashkiria learned that he was not only still alive but also returning to lead them.

New manifestos were produced for the natives and for the peasants. As usual these appeals had much in common because both groups were following the same false tsar and fighting against the same oppressive Russian dvoryane regime. The only real innovation was that in their desperation to generate instant mass support the rebel leaders exceeded even their usual promises of a three, five or seven-year tax holiday. They painted a totally irresponsible picture of a tax-free never-never land when they could not even live up to their ideal of purely voluntary service. An ukaz written by Dubrovsky told the peasants:

We, by our paternal grace and solicitude, do endow all our loyal subjects who remember their sworn duty to us with liberty, with no demands for the treasury of soul-tax and other such taxes and conscription of recruits whatsoever, with which things the treasury can provide itself by its own means, but our army, made up of volunteers for our service, will have great numbers. Moreover, in Russia the nobility (dvoryanstvo) shall not oppress the peasantry with their great works and taxes (nalogi), so that each shall feel the above-mentioned freedom and liberty.⁵⁶

Pugachev's manifesto to the Bashkirs, on the other hand, was aimed at their chiefs. It stressed both liberation of their whole people from Russian tyranny and personal glory and profit for these starshiny. To impress and embolden them the impostor said that he was going to Ufa to join forces with the Tsarevich Paul, who was approaching their capital with 40,000 men. The written appeal was supplemented by an especially lavish showering of flattering

ranks and gifts on native chieftains who made appearances before the false tsar. "One starshina he created a general, another a brigadeer, and ten others colonels. All the remaining starshiny the impostor promised to reward with rich crimson kaftans with gold trimming."⁵⁷ Pugachev also renewed and greatly expanded his outflow of orders to the native chiefs to burn and destroy all factories on their soil. He personally set the example by levelling the Zlatoustovsk and Satkinsk works as he passed through them, just as he also destroyed any village which did not properly receive him.⁵⁸ Acting on the impostor's orders, Salavat Yulaev had already burned the Simsk metalworks on May 23. By the time another Bashkir chief carried out Pugachev's command to burn the Voznesensk factory at the end of the month there was hardly a foundry left standing in all the south Ural region.⁵⁹

This almost unconditional indulgence of the Bashkirs did win their massive and enthusiastic support, sweeping aside the hard-won pacification gains of Shcherbatov and Mikhelson, but only at the price of some side-effects harmful to the overall cause of the impostor. It encouraged some of the rampaging natives to commit excesses against their uneasy allies, the rebel peasantry of the region. Especially it increased the number of incidents between Bashkir contingents and factory workers. Many of the workers resented and resisted the wholesale destruction of their main source of livelihood. As a result Pugachev did not receive such wholehearted support from them as he had the previous winter.⁶⁰ Still the hard-pressed rebel leadership had no choice but to patronize the warlike native horsemen, who were now clearly the better source of quick and massive support, at the expense of the exhausted factories. Besides, there was, in spite of everything, considerable support from the factory workers and co-operation between them and Pugachev's Bashkir commanders, thanks to the efforts of Kankaev and Beloborodov. In fact there

is some evidence, such as the complaint of a wealthy peasant against Yulai, to suggest that the friction was more between rich and poor than between Russian and Bashkir.⁶¹

While Pugachev was propagandizing and reorganizing, Mikhelson was struggling desperately to counter the impostor's incendiary agitation, keep run of his movements, catch up to him, defeat him and capture him.

On May 25 Mikhelson captured some fugitive Bashkirs in the forest and induced them to change sides. From them he learned that Pugachev was already at Satkinsk with 2000 men and would be joined there any day by Salavat with a Bashkir horde. Mikhelson did all he could to disrupt the impostor's plans. He released his Bashkir captives with orders to spread the word of a 10,000 ruble reward for Pugachev's capture. He drove his tired men to advance even more rapidly in their forced march. But when he reached the smoking ruins of Satkinsk factory on May 27, Mikhelson learned that the impostor had veered abruptly toward Krasnoufimsk and that Salavat Yulaev, moving from Simsk, would join forces with him en route. The lieutenant-colonel also discovered Yulaev's cunning reply to his reward offer. Salavat's messengers were spreading contrary reports claiming that it was the "sovereign" who had beaten Mikhelson and who had now placed a price of 300 rubles on the lieutenant-colonel's head.⁶²

During the next few days, from about May 30 to June 4, there ensued a deadly game of hide-and-seek in the wooded defiles of the Urals. Mikhelson scattered a Bashkir contingent near Simsk on May 30-31 but on June 3, near Verkhnye Kigi, he was ambushed by Pugachev with about 2000 men. Then Salavat suddenly appeared and fell on his troops from the opposite side. Mikhelson had to fight hard to escape from this trap and then from another, similar surprise attack by the false tsar the very next day. These two engagements

were the closest Pugachev ever came to beating this persistent commander who was destined to hound him to his final ruin. In both Mikhelson managed eventually to drive off his assailants with far heavier casualties, but only at the cost of utterly exhausting and decimating his own small corps. He had no choice but to retreat back to Ufa for rest, reinforcements and provisions, leaving Pugachev in possession of the field.⁶³

The propaganda superiority which enabled Pugachev to raise mob after mob of rebel zealots in rapid succession had temporarily worn Mikhelson down. The impostor had gained a kind of victory by attrition and a very important victory, as Mikhelson well knew. Though blocked now from moving on Ufa, Pugachev was free to merge with Yulaev's force and take the alternate, northern route to Kazan. If the insurgents could get past Krasnoufimsk, Kungur and Osa and cross the Kama River, they would outflank most of the government forces trying to contain them in Bashkiria. Ufa, then, was much more than a rest stop for Mikhelson; it was an important step on the shorter, direct route to Kazan by which he might still be able to intercept Pugachev's offensive on the city.⁶⁴ The question was whether this distance was short enough to offset the impostor's advantage of overwhelming popular support.

Pugachev and his Military College moved quickly to replenish their decimated following and safeguard their northern escape route by launching a new wave of propaganda and patronage to the rebel native chiefs.

On June 5 the rebel Military College sent its "chief Mishar colonel" Kanzafar Usaev, a rousing proclamation of freedom in both Turco-Tatar and Russian versions, with orders to "proclaim this my manifesto to all my subjects" and to organize resistance to the "malefactors". Another ukaz sent soon afterward warned Kanzafar and his warriors to commit no offence against any who submitted, "for fear of the sovereign's cruel wrath", and promised them all

promotion if they would serve zealously against the foe.⁶⁵ On June 6 the rebel College sent a "letter of admonishment" (uveshchatelnoe pismo) to the Mishar starshina Abdulkarim Aitov, promoting him to the rank of esaul for loyal service and ordering him to "raise an army" and "be on guard against the rampaging enemy".⁶⁶ Then, soon afterward, Pugachev joined forces with Salavat and Yulai and their 2000 men. To express his gratitude and to ensure the continued zeal of his Bashkirs in the crucial weeks ahead, the false tsar granted their wishes: He made Salavat a brigadier and his father Yulai a glavnyi ataman and ruler of all northeastern Bashkiria. Then he sent Salavat off to take Birska.⁶⁷

The move against this fort, strategically situated on the lower Belaya River north of Ufa, seemed to both the Bashkirs and the government commanders like a prelude to a new attack on Ufa itself. It was in the impostor's interest to let them both think so, for the sake of maintaining the enthusiasm of his native allies while promoting confusion as to his strategy among his enemies. The attack on Birska would be equally important as a measure to help secure his planned advance down the Kama, once he had reached that river by similarly going along with the natives in a new drive on Kungur.

While Salavat was taking Birska, Beloborodov was sent ahead by the impostor to seize Krasnoufimsk. This venture was a brilliant success, thanks to the ataman's skill in reviving and leading the rebellion of the local Cossacks and others. Beloborodov collected an army of 3000 men, beat Lt. Col. Popov's corps near Krasnoufimsk on June 12, chased the retreating government force halfway back to Kungur, where Popov took refuge on June 13, and occupied Krasnoufimsk without further resistance. It was enough to merely send in a copy of a Pugachev ukaz, in view of the enthusiasm of the Krasnoufimsk Cossacks and the tremendous propaganda impact of Beloborodov's victory.⁶⁸ The Cossacks

sent out fifty men to the impostor as he by-passed their town and joined forces with Beloborodov on June 17.⁶⁹

The locals now expected their tsar to lead them against Kungur, but Pugachev was wise enough by this time to avoid wasting precious days in a siege he did not need to procure his further progress. Besides, if the testimonies of Chumakov and Tvorogov can be trusted, the impostor's war-weary Cossacks now pleaded with him to move on Moscow without further delay.⁷⁰ Accordingly, he by-passed Kungur to the south and hurried on to Osa, about 80 versts further west. Recapturing Osa, Pugachev knew, would appease his local adherents almost as well as taking Kungur, while satisfying his own needs much better. Osa's location on the banks of the Kama would give him his bridgehead for crossing the river on the way to Kazan.

Governor von Brandt, alert to the danger, had sent his last reserves, under 2nd Maj. Skripitsyn, to stop the insurgents at Osa. On June 18, Skripitsyn managed to fight his way through a Bashkir mob and enter Osa, swelling its garrison to 1100 men and 13 cannon. This should have been a large enough force to repel the rebels, but weak leadership and low morale made the defenders vulnerable to the propaganda which the insurgents substituted for artillery.⁷¹

Skripitsyn sallied forth at once to meet the approaching Pugachev head-on, but was obliged to retreat when 100 of his men, part of the rebel Rozhdestvensk workers who had supposedly been pacified, suddenly changed sides. The impostor then returned to his camp and had an ukaz written ordering the town to surrender "without a battle". When it was ignored he attacked again and drove Skripitsyn back into the fort.⁷²

The psychological impact of these defeats was considerable. Panic began to grip Osa, and even the officers were terrified by rumors that Pugachev had

8000 men. The impostor's Cossack agitators augmented this terror, riding up under the town walls and shouting that submission was the only alternative to fire and sword. Pugachev shrewdly followed with a powerful new propaganda and military initiative designed for maximum persuasiveness. While his Cossacks invited the people of Osa to verify the authenticity of their "sovereign" by sending out some trustworthy person who had seen Peter III to identify him, Pugachev advanced in full array. In front, as Beloborodov had suggested, the rebels pushed fifty cartloads of hay, to be used first to shelter them from the defenders' volleys and then to fire the town's wooden walls.⁷³

These measures, working on the weakness of the leaders in the town and their despair at the lack of any prospect for relief, induced them to compromise with a growing pro-surrender faction. Even Skripitsyn favored talks and offered to yield at once if the attackers could prove the identity of their Peter III. Shouts from the walls offered surrender but asked for more time. Pugachev consented and postponed his assault.⁷⁴

What followed was perhaps the most bizzare and the most spectacular bloodless victory ever won by Pugachev's imposture. An old retired sergeant of the Guards was sent out from Osa to the impostor's camp. Pugachev, eager as ever to exploit any chance to strengthen his credibility as Peter III among his immediate following as well as his opponents, staged an unprecedented show of objectivity. The frightened veteran was brought before a lineup of men in Cossack dress and told to pick out the emperor. As the old soldier reached Pugachev with his scrutiny the impostor gave him the sign he needed by speaking to him: "What, old man? Did you recognize me?" He hesitated in confusion and Pugachev pressed him: "Take a good look, grandfather, and see if you remember!" Since he was not yet tired of living, the old soldier then

managed to "recognize" his "sovereign".⁷⁵

On the following day, June 21, Osa threw open its gates and gave Pugachev the usual tsar's welcome. After that the impostor first disarmed the garrison, then re-inducted them as "Cossacks" in his new "Kazan Regiment", with Skripitsyn as their colonel. Surrender, however, did not save Osa from being sacked and burned as Pugachev moved on in triumph, on June 22. Nor did it save Skripitsyn, for he was caught the very next day trying to smuggle out a message to Governor von Brandt and was promptly hanged. His place was taken by 2nd Lt. Mineev, who proved to be a reliable commander and indeed became a close advisor to the impostor for the next few weeks. He promised to guide the insurgent host to Kazan and to help them take the city, and the rebel leaders were sure they would succeed with a man of his knowledge and skill on their side.⁷⁶

In breaking through to the Kama at Osa, Pugachev had cleared the way for the greatest strategic victory of his campaigns. It was a victory which seemed able even yet, at this eleventh hour, to erase the folly of his failure to move at once on central Russia the previous fall. He had earned a second chance by following the second best strategy. He had first drained the Volga provinces of troops in the attempt to catch him in Bashkiria, and then eluded their trap. Now Pugachev was poised for the third and final step in turning the tables on his adversaries: the swift drive westward that would propel him into the power vacuum which they had so carelessly left behind them. Again the impostor was exploiting his opponents' underestimation of him; this time, their disbelief that he would dare to take a path of escape that would lead him deep into central Russia rather than away from it.⁷⁷

Pugachev's propaganda superiority had rescued a victory from defeat and turned his flight into an offensive. To consolidate that victory by seizing

Kazan he only had to maintain the pace he had already set. The continuance of massive popular support would speed his advance to Kazan and give him fresh mobs with which to overwhelm the city, while other mobs in his wake continued to obstruct and slow down his pursuers.

First of all the impostor had to arouse enough enthusiasm among his current following to attract most of them to stay with him in his new venture and encourage the rest who stayed behind to carry on a stubborn rearguard action. The conquest of Osa in itself exerted a great propaganda stimulus on the impostor's following, and its effect was supplemented by certain other chance developments, occurring during these same days, of which Pugachev took full advantage.

One such development was the arrival of a new and clever rascal in the insurgent camp before Osa. Astafy Trifonovich Dolgopolov was a former merchant of Rzhev who had once supplied oats to the imperial stables at Oranienbaum and had often seen the real emperor Peter III there. Now he had formed an audacious scheme for using this past experience to ingratiate himself with the present impostor. Dolgopolov made his way to Pugachev's camp and introduced himself as a merchant of Moscow, "Ivan Ivanov", sent by the tsarevich as a messenger. He then presented the impostor with rich gifts supposedly sent by Paul: a hat, gloves and boots all embroidered in gold. He also claimed to have sixty poods of gunpowder sent by the tsarevich which he had concealed in Nizhny Novgorod. In return he asked for 700 rubles which the emperor supposedly owed him from years before. Pugachev suspected "Ivanov" to be a "deceiver", ordered Tvorogov and Chumakov to have him closely watched, and refused the merchant's request to be released so as to return to Nizhny for the powder, for fear that his real intention might be to return with government troops. But the impostor could not resist such a chance to enhance

his masquerade. To supplement the effect of his encounter with Dolgopolov, witnessed only by his immediate circle, he at once ordered Davilin to "loudly proclaim to all his mob" that he had "received two joys: the first, that he had taken Osa and the other, that gifts had been sent by Pavel Petrovich to His Majesty."⁷⁸ Equally useful was another story of Dolgopolov's that Pugachev relayed to his assembled host on June 22, as he left Osa and prepared to cross the Kama. He told them that he had to go to Kazan at once because he had just received a message from the tsarevich, who was coming with 20,000 men to meet him there.⁷⁹

This revelation made a powerful enough impact so that Pugachev was able to follow it up with a new levy on the Bashkirs.⁸⁰ But along with this he also acceded to the wishes of many of his Bashkirs and Mishars and sent them back to carry on their fight on their home ground.

Salavat Yulaev, wounded during one of the skirmishes at Osa, was unable now to accompany Pugachev to Kazan in any event, and had to be sent back home with his retainers to recover. The false tsar used the occasion to send back not only Salavat but also several other prominent chiefs, including Kanzafar Usaev and Bakhtiyar Kankaev, with their contingents. Each was rewarded for his past services and equipped for his future duties with the rank of colonel, fifty rubles, a Pugachev manifesto and orders to continue the struggle. Kankaev, who was left in command on the Kama, wasted no time in obeying: on the same day, June 22, he sent off an order to the rebel assembly of Uransk volost to gather men and help pin down government troops in Sarapul. To spur these rebels on he told them two lies: that the "sovereign" was now in Kungur and that he was coming directly to them.⁸¹

As for the impostor's Yaik Cossacks, they seemed to take Dolgopolov's story so much to heart as to be more eager than Pugachev himself to move on

Moscow. Pugachev later testified that they "urged (usil'no prosili) me to go to Moscow, which I promised in order to satisfy them." However, the Cossacks' words suggest that they were wearying of the struggle, as they told Pugachev "that since he was tsar it was time to take the throne, and enough shedding of human blood." Pugachev also betrayed a lack of firm resolution with his reply, cautioning them that "it's not time yet."⁸² For the time being, though, all were eager enough to seize Kazan, whether because it was the key to Moscow or the key to an escape southward down the Volga.

As he forded the Kama downstream from Osa on June 23 Pugachev had between five and eight thousand men: Yaik Cossacks, Bashkirs, Krasnoufimsk Cossacks, economic peasants, serfs and soldiers. That was plenty for a start. Tatar emissaries who had come to invite the impostor to their old capital confirmed Mineev's description of its weakness and unpreparedness. They also assured Pugachev of the support of their people, confirming his hunch that the native and Russian peasantry of the region, who had demonstrated such zeal the previous winter, could be relied on to welcome him and swell his mob.⁸³ Pugachev had already ensured the protection of a strong Bashkir rearguard action and the enthusiasm of his own mob. Now the remaining, closely interconnected ingredients for a successful juggernaut - the paralyzing of his weak opponents by terror, the attraction of vast new hordes to his army, and a swift advance on his objective - were likewise assured.

The powerful effects of these ingredients were immediately apparent: the false tsar found that his crossing of the Kama was unopposed. Colonel Obernibesov, whom Shcherbatov had put on river patrol to block Pugachev's passage, had lost his nerve and withdrawn to Zainsk. Even there he feared the reviving unrest of the locals and appealed to Shcherbatov for reinforcements. Later, in an order of July 16, Shcherbatov would severely reprimand Obernibesov

for cowardice and declare his intention to drag the colonel before the Military College. One wonders, however, whether Shcherbatov himself was much better, in view of his own slowness in moving to heading off the impostor and his continuing reliance on Mikhelson to do most of the work.⁸⁴ With Obernibesov out of the way, the workers of Rozhdestvensk, on the Kama's western bank, were free to prepare barge boats and help Pugachev cross. In return, the false tsar refrained from looting or destroying this foundry which was the sole source of income for its landless workers.⁸⁵

Next came the Votkinsk and Izhevsk factories. There, Collegiate Councilor Ventsel had collected a defence force of 1300 tradesmen and factory serfs under military officers. However a Bashkir attack on Sarapul led Ventsel to concentrate his men at Izhevsk in the belief that Pugachev was approaching from that quarter. By the time he realized his mistake and headed for Votkinsk the flames of that factory on the horizon gave his unwilling charges all the signal they needed to begin deserting en masse to their tsar. On June 27 Pugachev defeated the factory contingent, hanged its officers who refused to serve him, and absorbed the men into his army, raising its strength to over 7000 men and twelve cannon. Then he looted and burned the Izhevsk factory.⁸⁶ On June 29 Pugachev stopped to celebrate at a Mari village. As usual he took advantage of the occasion to stage another show of his authenticity as Peter III for the benefit of both the awestruck locals and his own host. The impostor drank from a wineglass bearing a portrait of the empress Anna while his accomplices toasted him as emperor.⁸⁷

Already, as Pugachev moved westward through the Kama and Vyatka country, the pattern of the peasant jacquerie that would sustain him for the next two months was emerging. The local peasant population, who had been in a state of unrest and eager anticipation of their tsar's coming for many months, were

in a receptive mood. But just to make doubly sure of this, Pugachev's armed bands and his vanguard maintained their studied blend of practical incentives - of enticing propaganda and selective terror - as they rode through the villages. New ukazy were produced and proclaimed all along the way. They promised a freedom which these predominately non-serf peasants could readily understand and appreciate: seven years' liberty from all taxes and other impositions was to be their reward for loyal submission and service; for "just a few serving him (i.e. Pugachev) as Cossacks." The priests of the Russian and "newly baptized" native villages were singled out for special attention because of their local influence and leadership. Beloborodov in his testimony laconically describes the simple choice of submission or death with which they were confronted: "The priests of villages who met him with the cross he spared, but those who did not meet him he hanged."⁸⁸ These tactics assured the impostor of massive support from the surrounding Udmurt, Mari and Tatar yasak peasants and from the Russian state, economic and pomestie peasants. By early July, as Pugachev neared Kazan, his following had grown to 20,000 or more.⁸⁹

Meanwhile the bewildered and frightened government commanders both before and behind the false tsar's onslaught were struggling desperately to make headway against the new crest of popular rebellion which his onslaught was raising. Both von Brandt and Shcherbatov have been justly censored for their negligence and inefficiency in meeting the challenge. The former, sharing the general delusion that Pugachev would never dare to break out to the westward, had not begun to strengthen Kazan's garrison or repair the decaying walls of its kremlin in time. The latter had remained in Orenburg instead of following Pugachev to the north and west. Still the crisis which these commanders faced was by no means exclusively the product of their own mistakes;

their hands were tied by the chaos which the impostor had unleashed against them on all sides.⁹⁰

Von Brandt was writing frantic letters to Shcherbatov, urging him to send help and come at once to Kazan. Shcherbatov, finally shocked into action, left Orenburg and ordered his field commanders to converge on Kazan. But his progress was badly slowed and disrupted by the constant Bashkir attacks and Kazakh raids he had to deal with.

Pugachev was doing all he could to ensure continued Kazakh harassment of the Yaik frontier by sending further messages and agitators among the nomads. One such communication, in mid-June, had urged the Kazakh chiefs to collect several thousand men and attack forts of the Upper Yaik line. One of the resultant attacks had freed Grigory Tumanov at the end of the month, just as Reindsorp was reporting to Panin that Khan Nur-Ali and even the rebel Sultan Dus-Ali had newly pledged their loyalty. These Kazakh raids, often co-ordinated with Bashkir and Kalmyk attacks, continued in July. At the end of that month a returned Russian captive would reveal an important reason why. He had heard that Pugachev had agreed with Nur-Ali and the Kuban khan to divide up the Russian Empire three ways. To the first would go European Russia north of the Don and west of the Volga; to the second, everything east of the Volga; and to the third, the entire North Caucasian steppe.⁹¹

Faced with such massive difficulties, Shcherbatov had to report that "The forces, scattered over a wide expanse of land, cannot hasten to cut off the evildoers' offensive."⁹² He was still depending on Mikhelson to intercept, smash and capture Pugachev. But the Lieutenant Colonel had only learned of the impostor's whereabouts on June 21. Fighting off Bashkirs all the way, Mikhelson managed to reach the Kama on July 3 and the Vyatka on July 8. That was fast, considering the obstacles, but not fast enough to catch Pugachev

before he could reach Kazan. Bakhtiyar Kankaev was conducting a stubborn rearguard action in spite of trying circumstances, as his reports to Pugachev show. Though he still claimed to be getting plenty of volunteers, he had to contend not only with Colonel "Melkhison" and certain turncoat starshiny who had joined him, but also with shortages of arms, powder and horses for all but his own 600 men, and with the activities of at least one elusive pro-government agitator. The latter, adopting rebel methods, was riding on post horses through the villages, proclaiming a "Moscow ukaz" and telling the inhabitants "not to acknowledge Your Majesty as the third emperor but as Pugachev". Consequently, Bakhtiyar was unable to halt Mikhelson's 2000 men and six cannon, but he continued to harass the lieutenant colonel while posting 50-man guards at all Kama and Vyatka crossings to obstruct Shcherbatov's approaching detachments.⁹³

By this time the paralysis of terror in the face of a merciless class warfare had replaced complacent indolence as the chief impediment to efficient defence preparations in Kazan. The impostor's coming was being impatiently awaited not only by the surrounding native and Russian peasantry but also by thousands inside the city itself: rebel prisoners of the Secret Expedition, serfs of dvoryane refugees from the countryside and impoverished townspeople. It was this dangerous internal threat, the existence of such a large "fifth column" in the presence of such a small and weak garrison, that forced von Brandt to reject Col. Prince Odoevsky's proposal. This plan, which no doubt would have worked well in a more normal situation, called for the sending out of all 600-odd available defenders to block Pugachev's advance until Mikhelson could catch up and take him in the rear. Instead, though, von Brandt made a move that was worse than none at all: he sent out less than half of his meager garrison - 100 foot, 100 carbines and one cannon - to face the rebels. He

might as well have made an outright gift of these precious men and arms to Pugachev. On July 10 a vast insurgent host of 20,000 or more engulfed the tiny force and closed in on Orenburg.⁹⁴

On July 11 the impostor reached the eastern suburbs of Kazan and established his camp there, at Troitsk mills. Ovchinnikov rode ahead with a Pugachev ukaz produced for the occasion by Dubrovsky and Stepanov, addressed to the people of Kazan and promising them the tsar's generous favours in return for prompt submission. When no reply was received, Pugachev planned his assault. That evening he and his leading advisors, with a party of 50 men, reconnoitered the city's defences. They soon perceived the vulnerability of Kazan both to propaganda and to a combined rear and flank assault.⁹⁵

Returning to his camp, the impostor made the most of his findings as propaganda to arouse his host for the coming battle. He addressed the mob and relayed to them the news that he claimed to have received from an old man encountered on Arskoe field, who had told him "that in Kazan the archbishop and all the lords are willing to surrender to the evildoer and welcome him, but the newly arrived general from Moscow (Gen. Paul Potemkin - L.H.M.) and the governor forbid them and say: 'If they go to meet the evildoer with crosses, then we'll smash the crosses with cannonfire.'" On the morning of the following day, July 12, Pugachev administered a further dose of heartening propaganda, this time to his assembled war council. He told his atamans, colonels and starshiny that if Kazan fell he intended to "go to Moscow and take the throne there and conquer the whole Russian state."⁹⁶

The majority of the impostor's following were a mere peasant mob, untrained and undisciplined, unarmed except for clubs, pitchforks, scythes and sharpened poles. Many did not even have such primitive weapons as those. But they were armed nevertheless with a desperation inspired by Pugachev's

promises of freedom and reinforced by their fear of the Cossacks who followed behind, driving them into battle with their nagaiki (Cossack whips). As a result these unarmed thousands not only shouted and raised a great clamour, as Pugachev had ordered; some of them literally fought with their bare hands.⁹⁷

Such desperate courage, in view of the exceptional weakness of the defenders and the unusually effective tactics which Pugachev, Beloborodov and Mineev displayed with their three-sided assault, was enough to carry Kazan's feeble outer defences. As the rebel mob swarmed into the streets of the largest town they had yet entered, Pugachev's reign of terror took on new and frightening dimensions. Potemkin had to fall back quickly toward the kremlin in order to avoid being cut off and surrounded, and even so his Chuvash cavalry went over to the insurgents. Everywhere the townspeople faced a simple choice: escape, submission or death. The overwhelming majority were choosing the second option, although Pugachev's wild Bashkirs, disobeying his strict orders, were obscuring and hurting his selective terror tactics by indulging in some indiscriminate slaughter of men, women and children. Potemkin, however, was no better when he ordered the mass slaughter of all the rebel prisoners so that Pugachev's mob could not liberate and absorb them. Some were killed, but before this counter-atrocity could be completed the prison was in rebel hands. Potemkin barely had time to rush into the citadel before the mob reached it and Pugachev brought up his siege-guns to bombard the decaying old fortress.⁹⁸

In winning this great victory and freeing the prisoners the impostor was avenging their sufferings and his own in that same Kazan ostrog over two years earlier. Unfortunately, he was also catching up to other aspects of his past that jeopardized his tsarist pretences, for a few of the liberated prisoners turned out to be former close associates who knew his true identity and whose

present reliability was questionable. One of these was the monk Filaret, but he apparently gave Pugachev no trouble. In fact, he now disappeared without a trace.⁹⁹ But a much more awkward and embarrassing problem was posed by four other liberated prisoners: Pugachev's first wife and their three children.

As the impostor approached, his little boy Trofim was heard to shout, as little boys will do at the most inconvenient times, "Mommy, look! Daddy's coming!" A startled Pugachev managed to keep his composure well enough to make a quick and disarming response: "Well, well! It's the wife of my friend Pugachev, at whose home I lived in poverty and who suffered on my behalf."¹⁰⁰ The impostor showed his family as much kindness as he dared to under the circumstances. He ordered that they be taken into his personal household of ten maidservants. There they were to remain for the duration of his campaigns, sharing his tents and travelling on one of his carts. Pugachev sternly warned them not to betray his true identity and so far as is known they never did, but the special treatment he accorded them could not fail to arouse the suspicions of his followers.

This new blow to Pugachev's credibility as Peter III, however, seems to have damaged his popular appeal even less than had his marriage to Ustinia Petrovna in February. Although rumors must have spread quickly and confirmed the suspicions of many as to Pugachev's true identity, his following remained as large and enthusiastic as ever wherever he went. Very few of those rebels captured after Kazan even mention the incident, let alone make much of it, in their testimonies.¹⁰¹

It was the dread news of Mikhelson's approach, received by Pugachev not more than four hours after his entry into Kazan, which really cast a shadow over the impostor's victory celebrations. Without this development the kremlin would almost certainly have fallen. Already its ancient walls were beginning

to crumble under Pugachev's shelling, while the defenders choked in the smoke of their own burning houses, ignited by the impostor's Bashkirs on his orders. Defeatism was spreading among the terrorized refugees inside: Potemkin had to supplement Archbishop Venyamin's prayers and admonitions with the hanging of two capitulationists in order to keep control. But when the defenders awoke the next morning they found that their prayers had been answered. The insurgents had not returned because they were being engaged in battle by Mikhelson just east of the city.¹⁰²

The battle before Kazan on July 13 was a repetition of previous encounters in which Pugachev had been trounced but not vanquished by Mikhelson's redoubtable little corps. The insurgents had a degree of firepower as well as zeal which surprised Mikhelson:

The evildoers met me with a great shout and with such cannon and small arms fire as I have seldom seen, having gone against various enemies, and did not expect from these barbarians.¹⁰³

But still Mikhelson's great superiority in efficiency and discipline won him the day. Pugachev had to flee, leaving behind 800 dead and 737 prisoners, while his hated and feared tormentor relieved Kazan.

Nevertheless the impostor had salvaged the bulk of his army, and thanks to the combined power of his propaganda appeals and his coercion, additional thousands of peasants were streaming in to swell his ranks. By way of contrast Shcherbatov, according to a report of Bakhtiyar to his "sovereign" dated July 14, was hanging back, frightened by the news that "Almighty God has delivered Kazan to Your Majesty."¹⁰⁴ Even on July 15, the very day they faced Mikhelson again, Pugachev and his college were still issuing measures contributing to their agitation. An ukaz, signed by Tvorogov and Dubrovsky, to the clergy of Kazan uezd ordered the villagers to feed them, for which favor they in turn were to commit no extortion or oppression. This edict was widely

distributed in over 100 copies. Pugachev's College also gave a pass to two Kazan merchants to go to the village of Karavaev and provide food for the people there.¹⁰⁵ Pugachev was able to return with an enormous mob numbering at least 15,000 and perhaps as many as 25,000 men. Mikhelson had only 1000 men and again claimed to be hard pressed by his adversaries' fanaticism and firepower, but once more quality triumphed over quantity.¹⁰⁶ After a hard day's fighting the impostor and his mob were soundly beaten. Leaving 2000 dead and 5000 to 10,000 captured along with all their artillery, they scattered in flight, pursued for as much as 30 versts by Mikhelson's cavalry. Pugachev himself had a very close brush with death or capture as he tried to rally his men around his camp. Only by fleeing into the nearby dense forests and hiding there was he able to escape with the core of his army.¹⁰⁷

Ivan Beloborodov was less fortunate than his "sovereign". He also hid in the forest but was rash enough to come out and give himself up to the Kazan authorities under an assumed name. He was gambling on not being noticed or betrayed while being processed along with the thousands of other peasants taking advantage of the usual government amnesty offer. Then, on being released, he would quickly find Pugachev again. However his gamble failed when he was identified by an informer. He was later interrogated and flogged by the Kazan Secret Expedition, and finally executed in Moscow. Ivan Beloborodov's exceptional gifts as a rebel organizer and leader had played a great part in getting Pugachev through Bashkiria. His loss was a serious blow to the impostor.¹⁰⁸

Among the 10,000 men, women and children captured by Mikhelson in Pugachev's camp and sent back to Kazan were 700 soldiers of the Kazan Regiment. Their story highlights once again one of the most telling weaknesses of the impostor: his failure to really convince soldiers and win them over. These troops said

that Pugachev had never trusted them and had only let one man in six keep his rifle.¹⁰⁹ Yet such were the very men who could have formed the vital infantry nucleus of a real army for the false tsar and could have made the difference between defeat and victory at Kazan as elsewhere.

Official and aristocratic Russia indulged in another premature victory celebration when the news of Pugachev's defeat before Kazan was received. Mikhelson was now a celebrity. The wealthy industrialist P.A. Demidov called him the savior of Moscow as well as Kazan. Catherine promoted Mikhelson to the rank of full colonel and once again demonstrated her imperviousness to the lessons of the rebellion with a fine touch of irony by awarding Mikhelson an additional 600 peasant "souls".¹¹⁰

At the scene of the victory, however, there was little celebration. Pugachev was still at large and, thanks to the activities of his bands east of the Volga, had several days' head start on the other government contingents without whose aid Mikhelson could not hope to trap him. Col. Potemkin reported to St. Petersburg how he was doing his best to undercut Pugachev's popular support with a show of clemency. He claimed that his release of the bulk of his thousands of new prisoners was greatly impressing and helping to pacify the local population. However, he had to go on to predict that the impostor would try to outflank such measures by crossing the Volga and heading for Moscow. To deal with the consequences, Potemkin urged that "at least a battallion of guards" be sent at once. While von Brandt pleaded with Shcherbatov to send more cavalry, General Potemkin organized river patrols to try to prevent Pugachev from crossing the Volga.¹¹¹ These frantic efforts, however, were too little too late. On July 17, just two days after his second defeat at Kazan, Pugachev made his crossing and began a still more terrifying revival of his movement on the threshold of agricultural, serf-owning central Russia.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER IV

1. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, p. 209.
2. V.M. Paneyakh, "Kinzia Arslanov; Salavat Yulaev", Pugachev i ego spodvizhniki, Moscow-Leningrad, 1965, pp. 120-121. (Henceforth cited as "Paneyakh")
3. Dubrovin, vol. III, pp. 1-3, 9.
4. Alexander, p. 135, Pugachevshchina, vol. III, No. 126, p. 250.
5. Tkhorzhevsky, pp. 62-63.
6. Pugachevshchina, vol. II, Dopolneniya, p. 403.
7. Andrushchenko, p. 149.
8. Cited by Andrushchenko, p. 150.
9. Ibid., p. 204; Pugachevshchina, vol. I, pp. 90-91.
10. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, No. 77, pp. 84-85; No. 83, pp. 90-91; No. 237, p. 194.
11. Alexander, p. 136, Ocherki po istorii Bashkirskoi A.S.S.R., p. 241.
12. As Mavrodin notes (vol. II, p. 463), Dubrovin errs (vol. III, p. 21) in following Tvorogov's incorrect assertion that Tumanov, rather than Sedachev, now became Pugachev's povytchik. (See Pugachevshchina, vol. I, No. 30, p. 50.)
13. Dubrovin, vol. III, pp. 21-22. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, Primechaniya, p. 228.
14. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, p. 50.
15. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, No. 89, pp. 94-95; No. 93, p. 98.
16. Ibid., vol. I, No. 54, pp. 64-65; No. 84, p. 91.
17. TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 416, ch. 1, otd. 2, l. 1-6.
18. Andrushchenko, pp. 205-206.
19. Pugachevshchina, vol. II, p. 145. Yu.A. Limonov, "Ivan Naumovich Beloborodov", Pugachev i ego spodvizhniki, p. 107. (Henceforth cited as "Limonov".)
20. Cited by Dubrovin, vol. II, pp. 323, 324.
21. Rozner, Kazachestvo, pp. 144-145.

22. Paneyakh, p. 128.
23. Ibid., p. 127.
24. Dubrovin, vol. III, pp. 17-20; Andrushchenko, p. 207.
25. Dubrovin, vol. III, pp. 20, 24-25.
26. Pugachevshchina, vol. III, No. 127, p. 151.
27. Andrushchenko, p. 151; TsGADA, G.A. r. VI, d. 4, l. 325, d. 512, ch. 1, l. 468 ob.
28. Dubrovin, vol. III, p. 37.
29. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, Nos. 200, 201, pp. 168, 169.
30. Ibid., vol. III, pp. 7-8. Rozner, Kazachestvo, pp. 149-150.
31. Andrushchenko, pp. 184-185. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, pp. 64-65.
32. Alexander, p. 136, Paneyakh, pp. 129-130.
33. Dubrovin, vol. III, pp. 28-30.
34. Limonov, p. 88.
35. Beloborodov's testimony, Pugachevshchina, vol. II, no. 126, pp. 329-330.
36. Limonov (p. 85) gives this estimate of Beloborodov's strength on the basis of a letter of Stepan Kuznetsov (Pugachevshchina, vol. I, No. 121, p. 116). Beloborodov, in his testimony (Martynov, p. 51), claimed to have only 700 men, including 200 factory workers.
37. Andrushchenko, pp. 53-54.
38. Pugachev's Yaik Testimony, No. 4, p. 121. His Moscow testimony, p. 210. Testimony of Yaik Cossack, I. Krylov, Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 81, p. 137. Dubrovin, vol. III, p. 30.
39. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 154. Pugachevshchina, vol. II, Dopolneniya, p. 434.
40. Dubrovin, vol. III, p. 30. Andrushchenko (p. 153) criticizes this, noting that Dubrovin gives no references. But he cannot deny that Pugachev more than once ordered the Bashkirs to destroy factories.
41. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, p. 211. Limonov, p. 108. Mavrodin, Krestyanskie voyny, p. 243.
42. Andrushchenko, p. 185.
43. Dubrovin, vol. III, pp. 22-23, Pugachevshchina, vol. III, No. 130, pp. 255-257; No. 132, p. 259.

44. Beloborodov's testimony, Pugachevshchina, vol. II, No. 126, p. 331. Dubrovin (vol. II, pp. 32-33) tells the story of rebel atrocities in Troitsk and Alexander (pp. 137-138) follows it. Naturally, all is denied by the testimonies of captured rebels like I. Kuznetsov, Chumakov and Tvorogov, who claim that the insurgents killed only those in power - a few officers and gentry. (Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 81, p. 137. TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 505, l. 5 ob.)
45. Pushkin, p. 73.
46. Tvorogov's testimony, Pugachevshchina, vol. II, p. 146. Rozner (Kazachestvo, p. 156) uses the figure of 3500 unharmed captives as hard evidence that the insurgents were not nearly as cruel as Dekolong and his soldiers, who took only a handful of rebels alive.
47. Cited by Dubrovin, vol. III, p. 35.
48. Pugachevshchina, vol. II, No. 87, pp. 259-261.
49. TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 505, l. 6.
50. Dubrovin, vol. III, p. 38.
51. Andrushchenko, p. 188. Pugachevshchina, vol. II, No. 44 (Tvorogov's testimony), p. 146; No. 126 (Beloborodov's testimony), p. 331. Some documentary evidence (e.g. Pugachev's Moscow Testimony, p. 211) suggests that Pugachev had planned to move further eastward, but other evidence contradicts this. Rozner (Kazachestvo, p. 156) insists that the balance of evidence shows that only the more "moderate" of Pugachev's advisors (Tvorogov and Chumakov) favored this, while the more "radical" (Pugachev, Ovchinnikov, Perfiliev) had overruled it and carried a renewed decision to turn toward Moscow.
52. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 158; Ocherki istorii Bashkirskoi A.S.S.R., p. 244.
53. Pugachev's Yaik Testimony, Voprosy Istorii, 1966, No. 4, p. 121. I. Kuznetsov's testimony, Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 81, p. 137.
54. Pugachevshchina, vol. II. No. 44 (Tvorogov's testimony), p. 149; No. 72 (Trofimov's testimony), pp. 220-221; Dopolneniya, p. 403.
55. TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 416, ch. 1 otd. 14, l. 2.
56. Cited by Dubrovin, vol. III, pp. 52-53.
57. Dubrovin, vol. III, p. 52.
58. Pugachevshchina, vol. II, No. 125 (testimony of townsman A.F. Potorochinov), p. 324; No. 126 (Beloborodov's testimony), p. 331.
59. Mavrodin, vol. II, p. 216. TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 427, l. 9-14, d. 431, l. 19, 19 ob. Andrushchenko, p. 248.

60. Andrushchenko, p. 272. TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 504, ch. 4, l. 194 ob.
61. TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 416, ch. 1, otd. 1; otd. 14, l. 8.
62. Dubrovin, vol. III, pp. 38-40.
63. Ibid., vol. III, pp. 40-43. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, No. 55, p. 65.
64. Oreus, "Ivan Ivanovich Mikhelson", p. 199. Pugachevshchina, vol. III, No. 135, pp. 263-264.
65. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, No. 31, pp. 50-51.
66. Ibid., vol. I, No. 55, p. 65.
67. Beloborodov's testimony, Martynov, p. 52. Paneyakh, pp. 130-131.
68. Chumakov's and Tvorogov's testimony, TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 505, l. 6. Dubrovin, vol. III, pp. 55-58. Limonov, p. 89. Paneyakh, p. 131.
69. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, p. 213.
70. TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 416, ch. 1, otd. 17, l. 42.
71. Dubrovin, vol. III, pp. 66-68. TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 505, l. 6.
72. Dubrovin, vol. III, p. 68. Andrushchenko, p. 262.
73. Pugachev's Yaitsk testimony, No. 4, p. 121. Limonov, p. 89, Dubrovin, vol. III, p. 68.
74. Beloborodov's testimony, Martynov, pp. 52-53. Pugachevshchina, vol. II, No. 126, p. 332. Dubrovin, vol. III, pp. 68-69.
75. Dubrovin, vol. III, pp. 69-71.
76. Ibid., vol. III, pp. 71-74. Chumakov's and Tvorogov's testimony, TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 505, l. 6 ob. Beloborodov's testimony, Pugachevshchina, vol. II, No. 126, p. 332.
77. Alexander, p. 147.
78. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, p. 234.
79. Dubrovin, vol. III, pp. 63-66. Chumakov's and Tvorogov's testimony, TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 505, l. 6 ob.
80. Dubrovin, vol. III, pp. 72-73.
81. Andrushchenko, p. 161. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, No. 94, pp. 98-99. Paneyakh, p. 131. TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 428, l. 4.
82. Pugachev's Yaitsk testimony, No. 4, p. 121. Chumakov's and Tvorogov's testimony, TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 505, l. 6.

83. Pugachevshchina, vol. II, p. 357.
84. Pugachevshchina, vol. III, pp. 269-270.
85. Andrushchenko, p. 262.
86. Dubrovin, vol. III, pp. 74-75.
87. Beloborodov's testimony, Martynov, pp. 53-54.
88. Beloborodov's testimony, Pugachevshchina, vol. II, No. 126, pp. 332-333.
89. Testimony of Karp Stepanov Karas, Martynov, pp. 57-58. The Yaik Cossack I. Kuznetsov affirms (Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 81, p. 137) that most of these native and Russian villagers, as well as many soldiers and citizens of Kazan, joined Pugachev voluntarily.
90. Dubrovin, vol. III, pp. 75-76, 81. Alexander (p. 148) also notes two other excuses for Kazan's unpreparedness which are valid in the short term: Von Brandt was already mortally ill, while General Potemkin, newly-appointed head of the Kazan Secret Commission, had only arrived a few days before Pugachev, so that he had not had sufficient time to organize a defence.
91. Limonov, p. 108. Pugachevshchina, vol. II, No. 105, p. 288; No. 107, p. 292.
92. Pugachevshchina, vol. III, No. 96, p. 271.
93. Ibid., vol. I, Nos. 96-101, pp. 100-103; No. 208, pp. 173-174; No. 210, p. 175; No. 257, pp. 207-208; vol. II, No. 89, pp. 262-263. Alexander, p. 147.
94. Dubrovin, vol. III, pp. 82-86.
95. Ibid., vol. III, pp. 87-88. Pugachev's Yaitsk testimony, No. 4, p. 121. Beloborodov's testimony, Martynov, p. 54.
96. Beloborodov's testimony, Pugachevshchina, vol. II, No. 126, p. 333.
97. Pushkin, pp. 79-80. Dubrovin, vol. III, p. 88.
98. Pushkin, p. 81. Dubrovin, vol. III, pp. 89-91.
99. TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 506, l. 33.
100. Mavrodin, Pugachev, p. 26. Pugachev's Yaitsk testimony, No. 4, p. 121.
101. Dubrovin, vol. III, pp. 97, 215. Tvorogov's testimony, Pugachevshchina, vol. II, No. 44, p. 149.
102. Dubrovin, vol. III, pp. 90-91. Pugachev's Yaitsk testimony, No. 4, p. 122. Chumakov's and Tvorogov's testimony, TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 505, l. 7.

103. Cited by Dubrovin, vol. III, p. 98.
104. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, No. 257, p. 208.
105. Ibid., vol. I, No. 58, p. 66.
106. Oreus, "Ivan Ivanovich Mikhelson", pp. 200-201. Dubrovin (vol. III, p. 100) in a footnote very correctly poses a question that is obvious by now - if Pugachev really fought so well, why did he keep losing, with terrific casualties, to a corps only a fraction the size of his own mob? Dubrovin suspects Mikhelson of having exaggerated the rebels' strength in his reports in order to glorify his own exploits.
107. Dubrovin, vol. III, pp. 100-101. Chumakov and Tvorogov (TsGADA, G.A., r. VI, d. 505, l. 7) speak of three battles; the first was inconclusive except for Pugachev's being obliged to evacuate Kazan, the second was won by Mikhelson and the third left the impostor "clean smashed" (razbit na chisto).
108. Pushkin, p. 85. Beloborodov's testimony, Martynov, p. 56.
109. Dubrovin, vol. III, p. 101.
110. Ibid., vol. III, p. 102.
111. Ibid., vol. III, pp. 102-104. Alexander, p. 189.

CHAPTER V

PUGACHEV CROSSES THE VOLGA

Pushkin neatly summed up the ensuing final crescendo of the rebellion when he wrote, "Pugachev was fleeing, but his flight seemed like an offensive."¹ Indeed Pugachev's epic flight from Kazan turned out to be his most audacious, spectacular and terrifying offensive of all.

Once again the impostor was in a situation similar to that which he had faced after his earlier major defeats at Tatischev, Sakmarsk and Troitsk. Again government forces, unable to follow up their smashing victory by capturing their foe or at least deflecting him into a relatively harmless course, found themselves literally chasing him in the very direction they feared most. Once more Pugachev was moving into new ground where his powerful agitation could be counted on to quickly revive his fortunes. This time, however, the deadly game was entering its climactic phase. The false tsar's trajectory was finally carrying him across the Volga, straight toward Moscow, his oft-proclaimed goal, and toward the serf millions of central Russia who impatiently awaited his arrival.

Pugachev no longer had any choice but to cross the Volga and carry his insurrection into at least the outskirts of metropolitan Russia. The question remains, however, as to whether he or his advisors still really intended (if indeed they ever had) to go all the way to Moscow. Ever since the rebel leaders' strategy planning of late May such a bold move had been predicated on victory at Kazan.² Otherwise Pugachev had planned to turn southward and go to the Don. There is some evidence indicating that this alternate plan was adopted right after the Kazan defeat. Pugachev's Cossack starshiny are supposed to have chosen this juncture to repeat their earlier plea, "Your Majesty, have mercy! How long will we have to wander this way and shed human

blood? It's time for you to go to Moscow and take the throne." To this Pugachev allegedly replied, "No, children, have patience. My time has not yet come. But when it comes, then I'll go myself without your summons. But now I'm resolved to go to the Don. There are some there who know me and will receive me joyfully." Chumakov and Tvorogov even claim in their testimonies that Pugachev promised now that if he took Tsaritsyn he would winter in Yaitsk, "where all the Yaik Cossacks urged him to go".³

This story is probably more than just another example of Pugachev's and his associates' attempts in their testimonies to minimize their guilt. It does not necessarily contradict the fact that after his supposed decision they went on making moves that seemed to indicate a continued drive on Moscow more than an escape southward. For one thing, Pugachev's talk of going to the Don could have been intended to lure his Yaik Cossacks into becoming involved in the move on Moscow which they had only pretended to want. For another, this plan could have been simply the latest and grandest application of the impostor's cautious old two-way strategy: advancing gingerly while always keeping a "back door" open for tactical retreat or escape. Pugachev knew that even if he did turn southward he could still continue to watch for openings to threaten Moscow all the way. This would lend maximum credibility to his propaganda and agitation, so as to assure the mass uprising that was as essential for shielding his escape as for promoting his advance. The authorities and government detachments would be kept off balance. They would be confused and frightened by the universal chaos and with the limited forces at their disposal they would not be able to seal off both the approaches to Moscow and the southern escape route at the same time. Above all, Pugachev knew that even if he should be forced to retreat all the way down to his native Don, he would find there not only an avenue for escape from the empire but also a formidable new base, replacing his lost Ural

stronghold, from which he could return to menace Moscow as never before.⁴

Now more than ever the success of this dual strategy depended on effective propaganda and agitation and effective use of the massive support which they produced. Pugachev and his advisors, goaded on now by desperation, threw themselves vigorously into the task.

The impostor's first step was to give a parting impetus to the rebellion in Bashkiria so as to ensure that it would continue to obstruct Shcherbatov's and Golitsyn's advance from Ufa for as long as possible. He commanded his Bashkir and Mishar warriors, who made up the great majority of the 3000 men he had re-gathered as he fled north-westward from Kazan, not to cross the Volga with him but to "return to their settlements".⁵ There they would join with hundreds of Russian peasants and peasant-workers scattered in Pugachev's defeats who were already making their way back, often with the authorities' blessings after taking a solemn oath to be loyal in future and to breathe not a word of Pugachev's capture of Kazan, on pain of death.⁶ The combined numbers of these returning men would help to swell the forces of Bakhtiyar Kankaev and his new colleague, the rebel esaul-turned-"colonel" Gavril Likhachev, who had remained behind after failing to reach Pugachev in time at Kazan with reinforcements.⁷ Only Pugachev's trusted advisor Kinzia Arslanov was excepted. Kinzia and the remaining fifty men of his Bashkir regiment rode with the impostor, his 300 Yaik Cossacks and the rest of his select mounted force, estimated as numbering from 400 to 1000 men, that crossed the Volga at Kokshaisk on July 17. Arslanov and his Bashkirs would stay with Pugachev to the end, fighting as stubbornly as their countrymen who carried on their struggle at home.⁸

Immediately after crossing the Volga Pugachev was obliged to use a little terror as his next step. Just to remind all of his followers, both

actual and potential, that he was in deadly earnest, he burned a village on the right bank whose inhabitants had fled rather than assist him in his crossing.⁹ Then immediately afterward, on July 18 in a field near the river, the impostor grandly produced the gingerbread to follow the knout. Pugachev officially promulgated the new manifesto, penned by Dubrovsky, that was to herald his western onslaught.

By the Grace of God we, Peter III, emperor and All-Russian autocrat

etc., etc., etc.

Do endow by this personal (imennym) ukaz, with our monarchical and paternal compassion, all who were formerly in the peasantry to be loyal slaves (vernopodannymi rabami, i.e., loyal subjects) of our own crown and we reward (you) with the ancient cross and prayer, with heads (i.e., raskolnik tonsure) and beards, with liberty and freedom to be Cossacks forever, not demanding levies of recruits, soul and other money taxes, with ownership of the lands, of the forest (and) having rights and of the fisheries, and of the salt lakes without purchase and without quit-rent (obrok), and we free of all the taxes and oppressions formerly imposed on the peasants and the whole people by the dvoryane malefactors and the city extortioner-judges. And we wish you salvation of souls and a peaceful life on earth, for which we tasted and endured wandering and no small miseries from the aforementioned dvoryane malefactors. And as now our name by the power of the Almighty Right Hand is flourishing in Russia, for that reason we command by this our personal ukaz: those who formerly were dvoryane in their pomestiya and votchiny, those enemies of our power and subverters of the empire and destroyers of the peasants are to be caught, executed and hanged and treated the same way as they, having no Christianity in them, did with you, the peasants. At the extermination of which opponents and dvoryane malefactors, each may begin to feel a quiet and a tranquil life, which will continue forever.¹⁰

Here, at last, beneath the bad grammar and punctuation and the veneer of pseudo-tsarist legitimacy, Pugachev had achieved an eloquent and strident trumpet-call to full-scale social revolution. For the first time Russia's peasant and serf masses were being addressed directly and generally in an appeal designed to sweep their "peasant tsar" to victory on a tidal wave of ferocious class warfare.

This electrifying new manifesto was destined to be copied and re-issued many times as Pugachev plunged deep into the jacquerie which it helped to arouse throughout the west-bank Volga country. Yet impressive though the rebels' efforts and the popular response were, both were already bound to fall short. Although neither Pugachev nor his enemies could yet know it for sure, his Volga crossing had come as "too little too late". As Rozner puts it, "the favorable time for an insurgent drive on Moscow had been allowed to slip by."¹¹

To begin with, the news of the rebels' spectacular success in crossing the Kama, received in St. Petersburg in early July, had finally shocked Catherine and her government into a flurry of activity. Immediately, on July 9, the enraged empress had dismissed Shcherbatov and put Golitsyn in his place. She had also begun to bolster Moscow's defences by ordering three regiments then at Vyazma to march at once to the old capital and place themselves at Governor General Volkonsky's disposal.¹²

Pugachev though, would still have had at least a fighting chance of winning out in the end with his ultimate weapon of launching a wholesale slaughter in central Russia, had he continued to face nothing more than the sparse and makeshift internal defence resources of an empire at war. But unfortunately for him another development, which had come on the morrow of Catherine's measures and which dwarfed them in importance, had already sealed the doom of his movement even before his attack on Kazan. On July 10, far to the south-west in the Bulgarian village of Kuchuk-Kainarji, Field Marshal Rumiantsev had signed a victorious peace treaty with the exhausted Turks.¹³ The foreign war, the crowning ingredient which had made Pugachev's insurrection possible, had been eliminated. Now it was only a matter of time before the rebellion would meet the same fate. Within two

weeks the news of peace, carried by Rumiantsev's son, would reach the two capitals as well as all points along the way. From there, diffusing rapidly outward in rumors and official proclamations, it would soon be taking powerful effect as the government's ultimate weapon of psychological warfare against insurrection. Everywhere the news would act simultaneously as a stimulant to the courage and morale of the authorities and a depressant to the rebellious spirit of the lower classes. Finally, within a few more weeks, the regime would be able to drive home its message with an iron fist if that should prove necessary. Regiments returning from the front would be pouring in to secure both central Russia and the Don and to crush out in blood whatever might remain of the insurrection.

Ironically then, the Pugachev rebellion was already living on borrowed time even as it launched, in crossing the Volga, its most frightening, climactic expansion. However, neither the insurgent leaders nor the eagerly expectant masses of central Russia nor the terror-stricken authorities knew this yet. In the meantime the impostor's new manifesto, supplemented by the impact of his personal presence and his armed detachments, seemed to be mounting a juggernaut that might sweep him to an eleventh-hour victory.

The dramatic appearance of Pugachev, his armed force and his new manifesto on the west bank was all the more effective because it could ignite an atmosphere already charged by weeks of mounting tension and anticipation. As usual, Pugachev had not had to work directly at preparing the ground; his product was selling itself with a minimum of advertising. The record of his past works and deeds combined with news that he was approaching to raise spontaneous popular rumors and restlessness to a fever pitch. At the same time the gentry and local officials, caught almost totally unprepared and defenceless, were already feeling the paralysis of terror.

Throughout the broad territory between the Volga and the Oka, defence forces were almost non-existent. The voevody in the towns had only small, pathetic "invalid" detachments at their disposal. Most of the bigger landowners could have raised better forces than these by arming their more trusty serfs. In fact a few did. But for the overwhelming majority of pomeshchiki the false sense of security induced by the news of Pugachev's springtime defeats was now being supplanted only by panic and flight.¹⁴

Besides, even those few serf contingents that were raised by landlords were already exhibiting a disconcerting tendency to melt away with the first word of the impostor's approach. Such was the experience of Count Saltykov, the sole pomeshchik of Arzamas uezd who effectively responded to Governor Stupishin's appeal for men. The governor had launched his appeal early, around St. John's Day in late June, but the rival appeal of rumors penetrating the lower classes had begun even earlier.¹⁵ Already by that time peasants in Shatsk uezd were whispering that Tsar Peter III had reappeared and had commanded that all dvoryane be killed. By the time Pugachev actually crossed the Volga the contents of his new manifesto had already been more than anticipated in the rumors that were rife among both the Russian and the "newly-baptized" (novokreshchennye) native peasantry. It was said, for example, that Peter III was on his way to Saransk and had ordered the local peasantry there to bring all their pomeshchiks, prikazchiks and priests in for hanging, offering a reward of 25 rubles each. Some nearby villagers were rumored to have left already to join the approaching army of their "sovereign".¹⁶

This talk of hanging priests as well as the familiar landlords and local officials clearly identifies the latter rumor as having been current among the "newly-baptized" native crown peasants. Hostility to the Russian

Orthodox priests who for generations had been exploiting and persecuting them was the only apparent feature distinguishing the rebellious movement of these natives from that of their Russian fellow-peasants. It reflected the fact that they had been largely assimilated in terms of race and material culture, but still clung to their own native languages and religions. The Chuvash, Tatar and Mordva villagers eagerly co-operated with their Russian neighbors in taking the impostor's appeal to heart and forming mobs to respond to it. The only difference is that they were careful to kill as many priests as they could lay hands on as well. In this Chuvash and Mordva country, where the natives still were at least half the population in some districts, over half of the rebellion's victims were clergy.¹⁷

The Chuvash were the first to respond to Pugachev's advance across their country and the first also to pay the inevitable price. By July 19 Mikhelson and Mellin were racing through in hot pursuit of the impostor, while General Potemkin in Kazan was preparing punitive counter-measures. He ordered the voevoda of Sviyazhsk to investigate the Chuvash disturbances, knout the ringleaders and flog one man in every ten in the offending villages.¹⁸ In the meantime, though, Chuvash support had already helped speed Pugachev's lightning advance and aim it, seemingly, straight at Moscow.

At Tsivilsk the false tsar countenanced the hanging of two priests brought in by local Chuvash rebels, while his Cossacks dropped rumors that he was preparing to divide his army in two. While half of his men took Kurmysh, the rest would branch off to incite the crowds at the ancient Makarev monastery fair, then in progress, near Nizhny Novgorod.¹⁹ On July 20 a mob led by priests welcomed the impostor as he entered Kurmysh without a fight. Pugachev then presided over the hanging of the local invalid

commandant, the installation of one of his Yaik Cossacks as the new voevoda, the reading of his manifesto and the administration of his oath of allegiance. He ordered prayers in the church for Peter III and the tsarevich Paul, the confiscation of all church and gentry wealth, as well as arms and provisions, the distribution of salt to the local Chuvash and Russian peasantry, and the raising of 60 "Cossack" volunteers to swell his army.²⁰

Kurmysh, in short, saw the impostor's propaganda and terror emerge already with the full pattern for his jacquerie in town and countryside west of the Volga. In the towns, as Fedulev would later testify,

"there was no resistance at all to Pugachev; he was always admitted with honor. We found no voevody in these towns; clearly they were hiding. From the garrisons in them (i.e., in the towns - L.H.M.) and likewise from all callings of people we took (men) with us, and assured each one that the impostor really was the sovereign Petr Fedorovich."²¹

As for the villages near Kurmysh, their reaction to Pugachev's long-awaited arrival is no better conveyed than in the testimony of the serf Vasily Chernov.

When, on July 18, four peasants from a nearby village rode up to announce the near approach of a "brigadier" of "the sovereign Peter III", Chernov and his fellow serfs quickly forgot the message in Catherine's ukaz of November 29. Emboldened still more by the arrival of six mounted and armed men in Cossack dress who said they had been sent by a "colonel" of Pugachev, the serfs met in a mirskoi skhod (communal gathering) on July 20 in which "all shouted in unison that they should, renouncing their lord, submit to the designated impostor-malefactor Pugachev, believing him to be the sovereign Peter the Third." The villagers then voted to arrest their steward, his wife and several other manorial officials and take them to Kurmysh, where they had heard Pugachev had ordered all

"votchina despoilers" to be brought for hanging. Next, on July 23, the serfs, led by their priests with icons and elders with bread and salt, welcomed the Pugachev "colonel" they had been expecting. The latter established himself in the tavern, ordered several more hangings, recruited volunteers by promising them a salary of twenty rubles a month, and led the villagers in looting the manor-house and the estate's linen and leather shops. This rough-and-ready formula for social revolution was enough to convince Chernov, at least, of his tsar's authenticity. His inquisitors in the Nizhny Novgorod gubernatorial chancellery had to close their report by noting, in grudging admiration, that

the abovementioned Chernov, however ... under cruel torture for a long time stubbornly refused to call Pugachev a malefactor, believing him to really be the sovereign Peter the Third; finally, however, not from conviction but from inability to bear the torture, he called him a malefactor.²²

The area around Kurmysh was the first crossroads that Pugachev encountered on his westward flight-offensive. It was also the place where the consequences of that offensive's tardiness began to catch up with him.

From Kurmysh the impostor could have followed the Sura River either north via Yadrin to the Volga, Nizhny Novgorod and thence to Moscow, or south toward the Don, with the option of veering toward Moscow again somewhere along the way. The danger to Nizhny was indeed acute. The city was still quite weakly defended, though not so bad off as Kazan had been. Governor Stupishin was well aware of the danger that he might have to face an internal rising inspired by Pugachev's propaganda as well as an external attack. To reduce this danger he closed the Makarev fair and dispersed the large crowds of peasants congregated there. Still, though, he feared trouble from the burlaki (Volga boat-haulers) who were numerous as always

in Nizhny, their upriver terminus. Another source of anxiety was the local Old Believer population. The governor had been obliged to divert precious troops from garrison duty to guarding and policing these potentially dangerous elements, and was frantically begging Volkonsky to send him reinforcements at once.²³ However, Stupishin was lucky: Pugachev was deflected southward.

Mikhelson was sure that the impostor was heading for Moscow. Pugachev had apparently left a large mob behind at Kurmysh to decoy his pursuers while he headed north to Yadrin, the next point on the road to Nizhny. But then he suddenly turned before Yadrin, leaving another mob to attack that town while he hurried back up the Sura past Kurmysh. Governor Stupishin, in his reports, readily concurred with the flattering story of some captives that Pugachev had changed his course because some Chuvash scouts had informed him that Nizhny-Novgorod was strongly fortified and garrisoned. More likely, however, is the version of Mikhelson and Mellin, relayed to the empress by Shcherbatov: Mellin had forced Pugachev to turn by ignoring Kurmysh for the time being and heading stright for Yadrin.²⁴

Mikhelson may also have tricked Pugachev at this time into abandoning his drive not only on Nizhny but also on Moscow. At any rate Pugachev's men were allowed to intercept a courier with a false letter purportedly from a Moscow general, telling the Lieutenant-Colonel he had 30,000 men in the old capital and urging him not even to chase the impostor for fear of diverting him from the trap.²⁵

Though deflected from the most direct route to Moscow, Pugachev had nevertheless done a good job of throwing dust in his enemies' eyes and eluding their grasp once again so as to win still another reprieve.

Whether or not the mobs he had collected at Yadrin had genuinely represented further steps toward Nizhny Novgorod, they now served to impede his pursuers. Even the testimony of his captured rebel voevoda in Kurmysh - that Pugachev intended only to return to the Yaik and had already received promises of support from the Cossacks there - could have been a lie to throw the impostor's adversaries off the scent.²⁶ Meanwhile the universal chaos Pugachev was creating seemed to give him more chances at Moscow. Certainly it gave his frightened opponents the impression that he was attacking everywhere at once.

Governor Stupishin was kept fearful for his city's safety and on the defensive for another two weeks after Pugachev's southward turn of July 20. He continued to plead for more troops while local rebel mobs advanced to within 80 versts of Nizhny itself.²⁷ Mikhelson's pursuit of Pugachev was likewise confused and delayed, in his case by fears and rumors that the impostor would again turn westward. First the lieutenant colonel had to lose precious time by making a wide sweep around Arzamas, so as to put himself between Pugachev and Moscow. Then on July 30, after he had resumed his southward course, he received a frantic message from the provincial chancellery in Arzamas, saying that Pugachev was approaching the town. Mikhelson had to drop everything and rush back, only to learn that the call had been a false alarm.²⁸

This same false alarm from Arzamas also penetrated west of the Oka, deep into the heart of metropolitan Russia, where it frightened local officials and gentry in Vladimir, Kaluga, Murom and other cities.²⁹ And this was only one of a rash of such rumors which were cropping up everywhere in Moscow guberniya. Now at last the center itself was feeling the same dire rumblings as had always prepared the way for Pugachev's hosts wherever they had gone.

All, whether the rich and high-born in their fear or the poor and enslaved in their eager anticipation, were convinced that the peasant tsar was coming their way. On July 25, for example, the authorities in Yuriev-Polsky were alarmed by rumors that ten men calling themselves a "corps of the Sovereign Emperor Petr Fedorovich" were in town.³⁰ On that same day Governor Volkonsky's Moscow senate, meeting in extraordinary session, passed an order which was to add still more to the panic as it circulated among the town chancelleries during the following week. It set forth emergency plans for the defence of Moscow and appealed to all the gentry to raise armed detachments from their trusty serfs and help defend their local towns. Volkonsky had been moved to take this drastic step by two messages that he had just received. One was Von Brandt's letter of July 17, telling him of some prisoners' testimony that the impostor intended to move against Moscow next. The other was a report Volkonsky had just received from his guberniya commander, informing him that Pugachev was in Kurmysh and was planning to advance on Moscow.³¹

This kind of preliminary panic, though, could not last long or achieve a real uprising in the Moscow region unless and until it received direct armed support from Pugachev. That support never came and the crisis passed during the next week, as both the government and the peasant tsar saw the balance of developments shift decisively in favor of the former.

For Moscow the turning point came on July 26, the morrow of the senate's emergency order, when Volkonsky suddenly changed his mind and rescinded it. Apparently this was partly a psychological measure which the governor took, on second thought, to calm the panic that he saw rising all around him. But this secondary consideration would not have

come to the fore unless the primary one, the immediate danger to Moscow, had first receded. Volkonsky had already received the news of the peace with Turkey, which had reached Moscow on July 21 on its way to St. Petersburg. Perhaps what now changed his mind was word of the further emergency reinforcements which Catherine was rushing to him in response to the disastrous news of the fall of Kazan, which had just reached her on that same day, July 21.³²

Since this first report on Kazan did not include the news of Mikhelson's subsequent victory there, Catherine's fear and anger had been even greater than on July 9 when, on learning of Pugachev's crossing of the Kama, she had dismissed Shcherbatov and appointed Golitsyn interim commander. Now she and her council had immediately decided to dismiss Golitsyn and find another commander against Pugachev. She had also ordered that four more regiments - two infantry, one hussar and one Cossack - be rushed post-haste from St. Petersburg to Moscow. The empress had even expressed a desire to go personally to Moscow in order to oversee and inspire the defenders, but her advisors, doubting the wisdom or usefulness of such a move, had dissuaded her.³³

Then just two days later, on July 23, the whole outlook from St. Petersburg had been suddenly and dramatically altered. The arrival of the peace messengers in the coach of Count Nikita Panin had cleared the way for both the ultimate propaganda weapon and the new, capable and ruthless commander needed to ensure speedy suppression of the rebellion. By the end of the month Nikita's brother in Moscow, Count Peter Panin, had been appointed as Golitsyn's successor, with sweeping powers resembling those which Bibikov had wielded.³⁴ Volkonsky had accumulated fourteen regiments and 3000 Cossacks in Moscow and its environs. Under

Panin's strong and cruel hand the government defence was consolidating itself and cautiously beginning to turn into an offence. Major-General Chorba's patrols, fanning out to the east and south of Moscow, were blocking the roads, rivers and canals and tracking down elusive rumors of local rebel activity.³⁵ These troops were joining with the local authorities to spread the news of the coming of peace and the imminent approach of great armies returning from the front. A proclamation which Panin ordered Governor Stupishin to publish on August 2 warned that General Repnin and Field Marshal Rumyantsev were coming "to punish all those inhabitants who not only join the rebel but who even help him in any way."³⁶ The governor himself, by that time, had recovered sufficient composure to begin driving home this message with a little exemplary terror. In his capital and in other towns along the Volga numbers of captured rebels were being hanged on rafts which were then floated down the river as a grim warning to all beholders.³⁷ Meanwhile, Mikhelson had also received orders from Panin. He was to continue keeping between Pugachev and Moscow at all costs while dealing out harsh punishment to all captured rebels, especially any who were found to be gentry. Clergy guilty of that offence were to be arrested and spirited off for investigation.³⁸

It took a long while, though, for the news of the peace and Pugachev's flight to filter down from the top to local authorities. Besides, it was still not certain that he would not veer westward again - especially in view of the mounting chaos that his agitation was raising in that direction.

On July 23, as St. Petersburg was learning of the war's end, Pugachev was capturing his next objective, the town of Alatyry, about 100 miles up the Sura from Kurmysh. Again the victory was bloodless. In a panicky

meeting the local officials, gentry and merchants had decided to resist only if Pugachev was seen to have no more than 500 men. When word came that the impostor was approaching with 2000 men, most of the gentry and local authorities fled for their lives. The remaining townspeople, led by their militia ensign, Syuldashchev, decided to give Pugachev the royal welcome he demanded, even though they were probably motivated more by fear than by genuine conviction. Later, in their testimonies, many of these townsmen, militiamen and even nearby serfs would try to put all the blame on the ensign, claiming that he had forced them to submit to Pugachev. The impostor, in a written "personal order", made Syuldashchev "colonel" and commandant and ordered all to obey him. The document went on to castigate "the dvoriane malefactors, not wishing to be loyal subjects and give up their gentry status (dvoryanstvo).". Pugachev depicted the gentry as being the sole remaining group to obstinately oppose his rule, and accused them of trying to "stir up their peasants" against him. There followed the usual scene, with the false tsar staying at Syuldashchev's home, ordering the wine casks broken when his men got too drunk, releasing all prisoners from the town jail and distributing part of the treasury money to the people.³⁹

This quick and easy capture of Alatyr was a lucky stroke for Pugachev. It gave him his first real stop since Kazan; two days in which to rest, reorganize and plan his next move. Watchful as ever for any chance to strengthen his credibility as tsar, Pugachev used this opportunity to commission the striking of twenty "Peter III" medals by two silversmiths in the town. The craftsmen had no dies for Peter III but improvised from one bearing a portrait of Peter I. The medals were then ceremonially

presented by the impostor to his leading henchmen.⁴⁰ Pugachev also took advantage of the pause to expand and direct the social, radical side of his appeal to the masses. The false tsar held court for a number of peasant delegations, passing sentence of death on a dozen local landlords who were dragged before him by their serfs, encouraging the latter to fight for him at home by spreading his peasant revolution throughout the neighboring countryside, and handing down decisions in civil disputes.⁴¹ Pugachev refused to take any but mounted men, including some of the local militia, with him as he left the town. Thus he ensured that he would reach his next target, Saransk, very quickly, while leaving behind him a maximum of chaos to impede his pursuers.⁴²

Count Mellin, who reached Alatyry soon afterward, professed shock in his report at the extent of this "punishment from God", as he called the rebel atrocities against the gentry. Yet he did not hesitate to fight rebel terror with an equal or even greater terror of his own: He had twenty rebel prisoners publicly hacked to death.⁴³ Governor Stupishin's justice was no better: he ordered that two very old and blind captives be flogged, yet spared an Alatyry militiaman on the strength of the latter's claim that he had only gone with the insurgents because they had carried him off unconscious.⁴⁴

Pugachev's move to Saransk and his activities there may have been merely his next steps in a headlong flight southward. They may also have been the beginning of a second attempt to break through into the Russian heartland and resume a drive on Moscow. The geographical position of Saransk made both steps equally logical and convenient for Pugachev. It was the next town of any consequence lying in the impostor's

general line of flight down the right bank of the Sura. Yet its location also required him to make a considerable turn inland and westward. Had this sweep been continued it would have carried Pugachev via Kadom and Kerensk to Moscow in a distance about equal to the distance via Nizhny Novgorod. Moreover the country westward from Saransk almost to the Oka River, though it had few serfs, contained large and very discontent odnodvoretz and Mordva populations. And just beyond lay Kasimov, also ripe for the plucking with its defences still almost non-existent and its large and restless potential fifth column of peasants and teamsters. St. Petersburg feared and expected that Pugachev would make just such a move, either through Kasimov or to the south of it. On July 28 Catherine supplemented her earlier provisions for Moscow's security by ordering the establishment of a defence line stretching from Kasimov to Voronezh.⁴⁵

Meanwhile the impostor continued to take measures which strongly suggest that he was at least considering the launching of a renewed drive on Moscow from Saransk. As he bore down on Saransk on July 27 Pugachev sent his Cossack lieutenant Chumakov up to the walls with a special ukaz. This edict proclaimed that "now His Imperial Majesty, the all-gracious sovereign Petr Fedorovich, with his victorious army desires to proceed through the town of Saransk for the assumption of the All-Russian throne in the governing city, Moscow." It ordered the preparation of "horses, forage and provisions" for his "Cossack army" and threatened any who should disobey with the "most cruel wrath" of the "sovereign".⁴⁶ On the following day Pugachev was welcomed by the whole town, led by the commander of its "invalid" de-

tachment, Shakhmametev, and the archimandrite of the nearby St. Peter's monastery, Alexander. The extent of the Saransk clergy's collaboration with the impostor would prompt a shocked Count Mellin to remark on the ineffectiveness of the church's anti-Pugachev propaganda.⁴⁷ Pugachev next presided, in church, over the reading of another ukaz. Similar to the edict released in Alatyry, it branded "the gentry especially" as "malicious rebels and traitors to their sovereign" and condemned them for "inciting their peasants to oppose our crown." The ukaz then declared Lieutenant Shakhmametev voevoda and ordered him and his assembly (mirskie lyudi) to govern fairly and promote the impostor's cause.⁴⁸

Pugachev followed up his words with action. During his three-day sojourn at Saransk he hanged over sixty pomeshchiks and stewards brought before him by their serfs. This, together with his propaganda and his familiar policy of sending back many of his volunteer "Cossacks" to raise bands in their home districts, earned for the impostor the greatest proliferation of his radical peasant revolution to date. Moreover, this proliferation occurred mainly in the country west of Saransk, exactly as though Pugachev had deliberately focused his agitation there as a prelude to continuing his own advance in that direction.⁴⁹

The town of Insar, about forty miles southwest of Saransk, was the main starting point for this western salient of the rebellion which Tkhorzhevsky so aptly calls "the pugachevshchina without Pugachev". The efforts of the town's voevoda to organize a defence failed miserably, overwhelmed both from without and from within by the rising tide of rebellion. The chastnye smotriteli ("special inspectors") from the local gentry whom he sent out to recruit peasant support not only

failed in their mission; they were mobbed. Two at least could not even reach their estates. One was attacked by an angry crowd and was lucky to escape with his life; another, less fortunate, was caught and hanged. When the voevoda heard the news of this his courage left him. He collected his treasury funds, his papers and his chancellery officials and fled.⁵⁰

The townspeople of Insar were terrified at the prospect of having to answer to the "third emperor", whom they believed to be on his way to their town, for the flight of their voevoda. They begged the aged vakhmistr of the local shtatnaya komanda (town militia) to pursue him and bring him back. The vakhmistr consented and set out with a small patrol on the road to Kerensk, but instead of bringing back the voevoda he suddenly turned into a Pugachev agitator, spreading the word all along the way of the liberties which the tsar had graciously bestowed on his people. On August 1 he and his guard entered Kerensk. It was market day and the old soldier, Felshman, addressed the crowd in the main square. He urged his listeners to pray for the long life and health of the emperor Peter III and he relayed some of the impostor's promises: there was to be no poll tax or conscription of recruits for ten years, and salt was to be sold for only two grivni per pud.⁵¹

The fact that Pugachev's or old Felshman's propaganda to these people did not stress emancipation from serfdom is not an indication of backsliding from radical ideals. It is simply a natural reflection of the fact that serfdom was not a major problem in that particular region. Most of the population there consisted of odnodvortsy and merchants, in the towns, and state peasants, many of them native

Mordva, in the countryside. The gentry were few and mostly small proprietors. Many actually had no serfs and were no doubt poorer than some well-to-do peasants, just as some of those enrolled as "merchants" in these primitive "towns" were really no more than batraki (hired laborers). The old sosloviya (estates of society), never exact, had become dated and needed revision, but this did not trouble the rebels. Their struggle was not just one of peasantry against gentry; it was one of poor against rich. In fact, a few rebel bands were actually led by poor gentry such as Fedor Uvarov of Penza uezd, who rode about in Cossack dress inciting serfs against their masters.⁵²

All who were comparatively well off, whether nobles, churchmen, merchants or even peasants, were at least looted, even if they tried to avoid that fate by making a show of support for the insurgents. True, the gentry suffered most heavily in terms of lives lost, and the poorer gentry at that. Almost all of those who were killed in this western extension of Pugachev's rebellion owned fewer than 100 serfs, and some had none at all. But this is readily explainable. The gentry were still, after all, the wealthiest and most privileged class on the whole. They were the main perpetrators and the symbols of oppression at the local level. As such they were hated by many of the poor and were therefore singled out for special attention by Pugachev's propaganda and the wave of rebellion which it aroused. Most of the wealthy pomeschchiks escaped death only because they were not on their estates when the rebel mobs came calling. Either they were absentee landlords who habitually lived in the city, or they had used their superior resources to flee more quickly and easily than their poorer brethren could. Thus the latter were left to suffer a double vengeance at the

hands of mobs especially provoked by the flight of their main prey.⁵³

Under the circumstances, though, it is remarkable how restrained the rebels usually were. Generally speaking, the ravages they wrought appear to have been more calculated than wanton. They usually destroyed only the persons of such pomeshchiks and stewards as they found and the damning written records of serfdom. The manorhouses were looted but the booty was treated like legally confiscated goods, pooled and stored under guard in various central locations. The manorhouses themselves, as a rule, were subjected only to a kind of token, symbolic destruction - usually the smashing of windows and doors - by which the rebel peasants made their point and rendered the houses uninhabitable without seriously damaging them. Quite plainly they were doing their best to maintain the Pugachev version of revolutionary legitimacy which characterized the whole rebellion. Like the factory peasants who refrained from destroying their factories, these peasants instinctively perceived the value of Pugachev's imposture and ukazi as a shield from responsibility for their deeds. Behaving always as if they were only passively obeying the commands of a man who claimed to be tsar, they could hope to avoid both the wrath of Pugachev and that of the established gentry regime, if the latter should somehow return victorious.⁵⁴

As it turned out, old Felshman's bid to take over Kerensk by the power of his Pugachev-inspired propaganda failed. The influx of fleeing dvoriane and their loyal serfs from the surrounding countryside helped to swing the balance in the town against him.⁵⁵ But in the meantime Insar spawned several other rebel leaders who soon gathered followings strong enough to besiege Kerensk three times and capture most of the other towns in the region.

Petr Evsevev, a household serf of an Insar chancellery secretary, collected 200 men and headed westward. Using Pugachev propaganda similar to that spread by Felshman, he captured Troitsk and Narovchat without a fight by August 9. There his mob carried on in much the usual way, killing, looting and carousing in the name of Peter III. Evsevev also seems to have made himself a junior impostor, unless the "Petr Evtifeev" mentioned as a false Peter III in some sources was indeed a different Insar rebel leader.⁵⁶ Another Insar man, the iron-worker Savelii Martynov, specialized in spreading the movement to other factory workers of the area and in hanging factory officials. Still, another Pugachev rebel leader from Insar was the odnodvoretz "colonel" Mikhail Evstratov.⁵⁷

These Insar men generated, in turn, a second wave of local insurgent leaders from the other towns and areas they overran. The most notable of these was Yakov Ivanov, a court peasant from near Narovchat who also ended up with his own mob before Kerensk, after having made a circuit of Upper Lomov uezd. According to at least one testimony Yakov Ivanov became an impostor as well, presiding over his own hangings and creating his own "Cossacks".⁵⁸ On August 6 two other agitators galloped recklessly into Upper Lomov, shouting "Who are enemies of the sovereign Peter III in this town?" They entered the church and handed a copy of a Pugachev ukaz to a priest, but were seized when they came out. The town's militia officer thought he had crushed this outburst when his extraction of a public testimony and recantation from the pair seemed to greatly impress the people. He raised 25 men and went off rebel-hunting in the surrounding villages, but when he returned he found that

some odnodvoretz rebels had again reversed the situation in Upper Lomov. The officer had to flee as the town was looted by an insurgent mob. Now the citizens of Lower Lomov tried to avoid the wrath of both sides by seeking a compromise with Pugachev. In a "letter of approval" of August 9 they assured the impostor they were satisfied with the rule of their "assessor", and asked only for a guarantee that "without the capital command of His Majesty he execute no one and touch nothing."⁵⁹

By this time, Pugachev's propaganda and agitators had spread his jacquerie over a still wider area. Some of these homegrown leaders sprang up and operated far from where Pugachev passed; even far to the east of him, which confused the authorities all the more. One, Firs Ivanov, apparently raised a large mob and threatened Simbirsk.⁶⁰ But the most famous and successful of them all, Ivan Ivanov, was a serf from Prince Golitsyn's lands north of Penza. Ivanov built up a following of over 3000 men and campaigned widely in his region. Everywhere he and his men relayed the impostor's message: The man called Pugachev really was Peter III, come to free the serfs, give them a seven-year holiday from the poll-tax and conscription, and sell them salt for only 20 kopecks per pood. Ivanov ordered the serfs to "be crown (gosudarevye) peasants and not seigneurial (gospodskie) peasants" and to kill or bring in their lords. He proclaimed ukazy "from the sovereign Petr Fedorovich" and threatened his hearers, "If you do not obey, I'll hang you all!"⁶¹ Mikhelson, in a report of August 8 to Panin, expressed fear that Ivanov might join forces with Pugachev himself. He testified to the ferocity of the peasant rebellion and its importance in aiding the impostor: "I cannot express to Your Grace

what a great evil has taken root in the hearts of the people here: all the barbarities committed in those places on the gentry and other honorable people are committed only because of the help of the peasants."⁶²

Yet impressive though all this proliferation of rebellion was in its initial gains, its seeming strength was illusory. All of the rebel mobs were weak both organizationally and militarily. Sheer enthusiasm was an effective substitute for military experience and equipment only so long as they faced no real opposition. The typical mob had only a small elite core of mounted and decently armed men: the volunteers, or "Cossacks of Peter III" as they called themselves, who came mainly from the restless and rootless batraki. The rest, the great majority, were only semi-voluntary ponyatye ("pick-ups"), usually on foot and armed only with clubs, pitchforks and other such improvised weapons if they were armed at all. They were useful for swelling the insurgent mobs' numbers so as to make them look more formidable. Moreover, their involvement as participants or at least witnesses seemed to guarantee their commitment to the movement. As one odnodvoretz ataman would later testify: "We intended to hang every pomeshchik we could find, for the common people, watching that, rejoice and believe all the more." Still these mobs were only pawns in the game. They were heavily dependent on Pugachev's keeping his promises to come soon to unite and lead them in person. If their "sovereign" should abandon them to fragmentation and defeat, they would be forced to submit and fall back on the other reason for their having joined Pugachev, the rebels' threats of terror and execution, as an excuse for their crimes.⁶³

The wary impostor, indeed, was in no position to come to the

aid of these local movements he has fostered and to continue his course toward Moscow. At Saransk Pugachev still had only about 1500 men and nine cannons of questionable value. The new voevoda whom the impostor appointed there, a retired militia ensign, proved to be a capable and energetic organizer, yet he only managed to raise 91 more mounted "Cossacks" for his "sovereign". Scouting patrols brought word that soldiers were blocking all the roads to Moscow, and that Mikhelson was approaching from the northwest so as to intercept Pugachev if he tried to make a run for the old capital.⁶⁴ Pugachev may even have learned of the end of the Turkish war during his stopover at Saransk. True, a Don Cossack would later testify that the false tsar's Yaik Cossacks made light of this development: "There, now, they've made peace!" (Vot, de, pomirilis!) It was easy, however, to mock from drunken abandon or from the need to put on a brave front so as to continue attracting wide support. Continuing a march on Moscow in the light of this knowledge would not have been so easy. The true impact of the news on the rebels is probably better exemplified by the reaction of "Colonel" Ivan Ivanov. When he learned of the "eternal peace" with the Porte from a government ukaz which a clerk and soldier from Saransk were circulating in the villages, he beat his forehead in despair and handed back the proclamation.⁶⁵

Such an accumulation of threatening developments was enough to dissuade the impostor from any plans he may have had for advancing directly on Moscow from Saransk and confirm his plan to seek a new base on the Don instead. On July 30 he and his mob hurriedly left the town and set out not westward but southward, toward Penza.

Penza, in fact, would have made just as good a pivotal point as Saransk for a swing westward. It was only a little further from Moscow, and its location on one of the main roads leading to the old capital would have more than compensated for that by speeding Pugachev's advance. The false tsar still gave every appearance of preparing for such a move. His agitation of the peasantry continued unabated. It was here, on the Penza road, that a court peasant named Gordei Abramov claimed to have innocently stumbled onto Pugachev's camp and to have been detained there for the night while on his way back home from a trip to Astrakhan. He testified that a rebel colonel and some other Cossacks told him "that this is a sovereign who strives for the peasantry, and takes away those peasants who are now under lords, and gives them freedom from all taxes for ten years."⁶⁶ Moreover, the impostor's lightning capture of Penza was a model triumph of his terror and propaganda techniques which should have imparted a new momentum and a lift in morale to his army.

Penza being just as poorly prepared to face Pugachev as the preceding towns had been; the mere news of his approach was enough to bring on panic and collapse. The voevoda and his chancellery fled at once, leaving Major Gerasimov of the local militia to try to organize a defence. But only twelve of the major's soliders showed up for duty, and although he managed to collect 200 farmer-soldiers he had no arms to give them. On August 1, fifteen Pugachev followers slipped into town and proclaimed a manifesto in the market place. Prompt surrender, they shouted, would bring the tsar's favor, while resistance would bring down his terrible wrath: the town would be razed and its inhabi-

tants slaughtered. This ukaz and the terror it created induced the town's burmistr (mayor) and merchants to undercut Gerasimov by voting to welcome Pugachev as tsar rather than risk destruction. Then Gerasimov himself yielded and joined in the royal welcome which was accorded to the impostor. Later the major would testify,

I sincerely admit that I myself on that occasion wavered in my thoughts, thinking that Pugachev was really the sovereign, for that was affirmed by the fact that he had taken many cities and forts and all the rabble (chern), wherever he was, adhered to him without question.⁶⁷

Once in Penza, however, Pugachev quickly showed that he had not forgotten on which side his bread was buttered. As always, surrender did not save the wealthier residents from being plundered by drunken mobs made up of both Pugachev's men and the poorer townsmen. Then, while the false tsar gorged himself at the mayor's house, he showered his levelling largesse on the citizens. Henceforth they were to call themselves free Cossacks. They were to have free trade in salt and freedom from the poll tax and the draft. Pugachev ordered the immediate distribution of three pounds of salt and a sum of money to everyone in Penza. Then he filled forty carts with confiscated provisions and valuables, including treasury funds amounting to 13,000 rubles, and prepared to move on. In leaving, Pugachev sternly warned his new voevoda of Penza, Major Gerasimov, that he must not only defend the town against the approaching government detachments but also collect and bring 500 men to the main rebel army. The impostor threatened to return and burn Penza yet if his orders were not carried out.

Almost as soon as Pugachev left Penza, however, the balance of

terror began to turn against him, at least in the town itself. Pursuing government detachments were drawing near and the impostor himself was obviously fleeing their approach, for he was not taking the road that led west from Penza to Tambov and ultimately to Moscow. He was only continuing along the southward road that now bent eastward toward Petrovsk, Saratov and the Volga. Under these circumstances especially, neither Gerasimov nor his charges had much stomach for carrying out Pugachev's orders. The major brought only about 200 men to the impostor. Pugachev was furious, and Gerasimov barely saved his neck by promising to return for more at once. But when he reached Penza again, on August 5, Gerasimov found Major Mufel already there and himself under arrest.⁶⁸

The end of the Penza episode marked the end of any serious threat of Pugachev's penetrating central Russia. Yet this was not yet clear to his pursuers and perhaps not to the impostor himself.

On August 3, near Penza, Mikhelson's advance patrol under Major Kharin defeated and captured Pugachev's Don Cossack "colonel", Alexander Sukhodolsky. Under interrogation he revealed,

that the malefactor, although he has not lost hope of forcing a passage to Moscow nevertheless, seeing the difficulty of that course, asked the way to Malykovka, on the Volga, so as to make his way to the Irgiz. However, there is also word that the evildoer intends to advance to the Don, raise the Kuban hordes and, strengthening himself, move on Moscow.⁶⁹

Indeed there was still a slim chance that such a strategy might succeed. It would demand that Pugachev reach and raise the Don, dash back northward, expand his peasant revolution and capture Moscow before either the propagandic or the military consequences of the peace should

have had time to catch up with him and dampen the fierce fires of his rebellion. The impostor's enemies remained ignorant of his whereabouts and fearful of his immediate course. As Governor Stupishin put it, "This monster (izverg) scatters his mob to various places and thus conceals his movements and intentions." Mellin, at Penza, realized that his quarry was probably making for the Don or even the Yaik, but still he could not dismiss the possibility that Pugachev might veer westward toward Tambov or Voronezh and thence to Moscow.⁷⁰

The latter course was certainly the one which many eager peasants and serfs to Pugachev's west and northwest were still expecting and depending on. The Tambov provincial chancellery had to report in fright to Count Panin that "all the rabble (chern) in the town as well as the uezd" were wavering. In at least one nearby village the peasants had refused to obey a government ukaz demanding recruits because, as they put it, they were "not commanded to" (i.e., by Pugachev - L.H.M.). A captured runaway peasant had testified, under the lash, that he had met a band of fifty serfs, armed with clubs and other improvised weapons, who had come from west of Kursk and were on their way to join the impostor's army. Potential peasant insurgents, alerted by rumors that their "sovereign" was approaching, were congregating in the forest around both Tambov and Kozlov, the next towns on the road from Penza to Moscow. Obviously they were just waiting for a Pugachev contingent to arrive and lead them into action. The voevoda of Tambov had no illusions about what was needed to head off these threatening developments: he asked Panin to send him "a large detachment of troops" at once.⁷¹ Similarly, the Kozlov chancellery appealed to Colonel Drevits

on August 19 for reinforcements, summing up its reasons in a penetrating and revealing sentence: "And although sometimes an execution and sometimes a harangue has restrained them . . . it is impossible to trust them . . . all the moreso because they see no military detachment to either restrain them or defend them from the malefactors."⁷²

Impressive and dangerous though this peasant response to Pugachev seemed, it was extremely vulnerable to government reprisals. If his peasant revolution were to survive long enough to smooth his way to Moscow he would have to return soon to give it a renewed impetus. Although the local authorities at Kasimov and Shatsk still felt threatened both externally and internally, and appealed for reinforcements as late as August 10 and 16 respectively, they really had nothing to fear.⁷³ By then the northwestern sector was already beginning to be rolled back by a series of crushing defeats at the hands of small government detachments. On August 8 Ivan Ivanov's rabble army of 3,000 men, seven iron and two brass cannon was routed by a tiny government force of only 170 men with no artillery. On August 14 another mob of 3000 was smashed near Temnikov. Three days later the rebel siege of Kerensk was broken, thanks largely to the aid of some Turkish prisoners of war to whom the insurgents failed to appeal.⁷⁴ True, the rebel mobs which had burned Kerensk would return throughout August to menace the town. Ivanov and many others went on to regroup and fight stubbornly again and again, but they were only able to do this by falling back further and further to the south in the face of Panin's ruthless advance. Ivanov and the others were being forced to retreat from the role of social revolutionary to that of steppe-frontier bandit. They were following the traditional escape routes of Russian fugitives, down the Vorona, Khoper and

Medveditsa Rivers into the upper Don country. In so doing, they were unavoidably inflicting still more hardships on the peasants in their path, who had already lost much of their livestock and provisions to the successive requisitionings of Pugachev and of his immediate pursuers.⁷⁵

There was also a positive side to this picture, however. In falling back toward the Don these secondary mobs were both following Pugachev's example and striving to maintain contact with him and coordinate their efforts with his. The impostor was being bombarded with incessant pleas for help from some peasant contingents, while others were trying to actually reach him and join his main army. All that remained of the rebellion, except for the Bashkirs, was pulling back toward the Don, hoping to find there the refuge and the support they needed to revive the movement. If this should prove successful, then the peasant insurgent mobs would still be ideally situated, directly on Pugachev's route to Moscow.⁷⁶

NOTES FOR CHAPTER V

1. Pushkin, p. 89.
2. Pugachevshchina, vol. II, No. 125, p. 324. See also above, Chapter IV, p. 166.
3. Chumakov's and Tvorogov's testimony, TSGADA, G.A., r.VI, d.505, 1.13. Pugachev's Yaitsk testimony, No. 4, p. 123.
4. Pugachevshchina, vol. II, Dopolneniya, p. 397.
5. Ibid., vol. II, No. 98, p. 275. TSGADA, G.A., r.VI, d.416, ch.I, otd. 14, 1.13, No. 43' d.505, 1.7 (Chumakov's and Tvorogov's testimony). Andrushchenko (pp. 135-136) notes that by this time 99.6% of Bashkir homesteads - 14,038 out of 14,092 - and 133 starshiny out of 144 had fought for Pugachev.
6. Andrushchenko, p. 295.
7. TSGADA, G.A., r.VI, d.416, ch.1, otd. 13, 1.14, 21, 27, 30, 35.
8. The figure of 50 Bashkirs and 1000 men overall is given in the testimony of the Yaik Cossack I. Kuznetsov, in Don i nizhnee Povolzhe, No. 81, p. 138.
9. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, p. 214. Chumakov's and Tvorogov's testimony, TSGADA, G.A., r.VI, d.505, 1.7.
10. Reprinted by Dubrovin (Vol. III, p. 112).
11. Dubrovin, vol. III, p. 112. Pugachevshchina, vol. I, pp. 40-41. TSGADA, G.A., r.VI, d. 415, 1.53. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 161.
12. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 163.
13. Maj.-Gen. Prof. A.G. Elchaninov, article "Aleksandr Vasilyevich Suvorov", Istoriya russkoi armii i flota, Vol. II, Moscow, 1911, p. 95. Alexander, pp. 158-162. Elchaninov is right, of course, in saying that "the Porte signed the Peace of Kuchuk-Kainarji on the terms proposed by the Russian government." Alexander, though, points out (pp. 158-162) that it had been St. Petersburg's desperation for peace that had moderated those terms while spurring Rumyantsev on to new efforts.
14. Dubrovin, Vol. III, p. 103. Tkhorzhevsky, p. 60.
15. Tkhorzhevsky, pp. 62-64, 65-66.
16. Ibid., pp. 66, 83.
17. Ibid., pp. 15-18, pp. 134-135. Pugachevshchina, Vol. III, No. 202, pp. 374, 381; No. 203, p. 385.

18. Alexander, p. 189.
19. Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, Dopolneniya, pp. 396-397.
20. Dubrovin, Vol. III, pp. 114-115.
21. TSGADA, G.A., r.VI, d.505, l.16 ob.
22. Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, No. 138, pp. 360-363.
23. Dubrovin, Vol. III, pp. 105-106. Alexander, p. 152.
24. Report of Mikhelson to Panin, Pugachevshchina, Vol. III, No. 37, pp. 78-79; Report of Shcherbatov to Catherine, No. 141, p. 27. Vol. II, testimony of dvoryanin - rebel Ilya Aristov, No. 137, p. 358; Report of Stupishin, No. 114, p. 304; Dopolneniya, p. 397.
25. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 162. Pugachevshchina, Vol. III, pp. 286, 78; Vol. II, p. 304.
26. Pugachevshchina, Vol. III, No. 141, p. 273.
27. Dubrovin, Vol. III, p. 140.
28. Ibid., Vol. III, p. 126.
29. Alexander, pp. 154-156.
30. Ibid., p. 154. Tkhorzhevsky (pp. 174-175) also notes two later remarks testifying to the great potential of support that had awaited Pugachev in the Moscow area: Panin, in a letter of October 1774 to Catherine, wrote that "the readiness of the aroused rabble to indulge in just such malicious affronts was spreading not only through all those places where I turned with the troops entrusted to me, but also beyond Moscow." The German tutor of a wealthy dvoryane family that had fled to Moscow from its estate in Arzamas uezd wrote that it was lucky indeed that Pugachev had turned southward, for a "dissolute rabble" of 80,000 had been eagerly awaiting him in Moscow.
31. Dubrovin, Vol. III, p. 139. Alexander, pp. 152-154.
32. Ibid., pp. 154, 163. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 163.
33. Dubrovin, Vol. III, pp. 128-133.
34. Ibid., Vol. III, pp. 142-145. Alexander, p. 168. The powers granted to Panin, however, were not quite so extensive as those which he had demanded. His authority was restricted to the gubernii directly involved in the rebellion - Orenburg, Kazan and Nishny-Novgorod, and the Kazan Secret Commission remained under the empress' control. The relief brought by news of the war's end had enabled Catherine

thus to curb Peter Panin's overbearing ambition. As she confided to her new favorite, Grigory Potemkin, only her fear of Pugachev had moved her to grant such a position to "a prime big-mouth and my personal insulter."

35. Pugachevshchina, Vol. III, No. 144, pp. 278-279; No. 145, p. 280.
36. Ibid., Vol. III, No. 143, pp. 276-277.
37. Pushkin, p. 91. Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, No. 114, p. 305.
38. Pugachevshchina, Vol. III, No. 147, p. 289.
39. Dubrovin, Vol. III, pp. 115-118. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, p. 215. Pugachevshchina, Vol. III, No. 104, pp. 215-216.
40. Pugachevshchina, Vol. III, No. 141, p. 273. Dubrovin, Vol. III, pp. 118-119.
41. Pugachevshchina, (Vol. I) reproduces one of these peasant petitions (Varia, No. 266, pp. 216-217), and also a sample Pugachev judgment, awarding free possession of a mill, without obrok, to two peasant brothers (No. 34, p. 53). See also Stupishin's report in TsGADA, G.A., r.VI, d. 416, Ch. 1, otd.9, l.1, 2,3,4.
42. Dubrovin, Vol. III, pp. 118-119. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, pp. 215-216. Pugachevshchina, Vol. I, No. 67, p. 70.
43. Dubrovin, Vol. III, p. 125.
44. TsGADA, G.A., r.VI, d. 416, ch. 1, otd.9, l.1 - 2.
45. Dubrovin, Vol. III, p. 138. Pugachevshchina, Vol. III, No. 47, p. 95.
46. Pugachevshchina, Vol. I, No. 60, pp. 67-68. The impostor also released another copy of his radical July 17 ukaz to the serfs on July 28, while in Saransk (TsGADA, G.A., r.VI, d. 415, l.55, 550b.)
47. Ibid., Vol. II, Dopolneniya, p. 446; Vol. III, No. 87, p. 182.
48. TsGADA, G.A., r.VI, d. 415, l.55. Pugachevshchina, Vol. I, No. 40, pp. 56-57.
49. Pugachevshchina, Vol. I, No. 40, pp. 56-57. Vol. III, No. 61, pp. 130-131. Dubrovin, Vol. III, p. 121.
50. Tkhorzhevsky, pp. 9, 68.
51. Ibid., pp. 68-69. A grivna was a ten-copeck piece.
52. Ibid., pp. 110-111. Pugachevshchina, Vol. III, No. 109, p. 223.

53. Tkhorzhevsky, pp. 115-127.
54. Pugachevshchina, Vol. III, No. 66, p. 142. Tkhorzhevsky, pp. 88-89.
55. Tkhorzhevsky, p. 74.
56. For an example of Evsevev's propaganda, see his prikaz (order) of August 4 to Captain Peter Timofeev of the Troitsk militia, in Pugachevshchina, Vol. I, Varia, No. 267, p. 217. Tkhorzhevsky, in a footnote (p. 69), says that Evsevev was "obviously" the same man whom Pushkin calls "Evsigneev" and identifies as an impostor. Tkhorzhevsky claims that there is no evidence that Evsevev ever called himself Peter III, and implies that Pushkin and others misinterpreted Evsevev's claim to be acting "under the name" (pod imyanem) of Peter III, which really meant only "in the name" of the impostor. Plausible though this sounds, Tkhorzhevsky seems to have neglected the direct statement that "Eftifeev" was an impostor contained in Pugachevshchina, Vol. III, No. 60, p. 122.
57. Tkhorzhevsky, pp. 72-73, 76.
58. Ibid., pp. 77-79. Pugachevshchina, Vol. III, No. 60, p. 125.
59. Pugachevshchina, Vol. III, No. 55, p. 107, Vol. I, Varia, Nos. 268, 269, p. 218.
60. Tkhorzhevsky, p. 81.
61. Dubrovin, Vol. III, pp. 168-169. Tkhorzhevsky, pp. 80-81. Pugachevshchina, Vol. III, No. 32, p. 67. Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 86, pp. 152-155.
62. Pugachevshchina, Vol. III, No. 37, p. 79.
63. Tkhorzhevsky, pp. 87-89, 93. Pugachevshchina, Vol. III, No. 60, pp. 127-128. Tkhorzhevsky (p. 67) gives a prime example of how ordinary rebels could later disclaim responsibility for their excesses: the case of the Mordva peasants of Khylstovki, who claimed that they had hanged their Russian priest from his gatepost only because an armed rebel band had ordered them to, on pain of death.
64. Dubrovin, Vol. III, p. 123, Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 164.
65. Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, No. 80, p. 242. Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 50, p. 92.
66. Pugachevshchina, Vol. III, No. 28, p. 61. Guards Lieutenant Gavril Derzhavin, in a report of August 14, also testifies to the ubiquitous popular support the impostor received in the Penza area. (Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 25, pp. 59-60).

67. Dubrovin, Vol. III, pp. 162-165. Pugachevshchina, Vol. I, No. 66, p. 69.
68. Dubrovin, Vol. III, pp. 165-167.
69. Pugachevshchina, Vol. III, No. 37, p. 79.
70. Ibid., Vol. II, No. 115, p. 307.
71. Ibid., Vol. III, No. 68, p. 148. Testimony of peasant of Tambov province, V. Ulanov, Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 86, pp. 151-154.
72. Pugachevshchina, Vol. III, No. 73, p. 158.
73. Ibid., Vol. III, No. 47, p. 95; No. 49, pp. 98-99. West of the Oka, Maj.-Gen. Chorba, Volkonsky's commander, could not even find any rebel mobs, despite the many rumors to the contrary. (Pugachevshchina, Vol. III, Nos. 144, 145, pp. 278-280).
74. Ibid., Vol. III, No. 31, p. 65; No. 55, p. 108.
75. Tkhorzhevsky, pp. 79, 80-81, 82-83, 85. Pushkin, p. 95. As Mavrodin says in summary, ". . . in August 1774 the class struggle was decided not in the clashes of ideas, where the strength was on Pugachev's side, . . . but in armed clashes, where the balance was on the side of the rebellion's enemies." (Krestyanskaya voina, Vol. II, pp. 438-439).
76. Tkhorzhevsky, pp. 85, 98-99.

CHAPTER VI

THE END OF THE ROAD

Pugachev's capture of Petrovsk and Saratov marks the transition from his attempt to penetrate left-bank Russia to his struggle to win over the Don Cossacks.

Petrovsk was another easy propaganda victory for Pugachev, thanks to the impostor's tempting agitation backed by 3000 men and ten cannon. Before he could even send in a manifesto the local farmer-soldiers were refusing to take up arms against him. They beat the ensign who was trying to muster them and they stopped the Petrovsk voevoda from escaping with his treasury money. A mob of 2000 then arrested the voevoda and compelled the frightened ensign, Yumatov, to appear in uniform before the impostor, welcome him as Peter III and report to him on the condition of the town. The voevoda, Butkevich, was hanged by Pugachev in response to popular demand. Yumatov found himself appointed as the new voevoda of Petrovsk and strictly ordered to perpetuate the Pugachev-style revolution there. He was to distribute salt free of charge, sell wine for only one ruble per bucketfull, and above all raise and equip as many "Cossacks" as possible for Pugachev's army. Yumatov collected 339 men for the impostor while the latter confiscated nine cannon, powder and shot, small arms and clothing. On August 5, after only one night in Petrovsk, Pugachev resumed his drive for Saratov and the Volga.¹

It was just as he was leaving Petrovsk that the false tsar won over his first contingent of Don Cossacks. They were a sixty-man patrol sent out from Saratov which had arrived on the scene too late to help defend Petrovsk. Guards Captain Gavril Derzhavin, in Saratov on an errand from the Kazan Secret Commission, had sent the patrol in an effort to set an example for his squabbling colleagues in the town. The enterprise, however, backfired

miserably. Four of these Don Cossacks, sent ahead into Petrovsk as spies, were caught, brought before Pugachev and induced to serve him. One of these was then sent back to persuade the rest of the patrol to do the same or face execution. His agitation soon took effect when supplemented by the spectacle of the false tsar approaching with his whole army. The Don Cossacks' officers fled, while their men fell to their knees before Pugachev, shouting, "We'll be glad to serve you, sovereign!"²

Of the 4000 men with whom the false tsar now bore down on Saratov, no more than half were armed.³ However, that proved to be more than enough, in view of the disarray which the rebel propaganda and terror were causing among the defenders. When Derzhavin got word that his Cossack patrol and his 500 peasant levies had gone over to Pugachev, he promptly left town, ostensibly to try to win them back. Ladyzhensky, the government trustee for the nearby German colony, boarded a boat on the Volga. This left Commandant Boshnyak as the undisputed master of Saratov at last, but one with few men left to command. Another expeditionary force, composed of 397 soldiers and Don and Volga Cossacks, had just defected to Pugachev, on August 5. The Cossacks assured the impostor that their comrades still in Saratov would not fight him, and added, "Why, we would have gone over to you long ago, but we didn't know where to find you."⁴

By now the citizens of Saratov no longer had any stomach for resisting Pugachev. About four versts from the town the impostor encountered a party of twenty Volga Cossacks escorting a citizen who prostrated himself at the false tsar's feet and explained, "I am a townsman of Saratov, Kabyakov, sent to Your Majesty by the whole town in order that you grant a manifesto, for the people wish to serve you, only there is no manifesto." Immediately Pugachev seized this opportunity; he had Tvorogov pen a manifesto to the people of Saratov

and give it to the deputy to take back into town.⁵ Then the impostor advanced to reap the harvest of his propaganda. When Colonel Bashnyak ordered his troops to open fire on the insurgents, the merchants protested loudly. When he tore up and trampled their Pugachev ukaz they refused to have anything more to do with the defence. Finally, when Pugachev set up eight guns on a nearby hill and began to shell Saratov while his mob charged the walls, the defenders could take no more. An ensign threw open the gates and the town's remaining Don Cossacks refused to fight as the rebels poured in. Within minutes Major Salmanov and his soldiers had also submitted. Next all the townspeople, led by their mayor, bowed to the impostor and declared, "We're ready to serve you, Your Majesty."⁶ Bashnyak escaped downriver by boat with only forty troops.

The insurgents stayed in Saratov for three days. From August 6 to August 9 they looted, killed the few who resisted and administered Pugachev's oath of allegiance and Cossack tonsure to the majority who submitted. On August 7 a procession led by priests with crosses and icons wound its way out to the impostor's camp. Two ukazy were read to the supplicants. The first bestowed freedom on all and sundry; the second exempted the peasantry from the draft and the poll-tax. Pugachev then named a Cossack horse-trader of Saratov, Ufimtsev, as his new voevoda. On the next day a deacon conveyed a brief "rescript" of the false tsar to the Saratov branch of the state "Spiritual Administration". It ordered that special prayers be said for the "sovereign" and his consort, Ustinia, as well as for Grand Duke Paul and his bride Natalia. On August 9 these prayers were duly said in all the churches, as Pugachev left Saratov.⁷

At Saratov the impostor had collected five more cannon, more horses for his Cossacks, provisions, and another 25,000 rubles with which to pay for these supplies and keep up the enthusiasm of his followers. He had more than doubled

his following. Besides Salmanov's garrison he had taken in 700 Ukrainian and foreign colonist volunteers from Pokrovsk sloboda, across the Volga. Another, still more valuable contingent of 700 had also been absorbed when Khodin, a Yaik Cossack, missing since the Kazan defeats, had finally caught up with his "sovereign". Most of Khodin's factory peasants were well armed with either muskets or pikes.⁸ Nevertheless, the old weaknesses remained.

The ten thousand people now in Pugachev's mob included his adherents' women and children, who came along with their carts and livestock. Consequently, his host had come to resemble a barbarian migration or a refugee movement more than a rebel army. Only about 200 men had firearms and most of these were still men unskilled in their use, for if Salmanov's testimony is true, the insurgent leaders still had not succeeded in establishing real mutual trust with captured soldiers. He swore that his soldiers had been disarmed and their weapons given to "loyal peasants" and that he and his men only stayed with Pugachev until the last battle because the rebels' very close surveillance over them made escape impossible.⁹ Even the encouraging first successes with Don Cossacks which had played such a great part in the capture of Saratov and which had augured so well for Pugachev's plans for the Don had apparently gone sour. According to testimonies again, by the time the impostor left Saratov most of the original 60 Don Cossacks who had joined him outside Petrovsk had disappeared. Unless subsequent testimonies that these men had deserted were mere attempts to conceal their having been sent back home as agitators, their departure was an ominous sign of what lay in store.¹⁰

Regardless of whether these discouragements were genuine, other circumstances still made Saratov an agonizing crossroads for the impostor and his advisors. This time, however, with government forces very near, uncertainty centered not on the road to Moscow, but on the tempting escape route that led

in the opposite direction - across the Volga to the Uzen Rivers. According to Rozner, Pugachev's more cautious and conservative advisors, men like Chumakov, were urging him to take this route and go on to Yaitsk, supposedly to winter there. But again Pugachev, Ovchinnikov and the other "radicals" fought off this defeatist challenge by pointing to the tremendous peasant response behind them and the great potential of Don Cossack support still before them. At any rate, the previously planned course, the one leading down the second main road from Saratov - the road which followed the Volga southward to Tsaritsyn - was confirmed.¹¹

Accordingly, two Volga Cossacks were sent off toward the Don country with "various false ukazy", while the road leading westward toward Moscow as well as the Don was taken by one of Pugachev's Yaik Cossacks, Ivan Ivanov. Given 300 men, Ivanov was ordered to follow this road via forts Borisoglebsk and Novo-Khopersk, which he was to capture, then fan out from the Voronezh area to gather volunteers. Though he failed to take the forts, his bands enjoyed much success with their other task, seemingly designed to link the peasant revolution with the upheaval Pugachev hoped to raise on the Don and prepare the way for the impostor's planned advance on Moscow via Voronezh.¹² Meanwhile Pugachev himself launched a combined land and water offensive on Tsaritsyn, the key to the Don. While he and his "main army" took the road along the right bank, a flotilla of 100 boats and barges manned by rebel burlaki pushed off down the Volga.¹³

Pugachev was getting away from Saratov just in time. Prince Golitsyn, who had fought his way to Kazan by the end of July, had gambled by nearly draining embattled Bashkiria of government troops in a desperate bid to help Mikhelson and Mellin trap the impostor before he could reach the Don country. Golitsyn was counting on the impact of several thumping victories and the

resultant return of many chiefs to the government fold to keep the situation east of the Volga under control until Pugachev could be crushed.¹⁴ The gamble nearly succeeded. Major Mufel actually caught and cut to pieces a rear detachment of rebels under the Yaik Cossack Mitryasov.¹⁵ But once again Pugachev's speed and the universal chaos raised by his primitive revolutionary appeal came to his rescue. Panin, now in Shatsk, ordered Golitsyn to stop at Saratov and help pacify the hinterland, where famine was by now aggravating the peasants' and serfs' unrest. The prince also had to form a corps of 600 peasants in Malykovka to meet the menace of Kazakh raids along the Irgiz River settlements. For the time being then, Golitsyn could take no more direct action against Pugachev than sending part of Mansurov's force across to the Medveditsa River to counter the impostor's threat to Voronezh and the upper Don country.¹⁶

It was fortunate for Pugachev that he was still able to attract so many followers there, for Golitsyn's gamble was succeeding very well across the Volga, where the exhaustion and discouragement of an unequal and isolated struggle were taking their toll. By late July, rebel leaders there were complaining bitterly that their pleas for aid were not being answered even with words, let alone the gunpowder they so desperately needed.¹⁷ Frictions were worsening among the leaders. Likhachev accused Bakhtiyar Kankaev of inactivity.¹⁸ Kankaev, in turn, was finding that his propagandic assurances that the impostor had taken Kazan and was moving on Moscow no longer sufficed to maintain his subordinates' enthusiasm. In fact this news was even being used by some chiefs as an excuse to withdraw their support, on the pretext that the cause was already won. One, though, had a more genuine excuse: "the ideas of the people have changed."¹⁹ Lack of leadership and provisions was forcing more and more of the trans-Volga natives and factory workers to

capitulate sullenly. On August 4 Kanzafar Usaev was captured. Only Batyrkai Itkinin, Yulai and Salavat remained at large with sizable contingents.²⁰ In short, rebel Bashkiria had exhausted its role as a rearguard for the impostor. The same fate awaited the west Volga country next, unless Pugachev could revive his fortunes on the Don.

The impostor was speeding through the territory of the Volga German colonists and receiving much support from them. Dismayed by news of this and prodded by Derzhavin's urgent report, Mansurov sent the colonists a manifesto. He sternly reminded them of their duties as loyal subjects and appealed to them "as foreign, sensible Germans" not to help this "barbarian" and "tyrant". The stout German farmers, however, paid little heed. It was not simply that they were in no position to resist Pugachev's demands as he passed right through their land; the false tsar made sure of positively attracting their enthusiastic support. Not only were the Germans, like all the other groups before them, endowed with "all liberties"; their class warfare was shrewdly and liberally subsidized with rubles from Pugachev's ample treasury. Every man who joined him was given twelve rubles, and a reward of 1000 rubles was offered for every government officer brought in alive. Yet the motives of the 500 Volga Germans who joined must have gone deeper than simple fear and greed, for they stayed with him faithfully and fought until the bitter end.²¹

The Volga German territory was Pugachev's last hurdle before he re-entered his native Cossack environment at Kamyshin (Dmitrievsk). There his agitation scored a smashing debut. As the impostor's 5000 or more men bore down, a patrol of thirty Tsaritsyn Cossacks defected to him. Then the Volga Cossack inhabitants of Kamyshin threw open the town's gates and welcomed their "Peter III" with bread and salt. The commandant tried to barricade himself in his fort, but Ataman Ovchinnikov and a mob broke in, killed him and looted his

large treasury. Then with Pugachev's Yaik Cossacks setting the pace, the whole town was ransacked and a number of inhabitants killed in the streets.²²

The false tsar used this triumph as an occasion to launch his agitation of the Don Cossacks in earnest. As he left Kamyshin and continued down the Volga with his main army, smaller parties branched off westward. Their mission was to descend the Khoper, Medveditsa and Ilovlya Rivers and rouse the Don Cossacks stanitsy there.²³ Some bore copies of a new ukaz which Pugachev had had Dubrovsky write especially for them on August 13:

You already know well and clearly enough that almost all of Russia has already bowed to our scepter and crown in an orderly manner according to its previous oath. Moreover, some of the Don and Volga voiska are showing - by the uprooting of the opponents, wasters and seditioners of the empire, the dvoryane - fervor and zeal for our service, and have received free liberty, our royal favor, and the reward of the ancient cross and prayer [i.e., liturgy - L.H.M.], heads [i.e., tonsure - L.H.M.] and beards prescribed by the Holy Fathers. By virtue of that, as we are the all-gracious monarch and guardian over all loyal slaves [i.e., subjects - L.H.M.], we wish to bend you and all to uniform loyalty and to see proof of fervor for our service from you. You are now obscured and blinded by the seductiveness of those dvoryane of cursed breed who, not satisfied with Russia, wanted to crush the natural Cossack voiska into the peasantry as well and exterminate the Cossack breed.

We, however, by the power of the Most High Right Hand, hope that you, recognizing the enmities and brutal struggles shown against our royal power and your sovereign, which will always be to your ruin and (that of) your commanders, will repent and come to a sense of penitance, for which you can receive our royal pardon and, moreover, a reward such as yielding loyal slaves have (always) received from us.²⁴

These very achievements at Kamyshin, it is true, produced new worrisome signs that Pugachev's appeal to both the Don and Volga Cossacks and his own Yaik men was on the wane.

Tvorogov claims in his testimony that he and Dubrovsky had their supposed doubts about the authenticity of their "sovereign" devastatingly confirmed

when they took the new ukaz to him for signing and he declined. Pugachev allegedly excused himself, with a fine feeling for irony, on the grounds that some "impostor" might forge his signature. Later, discussing the incident with Chumakov, Tvorogov and Dubrovsky supposedly concluded "we're in a bad fix" (khudo nashe delo). The man they had accepted as Peter III really was an impostor, "therefore we are all doomed." Tvorogov and Chumakov claim that word of this incident quickly spread and caused many to doubt Pugachev, yet they have to admit that they themselves, like most of the others, stayed with the impostor. Their explanation that they did so only from fear and because Pugachev continued to be greeted everywhere with bread and salt is as unconvincing as their pretence that they had never before seen the false tsar decline to sign manifestos. Even Tvorogov and Chumakov only helped betray Pugachev after his ultimate defeat, while Dubrovsky, captured, died under the tortures of his inquisitors rather than do so.²⁵

While Pugachev's henchmen were undergoing their supposed crisis, the men of Kamyshin were failing to keep their promise to send a contingent of volunteers to catch up with Pugachev. The impostor was furious, believing that they had betrayed him. While that may be true, it is also possible that they were merely restrained by fear of Pugachev's rapidly approaching pursuers. In any event the impostor had still acquired the 600 Ukrainian Zaporozhian Cossacks stationed at Kamyshin, and with their help he went on to win a battle, on August 16, that gave his campaign new impetus.²⁶

The speed of Pugachev's advance through the Volga Cossack lands and the enthusiasm of his reception are conveyed in the words of a captured Yaik Cossack rebel: "The whole Volga voisko eagerly awaits Pugachev ... the remaining stanitsy have voluntarily gone over to him."²⁷

Antipovsk stanitsa is a case in point. On August 13 the impostor sent

a short proclamation to the Antipovsk Ataman, Ivan Platonov, and his fellow villagers. They were ordered to "arrange a fitting welcome on the occasion of our arrival with our army" and to "try in every way to uproot the dvoryane evildoers."²⁸ In his testimony the Cossack Ivan Chernikov vividly describes the impact of this ukaz, which confirmed the rumors that had preceded it and heralded the arrival of a "big vessel" full of tough rebel convicts. The insurgents ransacked Antipovsk stanitsa for supplies while Pugachev dined in the best house. Evidently, though, Platonov's hospitality had not been dictated by fear alone, for he became an energetic agitator and organizer for Pugachev.²⁹

Rumors of this rebel sweep through the Volga stanitsy paved the way for an important new victory. Colonel Prince Dondukov with his 3000 Kalmyks, Major von Dits with his light field company and Colonel Kuteinikov with his Don regiment were approaching from Tsaritsyn, but their urgent orders and messages drew little support. Even the Volga voisko ataman, Persidsky, begged off with the excuse that he was "sick".³⁰

When Dondukov attacked Pugachev's mob of 5000 or more on the Proleika River, on August 16, he drove back the rebels and seemed on the verge of victory. But then his Kalmyks suddenly began to disintegrate; the first rebel cannon volley broke their charge, for Pugachev had already reached them with an ukaz of August 14 to their prince Baribur. This edict had emphasized the many indignities, such as rape of their women and theft of their children, which the Kalmyks had been enduring from the Russian gentry, and had ordered Banbur to come at once in force, promising a reward of ten rubles per man.³¹

Meanwhile, on Dondukov's left, the insurgents had cut off Kuteinikov's Cossacks from von Dits' regulars. These Cossacks were more cautious than the Kalmyks - they waited until the government side guns were silent before they

disintegrated. Then many of them surrendered to the impostor, swelling the number of his captured Kalmyks and Cossacks to over 800, while others joined Dondukov's and Kuteinikov's headlong flight. Only von Dits kept his head, formed his infantry into a square and tried to conduct an orderly retreat. But even he began to lose control when he failed to break through an engulfing rebel mob. Then, when he and his officers were shot, his men threw down their weapons. They received the Cossack tonsure and were sworn in along with the other captives as Cossacks of Peter III.³²

Immediately, while still on his field of victory, Pugachev took advantage of this auspicious occasion to launch another wave of ukazy to the Don Cossacks. One of these, addressed to "my lord the ataman of Berezovsk stanitsa and all Cossacks of the Don voisko living in it," bears an unusually strong schismatic tone:

Not only Russia was already full enough of likely rumors of our concealment from the malefactors (the chief senators and gentry) but (in) foreign states as well (they were) not unknown. This resulted from nothing other than that in the time of our reign (it was) observed that the Christian law of the ancient tradition of the Holy Fathers was altogether broken and abused by the abovementioned gentry evildoers, in place of which by their evil harmful whim another law and that most blasphemous shaving of beards and various madresses both in the cross and in other matters have been introduced into Russia from German customs. And they subjected, besides our royal power, all Russia to themselves, with the imposition of great oppressions, and brought her to the most extreme ruin, by which not only the Yaik, but also the Don and Volga voiska awaited their final destruction and extermination. Which we, paternally sympathizing for all the abovementioned, regretted and intended to liberate and introduce freedom in all of Russia. For which we were unexpectedly deprived of the Russian throne and given to be dead by malevolent published ukazy.

The manifesto goes on to stress the impostor's supposed great victories and near-universal support, and to extend an invitation "that all who wish to show passion and zeal for the extermination of those dvoryane harmful to

society join our main army, where we ourselves are presiding." Finally, the ukaz is ordered to be sent down the Don from stanitsa to stanitsa, with copies being made at every stop.³³

On the morrow of his victory, August 17, Pugachev closed in on the Volga Cossacks' "capital", Dubovka. Ataman Persidsky and his esaul had already fled, despite the Cossacks' warnings that they would not oppose the rebels if their leaders deserted them. When Persidsky sent back one of his starshiny, Polyakov, to govern in his place, the Cossacks found another excuse for inactivity against Pugachev: When Polyakov tried to set up batteries, they protested that resistance was useless. The starshina then tried a desperate ruse. He sent a Cossack out to tell the impostor that Dubovka had been stripped and abandoned, hoping thus to induce Pugachev to by-pass the town. The false tsar, however, was not fooled: the Cossack soon returned with three rebel ukazy which ordered the townsmen to yield peacefully, keep all horses and prepare a vessel to ferry their emperor's "Black Hussar Regiment" across from the east bank of the Volga. Discouraged, Polyakov abandoned his defence efforts and joined his men in welcoming Pugachev.³⁴

At Dubovka, once he had presided over the election of a new ataman and esaul, Pugachev strengthened himself considerably. Not only did he absorb 200 more Volga Cossacks there; his "Black Hussars" also arrived in the form of the Kalmyk Khan Tsenden with 3000 warriors. The impostor eagerly accepted the khan's offer of service, had him and his men ferried across and rewarded them richly. There were special gifts for the khan, while his fierce warriors were given ruble pieces which they hung as decorations on their pierced left sides.³⁵ Nevertheless, more trouble signs arose in the midst of success at Dubovka.

Pugachev's discipline was disintegrating. His orders that the winecasks

be broken were disobeyed. When drunkenness and looting followed, the false tsar himself failed to act on the petitions pleading for security which he received.³⁶

The plot of some highly-placed Cossack rebel leaders against Pugachev was developing further: Tvorogov presented a captured Astrakhan Cossack sotnik, Vasily Gorsky, to Pugachev as a further test of the impostor's validity. True, Pugachev took the test in stride. He won Gorsky's acknowledgement that he was Peter III by a roaring affirmation of his authenticity. He countered the Astrakhan Cossack's story of Tsaritsyn's strong fortifications by boasting that they could not restrain a tsar who, in taking Kazan, had done in three hours what had taken Ivan the Terrible seven years. Yet this same Gorsky would later testify that he had overheard the impostor losing a crucial strategy debate with his henchmen. Pugachev argued, "Enough, now, gentlemen; what would we do with Tsaritsyn? Let's pass it by and go on to the Don, and from the Don we'll go to Moscow, for it's the chief place - this way we'll grasp the tail, for tails always lead towards the head." Nevertheless his colleagues' insistence on continuing to Tsaritsyn prevailed.³⁷

The impostor was also having more problems with the Don Cossacks. Those whom he had just absorbed on the Proleika were already beginning to escape, individually and in small groups, and make their way back to Tsaritsyn. Meanwhile, though Pugachev did not know it, the eloquence of his manifesto to the men of Berezovsk had gone to waste. Ataman Mankov of Ilovlenk stanitsa intercepted this propaganda initiative, arresting the rebel couriers and sending their message to voevoda Tsypletev in Tsaritsyn.³⁸

It is true that the importance of these incidents should not be magnified. The Don Cossack "deserters" could have been deliberately sent back by the impostor to infiltrate Tsaritsyn and thus help him take the town. The loss

of his epistle to the Berezovsk Cossacks was largely offset by the penetration of other insurgent riders with similar manifestos.³⁹ Yet these failures are symptomatic of the desperate crisis faced by both Pugachev's "main army" on the Volga and his auxiliary forces descending the Don tributaries as their joint advance came to a climax.

The early preparations and vigilance of the imperial government and the Don voisko authorities were paying off. After the harsh exemplary measures of midwinter, the authorities had changed their tune. Inspired first by reassuring news of government victories and then by fear of the insurgent revival, Sulin had issued a steady stream of flattering ukazy to his men throughout the spring, lauding them for their loyalty and service in the past. An ukaz of June 21 had even declared an amnesty for all persons still held in connection with the Efremov affair of two years before.⁴⁰ At the same time special attention was being given to the relief of famine victims in the Don lands.

Then, as early as July 19 Potemkin and von Brandt in Kazan had warned Sulin through his superior, Governor Shetnev of Voronezh, of Pugachev's rumored intention to march on the Don. They had urged him to remind all his Cossacks that a reward of 25,000 rubles and a gold medal awaited the man who should bring in Pugachev alive. Sulin had complied, but had taken care to reinforce this enticement with the organization of a 1500-man Don Cossack force, under Ataman Lukovkin and Colonels Yanov and Vukolov, to be stationed in three regiments along the northern frontier of the Don voisko. Then, on August 10, in response to a Military College directive, he had begun organizing a further 1000-man force to protect Voronezh. This gramota, (document), together with an answering voisko edict of August 15, was making the rounds of the upper stanitsy during the same days when Pugachev's outriders

began penetrating with their rival appeals.⁴¹

Neither the Cherkassk nor the St. Petersburg authorities, however, were rash enough to regard any number of ideologically vulnerable locals as sufficient military underpinning for their shifting propaganda on the Don. Both realized that regulars were needed to bolster the morale of these Cossack levies. On hearing that Pugachev had crossed the Volga and planned to go to the Don, Catherine had rushed an order to General Prince Vasily Dolgoruky, in the Crimea. The instant he received word of the war's end, he was to send Lt. Gen. Count Pushkin to the Don country with two infantry regiments, two carbine regiments, ten squadrons of hussars and three dragoon squadrons.⁴²

Those units would normally have been more than sufficient to hold down Cossack villages whose manpower had been depleted by a long war. However, the soldiers were very slow in coming. So were the thirty Don Cossack regiments that were returning now from the front and from garrison duty in the recently threatened cities of central Russia. The Cossacks' slowness though, was probably welcomed or even calculated, for their usefulness was questionable. Most of their regiments were below strength, with as few as 200 men. Their officers knew that rumors were rampant in the ranks, that most of their men were unenthusiastic about fighting Pugachev, and that many would certainly desert rather than do so.⁴³

There was still, then, in mid-August, a very real danger that the impostor might overrun the Don, if only temporarily. Prince Golitsyn, well aware of the threat, struggled desperately to avert it. While urging Panin to send troops to block the narrow passage between the Volga and the Don, he bombarded the Don Cossacks with messages full of flattery and reminders that peace had come and troops were hurrying back.⁴⁴

Meanwhile, Pugachev's bands were achieving considerable propaganda and some military penetration of the Don country. On August 10 the rebel "colonel" Andreev became the first to take any objective for Pugachev in the Don lands when he captured a remote khutor on the Chernaya River, a tributary of the Medveditsa near Saratov.⁴⁵ Colonel Sebryakov, sent by Sulin to organize a defence in that region, reported rumors that rebel bands were being received with bread and salt in the upper Medveditsa stanitsy, and complained of extreme difficulty in recruiting men. Then, when he learned that 1500 insurgents were massing at Berezovsk, Sebryakov fled to Fort Novo-Khopersk and became "ill" with "fever".⁴⁶

Sebryakov's flight reinforced the impact of Pugachev's propaganda on the Cossacks. Their folk logic had already concluded, "If this were Pugach, he never would have been able to oppose the tsarist armies for so long." Now many, arguing against the attempts of Sebryakov's successor, Ataman Lukovkin, to recruit them, said, "It's obvious that this is not Pugach but the sovereign, for he [Sebryakov - L.H.M.] went away, and if it were not so he would have stayed."⁴⁷ Lukovkin only prevailed after a day-long indoctrination session into which he brought some captured rebels to testify. The ataman, moreover, had only been able to proceed this far because two starshiny with 550 men had joined him. Before that he had managed to recruit only thirty men at Eterevsk stanitsa, the remaining 300 having already gone to serve Pugachev. He had appealed to Sulin for emergency reinforcements to be sent post haste, for fear that the whole Medveditsa would be lost.⁴⁸

It is true that Lukovkin, when he finally came to grips with the insurgents on the Medveditsa, beat them in two fierce little battles at Eterevsk and Malodelsk stanitsy, on August 17 and 19. As usual it was their own weaknesses, more than their opponents' strength, which brought the rebels

defeat. Their lack of order and discipline had produced a drunken reign of terror that had caused many to flee to the woods rather than join their bands.⁴⁹ Nevertheless it took more than two small victories to make the troubled Don safe for the established regime. Though the Don rebels had still failed to deliver any significant aid to Pugachev, the impostor's triumphant advance on Tsaritsyn was now giving them a reprieve. Lukovkin was obliged, on the morrow of his victories, to withdraw most of his men and hurry off toward Tsaritsyn, despite the pleas of some starshiny that new Pugachev bands might form which their Cossacks would again refuse to oppose for fear of their "tyranny". That is exactly what happened: other bands, some having 700 to 1000 men, soon jelled and revived the rebel cause along the Khoper, Medveditsa and Ilovlya Rivers.⁵⁰ Pugachev, then, still had a chance of raising the Don Cossacks, provided that he could first win the necessary time and prestige by vanquishing his pursuers and surmounting the last real obstacle in his path: Tsaritsyn.

As both Pugachev and his adversaries knew, Tsaritsyn's position and strength made it the key to both the Don and the Caucasian steppe - the impostor's two last hopes for reviving his fortunes. He had to capture or at least get past the town, or else he would be crushed between its considerable fortifications and garrison on one side and his pursuers on the other.

Like Sulin at Cherkassk, Tsaritsyn's commandant, Tsypletev - the man who had jailed Bogomolov - had been preparing his defences ever since the previous fall. Since August 3, when he had received word of Pugachev's crossing the Volga, he had been intensifying these preparations. Tsypletev had first rushed requests to Bagration, Sulin and Dundukov for military aid. Then he had taken a shrewd propaganda risk calculated to help keep his people in line until that aid should arrive: he had published a proclamation of the

peace with Turkey even before receiving official news of the war's end. The commandant had also reinforced the Tsaritsyn line, with its earthen dyke, three forts and 73 cannon, which spanned the sixty versts between the Don and the Volga. Already the line patrols were netting some rebels; they had to block Pugachev's passage as well.⁵¹

Despite all his best preparations, however, Tsypletev found his defences strained to the breaking point by a flood tide of popular rebellion as the impostor drew near. Mid-August still saw Bagration and his troops over 200 versts away. Governor Krechetnikov in Astrakhan could send no help because, like Stupishin in Nizhny Novgorod a month before, he feared a rising by the thousands of restless burlaki in his city. The only reinforcements Tsypletev received were Sulin's Don Cossacks, and they were especially unreliable for the direct encounter with the impostor that was bound to come. Then, on top of all this, came the demoralizing news of Pugachev's victory on the Proleika. Unable to keep rumors of it from his charges, the commandant had to work desperately hard to counter them with the knout and gingerbread. On the one hand, there were arrests of careless individuals such as a soldier who had been heard to remark, "It's vain to labor, soon everything will go to the batyushka (little father) Pugachev." On the other hand, Tsypletev and his officers studiously cultivated popularity with their men and with the citizens at large by such devices as fraternization and distribution of coins. A frantic war council of August 17 decided to burn the distillery and warehouses just outside the citadel wall in order to curb drunkenness among the defenders while depriving the attackers of shelter. Yet the council had no choice but to sanction the free distribution of alcohol in order to humor the garrison, many of whom Tsypletev suspected of being Pugachev sympathizers.⁵² These measures came none too soon; two days later Pugachev smashed the commandant's second

expeditionary force, laying Tsaritsyn open to immediate attack.

Colonel Kuteinikov, having regrouped his own Don regiment and having been bolstered by six more Cossack colonels with their atamans, esauls, and 450 picked men, had decided to try to stop the impostor at the Mechetnaya River, a small Volga tributary just north of Tsaritsyn. The colonel spared no effort to strengthen his Cossacks' loyalty to Catherine: one of his subordinates, Major Kutkin, even produced a Yaik Cossack agitator recently captured on the Ilovlya and forced him to denounce Pugachev as an impostor before all the men. Yet when the battle came, three charges failed to disperse the insurgents and Kuteinikov was captured. The colonel was dragged before the impostor himself, who roared, "So you're the one who destroyed Pugachev's house!", then had him shot and left for dead.⁵³

News of Kuteinikov's fate, as Dubrovin says, "had a great influence on the remaining course of the battle." Knowing that they were no longer being effectively supported (or, perhaps, restrained) by regular infantry and calvary, the Don Cossacks began to disintegrate. The trickle of defection became a flood when one of Kuteinikov's Cossacks suddenly bolted across to the rebel lines carrying his regimental standard. Four hundred more followed, giving Pugachev the victory and the opportunity to form his "Don Regiment", with the Don Cossack Krapivin as its "colonel".⁵⁴

Word of this disaster made the defenders of Tsaritsyn even more restless. Tsypletev was obliged to play his last propaganda card, promising rewards from the empress to all who should continue to serve loyally. Then, as Pugachev's host came into view, on August 21, the commandant sent out another 1000 Don Cossacks, in a last effort to stop the false tsar short of Tsaritsyn. But here again the Don men proved unreliable: when the rebels began to cut off and surround them six khорунжие took their standards and men over to Pugachev's

side. At once the impostor and his men advanced to consolidate their victory by winning over the remainder of Tsypletev's Don Cossacks, who had drawn back to the shelter of the citadel.⁵⁵

At this point, however, Pugachev's magic suddenly seemed to lose its power. Only five more of Tsaritsyn's Don Cossack defenders joined him, while the rest retired behind the citadel walls. The conventional explanation for this failure is that some of the Don men recognized him and spread word of who he really was. One is supposed to have shouted to him, "Hello there, Emelyan Ivanych!" (Emelyan Ivanych! Zdorovo!). This incident provided a reason, or at least an excuse, for some of Pugachev's followers, including his leading Yaik Cossacks, to testify that only then, at Tsaritsyn, had they begun to seriously doubt his authenticity as Peter III.⁵⁶ As always, the shortcomings of Pugachev's masquerade cannot be entirely discounted as a factor. Certainly the impostor himself had shown increasing insecurity in his role as he came into contact with his Don kinsmen. He had warned his wife Sophia that he would kill her with his own hands if she ever divulged his true identity to anyone.⁵⁷ He had even taken to averting his face when before his host and asking frequently if there was anyone from Zimoveisk stanitsa among them. There were none; - at any rate, none who dared admit it, but there were some from neighboring stanitsy who secretly recognized him, as their later testimonies reveal.⁵⁸ Many of the Cossacks and Kalmyks who had deserted to the impostor were returning to Tsaritsyn after a day or two, supposedly "convinced by circumstances that he is indeed the liar, tyrant and perjurer Pugachev."⁵⁹

Nevertheless, another testimony suggests that the impostor's failure or neglect to conceal his Don Cossack traits still had no apparent ill effects on his popularity: He "went in Cossack dress (and) spoke in the Don Cossack dialect, but all the villainous mob acknowledge him as the sovereign."⁶⁰

Perhaps, then, the Don Cossack who shouted to Pugachev by name was not necessarily trying to discredit or taunt him. Perhaps the "circumstances" which "convinced" many of his Don Cossacks and Kalmyks to desert had more to do with realization that his cause was lost than with discovery that he was not Peter III.

There was, however, one other development which genuinely hurt Pugachev's cause. Tsenden's Kalmyks were running amuck, raiding as far westward as Pyatiizbyansk stanitsa on the right bank of the Don, killing, looting and herding off cattle indiscriminately. This was a very poor advertisement for the impostor's new order. It supported the image of the rebels as mere criminals and barbarians that the government's counter-propaganda had always promoted. It validated General Bagration's order to the Don stanitsa atamans to regard the "Derbetev Kalmyks" as "downright malefactors and traitors" and to fight them wherever they should show themselves.⁶¹

Pugachev's conventional arms met with no more success at Tsaritsyn than did his propaganda. His gunners set up several batteries, including one with twelve cannon, but when they opened fire the defenders answered round for round. Then when one of their batteries was hit and blown up, the attackers headed for cover. Meanwhile, the attempts of three smaller rebel contingents to reach Pugachev at Tsaritsyn also came to grief. His flotilla, lacking sufficient firepower, was smashed by Tsypletev's shore and floating batteries.⁶² On August 20 or 21 a large mob hurrying to join the impostor was scattered near Tsaritsyn by Col. Ilovaisky and his Don Cossacks. On August 23 Major Duve smashed the last of these rebel efforts, a force of convicts, about five versts from Tsaritsyn.⁶³

Pugachev might still have won on another attempt, but by now there was no time for second chances. While the impostor's foremost tormentor, Mikhelson,

again drew very near, General Bagration and his force, whose advance guard was already in Tsaritsyn, was crossing the Don, and another 1000 Don Cossacks were on their way from Sulin.⁶⁴ Pugachev had no choice but to abandon his attempts on Tsaritsyn and hurry on down the Volga. The fortress town erupted in officially sanctioned rejoicing with free liquor, promotions and monetary rewards for all.⁶⁵

To be sure, Pugachev had won a minor victory in simply getting past Tsaritsyn. Tsypletev, rebuked by Panin for his failure to stop the impostor, protested that his hands had been tied; in view of the restlessness of both his townspeople and his garrison he had not dared sally forth with all his men.⁶⁶ The impostor was now free to continue on to Cherny Yar, another town which he had envisioned as a pivotal point for returning toward the Don.⁶⁷

Admittedly, there is evidence that such minor victories were no longer enough to offset a growing conviction that the "sovereign" was false and was now bent only on escape from enemies who were closing in for the kill in overwhelming force. When Pugachev's men entered Sarepta, on August 22, they looted the settlement, while its German colonists, in marked contrast to their kinsmen upriver, fled in panic toward Astrakhan.⁶⁸ The impostor also continued to be plagued by apparent mass-desertions of his recently acquired reinforcements. Of his 1200 Don Cossacks, a hundred left during the first night out from Tsaritsyn, and another 400 left the second night. A number of Kalmyks also deserted. According to Tvorogov's testimony, at least, these desertions provoked "great doubt and discussion [in Pugachev's mob - L.H.M.] to the effect that the Don Cossacks had not left for nothing."⁶⁹ Another Yaik Cossack, Osip Bannov, testifies that Pugachev's Yaik Cossacks, "especially the officers", were now "in terrible doubt". They supposedly reasoned, "of course the Don Cossacks saw that he is not the sovereign but their Cossack, as was said of him, and he was deceiving them."⁷⁰

It is notable, however, that despite their supposed sudden disillusionment and the apparent ease of escape, neither these Yaik Cossacks nor the majority of the Don Cossacks nor the rest of Pugachev's mob followed the deserters' example. Perhaps that is because, as Rozner suggests, the Don Cossacks who had left were not really deserters. They may have been sent back deliberately to convey a new manifesto to their compatriots, which according to Vasily Gorsky's testimony, Pugachev had Tvorogov write on August 23 or 24.⁷¹ As for the Kalmyks, for every one who deserted many more fought on in the impostor's war. The only way Krechetnikov could find of neutralizing them was to have them forcibly moved and interned on the Volga islands.⁷²

Pugachev cannot have been still contemplating a further attempt on the Don, unless he was mad. Mikhelson, noting in a report how nearly impossible that would be, goes on to relay his latest intelligence that his quarry was making for the safety of the Nekrasov country.⁷³ That is substantiated by the fact that Pugachev was now telling his mob that his next target was Astrakhan. Indeed, that would have been a good, as well as an obvious, move. Overrunning the ancient Caspian port would not only have greatly expanded the impostor's mob, booty and supplies; it would also have assured his escape by sea to either Turkey, Central Asia or Persia. Even if, as Pugachev claims in his testimony, he merely told his mob he was going to Astrakhan because that was what he knew most of them wanted to hear, it was a shrewd gesture. He knew, he said, that few except his Yaik Cossacks would follow him any farther if they learned of his supposed secret plan, shared only with Ovchinnikov and Davilin, to re-cross the Volga at Chernyi Yar, take Yaitsk and winter there.⁷⁴ Meanwhile, though, he had to keep his host together for a very important reason: Regardless of whether it was to give him another chance at the Don, secure an advance on Astrakhan and the Caucasus, or merely cover an escape back across

the Volga, he had to turn once again to face the relentless pursuers who were nipping at his heels.

Having fired the imagination of his local peasant adherents, the false tsar tried to follow with measures designed to bolster the shaky morale of his henchmen and tighten general discipline. In a last great demonstration of his movement's ideological poverty, he showered conventional tsarist ranks and honors on his associates. Ovchinnikov was named "general-field marshal" and "cavalier of all orders". Perfiliev was awarded several orders and created "general-in-chief". Chumakov became "quartermaster-general" and Tvorogov, "lieutenant-general". Dubrovsky was made "chief secretary" and Davilin "Kammerherr". Next Dubrovsky produced a directive on special discipline measures appropriate for the ambush that the insurgents were laying for Mikhelson near the little fishing settlement of Salnikov: strict silence was ordered, and any person creating any disturbance was to face corporal punishment for his first offence and capital punishment for his second.⁷⁵

Nevertheless, the rebels' best efforts could not match those of a really determined and capable regular army commander. Once Mikhelson's effective blackout frustrated Pugachev's efforts to find and ambush his enemies by night, the battle of the following day, August 25, went according to pattern. Pugachev, as usual, relied on his overwhelming numerical superiority and on an artillery barrage more impressive in its appearance and noise than in its effectiveness. Mikhelson, as always, scattered the onrush of the screaming rebel mob by launching a cavalry charge. This time, though, there was an added touch of irony which must have been especially galling for Pugachev: his ragtag army was being cut to pieces by squadrons of his own Don Cossack brothers whom he had just been trying so hard to win to his cause. For a while the impostor rode frantically back and forth, yelling "Stoi! Stoi!" (Stand!

Stand!), but as ever, in Dubrovin's words, "the impostor was one of the first to flee from the field of battle", setting a bad example which the rest soon followed.⁷⁶

The rebels had lost 2000 killed, including Ovchinnikov, 6000 captured, including Dubrovsky, and 24 cannon. Pugachev tried to take one wagon loaded with his family and part of his booty, but was forced by the speed of his flight and the roughness of the terrain to abandon it.⁷⁷ He and Perfiliev collected 700 other fleeing rebels and tried to make a stand 40 versts further down the Volga against Major Kharin's hussars. Again, though, the impostor lost. He had to flee to the river with only 400 men; 200 Yaik Cossacks and 200 others.⁷⁸

This defeat settled the debate among the rebel leaders as to whether or not they should re-cross the Volga. Pugachev, perhaps suspicious of the plots being hatched against him and unenthusiastic in any event about returning to the exhausted Yaik, had opposed a crossing. He had insisted on continuing his southward trajectory to the Caucasus, where he could establish himself in Mozdok and stir up the wild Kuban Horde and Caucasian mountaineers. Then, if even this enterprise should fail, he and his men could easily reach the Nekrasovs on the Loba River.⁷⁹ Pugachev might well have succeeded had he taken this course. Certainly his enemies feared that he would. On August 26 Prince Dolgoruky had to report to Panin that despite his best efforts, word of Pugachev's approach and his successes among the Don Cossacks had somehow leaked through to the Nogai Horde. Potemkin, greatly concerned, sent off Major Gorich with an appeal to the Kabardin mountaineers to catch the impostor and reap a rich reward.⁸⁰ There was no time, though, for the impostor to make his plan prevail: the approach of Kharin's cavalry combined with the "tricks" of Pugachev's Yaik Cossack lieutenants to force his consent to a crossing.⁸¹

At a spot about twenty versts above Chernyi Yar, the fleeing insurgents commandeered several fishing boats, leaving none for their pursuers, and crossed to an island in midstream. From there Pugachev and most of his men continued across to the Volga's left bank. Only Perfiliev and a band of forty Cossacks remained behind to ferry across any other scattered rebels who might appear in response to the signal column of smoke which the impostor sent up.⁸²

No more rebels came, however, and the situation of the false tsar's band was desperate in every other way as well. They were facing a barren, semi-arid wasteland and frosty autumn weather with no food, hardly a shirt on their backs, and no large population from which they could replenish either their provisions or their manpower. Moreover, when Pugachev called a council, Tvorogov, Chumakov and some other Yaik leaders urged a return to their homes via the Uzen rivers.⁸³ In short, all the worst apprehensions Pugachev could have entertained about re-crossing the Volga were confirmed.

The impostor, however, still had no intention of giving in without a struggle. He stoutly resisted the proposal of those secretly plotting against him. He urged instead a flight down the Volga and thence to a Kalmyk lord, Bambur, who would take his part, or even to the Zaporozhian Cossacks, near whom, he said, lived two princes whom he knew. But Tvorogov and the others, taking advantage of their Yaik Cossacks' homesickness and war-weariness, absolutely refused to go to any foreign land and insisted on returning home. Pugachev tried another tack by suggesting that they journey via Yaitsk to Siberia, but this too met with refusal. Now it was the impostor's turn to become intransigent. Capitalizing on his followers' fear of the arduous steppe crossing, he managed to force the adoption of an uneasy compromise resolution: he would follow the Volga as far as possible before turning inland, and stop

at the Uzen rivers for further deliberation.⁸⁴

In his Simbirsk testimony Pugachev paraphrases the impassioned appeal he had made to his men:

"What's the use of our dying on the steppe of hunger and thirst and cold, when it's better to turn back to the Volga; there, even if we're captured, it'll still be better for us to quit our lawless deeds and sins and suffer execution, than to perish unrepentant on the steppe, like wild beasts."⁸⁵

Obviously, Pugachev has modified his language in an attempt to make a good impression on his inquisitors. In reality, he may have resolved to use the trek up the Volga's left bank as an excuse to renew his campaigns, perhaps even to re-cross the great river and at least die in another attempt on the Don and Moscow, since escape was denied him. He knew that the stubborn seeds of class warfare he had sown were still bearing fruit behind the lines of his enemies, where scores of insurgent bands held out in anticipation of his return. Certainly Pugachev's new line of advance rekindled his enemies' fear that he might make such an attempt. On August 25, the very day of Pugachev's Volga crossing, Mikhelson had sent the Don Cossack colonel Ilovaisky with his regiment across to try to catch the rebels. A few days later Ilovaisky reported that Pugachev had appeared on August 28 in the settlement of Zaplavnoe. There the impostor had paused briefly to replenish his provisions, then moved on up the Volga toward Kamyshin. Mikhelson sent more men across the Volga, including, ironically enough, 200 Yaik Cossacks. Golitsyn moved to block any rebel attempt to reach the Irgiz River settlements. On September 2 General Suvorov reached Tsaritsyn and took command of all the detachments converging on Pugachev. He ordered Mikhelson and Golitsyn across the Volga at once. Two days later though, Suvorov followed with his 1500 men. He knew by then that his preparations had already sufficed to deflect his prey back from the Volga.⁸⁶

Around August 29 the rebels had captured a few soldiers on a patrol from Kamyshin. From them they learned of the warm reception that awaited them if they did not get away from the Volga at once, let alone cross it. If any further persuasion was needed, it was provided by Tvorogov and his fellow starshina conspirators. In the assembly called to consider the next move, they secured the change of course by claiming that it would be used to raise more men on the Uzeni and along the lower Yaik line, so as to force a passage through Gurev into exile.⁸⁷

At last the starshiny had managed to isolate the impostor from the indispensable new human material for his agitation, by turning him back into the sparsely populated steppe. All that remained now was to get rid of the 200-odd non-Cossacks still in his following. These faithful followers were abandoned and their mounts taken in spite of Pugachev's protest, "As long as we have men we can always get horses."⁸⁸ Kinzia Arslanov, the false tsar's last faithful lieutenant, was secretly murdered.⁸⁹ Peasants and Cossacks who, along the road to the Uzeni, tried to join the band were turned away on the excuse that they would slow its progress. Even the writing materials which would normally have been used to produce new propagandic appeals were "lost".⁹⁰

Even yet the conspirators had to be careful. Well aware that many of the ordinary Yaik Cossacks were still genuinely loyal to Pugachev, they tried to broaden their support by revealing their plot to certain trusted comrades.⁹¹ Then their arrival at the first Uzen River brought the plotters a stroke of good luck. Two of their number, out hunting in the steppe, came upon a pair of hermits, one of whom was a Yaik Cossack. These recluses told of the arrival in Yaitsk of "such a gracious judge, I don't know - a captain or a major, who has released all prisoners from jail and who is giving bread to the widows and orphans." This "judge" was Captain Mavrin, whose apparently

genuine development of a concern for the Yaik Cossacks' plight was supplemented by Potemkin's orders that the gingerbread be applied liberally in Yaitsk, so as to erase the results obtained by the knout two years before. No doubt these two hermits also told the Cossacks, if they had not already heard directly from trusty Yaik men whom Mavrin had sent out, that all who gave themselves up would receive free pardons and those who turned in Pugachev would receive rich rewards as well.⁹² Just as the hermits' story encouraged the plotters to strike, their location provided an ideal chance to do so. On September 8 the twenty active conspirators induced Pugachev to leave the rest of his men behind and cross the river with them, supposedly to get melons from the hermits' garden. As soon as the party were across and out of sight, Tvorogov, Chumakov, Fedulev, Burnov and the others seized, disarmed and arrested the impostor.⁹³

The false tsar, though, still had no intention of giving in without a struggle. As Tvorogov and his fellow conspirators relate the story of their coup, Pugachev protested: "Now, boys! What's gotten into you to do me ill! After all you'll only destroy me, and yet you yourselves won't rise again." Even his betrayers did not contradict his imposture in their reply: "No, no! Enough! We don't want to shed any more blood! We're taking you straight to the town [i.e. Yaitsk - L.H.M.] - after all, if you're the true sovereign, then you have nothing to fear."⁹⁴

No doubt the testifying conspirators are exaggerating in one last bid to cast all responsibility on Pugachev. Yet this "physician heal thyself" stand was the best one they could have taken. Their pretence that Pugachev might be the true tsar after all and that they were merely taking him in hand, not betraying him, was a safe, flexible position for a coup that was still very insecure. It would help shield the conspirators against the impostor's

attempts to exploit both their own lingering doubts and the latent sympathies of the rest of the band, until he could be safely delivered up to the military authorities in Yaitsk.⁹⁵

Even as Chumakov rode back to break the news to the other Cossacks and three more men galloped off to verify the stories of Mavrin in Yaitsk, Pugachev was beginning his struggle to turn the tables on his captors. On the way back to camp he first isolated Tvorogov and tried vainly to win him over, then spurred his horse and made a dash for freedom. The impostor was quickly run to earth and had his hands bound, but his captors soon had to grant his request to untie him. Most of Pugachev's band listened in sullen silence as the arrest of their "sovereign" was officially confirmed at a special krug, but two of the false tsar's original adherents, Vasily Konovalov and Sidor Kozhevnikov, protested and had to be interned.⁹⁶ Two days later, as the Cossacks stopped to rest by the Balykleya River, a group of dissidents led by Mikhail Madenov came up and protested to the starshiny, "Where are you taking us? In Yaitsk we'll all perish; it would be wiser to take him, Emelka, to Moscow and appear there, or we'll become wanderers on the Uzen." Meanwhile a young Cossack, Kharko, carelessly (or perhaps intentionally) laid his saber and pistol on the ground. Pugachev seized them and roared to his captors, "Where are you taking me? Your Cossacks don't want to go to Yaitsk, so let's go to Moscow!" Then turning to the others he appealed, "Cossack sirs! Serve me faithfully; bind all the starshiny!" Only a stroke of bad luck, the accidental misfiring of the pistol, prevented the false tsar from shooting Fedulev and overthrowing his captors. Pugachev was disarmed and bound again, while Madenov was beaten almost to death for his role in the attempt.⁹⁷

Pugachev seemed to resign himself to his fate as the cavalcade neared Yaitsk. Further back on the trail news of his arrest inspired several of

Perfiliev's starshiny to plan a similar coup, which was, however, interrupted on September 12 when one of Mavrin's patrols surprised and captured the whole rebel band.⁹⁸ Nevertheless the impostor's spell was still strong enough to induce Tvorogov and Chumakov, when they encountered sotnik Kharchev near Budarinsk, to cautiously tell him that they were bringing in their "sovereign" and to ask "that he be met with honor in the town and given quarters."⁹⁹ In Yaitsk, when Mavrin tried to crown his efforts by having Pugachev appear and confess before a special krug, he found to his chagrin that many still showed sympathy for the unmasked impostor.¹⁰⁰

What was true of the common people under Mavrin's comparatively enlightened tutelage in Yaitsk was even more true of many thousands of others enduring less gentle pacification techniques. The extraordinary security measures which surrounded Pugachev's slow conveyance from Yaitsk to Moscow were taken not only to keep the slippery prey from escaping under his own power, but also to assure that no mob could forcibly release him. General Suvorov himself had the task of escorting the false tsar to Simbirsk. There he waited for weeks while Panin and the governors concerned completed the elaborate security and military preparations for his delivery via Kazan and Nizhny Novgorod to Moscow. This second stage took a month, with the equivalent of a small army escorting Pugachev and guarding every town and settlement through which he passed.¹⁰¹ Even then, the cavalcade was only possible because Count Panin's troops had had time to virtually complete their punitive tasks by October.

Less than two months earlier, in mid-August, the peasant rebellion west of the Volga had still been raging in full force. Not until August 17 had Count Panin finally ventured forth from Moscow, his patrols armed with copies of his own personal ukaz. Soon this edict had been supplemented by a proclamation of the Holy Synod which Panin, scandalized by the extent of the

lower clergy's participation on the rebel side, had requested. This document reminded all Orthodox Christians, laymen and clergy, of the terrible punishments which their souls, as well as their bodies, would suffer if they continued to violate the "laws of God" by opposing the established order.¹⁰²

Panin's propaganda had had little effect. In fact, as the count had soon learned to his rage, some even interpreted his approach as evidence that their "Peter III" was genuine: Panin was going to meet the emperor whom his brother had tutored as a boy.¹⁰³ As late as August 24 Governor Stupishin had had to report that "uprisings are not dying down here, where there are no troops" and to inform Panin that Arzamas, Alatyry, Insar and Saransk were again in danger.¹⁰⁴

This and other affronts had prompted the count to demonstrate in earnest the "most cruel execution" which his ukaz had threatened. In orders of August 23 and 25 he had spelled out to his subordinates the details of the brutal measures they were to take to bludgeon the people back into submission. Blocks for quartering selected victims alive, as well as wheels for breaking bodies and gallows for hanging were to be erected everywhere and used. Soon these cruel devices, at village crossroads or on rafts floating down the Volga, had been decorated with rotting corpses. If villagers refused to betray their ringleaders, one in every three was to be hanged. If they still refused, one in every hundred was to be hung by the ribs on a hook, while the rest were whipped past the gibbet. In the days of carnage that followed, Panin personally had 326 people executed, while his subordinates took thousands more lives.¹⁰⁵

This long carnival of blood and terror met with great success in crushing the peasant rising. It produced scenes such as the one reported to Panin from the Kerensk area by Col. Drevits, on August 28:

As I order them to gather at the church and have
Your Excellency's printed proclamation read to
them all the people, priests included, keeling,
tearfully acknowledge their crime and beg Her
Imperial Majesty's mercy on them.¹⁰⁶

It is true that the genuineness of the people's repentance may be measured by another of Drevits' observations, "the muzhiks are in such a panic as cannot be described." He also had to admit as late as September 17, in a report from near Petrovsk, that there was "not one village from which from twenty to two or three hundred souls did not go with the evildoers and still have not returned."¹⁰⁷ Furthermore many of these, even when they did come back, contrived to escape punishment by insisting that they had merely been hiding from the rebels in the forest.¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless they did return, for by that time the demoralizing effect of Panin's terror had been supplemented by a disastrous piece of news which the regime spared no pains in disseminating: word of Pugachev's capture and confession.¹⁰⁹

Now, this news and the despair it had engendered were confirmed by a spectacle whose irony was as bitter for the vanquished as it was sweet for the victors. The false tsar was going at last to his oft-proclaimed goal, Moscow, escorted by troops over the same route he had begun three months before; but this time his conveyance was an iron cage and his destiny was the scaffold, not the throne. Though many may still have felt pity or even rage at the sight of the discredited impostor's predicament, they could do nothing. No serious incident disrupted Pugachev's transferral to Moscow or his subsequent imprisonment there.

Only a handful of the most stubborn insurgents continued to hold out in secluded fastnesses. Ivan Ivanov had melted into the forests of the upper Don region after his revived mob had been crushed on September 4.¹¹⁰ In the east, Salavat continued to struggle against internal Bashkir-Russian friction as

well as against his foes. On September 10 he had appealed, "It is not right for us Bashkirs and Russians to quarrel and despoil each other."¹¹¹ A few days later he and 3000 followers, falling on a government force of 500 near Birsk, had been put to flight with 400 casualties. Still Salavat had fought on. By late October, though, as news of Pugachev's capture penetrated even the most remote areas, Reinsdorp was able to report the capitulation of nearly all the Bashkir and Mishar chiefs who had been holding out. Early in November General Freiman sent in Lt. Col. Ryleev with a large corps, food supplies with which to purchase loyalty from the starving villagers, and orders to bring in Salavat and Yulai. Soon even Yulai had deserted his own son to return home and try to hide his insurgent role. Finally, on November 24, Salavat and his last small party were trapped and forced to surrender. The same month had also witnessed the capture of Ivan, Alexei and Firs Ivanov west of the Volga.¹¹²

While these final triumphs and captures were taking place, Pugachev and his associates were enduring the next ordeal. This consisted of being broken, in preparation for the final humiliation of public confession and execution by which the regime would try to use them to discredit their own rebel appeal once and for all. Interrogation sessions accompanied by extensive torture or threat of torture would be used until the required abject confessions and repentances had been extorted.¹¹³ Then the condemned leaders would be publicly executed in Moscow or in the centers with which their insurgent activities had been chiefly associated.

On January 9, 1775, Catherine confirmed the death sentences on the impostor and his associates. Pugachev and Perfiliev were to be quartered alive in Moscow. Zarubin was to be beheaded and have his head stuck on a pole and his body burned at the scaffold in Ufa. Shigaev, Padurov and Tornov were to be hanged in Moscow. Zakladnov, Pochitalin, Ulyanov and several others were

to be knouted, have their nostrils torn out and be exiled to penal settlements for life. These sentences were carried out during the next few days. Pugachev and the others slated to die in Moscow were executed before a large crowd in Bolotnaya square on January 10, 1775. The only merciful change made was one that Catherine, who disliked torture, had secretly ordered: to the great frustration and rage of many dvoryane onlookers, the executioner decapitated Pugachev and Perfiliev before quartering them, rather than after, as was the usual practice.¹¹⁴

The turn of Yulai and Salavat came later. Not until early July did their ordeal of inquisition in the Ufa provincial chancellery end, and even after that their sentences, confirmed on July 15 by Governor Reinsdorp, assured another two months of horrible suffering for the two native leaders. First they received 175 blows of the knout; 25 in each of seven centers most associated with their rebel activities - Simsk works, the villages of Yulaev and Lak, Krasnoufimsk, Kungur, Osa and Fort Eldyatsk. Then their nostrils were torn out and the letters "V.I.U." - for vor i ubiitsa ("Brigand and Murderer ") - were branded on their cheeks and foreheads. Finally, in October - November, they were escorted under heavy guard via Moscow to hard labor for life at Rogervik, on the Gulf of Finland.¹¹⁵

These monstrous punishments were supplemented by other exemplary measures calculated to erase both the memory of the rising and the last traces of the Cossack freedom that had helped to produce it. The Yaik River and Yaitsk were renamed Ural and Uralsk. Martemyan Borodin, who had already been awarded the rank of major and its accompanying dvoryane status in recognition of his services in the defence of Orenburg, was appointed as the new Ural voisko ataman. On the Don, Razin's and Pugachev's native village was moved to the side of the river and renamed "Potemkinskaya stanitsa". The Don capital,

Cherkassk, was shorn from the voisko and included in the newly-formed Azov guberniya. The Volga Cossack voisko was dissolved and its members re-settled in the Caucasus. The ancient Ukrainian Zaporozhian Cossack voisko was likewise abolished and its island stronghold, the sech, destroyed. To escape enslavement the majority of these Cossacks turned to an ironic last resort: flight across the Danube to their age-old enemies, the Turks. Finally and above all, Catherine strictly forbade any mention of Pugachev's name or discussion of his movement.¹¹⁶

Pugachev's own use of agitation as a tactical weapon had ceased with his last personal struggle, and these crushing government measures effectively assured that the formula he had used would never work again for mass rebellion. Yet the tsarist authorities still could not rest easy, for even their most absurdly exaggerated prohibitions failed to banish the popular memory and example of Pugachev. Through these the impostor's agitation survived his death and continued its struggle against the regime's counter-measures.

On January 17, 1775, just a week after Pugachev's execution, a peasant named Vasily Timofeev was interrogated in Penza. He had to admit that he had been travelling through the local villages with two priests, making speeches such as this one, which he had bawled out on emerging from a tavern:

I proclaimed before the people the health and success of the former Third Emperor, and that the state rebel (gosudarstvennyi buntovshchik) Pugachev with his henchmen was to us, the rabble (chern), no scoundrel but a friend and protector, and though he is no more, still there is Pometaila, who likewise is resolved to defend us and will soon come to us from down Saratov way with his army.¹¹⁷

St. Petersburg, alarmed, ordered the frontier governors to take emergency measures such as those urged on Reinsdorp in an order of February 1:

Wherefore I recommend to Your Excellency, selecting reliable people in all the uezdy under your jurisdiction, that you direct them, circulating among the market-places and taverns, to listen attentively everywhere for mention of the name Zametaila, and bend every effort toward the capture and delivery of his proclaimers (proiznositeli), in order to discover forthwith and root out such harmful beginnings of a new popular insurrection.¹¹⁸

Zametaila was eventually captured, but the spirit of Pugachev lived on in the rich Cossack and peasant oral tradition. It inspired new generations of peasant rebels and haunted the gentry and government in the fiery words of dozens of underground folksongs like this:

I'm no tsar and no tsar's whelp!
I was born Emelyan Pugach,
Many lords and princes have I hanged,
Through Russia I've hanged unjust people.¹¹⁹

The fear of a new Pugachev-style rising, engendered by growing peasant discontent, helped at last to bring on the Great Reform of 1861. No doubt both the speaker and his audience had Pugachev vividly in mind when Alexander II told his Moscow gentry in 1856, "It is better to abolish bondage from above than to wait for the time when it will begin to abolish itself from below."¹²⁰ By that time, too, the impostor's legend was helping to inspire generations of new, Western-style radical revolutionaries - anarchists, populists and Marxists - the "university Pugachevs" destined to eventually succeed where the false tsar had failed.¹²¹

NOTES FOR CHAPTER VI

1. Dubrovin, Vol. III, pp. 175-177.
2. Ibid., Vol. III, pp. 177-179, 182-203. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 168. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, pp. 217-218. Testimony of Don Cossack I. Melekhov and quartermaster V. Malakov, Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 47, pp. 81-84. Testimony of Don Cossack Parfen Bekrenev, Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, No. 84, p. 249.
3. The figure of 4000 men (and 13 cannon) is from Dubrovin, Vol. III, p. 208. Pugachev himself, in his Simbirsk testimony, says that he approached Saratov with 3000 men and ten guns. (Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 102, p. 180.)
4. Dubrovin, Vol. III, pp. 203-207. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, p. 218; Primechaniya, No. 80, p. 235.
5. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, p. 218. Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, Dopolneniya, p. 394.
6. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, p. 218. Simbirsk testimony, Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 102, p. 180. Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, No. 62, pp. 191-192 (Boshnyak's report); No. 72, pp. 221-222 (Ivan Trofimov's testimony).
7. Dubrovin, Vol. III, pp. 212-213. Pugachevshchina, Vol. I, No. 20, p. 41; Primechaniya, p. 230.
8. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, pp. 219-220. Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 55, p. 102. Pugachevshchina, Vol. III, pp. 62, 86-87; Vol. II, pp. 216-217.
9. Testimony of Major Andrei Salmanov, Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, No. 71, pp. 217-218.
10. Don i nizhnee povolzhe, p. 13; No. 26, pp. 60-61; No. 28, pp. 62-63. The departure of these "deserters" coincides with that of Pugachev's first agitators to the Don tributaries. See below on this page, Note # 12.
11. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 169. Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, pp. 193, 219, 226, 394.
12. Don i nizhnee povolzhe, pp. 92, 158. TsGADA, G.A., r.VI, d. 506, l. 410-440. Some of these agitators, at least, now began descending the Medveditsa. (Testimony of Volga Cossack Ivan Chernikov, Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, No. 80, p. 241.)
13. Alexander, p. 180.
14. Pugachevshchina, Vol. I, No. 100, p. 102; No. 104, p. 105; No. 106, pp. 106-107; Vol. III, No. 148, p. 289 (Report of Golitsyn to Panin).

15. Ibid., Vol. II, p. 238; Vol. III, No. 152, p. 294. Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 27, pp. 61-62.
16. Report of Golitsyn, Pugachevshchina, Vol. III, No. 152, p. 294.
17. Pugachevshchina, Vol. I, No. 104, p. 105; No. 105, pp. 107-108.
18. Ibid., Vol. I, Nos. 108, 109, pp. 108-109.
19. Ibid., Vol. I, No. 112, p. 110; No. 193, pp. 161-162. TsGADA, G.A., r.VI, d. 416, ch.I, otd. 14, l.13.
20. TsGADA, G.A., r.VI, d. 416, ch.I, otd. 14, l.19. Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, No. 77, p. 236.
21. Dubrovin, Vol. III, p. 220. Pugachevshchina, Vol. III, Nos. 100, 101, pp. 203-204.
22. Dubrovin, Vol. III, p. 221. Pugachev's Yaitsk testimony, No. 4, p. 122. Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 82, p. 140 (testimony of an Astrakhan ship worker and a serf who had joined Pugachev at Saratov).
23. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, p. 235. Dubrovin, Vol. III, p. 222. Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 99, p. 176.
24. Cited by Dubrovin, Vol. III, pp. 215-216.
25. Chumakov's and Tvorogov's testimony, TsGADA, G.A., r.VI, d.505, l.7ob. Tvorogov's testimony, Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, No. 44, pp. 151, 162-163; Primechaniya, No. 72, p. 447; Vol. III, No. 173 (letter of P. Potemkin to Catherine), pp. 326-327.
26. Pugachev's Simbirsk testimony, Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 102, p. 180. Dubrovin, Vol. III, p. 221.
27. Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, No. 102, p. 283.
28. Ibid., Vol. I, No. 22, pp. 42-43; Primechaniya, p. 231.
29. Ibid., Vol. II, No. 80, pp. 239-240. Dubrovin, Vol. III, pp. 224-225.
30. Dubrovin, Vol. III, pp. 227-228.
31. Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 43, p. 78 (Report of Tsipletev); No. 32, pp. 66-67. The Volga Cossack Chernikov gives Pugachev's strength after Kamyshin as 6000, including women and children, of whom only about 2000 were armed. (Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, No. 80, p. 241.)
32. Dubrovin, Vol. III, pp. 228-229. Pugachevshchina, Vol. III, No. 157, pp. 304-305. Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 65, pp. 114-115; No. 82, p. 141.

33. Pugachevshchina, Vol. I, No. 21, pp. 41-42.
34. Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 102, p. 180 (Pugachev's Simbirsk testimony); No. 107, p. 200 (Vasily Gorsky's testimony).
35. Pugachev's Yaitsk testimony, No. 4, p. 122. His Moscow testimony, p. 221. Pugachevshchina, Vol. III, No. 157, p. 305; Vol. II, No. 44, p. 152 (Tvorogov's testimony).
36. Dubrovin, Vol. III, p. 231.
37. Vasily Gorsky's testimony, Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 107, pp. 204-206.
38. Dubrovin, Vol. III, pp. 228-229. Volga Cossack Ivan Chernikov's testimony, Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, No. 80, pp. 240-241.
39. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 172.
40. Don i nizhnee povolzhe, p. 7. The Efremov affair (see below, Chapter I, pp. 21, 40) had ended in November, 1772, with the arrest of the ataman and his followers by government troops. Efremov himself had been exiled to the penal colony at Pelym. (Dubrovin, Vol. I, pp. 111-118).
41. Dubrovin, Vol. III, pp. 217-218. Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 29, pp. 63-65; No. 73, pp. 122-123; No. 37, pp. 70-72; No. 39, pp. 72-73.
42. Don i nizhnee povolzhe, p. 9.
43. Ibid., p. 11. Both the Kalmyk colonel Prince Dondukov (Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 34, pp. 68-69) and Col. Boshnyak (Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, No. 62, p. 193) stress the unreliability of the Don Cossacks.
44. Report of Golitsyn to Panin, Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, No. 77, pp. 234-235. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 173.
45. Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 58, pp. 107-108.
46. Dubrovin, Vol. III, p. 219. Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, No. 76, pp. 232-233.
47. Don i nizhnee povolzhe, p. 12; No. 50, p. 92. Dubrovin, Vol. III p. 224. The Cossacks were also sending gontsy (couriers) to find the impostor and make sure he was the true Peter III. Rebel successes were even spawning rumors that the "sovereign" himself was leading his penetration of the Don. These rumors were to endure for another century in Don Cossack oral tradition. (Don i nizhnee povolzhe, p. 19.)

48. Dubrovin, Vol. III, pp. 222-223. Don i nizhnee povolzhe, p. 13, 16.
49. Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 73, pp. 122-124. Lukovkin's report Pugachevshchina, Vol. III, No. 36, pp. 75-77.
50. Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 73, p. 125; No. 90, p. 163; No. 94, pp. 166-169. Pugachevshchina, Vol. III, No. 36, p. 77; No. 77, p. 163. The penetration of the Don by rebel propaganda also continued. One Cossack later testified that half his kinsmen in Pyatiizbyansk stanitsa, on the middle Don, were eagerly awaiting Pugachev's arrival. (Don i nizhnee, p. 15; No. 86, pp. 151-156.)
51. Dubrovin, Vol. III, p. 236. Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 52, p. 96.
52. Dubrovin, Vol. III, pp. 236-241. Report of Tsypletev to Catherine, Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 52, pp. 96-97. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 175.
53. Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 66, p. 115; No. 73, p. 125; No. 52, p. 97. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, p. 221.
54. Dubrovin, Vol. III, pp. 241-242. Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 53, pp. 98-101; No. 88, pp. 159-162. Krapivin later tried to convince his captors that he had not joined or remained with the rebels voluntarily. His inquisitors, however, were not impressed; they cut off his right ear. Such frightened attempts of rebel Don Cossack captives to whitewash themselves must be weighed against testimonies such as that of the Yaik Cossack I. Kuznetsov, who emphasizes that half of Pugachev's Don Cossacks stayed with Pugachev until the last battle and urged him to go next to their homeland. (Don i nizhnee povolzhe, p. 14; No. 88, pp. 159-162; No. 91, pp. 164-165; No. 81, pp. 138-139.)
55. Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 53, p. 98; No. 107, p. 206. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 175. Pugachev's Yaitsk testimony, No. 4, p. 122.
56. Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, No. 47, p. 167. (Testimony of Yaik Cossack Osip Bannov); No. 44, p. 153 (Tvorogov's testimony). TsGADA, G.A., r.VI, d. 505, l.21 (Fedulev's testimony); l. 24ob - 25ob. (Testimony of seventeen other Yaik Cossack betrayers of Pugachev.)
57. Dubrovin, Vol. III, p. 215.
58. Tvorogov's testimony, Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, No. 44, p. 153. Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 51, p. 95.
59. Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 73, p. 124, pp. 127-12
60. Ibid., No. 82, p. 142.

61. Dubrovin, Vol. III, p. 243. Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 73, p. 124.
62. Dubrovin, Vol. III, pp. 243-244. Report of Mikhelson to Panin, Pugachevshchina, Vol. III, No. 155, p. 301.
63. Mikhelson's report, Pugachevshchina, Vol. III, No. 155, p. 301.
64. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 175. Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 75, p. 129.
65. Dubrovin, Vol. III, p. 243.
66. Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 105, p. 189.
67. Rozner, Kazachestvo, pp. 175-176. Testimony of Trofimov (Dubrovsky), Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, No. 72, p. 222. One of the Don Cossack deserters from Pugachev, Bekrenev, claims he had heard that the impostor intended to take Cherny Yar, then drive for the Don. (Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, No. 84, p. 251).
68. Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 82, p. 141. Dubrovin, Vol. III, p. 249.
69. Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, No. 44, pp. 152-153. Pugachev's Yaitsk testimony, No. 4, p. 122. TsGADA, G.A., r.VI, d. 505, 1.8.
70. Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, No. 47, pp. 168-169.
71. Don i nizhnee povolzhe, p. 207. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 176. Chumakov's and Tvorogov's testimony, TsGADA, G.A., r.VI, d. 505, 1.8. One wonders, though, whether Rozner is correct in dating the particular ukaz he quotes "August 23 or 24". It is clearly the same ukaz which Dubrovin reproduces and dates August 13. (Dubrovin, Vol. III, pp. 215-216. See also above, p. 232).
72. Report of Krechetnikov to Panin, Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, No. 103, p. 285.
73. Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 71, pp. 120-121. Pugachevshchina, Vol. III, No. 157, p. 306.
74. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, p. 221. Dubrovin, Vol. III, p. 245.
75. Tvorogov's testimony, Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, No. 44, p. 161. Gorsky's testimony, Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 107, p. 208.
76. Pugachevshchina, Vol. III, No. 158, pp. 307-308 (Mikhelson's victory report); Vol. II, No. 71, pp. 218-219 (Maj. Salmanov's testimony). Pugachev's Yaitsk testimony, No. 4, p. 122. Dubrovin, Vol. III, p. 252.
77. Pugachevshchina, Vol. III, No. 158, p. 309 (Mikhelson's report); Vol. II, No. 44, p. 153 (Tvorogov's testimony). Gorsky's testimony (Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 107, pp. 208-209) even implies that Pugachev deliberately scattered loot behind him so as to distract and slow down his pursuers.

78. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 178. Gorsky's testimony, Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 107, pp. 208-209.
79. Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, no. 102, p. 282. Gorsky's testimony, Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 107, p. 209.
80. Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 60, p. 110. Dubrovin, Vol. III, pp. 256-257.
81. Pugachev's Simbirsk testimony, Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 102, p. 180.
82. Mikhelson's report, Pugachevshchina, Vol. III, No. 158, p. 309. Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 82, p. 142. Rozner, Kazachestvo, pp. 178-179.
83. Pugachev's Simbirsk testimony, Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 102, p. 180. Tvorogov's testimony, Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, No. 44, pp. 154-155.
84. Ibid., Vol. II, p. 155. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, p. 222.
85. Pugachev's Simbirsk testimony, Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 102, p. 180.
86. Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, No. 160, p. 312; Dopolneniya, pp. 405-407. Rozner, Kazachestvo, pp. 181-182.
87. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 182.
88. Tvorogov's testimony, Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, No. 44, pp. 155-156. Gorsky's testimony (Don i nizhnee povolzhe, No. 107, p. 209) has Pugachev making this protest just before, rather than after, recrossing the Volga. Nevertheless, it would have been even more appropriate now, as Tvorogov's words show.
89. Rozner, at least, draws this conclusion from Tvorogov's testimony, (Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, No. 44, p. 156). True, Tvorogov's words are ambiguous: He merely says, "There was no way we could leave Kinzia, for the miscreant [Pugachev - L.H.M.] would have gotten suspicious of us." This could have indicated merely a desire not to leave Arslanov behind with the others who were being abandoned, rather than an intention not to leave him among the living. Yet the words have a sinister tone, and the fact is that we hear no more of Arslanov.
90. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 181.
91. Ibid., p. 183. Tvorogov's testimony, Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, No. 44, p. 154.

92. Tvorogov (Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, No. 44, pp. 159-160) has the conspirators receiving this news from the hermits only after they had already arrested Pugachev and determined to turn him over to the Yaitsk authorities. No doubt he thought this would make the plotters' achievement sound more spontaneous, and therefore more meritorious. Fedulev's testimony (TsGADA, G.A., r.VI, d.505, l.18) has the hermits' tidings being received at the more likely time, before the arrest, as related here.
93. Tvorogov's testimony, Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, No. 44, pp. 156-158. Pugachev's Moscow testimony, p. 223.
94. Tvorogov's testimony, Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, No. 44, p. 158.
95. Fedulev, for example, has Chumakov merely telling Pugachev "We are doubtful of you" in explanation of the arrest. (TsGADA, G.A., r.VI, d.505, l. 19-20.)
96. TsGADA, G.A., r.VI, d.505, l. 18-19 (Fedulev's testimony); l.110b. (Chumakov's and Tvorogov's testimony). Pugachev's Moscow testimony, p. 223. Kozhevnikov, of course, denies all in his testimony and ascribes his own words of protest to Pugachev. (Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, No. 49, p. 172.)
97. Chumakov's and Tvorogov's testimony, TsGADA, G.A., r.VI, d.505, l.11. Rozner, Kazachestvo, pp. 185-186.
98. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 186. Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, No. 46, p. 165; No. 47 (Yaik Cossack Bannov's testimony), p. 169; No. 73 (Yaik Cossack Pustobaev's testimony), pp. 228-229.
99. Kharchev's report to Simonov, Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, no. 69, p. 203.
100. Rozner, Kazachestvo, pp. 188-189.
101. Ibid., pp. 189-190. Dubrovin, Vol. III, p. 309. Details of Suvorov's conveyance of Pugachev from Yaitsk via Syzran; Penza and Saransk to Simbirsk, "under heavy guard, in irons" . . . "in a cage", are given in Pugachevshchina, Vol. II, Dopolneniya, pp. 407-408.
102. Dubrovin, Vol. III, pp. 284, 154.
103. Ibid., Vol. III, pp. 291-292.
104. Pugachevshchina, Vol. III, No. 154, p. 300.
105. Ibid., Vol. III, No. 153, pp. 296-299; Dopolneniya, pp. 453-454. Panin's similar circular of August 25 is reprinted in Alexander, p. 185. As Tkhorzhevsky emphasizes, (pp. 113, 157), the serfs suffered worst of all; after Panin's terror had subsided, they still had to face the vengeance of their returning masters as well.

106. Pugachevshchina, Vol. III, No. 156, p. 303.
107. Ibid., Vol. III, No. 163, p. 315.
108. Tkhorzhevsky, p. 88.
109. Dubrovin, Vol. III, pp. 309, 316.
110. Pugachevshchina, Vol. III, No. 33, p. 69. Tkhorzhevsky, pp. 82-83.
111. Cited by Andrushchenko, p. 299.
112. Ibid., pp. 303, 306-307. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 196.
113. It is difficult to find solid proof for Rozner's implication that the Moscow prisoners - Pugachev in particular - suffered "monstrous tortures". (Kazachestvo, p. 190). The death of Trofimov (Dubrovsky) had aroused not only Catherine's aversion to torture, but also official fears that other important rebel prisoners might die before their interrogation and public execution could be completed. (See above, p. 238 and footnote No. 25.) Yet, we do know that Catherine chose as Pugachev's inquisitor the Secret Chancellery's dreaded "whipmaster", S.I. Sheshkovsky, whose technique is noted by Martynov (introduction, p. viii): "He carried out the interrogation in a room ranged with ikons, and against a background of groans and soul-rending screams he read the acaphist to Sweetest Jesus and the Mother of God." Also, a letter of Vyazemsky to Catherine affirms that the impostor was already so worn down by his interrogation that he might not survive the further ordeal of his trial. (Pugachev's Yaitsk testimony, No. 3, introduction, p. 126. Martynov, introduction, pp. viii-ix.)
114. Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 191. Perfiliev's adamant refusal to renounce either his raskolnik faith or his rebel cause singled him out as the only one of Pugachev's lieutenants to share his master's dread punishment. (Dubrovin, Vol. III, pp. 363, 365.) The dvoryanin Andrei Bolotov's vivid eyewitness account of the Moscow executions is quoted by both Dubrovin (Vol. III, p. 365) and Alexander (pp. 209-210). Pokrovsky, in his foreword to Pugachevshchina (Vol. I, pp. 3-4), scoffed at the traditional accounts that Catherine had secretly intervened to moderate Pugachev's execution. A few years later, though, the discovery of Catherine's secret directive upheld these accounts and refuted Pokrovsky. (Martynov, introduction, p. x.)
115. Paneyakh, "Kinzia Arslanov i Salavat Yulaev", Pugachev i ego spodvizhniki, pp. 136-137.
116. Rozner, Kazachestvo, pp. 192-194.
117. Pugachevshchina, Vol. III, No. 40, p. 83.

118. Ibid., Vol. III, No. 214, p. 407.
119. Cited by Rozner, Kazachestvo, p. 182. Mavrodin discusses and further illustrates the folklore on Pugachev in Krestyanskaya voina, Vol. I, pp. 201-226.
120. Cited by Florinsky, Vol. II, p. 883.
121. Firsov, pp. 154-164. Tkhorzhevsky, p. 172, Mavrodin, Krestyanskaya voina, Vol. I, pp. 59-70.

CONCLUSION

Pugachev failed to reach his professed goal of overthrowing Catherine the Great and her gentry regime. Yet clearly his failure was not caused by lack of popularity among the masses of the Russian empire. On the contrary, this Don Cossack renegade succeeded brilliantly where all his precursors in the role of Peter III had failed in picking the proper time and place for his debut and in combining the essential ingredients of Cossack rebellion and general social upheaval with his personal imposture. Within two weeks of his emergence in arms at Budarinsk his manifestos and speeches had bestowed liberty on a complete cross-section of the empire's lower classes - on native peoples and serfs as well as Cossacks. It is true that this vertical penetration was not matched by a corresponding horizontal scope until the release of Pugachev's general ukazy of early December and his manifesto to all the serfs the following July. But this delay mattered little, for popular rumors and scores of spontaneous agitators had long since carried the exciting news of the tsar-liberator into every corner of Russia and every fort, town or armed force that his strategy or tactics would ever have to face to obtain victory. Clearly, the weakness of Pugachev and his henchmen was not a failure to advertize or sell their product; it was so irresistible to the people that it sold itself. Their real weakness was their failure to organize and direct their movement well enough to provide the minimum of military efficiency without which it could never even reach all of its masses of potential adherents, let alone win final victory.

Under the circumstances this weakness of leadership was almost inevitable. The same extreme polarization of Russian society which had produced the rebellion had also made the vital skills of higher military and civil leadership a virtual monopoly of the dvoryane ruling class. The odds were heavily against the likelihood of any member of the elite abandoning his privileged position to lead a levelling popular upheaval, as they were against the likelihood of any rebel leaders with adequate qualifications emerging from the masses. Barring those two highly unlikely possibilities, the most that could have been expected was that Pugachev at least be literate, which would have enhanced both his credibility as a tsar and his efficiency as a leader, and shrewd enough to see the urgency of moving on central Russia at once. With even these minimal qualifications absent, the impostor and his followers stumbled step by step toward a doom as certain as that of any Greek tragic hero.

The first strategic blunder into which Pugachev was led by his overcautious and parochially-minded Yaik Cossack advisors was his failure to turn westward immediately on capturing Fort Tatishchev, to raise the far larger Don Cossack voisko and the main peasant masses against central Russian internal defences that were still pathetically feeble and unprepared. The second was his failure to move swiftly and directly on Orenburg so as to catch that fortress unprepared, since its capture was deemed prerequisite to a westward offensive. The rebel leaders' third strategic blunder, the most disastrous of all, was their wasting of the whole winter on a sedentary blockade of Orenburg and other frontier centers, neither attacking effectively enough to storm them nor making up

their minds to abandon them and move on.

The victory which Zarubin and Ovchinnikov gained over General Kar gave the insurgents both a timely warning of what lay in store if they did not move on at once and an ideal propagandic and psychological advantage for the launching of a drive on Moscow. All the way to the old capital and beyond, the ground was spontaneously prepared for such an offensive, as the stunning news of Kar's defeat excited the serfs and frightened their masters. Yet both the warning and the golden opportunity went unheeded. The false tsar and his advisers did undertake a great wave of expansionist and organizational activity heralded by Pugachev's new ukazy, but this activity was still not directed especially westward. As a result, most of the tremendous gains in territory, manpower and resources that ensued were wasted on the Orenburg blockade or on similar stalemates that now developed before Ufa, Yaitsk, Kungur and Ekaterinburg. Only the drives of Arapov on Samara and Tornov on Nagaibatsk and Zainsk were both westward-directed and successful, but they received no special priority and they came a little too late. As a result, just as Arapov's agitators were beginning to cross the Volga and Tornov's foremost Tatar bands were nearing the outskirts of Kazan, both were smashed and hurled back by General Bibikov's new winter offensive.

Instead of realizing the futility of continuing to attempt orthodox military operations with irregular forces, commanders and arms, the rebels had only compounded their folly. Bibikov and his capable subordinate officers were not slow to take advantage of such a chance to let the impact of their repeated victories in the field, supplemented by the studied

application of the "knout and gingerbread", make up for the inferior appeal of their government propaganda. The ragtag rebel mobs that could not capture any large and reasonably well defended fort naturally failed also to halt the triumphant advance of General Bibikov's small but well-armed and well-led forces.

Ironically, though, Bibikov's rout of the main insurgent mobs and breaking of their sieges in late March and early April did Pugachev a great favor in a way. It literally forced him to resume the fluid, swift-moving campaign that the long fixation on Orenburg had interrupted. Fortunately for the rebels, moreover, the conjunction of circumstances during April and May gave them a chance to do so. The spring freshet came just in time to shelter the rebel fragments' regrouping in their last sizable enclave, the south Ural foundry region. General Bibikov's death and his succession by Shcherbatov, a less able man to whom, moreover, a prematurely complacent government did not extend Bibikov's special powers, further dislocated the punitive efforts just when final victory seemed to be within their grasp. Pugachev took advantage of this confusion to renew his strength with a new propaganda offensive and a series of easy victories along the upper Yaik line forts.

True, General Dekolong's crushing victory at Troitsk and several more trouncings administered by Lt.-Col. Mikhelson proved that the new, mobile Pugachev was still just as vulnerable as the old, sedentary Pugachev had been. Yet these government victories also failed to stop the impostor. They gave him another push toward his goal of Moscow, while demonstrating the remarkable speed and resiliency which ubiquitous popular support gave him, even when he was on the run. Pugachev turned the tables

on his foes, leaving them behind to fight their way through freshly aroused Bashkir hordes while he stormed into the vacuum which they had left in the west. Raising new thousands along the way, the false tsar descended the Kama and overwhelmed weakly defended Kazan. Mikhelson's arrival to inflict two more disastrous defeats was a great blow and may have convinced Pugachev then and there that he must raise the Don first to get better fighting material before proceeding to Moscow. Yet these defeats also hastened the impostor's crossing of the Volga, which he had to make in any event.

Pugachev, having crossed the Volga, behaved more than ever as though Moscow were his next major target. It was in his interest thus to confound his enemies and excite the masses, whether to promote an offensive or cover a retreat. Therefore the false tsar first addressed a new rousing manifesto to the serfs, most numerous in the Great Russian heartland, then covered half the distance to Nizhny Novgorod before veering southward. Even then he continued to move as though seeking another opening on Moscow. Numbers of local "Cossacks", led by "atamans" and even impostors of their own, sprang up to spread the movement, especially in the country west of Saransk. Just beyond, west of the Oka, incidents and rumors proliferated as the lower classes awaited the arrival of their "sovereign" with an impatience matched only by the near-panic of their dvoryane overlords. Pugachev, though, made no attempt to ride directly to the old capital on this wave of popular unrest. The disastrous news of the end of the Turkish war, which the impostor may have received as early as Saransk, confirmed his plan of building a new strategic base on the Don. Reaching and rousing his fellow Cossacks now presented his only hope for survival, let alone victory.

Pugachev, however, failed to raise up the Don enough to even provide himself with sufficient cover for further escape, much less a base for returning northward. Superficially, this failure was caused by the discrediting of his personal imposture which resulted from his recognition by some of his Don Cossack fellow countrymen. More substantially, it was probably caused by their recognition that, with the war over and regiments rushing back from the front in overwhelming strength, Pugachev's cause was hopelessly lost. This feeling of despair penetrated the ranks of the impostor's leading retainers as well when his last ditch stand against his pursuers at Salnykov still failed to break the chain of ignominious defeats. Conspiracy raised its head again, as it had after Pugachev's March defeat, but this time the plotters did not fail.

First Pugachev was half-pressured, half-cajoled into recrossing the Volga onto the barren steppe. There, having isolated the false emperor from the fresh and numerous human material on which his propaganda had fed and his strength had rested, his conspiring lieutenants and their accomplices were able to arrest him and deliver him up to the government military authorities at Yaitsk.

The humiliating capture, confession and execution of Pugachev and all of his surviving associates who had not helped betray him was a great blow to the morale of all those isolated pockets that had continued to resist. Combined as it was with the bloody waves of repression that Count Panin's troops were carrying out everywhere, it was enough to crush the fighting spirit of most of the common people for the time being. No amount of persecution, though, could erase the living memory of Pugachev from the minds of the people. His example continued to inspire revolutionaries and frighten officialdom for another century and a half. In this very

broadest sense, then, Pugachev's use of agitation and propaganda as tactical and strategic weapons survived his death.

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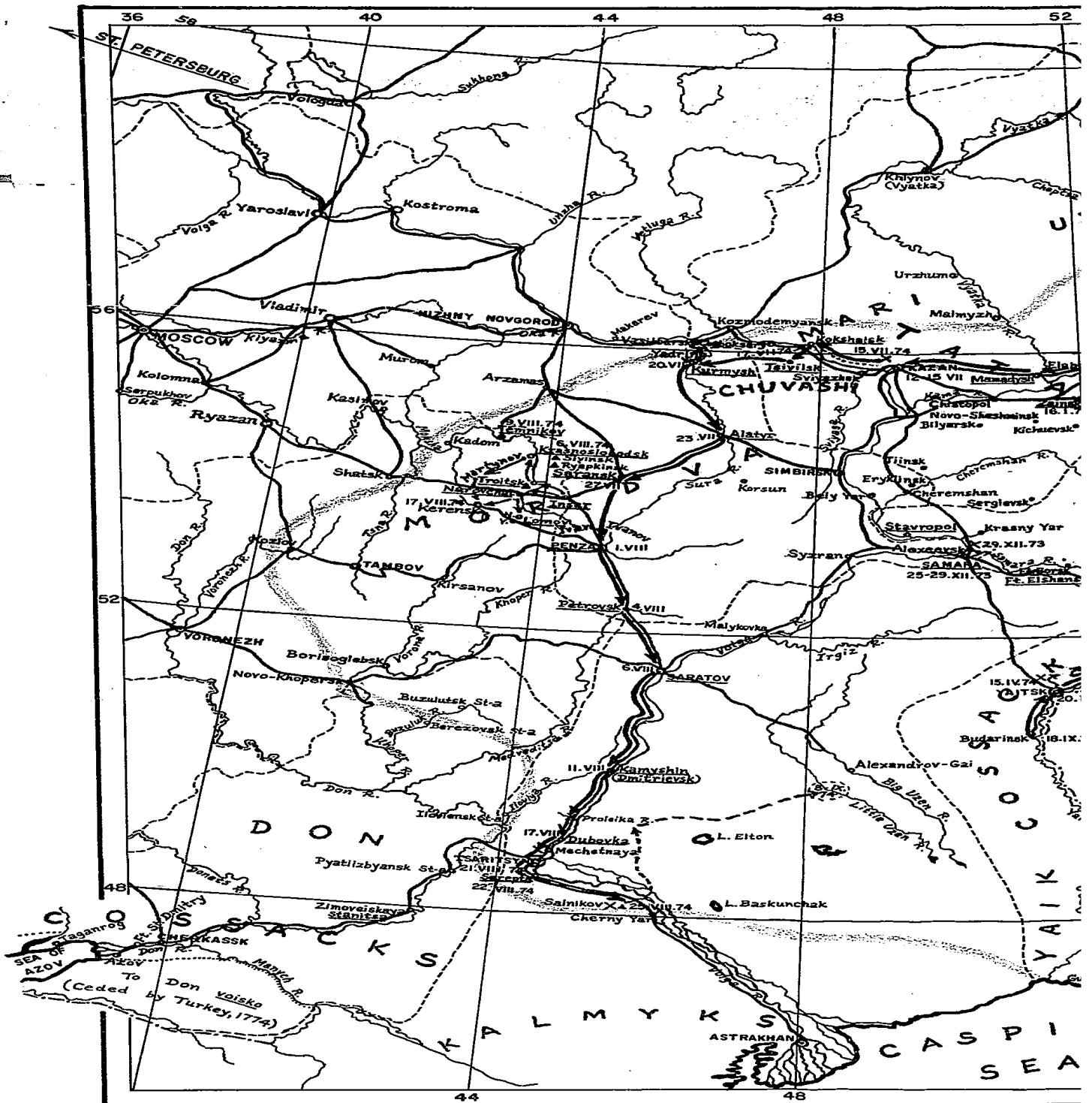
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