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# **The Muscovite Embassy of 1599 to Emperor Rudolf II of Habsburg**

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# **Abstract**

The present thesis represents a contribution to the history of diplomatic relations between Muscovy and the House of Habsburg. It includes an overall survey of those relations during the reign of Tsar Fyodor (1584-1598), as well as a more detailed study of the Muscovite embassy of 1599. It also provides original translations of important Russian documents related to the subject of the thesis.

The narrative of the embassy of 1599 is divided into three sections. It opens with the travels of the Muscovite delegation through several German cities, during which time the Tsar's representative engaged in discussions with the leading merchants of Hamburg and Lübeck. It then relates the arrival of this delegation at the court of Emperor Rudolf II, where the chief Muscovite representative raised the prospect of an alliance against Poland-Lithuania. Finally, it closes with the embassy's visit to Archduke Maximilian of Austria, whose pretensions to the throne of Poland-Lithuania had formed part of Russo-Imperial relations since 1587.

Analysis of the embassy of 1599 reveals that previous historiography on the subject was quite cursory and often based on misinterpretation or misuse of sources. The thesis points out these errors and seeks to provide a more accurate evaluation of the relations between Muscovy and the Empire in the late sixteenth century. It closes with a suggestion for further research into their dealings of the early seventeenth century.

## Résumé

La présente thèse est une contribution à l'histoire des relations diplomatiques entre Moscou et la Maison des Habsbourg. Elle comprend, d'une part, une vue d'ensemble de ces relations pendant le règne du tsar Fyodor (1584-1598) et, d'autre part, une étude détaillée de l'ambassade moscovite de 1599. Elle renferme par ailleurs des traductions inédites d'importants documents russes pertinents pour le sujet traité.

L'exposé portant sur l'ambassade de 1599 comporte trois parties. Il commence par le voyage de la délégation moscovite dans plusieurs villes germaniques où elle développa des rapports avec les grands marchands de Hambourg et de Lübeck. Il relate ensuite l'arrivée de cette délégation à la cour de l'empereur Rudolf II où le premier représentant moscovite laisse entrevoir la perspective d'une alliance contre la Pologne-Lithuanie. Enfin, l'exposé se termine par la visite rendue à l'archiduc Maximilien d'Autriche dont les aspirations au trône de Pologne-Lithuanie avaient entretenu une partie importante des relations russo-impériales depuis 1587.

L'analyse de l'ambassade de 1599 révèle que l'historiographie s'y rapportant serait assez superficielle et souvent basée sur une interprétation ou un usage erronés des sources. La présente thèse s'attarde donc à préciser ces erreurs ainsi qu'à fournir une évaluation plus précise des relations entre Moscou et l'Empire à la fin du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle. Elle s'achève en suggérant des cheminements intéressants pour toute recherche éventuelle portant sur l'ambassade au début du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle.

## Preface

Muscovite terms and concepts of the late sixteenth century differ significantly from their late-twentieth-century English counterparts. Consequently, direct translation is impossible. One must resort to a number of more or less artificial conventions in order to remain as faithful as possible to the original historical documents.

For instance, the calendar in use in Muscovy at the end of the sixteenth century reckoned time from the assumed creation of the world (September 1, 5508 B.C.). In addition, it calculated dates according to the "Old Style" or Julian system, even though much of Europe had already adopted the modified calendar of Pope Gregory XIII. Thus, the day called August 31, 7107 in Moscow was considered September 10, 1599 in Vienna. The following day was September 1, 7108 in Moscow and September 11, 1599 in Vienna. In this thesis, the Muscovite cosmic years have been changed to A.D. However, all dates are given in Old Style unless otherwise specified.

In transliterating Russian words, I have utilized the Library of Congress system with several important modifications. Masculine singular adjectives end in -y, rather than -yi or -ii (e.g., *dorodny*, *okol'nichy*). The hard variant of the plural adjectival ending appears as -ie instead of -ye (e.g., *muzhestvennie*). The final letter of the Russian alphabet is given as ya, not ia (e.g., *istoriya*).

Special allowances have been made for proper nouns. Names appear in their most readable phonetic form and without apostrophes to indicate soft signs (e.g., Maria not Mariya, Soloviev not Solov'ev, Ryl'sk not Ryl'sk). This format avoids such awkward possessive constructions as "Vlas'ev's embassy" or "Solov'ev's account." Moreover, certain common English renderings such as Dnieper, Dniester, and Moscow have been maintained.

Some older spellings of words have also been kept (e.g., *diak*). However, the name Ofonasy has been changed to its modern form, Afanasy, and final hard signs have been eliminated in all cases.

Throughout the thesis, the term "Muscovy" is preferred over "Russia," and "the Empire" over "Austria." However, the latter renderings do appear in translated passages; for example, when Karamzin states that "Russian relations with Austria were... highly amicable and not fruitless."<sup>1</sup>

\* \* \*

I am privileged to acknowledge the generous assistance of my supervisor, Prof. Philip Longworth of McGill University. It was he who suggested that I examine Russo-Imperial relations of the late sixteenth century and who introduced me to the relevant primary sources. Following this, he helped me to formulate research questions and provided constructive criticism on several drafts of the thesis. The final product would have been much weaker without his helpful comments.

Prof. Marina Swoboda of McGill University kindly read my translations and helped me with some difficult passages.<sup>2</sup> Her assistance is greatly appreciated. I would also like to thank Dan Gruber for reading the manuscript and spotting some typographical errors, Ethel Perez for translating the abstract into French, and Ilinca Iurascu for unwittingly contributing to the development of my concluding argument.

Finally, "It has seemed good to me to declare the signs and wonders which the Most High God has done for me... His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See *infra*, 5, 78.

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, *infra*, 82 n. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Dan. 4:2-3 (NASB).



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# Introduction

This Master's Thesis is intended as a modest contribution to the history of Russian diplomacy in the Muscovite period. At its core is an original study of the embassy sent by Tsar Boris Godunov to Emperor Rudolf II of Habsburg in 1599.

The embassy of 1599 took place at a time that has long been considered a critical moment in Russian history. The famous historian V. O. Kliuchevsky (1841-1911), for instance, regarded the beginning of the seventeenth century as the dividing point between two distinct political, economic, and social formations, which he termed Muscovite and Imperial. In his view, the *Smutnoe vremya* or "Time of Troubles" between the accession of Boris Godunov (1598) and that of Mikhail Romanov (1613) represented a transition between the medieval and modern epochs.<sup>1</sup> In 1922, M. N. Kovalensky echoed these sentiments, describing the Time of Troubles as a "sharp border" and a "bottomless abyss" between two periods of Russian history.<sup>2</sup>

Not all historians are in agreement with this analysis, however. Nicholas Riasanovsky has argued that the Time of Troubles did not produce significant lasting changes in Russian society. He refers to the period 1598-1613 as "a particularly turbulent, confusing, and painful segment of Russian history," but notes a "fundamental continuity" of historical development from the sixteenth to the seventeenth centuries. Consequently, he rejects Kliuchevsky's periodization and designates the accession of Peter the Great (1682) as the boundary between the Muscovite and Imperial periods.<sup>3</sup>

It is not the purpose of this thesis to debate the various methods of dividing Russian

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<sup>1</sup> V. O. Kliuchevsky, *Sochineniya*, vol. 1 (Moscow: GIPL, 1956), 33-34; vol. 3 (1957), 5-8, 17.

<sup>2</sup> M. N. Kovalensky, *Moskovskaya Smuta XVII veka, ee smisl i znachenie: istorichesky ocherk*, 2nd ed. (Moscow: Gos. izdat., 1922), 3.

<sup>3</sup> Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 173, 191, 235.

history, although a study of the embassy of 1599 may have something to say concerning periodization of the *Smutnoe vremya* itself.<sup>4</sup> However, it is worth noting that the turn of the seventeenth century deserves special attention in Russian history, both because of the extreme crises it entailed and because of the controversial nature of those crises. Dynastic struggle, social uprising, and foreign invasion all played a role in creating historical figures who acquired legendary status — as heroes and as villains — in historiography, literature, and popular mythology. Ivan Bolotnikov, the runaway slave who led a massive rebellion in 1606-1607, became "the original prototype of the Russian rebel-hero," and his leadership established a precedent for similar uprisings in 1670-1671 (Stenka Razin), 1707-1708 (Kondrati Bulavin), and 1773-1774 (Emelian Pugachev).<sup>5</sup> Kuzma Minin and Dmitri Pozharsky were lionized as national heroes, for they had organized the "army of national liberation" that rescued Moscow from Polish occupation in 1612-1613.<sup>6</sup> But perhaps no participant has attracted so much lasting attention as the Tsar who allegedly started the Troubles, Boris Fyodorovich Godunov, about whom Pushkin wrote a tragedy and Mussorgsky an opera.<sup>7</sup>

Boris Godunov obtained a position at court during the latter part of the reign of Ivan IV (1533-1584). He was a trusted advisor of the "Terrible" Tsar, and his sister Irina married Ivan's son Fyodor. Hence, when Fyodor, a mental incompetent, succeeded his father in 1584, Boris was well positioned near the center of authority. By 1588, he had become Tsar Fyodor's "foremost advisor" and sole regent, and for the next ten years

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<sup>4</sup> See *infra*, 68-69.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Avrich, *Russian Rebels, 1600-1800* (New York: Norton, 1972), 45-47, *passim*.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, George Vernadsky, *A History of Russia*, vol. 5, *The Tsardom of Moscow, 1547-1682*, pt. 1 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), 267; Yu. V. Got'e, *Smutnoe vremya: ocherk istorii revolyutsionnykh dvizhenii nachala XVII stoletiya* (Moscow: Gos. izdat., 1921), 94-101, 148-149. A recent book whose very title sums up this interpretation is Valery Shamshurin, *Minin i Pozharsky — spasiteli Otechestva* [*Minin and Pozharsky — Saviors of the Fatherland*] (Moscow: Novator, 1997). See also A. V. Shishov, *Minin i Pozharsky* (Moscow: Voen. izdat., 1990); R. G. Skrynnikov, *Minin i Pozharsky* (Moscow: Molodaya gvardiya, 1981).

<sup>7</sup> For a discussion of Boris Godunov as he appears in poetry, literature, etc., see Caryl Emerson, *Boris Godunov: Transpositions of a Russian Theme* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).

he served as the recognized ruler (*pravitel'*) of Muscovy. Fyodor died childless in early 1598, whereupon Boris was elected Tsar by an Assembly of the Land (*Zemsky Sobor*). He died in 1605, as the armies of the pretender, False Dimitry I, were advancing toward Moscow.

Godunov's political career has been described in detail in a number of monographs, of which the two outstanding examples are *Boris Godunov*, by Ruslan Skrynnikov, and the book of the same name by Sergei Platonov.<sup>8</sup> Both of these works include chapters on Godunov's foreign policy; however, they pay only scant attention to diplomatic relations with the House of Habsburg. Skrynnikov, in fact, does not actually discuss Godunov's relations with the Empire, but merely cites the title accorded Boris in Imperial correspondence and mentions that there were covert schemes to place a Habsburg on the Muscovite throne.<sup>9</sup> Platonov comments briefly on Russo-Imperial relations from 1588 to 1597, which he calls "complicated and imprecisely defined." However, his few paragraphs on the subject are insufficient to be termed a history of those relations.<sup>10</sup>

On the one hand, the meagerness of this coverage is understandable. Godunov's relations with the Empire were entirely peaceable, and therefore appear somewhat lackluster in comparison to his sometimes violent interactions with Poland-Lithuania, Sweden, and what Platonov calls the "Turko-Tatar world." On the other hand, however, the lack of attention to Russo-Imperial relations is surprising, given that these relations had the potential to dramatically alter the international political situation in the late sixteenth century. Muscovite and Imperial embassies repeatedly raised the prospect

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<sup>8</sup> R. G. Skrynnikov, *Boris Godunov* (Moscow: Nauka, 1978) [or R. G. Skrynnikov, *Boris Godunov*, trans. Hugh F. Graham (Gulf Breeze, FL: Academic International, 1982); S. F. Platonov, *Boris Godunov* (Petrograd: Ogni, 1921) [or S. F. Platonov, *Boris Godunov: Tsar of Russia*, trans. L. Rex Pyles (Gulf Breeze, FL: Academic International, 1973)]. In subsequent references to these works, the page number of the Russian version will be given first, followed by "(trans. x)," where *x* is the page number of the English version. Quotations in this thesis have been based on the English editions, but in some cases it has been found necessary to modify those translations in light of the original texts.

<sup>9</sup> Skrynnikov, *Boris*, 86-88 (trans. 67-68). See *infra*, 11 & n. 23.

<sup>10</sup> Platonov, *Boris*, 47 (trans. 61-63).

of an alliance between the Tsar and the Emperor, whether against the Ottoman Turks and Crimean Tatars or against Poland-Lithuania. The large gift sent from Moscow to Prague in 1595 is one evidence that such propositions were made in earnest.<sup>11</sup>

In addition, as both Skrynnikov and Platonov implicitly acknowledge, Godunov's relations with the Empire helped to improve his domestic position during the reign of Tsar Fyodor (1584-1598). In 1588, Godunov secured the right to correspond with the Habsburgs in his own name,<sup>12</sup> and thereafter he exercised complete control over Muscovite foreign affairs. In Platonov's estimation, this fact was of paramount importance in Godunov's success:

For Boris, the right of continual personal involvement in the diplomatic relations of the state was, after [the procuring of] a significant title, the second and more substantive means of strengthening [his] high position of ruler.<sup>13</sup>

Nevertheless, Muscovite relations with the Empire at the end of the sixteenth century have been almost completely neglected in historiography. The three-volume *Istoriya diplomatii* (*History of Diplomacy*) contains only brief references to a few of the embassies exchanged between the two powers in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and it does not present any overall characterization of their relations.<sup>14</sup> Kliuchevsky's classic *Kurs russkoi istorii* (*A Course in Russian History*) does not even address the issue.<sup>15</sup> In fact, only the following works provide any substantial outline of Russo-Imperial relations during the period of Boris Godunov: Nikolai N. Bantysh-Kamensky's four-volume *Obzor vneshnish snoshenii Rossii* (*Survey of Russian Foreign Relations*), compiled in the late eighteenth century; Nikolai M. Karamzin's twelve-volume *Istoriya Gosudarstva Rossiiskago* (*History of the Russian*

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<sup>11</sup> See *infra*, 20-21.

<sup>12</sup> PDS, vol. 1, 1174-1175. See Skrynnikov, *Boris*, 86 (trans. 67).

<sup>13</sup> S. F. Platonov, *Ocherki po istorii Smuty v Moskovskom Godudarstve XVI-XVII vv.*, 3rd ed. (St. Petersburg: Bashmakov, 1910), 197.

<sup>14</sup> V. A. Zorin, et al., eds., *Istoriya diplomatii*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (Moscow: GIPL, 1959).

<sup>15</sup> Kliuchevsky, *Sochineniya*, vol. 3.

*State*), written in the early nineteenth century; and Sergei M. Soloviev's twenty-nine-volume *Istoriya Rossii s drevneishikh vremen* (*History of Russia from Earliest Times*), written in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>16</sup>

All three of these works provide brief summaries of the Muscovite embassy of 1599.<sup>17</sup> Bantysh-Kamensky is concerned only to register the basic facts concerning this mission, but Karamzin and Soloviev both present it as evidence for their overall assessments of Godunov's relations with Rudolf II. However, their conclusions are precisely opposed: Karamzin asserts that these relations were "amicable and not fruitless," whereas Soloviev states that they "could not lead to anything" and represented a "pitiful attempt" on the part of Moscow to induce a rupture between Poland and the Empire.<sup>18</sup>

How are these discrepancies to be explained and resolved? What conclusions would a more detailed study of the embassy of 1599 suggest concerning the relations of Muscovy and the Empire? Moreover, might not such a study shed some light on the beginning of that "turbulent, confusing, and painful segment of Russian history," the Time of Troubles? What would it reveal concerning the nature and foundations of the power of Boris Godunov himself? The present thesis will attempt to discover the answers to these questions. It will include an overview and reappraisal of Russo-Imperial relations of the late sixteenth century, the first such account in English. It will further aim to strengthen existing historiography by providing the first detailed study in any language of the embassy of 1599. Finally, it will test the conclusions of Karamzin, Soloviev, Platonov, and other historians who have written briefly on Russo-Imperial relations of the late sixteenth century.

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<sup>16</sup> N. N. Bantysh-Kamensky, *Obzor vneshnikh snoshenii Rossii (po 1800 god)*, vol. I (Moscow: Lissner & Roman, 1894); N. M. Karamzin, *Istoriya Gosudarstva Rossiiskago*, 5th ed., bk. 3, vols. 10-11 (St. Petersburg: E. Prats, 1843); S. M. Soloviev, *Istoriya Rossii s drevneishikh vremen*, bk. 4, vols. 7-8 (Moscow: ISEL, 1960).

<sup>17</sup> The accounts of Karamzin and Soloviev appear in translation as Appendices B and C. See *infra*, 78-85.

<sup>18</sup> Karamzin, bk. 3, vol. 11, 34; Soloviev, bk. 4, vol. 8, 369; see *infra*, 65-66, 78, 84-85.

The thesis is based primarily on documents from *Pamyatniki diplomaticheskikh snoshenii drevnei Rossii s derzhavami inostrannymi* (*Monuments of the Diplomatic Relations of Ancient Russia with Foreign Powers*; hereafter *PDS*).<sup>19</sup> This compilation includes the official reports of Muscovite embassies to the Empire from the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries, as well as other records kept by the *Posol'sky Prikaz* (Foreign Office). The section dealing with the embassy of 1599 may be found in volume two, columns 653-752.<sup>20</sup>

The organization of the thesis is as follows. The first chapter presents a survey and analysis of Russo-Imperial relations during the reign of Tsar Fyodor, when Boris Godunov served as regent. The next three chapters constitute a narrative of the embassy of 1599, the first to the Empire after Godunov's accession. Chapter Two tells of its travels through Hamburg, Lübeck, and other German cities; Chapter Three, of its stay at the court of Emperor Rudolf II; and Chapter Four, of its dealings at the court of Archduke Maximilian of Austria. The conclusion sums up the findings of the thesis and assesses their implications. Finally, the appendices provide original translations of the Muscovite envoy's speech at the Imperial court and of the accounts of Karamzin and Soloviev, as well as additional related material.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> *PDS*, 10 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1851-1871).

<sup>20</sup> These documents were also printed, "with minor word changes," in N. I. Novikov, ed., *Drevnyaya Rossiiskaya Vivliofika*, 2nd ed., vol. 12 (Moscow: Tip. Kompanii Tipograficheskoi, 1790), 225-334. The originals are kept in the Central State Archive of Ancient Acts (TsGADA), fond 32, delo 9. See *PDS*, vol. 2, 1403-1404 n. 656; N. M. Rogozhin, *Obzor posol'skikh knig iz fondov-kollektsii, khranyashchikhsya v TsGADA (konets XV – nachalo XVIII v.)* (Moscow: Akad. Nauk, 1990), 56.

<sup>21</sup> Vlasiev's speech before the Imperial councillors (Appendix A) and Karamzin's account of the embassy (Appendix B) have not previously been translated into English. However, there is one prior translation of Soloviev's account (Appendix C), which may be found in S. M. Soloviev, *History of Russia*, vol. 14, *The Time of Troubles: Boris Godunov and False Dmitry*, trans. G. Edward Orchard (Gulf Breeze, FL: Academic International, 1988), 28-30.

# **1. A Survey of Diplomatic Relations between Muscovy and the Empire during the Reign of Tsar Fyodor Ivanovich (1584-1598)**

It is not known exactly when the rulers of Muscovy first entered into diplomatic relations with the German Emperors. The earliest archival records of such relations date from 1488, when the Habsburg Emperor Frederick III sent an ambassador to the court of Grand Prince Ivan III "the Great".<sup>1</sup> However, Nikolai N. Bantysh-Kamensky (1737-1814), who spent thirty-seven years working in the archives of the Muscovite Foreign Office, believed that "a link of mutual and friendly relations existed between these great courts from the earliest times [*izdrevle*], notwithstanding the fact that the traces of such... have been completely obliterated."<sup>2</sup> Although this hypothesis can be neither confirmed nor disproved, it is at least possible that Russo-Imperial relations predated Frederick's embassy of 1488.

In subsequent years, the two courts exchanged embassies with considerable frequency. Extant sources mention twenty missions between 1489 and 1522.<sup>3</sup> After that, however, there is no documentary evidence of relations between Muscovy and the Empire for half a century. According to Bantysh-Kamensky, the likeliest explanation is that the records from this period were destroyed during the Polish occupation of Moscow in 1610-1612.<sup>4</sup> Be that as it may, the archival records show that by the 1570s the two sovereigns were corresponding at an increased rate; in 1574, for instance, no fewer than five separate delegations arrived in Moscow with letters from Emperor

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<sup>1</sup> See *PDS*, vol. 1, 1ff.

<sup>2</sup> N. N. Bantysh-Kamensky, *Obzor vneshnikh snoshenii Rossii (po 1800 god)*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Lissner & Roman, 1894), 1.

<sup>3</sup> See Bantysh-Kamensky, vol. 1, 1-6.

<sup>4</sup> Bantysh-Kamensky, vol. 1, 6 n. 1.



## Maximilian II.<sup>5</sup>

What were the main issues in Russo-Imperial relations at the end of the sixteenth century? For what purposes were they conducted? What did each side hope to gain? According to the eminent Russian historian Sergei F. Platonov (1860-1933), "Diplomatic relations between Moscow and Vienna<sup>6</sup> at the end of the sixteenth century were in general complicated and imprecisely defined. The subjects of these relations were varied; motives and goals are not always clear [to the historian]."<sup>7</sup> This chapter will test Platonov's conclusion and see whether and to what extent the interests of the parties can be reconstructed. Its purpose is not to provide a comprehensive history of Russo-Imperial relations during the last decades of the sixteenth century, but simply to reveal the context within which the embassy of 1599 took place.

\* \* \*

The most prestigious court in Europe during the period under consideration was that of the Austrian Habsburgs, hereditary candidates to the thrones of the Holy Roman Empire and the Kingdoms of Bohemia, Hungary, and Croatia. R. J. W. Evans writes that "the Emperor was the senior sovereign of the continent, and the dignity was not an empty one, even for an age which boasted such diverse and self-willed monarchs as Philip II of Spain, Henry IV of France, Ivan the Terrible, or Elizabeth I."<sup>8</sup> This fact was of particular importance in diplomatic relations,<sup>9</sup> for the Emperor's status made him a kind of arbiter in questions of political legitimacy. His decision to recognize the claims of a particular sovereign could be taken as confirmation of that sovereign's right to rule.

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<sup>5</sup> Bantysh-Kamensky, vol. 1, 7-8.

<sup>6</sup> In this case, "Vienna" means simply the Imperial government. Emperor Rudolph II, who ruled from 1576 to 1612, actually had his court at Prague.

<sup>7</sup> S. F. Platonov, *Boris Godunov* (Petrograd: Ogni, 1921), 47 (trans. 61).

<sup>8</sup> R. J. W. Evans, *Rudolf II and His World: A Study in Intellectual History, 1576-1612* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973), 1.

<sup>9</sup> On the centrality of the Habsburg court in the system of international relations, see Garrett Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy* (Baltimore; Penguin, 1955), 158-159.

Conversely, his refusal to endorse such claims — as in 1613 when Mikhail Romanov acceded to the throne of Muscovy — could hinder a ruler's attempts at legitimation.<sup>10</sup>

For these reasons, Muscovite rulers tended to regard friendly relations with the Empire as an indication of their own status and might. By addressing the senior sovereign of Europe as "our most dear and beloved brother" and receiving the same appellation in return, the Tsars put themselves on a level with this most august of monarchs.<sup>11</sup> In fact, the very title *Tsar*' itself denoted equality with the Emperor; it was derived from *Caesar* and had been used as early as 1488 to show that the ruler of Muscovy was in no way inferior to the Holy Roman Emperor.<sup>12</sup>

During the reign of Tsar Fyodor, diplomatic relations with the Empire also helped Boris Godunov to increase his own prestige. Godunov ruled Muscovy as Fyodor's regent, but he was not descended from the line of Riurik as all previous rulers had been. Consequently, he needed other means of shoring up his legitimacy. Platonov writes that Godunov sought to strengthen his position internally by accumulating such impressive-sounding titles as "Court Marshal" (*dvorovy voevoda*) and "Governor [*namestnik*]"<sup>13</sup> of Kazan and Astrakhan."<sup>14</sup> The honorific aspect of foreign affairs offered him a similar opportunity to enhance his reputation. As Sergei M. Soloviev

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<sup>10</sup> The Empire recognized Mikhail as Tsar only in 1616. V. A. Zorin, et al., eds., *Istoriya diplomatii* (Moscow: GIPL, 1959), 2nd ed., vol. 1, 292, 307.

<sup>11</sup> See Platonov, *Boris*, 49 (trans. 63); *PDS*, *passim* (e.g., vol. 2, 926).

<sup>12</sup> Marc Szeftel, "The Title of the Muscovite Monarch up to the End of the Seventeenth Century," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, 13.1-2 (1979), 71; *PDS*, vol. 1, 6-18. The Muscovites called the Emperor *Tsesar*', which was simply a transliteration of *Caesar*. Although the word *Tsar*' also had its roots in *Caesar*, it was a much older term that had been used to refer to the Eastern (Byzantine) Emperor. By applying this title to themselves, therefore, the sovereigns of Muscovy were putting forth a claim to have succeeded the Byzantine ruler as Emperor of the East.

<sup>13</sup> A *namestnik* (lit., "one occupying a post") was an appointed official charged with governing a particular region, often a city and its environs. Sometimes his duties involved both civil and military administration, which has prompted alternate translations such as "governor-general" or even "lieutenant." In Godunov's case, of course, the title was ornamental. See Vladimir Dal', *Tolkovy slovar' zhivogo velikorusskogo yazyka*, 2nd ed., vol. 2 (Moscow: Russky yazyk, 1989), 442-443; Sergei G. Pushkarev, *Dictionary of Russian Historical Terms from the Eleventh Century to 1917*, ed. George Vernadsky & Ralph T. Fisher, Jr. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 66.

<sup>14</sup> See S. F. Platonov, *Ocherki po istorii Smuty v Moskovskom Gosudarstve XVI-XVII vv.*, 3rd ed. (St. Petersburg: Bashmakov, 1910), 195-197.

writes, Imperial diplomats accorded him much of the respect due a reigning sovereign and addressed him as "our most dear [and] especially beloved, the foremost [advisor] of his friend the Tsar, member of the secret Duma [i.e., innermost council], and potentate [*vlastel'*]." <sup>15</sup> Such expressions were of both moral and practical benefit to Godunov; they conveyed a sense of his importance and may also have furthered the consolidation of his power.

Insofar as relations with the Empire lent prestige to the Muscovite crown and to Boris personally, they represented an intrinsically worthwhile end from Moscow's point of view. There were other, more concrete goals as well. Yet during the reign of Fyodor, it was the Empire that initiated most of the diplomatic exchanges between the two powers. Thus, to some extent at least, it set the agenda and Moscow responded. Consequently, we shall first consider the history of these relations from the perspective of Imperial motivations and intentions, which are more readily apparent, and then attempt to discern those of Muscovy.

In Soloviev's assessment, "The Austrian house turned to the Muscovite court only when in need of its help." <sup>16</sup> As shown below, the Empire was indeed quite interested in the prospect of receiving financial or other assistance from Moscow. It regularly solicited funds for Archduke Maximilian's attempts to capture the Polish throne and for the ongoing war against the Ottoman Turks. However, there is evidence that the Habsburgs also had dynastic reasons for turning their attention toward Muscovy. According to Platonov, Emperor Rudolf II believed that Tsar Ivan IV had written a secret clause in his last will and testament concerning a possible dynastic union with Austria. This document, which has never been found, allegedly proposed to place a Habsburg on the throne of Muscovy if Tsar Fyodor should die childless. <sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> S. M. Soloviev, *Istoriya Rossii s drevneishikh vremen* (Moscow: ISEL, 1963), bk. 4, vol. 7, 240. See also Ian Grey, *Boris Godunov: The Tragic Tsar* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1973), 97.

<sup>16</sup> Soloviev, bk. 4, vol. 7, 243.

<sup>17</sup> Platonov, *Boris*, 47-48 (trans. 61-62). See also Grey, 97.

The origin of this notion is unclear. Platonov suggests that Muscovy's support of Archduke Maximilian during the Polish-Lithuanian election of 1587-1588<sup>18</sup> may have been misinterpreted in Vienna as signifying a desire to unite with the House of Habsburg, and that this was the root of Rudolf's misperception of the situation.<sup>19</sup> However, this hypothesis does not take into account the fact that Imperial attempts to place Maximilian on the Muscovite throne predated the Polish-Lithuanian election campaign. As early as 1585, a correspondent in Danzig informed the Polish government that Rudolf was seeking the Tsardom for his brother, the Archduke, and that "the electors [of the Holy Roman Empire had] gathered in Regensburg for a conference about the means by which Maximilian could attain the Muscovite throne."<sup>20</sup>

The means by which he could attain the throne soon became a secret concern of Imperial diplomats as well. In 1588, Ambassador Nicholas Warkotsch ("Mikolai Varkach") was sent to Moscow with instructions that mentioned Ivan's alleged will.<sup>21</sup> It is uncertain what use he made of this information at the time. However, in December 1593, during his second visit to Moscow, Warkotsch held private talks on this subject with Andrei Shchelkalov, who was then head of the Foreign Office (*Posol'sky Prikaz*).<sup>22</sup> Shchelkalov gave Warkotsch "lavish gifts" and spoke "in strict secrecy" about the possibility of Maximilian becoming Tsar after the death of Fyodor. Platonov believes that these discussions became known to Godunov and were the reason for Shchelkalov's dismissal a few months later.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> The death of King Stefan Bathory in 1586 brought about a protracted struggle for the throne of Poland-Lithuania. Both Tsar Fyodor of Muscovy and Archduke Maximilian of Austria presented themselves as candidates, but Sigismund of Sweden had the support of Chancellor Jan Zamoyski and eventually emerged victorious. W. F. Reddaway, et al., eds., *The Cambridge History of Poland to 1696* (Cambridge: University Press, 1950), 451-452.

<sup>19</sup> Platonov, *Boris*, 48 (trans. 62).

<sup>20</sup> Soloviev, bk. 4, vol. 7, 208.

<sup>21</sup> Platonov, *Boris*, 47-48 (trans. 61-62).

<sup>22</sup> Remarkably, Tsar Fyodor was not even childless at the time of these discussions. He had fathered a daughter, Feodosia, in 1592. (She died in January 1594.)

<sup>23</sup> Platonov, *Ocherki*, 212-213. Ruslan Skrynnikov disputes this point. He writes that Shchelkalov was actually complying with Godunov's wishes in offering the Muscovite throne to an Austrian prince. However, his arguments are not conclusive. See R. G. Skrynnikov, *Boris Godunov* (Moscow: Nauka, 1978), 87-88 (trans. 68).

Be that as it may, Rudolf did not abandon his hope of seeing a Habsburg on the throne of Muscovy.<sup>24</sup> It is not difficult to understand why: such a development would make the Habsburgs by far the strongest power in the region, put them in a position to intimidate Poland-Lithuania, and enable them to drive the Ottoman Turks out of Hungary.<sup>25</sup> For these reasons, his aspirations for Maximilian continued to act as one of the principal motivations behind Imperial relations with Muscovy. Platonov remarks that the idea of a Habsburg Tsar was not simply a "light-minded fantasy," but rather a definite goal "which occupied Emperor Rudolf for many years" and "seemed likely and feasible to very many."<sup>26</sup>

But if the Habsburgs aspired to the throne of Muscovy, they also aspired to that of the *Rzeczpospolita*, or Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The question of Maximilian's candidacy to the latter's crown had entered into Russo-Imperial relations during the election campaign of 1587-1588. Even though Tsar Fyodor had also been a candidate, the Muscovite government had been willing to support Maximilian. It had expressed its official position to Emperor Rudolf as follows: "If they do not elect us as their sovereign, then they might choose your brother Maximilian.... If your brother Maximilian succeeds to the Crown of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, it will be just as if we were on the throne in those states."<sup>27</sup>

In the end, neither Fyodor nor Maximilian was chosen. However, the latter maintained his pretensions even after the crowning of Sigismund III Vasa, son of King

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<sup>24</sup> Both Polish and Italian diplomats knew of Rudolf's intentions in the year 1598, when Tsar Fyodor died. Platonov, *Ocherki*, 213.

<sup>25</sup> At this time, the Ottoman conquest of Hungary was nearly complete. Only a relatively small stretch of land, called "Royal Hungary," separated Turkish possessions from Austria. In order to retain this "third" of the former kingdom, the Emperor was obliged to send an annual "gift" (i.e., tribute) to the Sublime Porte. In 1582, a Muscovite embassy to Austria reported that the Turkish border lay only twelve (German) miles from Vienna, and that consequently the Emperor would even send the tribute money early in an effort to please the Sultan. It is therefore quite possible that, as Ian Grey claims, Rudolf was interested in dynastic union with Muscovy as "a means of conquering the Ottoman Empire." *PDS*, vol. 1, 888-890; N. A. Kazakova, *Zapadnaya Evropa v russkoi pis'mennosti XV-XVI vekov* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1980), 183-184; Grey, 97.

<sup>26</sup> Platonov, *Ocherki*, 212-213.

<sup>27</sup> *PDS*, vol. 1, 1008-1010; Platonov, *Boris*, 48 (trans. 62).

John III of Sweden. Knowing that Sigismund did not have the support of all the Polish and Lithuanian nobles, Maximilian hoped to act before the new king could consolidate his power. In late 1587, he led a military expedition into Poland.<sup>28</sup>

This affair provided a second motivation for Imperial relations with Muscovy at the end of the sixteenth century. Its development was to figure prominently in those relations for several years to come. In early 1589, for instance, Warkotsch requested that the Muscovite government assist Maximilian in fighting the Poles. Godunov responded to this appeal with many expressions of support and good will. He even claimed to have postponed the conclusion of "eternal peace" with Poland out of a desire to further the Archduke's cause.<sup>29</sup> However, this moral support was not accompanied by financial or military assistance. Godunov's gift to Maximilian was unexceptional; it consisted of forty sable furs.<sup>30</sup>

Meanwhile, Maximilian's expedition into Polish territory had already ended in disaster. His army had been defeated after retreating to Silesia, and he himself had been taken captive by the forces of the Polish Chancellor Jan Zamoyski.<sup>31</sup> In March 1589, during Warkotsch's embassy to Moscow, Emperor Rudolf negotiated a peace settlement with Chancellor Zamoyski. In it, he secured his brother's release by renouncing all Habsburg pretensions to the throne of Poland-Lithuania.<sup>32</sup> However, Maximilian refused to abide by the terms of this agreement. Soon after gaining his freedom, he insisted on his claims in a letter to Tsar Fyodor: "We, Maximilian, by the grace of God chosen King of Poland, Grand Prince of Lithuania, Archduke of Austria..."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Maximilian and his followers reached Cracow in October 1587 and attacked it the following month. After failing to take the city, they retreated to Silesia and made plans to invade Great Poland. However, in January 1588 Chancellor Jan Zamoyski defeated Maximilian at Byczyna in Silesia and took him captive. See Reddaway, 452-454.

<sup>29</sup> The term "eternal peace" (*vechny mir*) was used to designate a final treaty as opposed to a temporary truce or armistice. In 1589 there was peace, but not "eternal peace," between Muscovy and Poland. The two states had signed a fifteen-year armistice for the period of August, 1587, through August, 1602. See Platonov, *Boris*, 44 (trans. 57).

<sup>30</sup> Soloviev, bk. 4, vol. 7, 240-242. See *PDS*, vol. 1, 1182-1185, 1210-1211.

<sup>31</sup> See *supra*, n. 28.

<sup>32</sup> This was the Treaty of Bedzin. See Reddaway, 454.

<sup>33</sup> *PDS*, vol. 1, 1222-1223.

In the body of this letter, Maximilian declared that the arrangements for peace had been made without his knowledge and contrary to his wishes. He went on to explain that he planned to continue the war against Poland and "to avenge the insults" he had suffered there. According to his version of events, the Poles had behaved despicably, intending "either to shed my blood or to betray me into the hands of the Turkish Sultan." After some further invective against his former captors and much grandiloquent rhetoric on the theme of his great love for the Tsar, Maximilian asked the Muscovite government for funds with which to hire a mercenary army.<sup>34</sup>

This must have created the impression in Moscow that the policies of Rudolf and Maximilian were at odds.<sup>35</sup> By his own account, the Archduke was in violation of a treaty approved by his brother, the Emperor. However, subsequent developments showed that Rudolf himself had not rejected the idea of Maximilian becoming king, regardless of his treaty with Chancellor Zamoyski. Imperial embassies to Muscovy continued to raise the issue, although somewhat more circumspectly than Maximilian had.<sup>36</sup>

In 1592, Sigismund III succeeded his father as King of Sweden, and this altered the situation somewhat. For a time, Sigismund was reportedly thinking of abdicating the Polish-Lithuanian throne, because the nobility's exercise of its "Golden Liberty" denied him effective power. When Rudolf's ambassador mentioned these circumstances to Godunov, the latter raised the prospect of Maximilian finally achieving his ambitions. He stated that Muscovy desired to further this goal "in every way possible."<sup>37</sup>

In subsequent years, this remained the official Muscovite policy: to express strong support for Maximilian's pretensions but sidestep his appeals for money. In 1597, an Imperial delegate again requested assistance for the Archduke. Vasily Shchelkalov, who

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<sup>34</sup> *PDS*, vol. 1, 1224-1227. See also Soloviev, bk. 4, vol. 7, 242-243.

<sup>35</sup> There is some evidence to support this notion. See *infra*, 61-62.

<sup>36</sup> See Soloviev, bk. 4, vol. 7, 243-244.

<sup>37</sup> Soloviev, bk. 4, vol. 7, 244-245. This was the same embassy during which the ambassador (Nicholas Warkotsch) secretly discussed the possibility of Maximilian becoming Tsar. See *supra*, 11.

had succeeded his elder brother as Foreign Minister,<sup>38</sup> responded with assurances of Moscow's constant desire to help. However, he also asked for details concerning Maximilian's chances. The emissary replied that Maximilian was supported by the Princes Zborowski, who were the leaders of the opposition to Chancellor Zamoyski,<sup>39</sup> several other great nobles, and about seven thousand of the lesser nobility (*szlachta*). He further declared: "And if only His Majesty the Tsar will provide assistance, then Maximilian will be able to gain the Polish throne [lit., receive the Polish state]."<sup>40</sup>

When Shchelkalov inquired what kind of assistance was needed, the emissary replied that financial subsidies would be most appreciated, and that the Tsar should send any such gifts by means of an embassy to the Hansa city of Lübeck in Germany. Shchelkalov managed to evade the request for money by stating that it was inconceivable for the Tsar to dispatch his ambassadors "to mere trading people" such as the merchants of Lübeck.<sup>41</sup> Instead, the Muscovite government gave the emissary letters for Maximilian in which Tsar Fyodor and Boris Godunov expressed their great desire to see him seated on the throne of Poland-Lithuania. They failed to proffer financial assistance, however.<sup>42</sup>

Thus, two of the principal Imperial motivations for relations with Muscovy during the reign of Tsar Fyodor involved the Archduke Maximilian. Imperial ambassadors covertly explored the possibility of placing him on the throne of Muscovy and overtly requested support for his aspirations to the throne of Poland-Lithuania. Concurrently

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<sup>38</sup> I.e., as head of the *Posol'sky Prikaz*. See *supra*, 11. According to Isaac Massa, Vasily "was not nearly as able as his brother [Andrei]." Isaac Massa, *A Short History of the Beginnings and Origins of These Present Wars in Moscow under the Reign of Various Sovereigns down the Year 1610*, trans. G. Edward Orchard (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 36. See also W. E. D. Allen, ed., *Russian Embassies to the Georgian Kings, 1589-1605* (Cambridge: University Press, 1970), vol. 2, 525.

<sup>39</sup> See Reddaway, 451-452; Evans, 76.

<sup>40</sup> PDS, vol. 2, 477-478, 517, 553-554; Soloviev, bk. 4, vol. 7, 250.

<sup>41</sup> PDS, vol. 2, 554-555; Soloviev, bk. 4, vol. 7, 250. Literally, the quote reads: "to such trading *muzhiki* [commoners or peasants]." One wonders, however, if this assertion was entirely sincere. Only two years later, in 1599, an embassy from the Tsar did in fact travel to the city of Lübeck. Bantysh-Kamensky, vol. 2 (1896), 191.

<sup>42</sup> PDS, vol. 2, 609-618.



with these efforts, the Empire pursued a third aim: a grand military alliance against the Ottoman Turks or, failing that, financial support for the struggle against "the Infidel."

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The idea of a great anti-Turkish coalition to drive the infidel out of Christendom was a Papal proposition of long standing. However, it had often run into snags as a result of animosity between the Christian states themselves.<sup>43</sup> In the late sixteenth century, as Emperor Rudolf worked with the Pope in an attempt to bring this project to fruition, Muscovy was one of the few powers that actively supported his efforts.<sup>44</sup> In early 1588, for instance, Moscow informed the Emperor that the Persian Shah, who since 1576 had been waging a prolonged and devastating war with the Ottoman Empire, wanted to unite with Muscovy, the Habsburg Empire, Spain, and France against their common enemy. In a letter to the Emperor, the Tsar strongly endorsed this proposal.<sup>45</sup>

In 1590, however, the Turko-Persian war ended;<sup>46</sup> and the next year the Sultan's armies marched on Habsburg positions in Hungary. During the course of this campaign, they captured several Imperial fortresses and built one of their own at

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<sup>43</sup> The most notable example, perhaps, occurred during the years 1458-1463, when Pope Pius II (Aenius Silvius Piccolomini) persistently called for a grand Crusade against the Turks. Vlad III Tepes of Wallachia (the historical "Dracula") responded to these appeals by attacking Ottoman possessions in the Balkans, but this ran counter to the interests of his neighbor, Matthias Hunyadi of Hungary (also known as Corvinus or "the Raven"). Instead of allying with Vlad, King Matthias seized him and kept him imprisoned for thirteen years. See Philip Longworth, *The Making of Eastern Europe: From Prehistory to Postcommunism*, 2nd ed. (New York: St. Martin's, 1997), 254-257; also *infra*, 46 n. 11.

<sup>44</sup> In 1589, when Ambassador Warkotsch asked the Tsar to join the proposed alliance, he was able to claim the support of only Spain and the Pope. Bantysh-Kamensky, vol. 1, 13.

<sup>45</sup> *PDS*, vol. 1, 1011-1012; Soloviev, bk. 4, vol. 7, 240.

<sup>46</sup> This war ended in an apparent victory for the Turks, who gained possession of most of Georgia, Azerbaijan, Shirvan, and other territories in the same region. However, the war had been severe and extremely costly to both sides. In addition, "the ceded lands, in a dreadful state of desolation, were of little profit to the Sultan"; and "the reality of Ottoman administrative control of these regions was always questionable." Charles Oman, *A History of the Art of War in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Methuen, 1937), 741; William H. McNeill, *Europe's Steppe Frontier, 1500-1800* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 55-56. See also Kenneth M. Setton, *Venice, Austria, and the Turks in the Seventeenth Century* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1991), 6.

Petrinja, in Slavonia. According to Gunther Rothenberg, this act was "a clear sign that these operations were not mere raids but rather a permanent invasion."<sup>47</sup> Nonetheless, Emperor Rudolf was in a poor financial position and could hardly afford to wage a full-scale war, so for two years he sought a diplomatic conclusion to the conflict.<sup>48</sup>

Moscow reacted to these circumstances by pointing out the contradiction implicit in Rudolf's appeals to unite against "the enemy of Christendom" and his attempts to make a deal with the Sultan. In a letter of June 1591, Boris Godunov complained that Rudolf asked others to make war against the Turks but himself entered into peace negotiations. He stated that Muscovy, in an attempt to help the Emperor and all of Christendom, had refrained from diplomatic relations with the Sultan and the Crimean Tatar Khan. Hence, he argued, the Emperor himself should at least do the same.<sup>49</sup>

Eventually, Rudolf had no choice but to follow this advice. In the summer of 1593, the authorities in Istanbul imprisoned his ambassador, who had been attempting to arrange a settlement, and issued a formal declaration of war.<sup>50</sup> Shortly thereafter, Ambassador Warkotsch was sent to Moscow for the second time.<sup>51</sup> When he arrived, Warkotsch stressed that it was crucial for all of Christendom to unite against the infidel, and he asked what Muscovy would contribute to the common cause. He said the Emperor hoped it would be possible to arrange peace between the Tsar and King

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<sup>47</sup> Gunther E. Rothenberg, *The Austrian Military Border in Croatia, 1522-1747* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1960), 56. The difference was significant, for even large-scale raids were acceptable within the framework of "peace," as understood in the borderland regions of Hungary and Croatia, while actual invasion was not. As a contemporary noted, "In these parts it is understood that neither a peace nor a truce is broken unless artillery is brought up to assault the cities or fortresses with the aim of occupying them." Catherine Wendy Bracewell, *The Uskoks of Senj: Piracy, Banditry, and Holy War in the Sixteenth-Century Adriatic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 36.

<sup>48</sup> In 1592, while Rudolf's ambassador in Istanbul sought to preserve peace, the Turks mounted another military campaign into Croatia. They succeeded in capturing some important Habsburg positions, including the town of Bihac (Wihitsch), and managed to advance almost to Inner Austria. During the late summer and early fall, Turkish raiders struck deep into Habsburg territory — not only in Croatia and Hungary, but even as far as the Neuhaus region in Bohemia. From these expeditions, they reportedly gained some 35,000 captives. Rothenberg, 56-57; Setton, 6.

<sup>49</sup> PDS, vol. 1, 1248; Soloviev, bk. 4, vol. 7, 243.

<sup>50</sup> See Oman, 743; Rothenberg, 58.

<sup>51</sup> See *supra*, 11.

Sigismund, so that both could participate in an anti-Turkish league.<sup>52</sup>

When pressed for details, however, Warkotsch had to admit that the Emperor had not sent an embassy to Sigismund about the proposed grand alliance, since it was known that the Polish and Lithuanian nobles had their disagreements with the king and refused to consider his propositions. Nor had the Danes been contacted, because the regents of their young king wanted to live in peace. The ongoing wars between England, France, Spain, and the Netherlands presented additional obstacles to unity.<sup>53</sup>

The Empire had turned to Moscow in the hope that it might help relieve Turkish pressure, if not directly than at least indirectly. Specifically, Warkotsch asked the Muscovite government to restrain the Crimean Tatars, who had joined the Turks in attacking Hungary, and to influence Persia not to seek peace with Turkey. He also inquired about taking the Zaporozhian Cossacks into Imperial service on the military frontier.<sup>54</sup> Finally, as Soloviev remarks, he "expressed the main object of his embassy" — to obtain a subsidy from the Tsar. Reminding the Muscovite government of its professed love for the Emperor, he asked for assistance in the form of money or furs. Such a donation would allow the hiring of mercenary troops to fight for the Emperor against the Turks.<sup>55</sup>

In a noteworthy coincidence, Warkotsch's embassy to Moscow overlapped with that of the Persian Ambassador Azi Khosrov. At the request of Boris Godunov, Tsar Fyodor gave permission for the two representatives to contact each other regarding the possibility of an anti-Turkish alliance. A few days later, Warkotsch sent a member of his suite, Christopher Unrut, to read a speech before the Persian embassy. A Tatar by

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<sup>52</sup> Soloviev, bk. 4, vol. 7, 244; Bantysh-Kamensky, vol. 1, 13.

<sup>53</sup> Soloviev, bk. 4, vol. 7, 245.

<sup>54</sup> The lands between the Southern Bug and Dnieper Rivers, where the Zaporozhian Cossacks lived, were formally the domain of the Crimean Khan from 1240 to 1739. However, by the sixteenth century the Tatars had ceased to exercise effective control over this region, and consequently the Cossacks could be employed against them. See A. I. Skrylov & G. V. Gubarev, eds., *Kazachy slovar'-spravochnik*, 2.1 (Cleveland, 1966), 241.

<sup>55</sup> Soloviev, bk. 4, vol. 7, 244-246; N. M. Karamzin, *Istoriya Gosudarstva Rossiiskago*, 5th ed. (St. Petersburg: E. Prats, 1843), bk. 3, vol. 10, 104.

the name of Velyamin Stepanov served as interpreter, enabling both sides to express their wish to unite against the common foe. The Imperial delegate suggested that Shah Abbas send an ambassador to the Emperor by way of Muscovy in order to discuss the prospect of alliance.<sup>56</sup> Khosrov thought this a likely possibility, and he promised to inform the Shah about all that had been said. The emissaries exchanged presents before parting; and later that day a member of the Persian delegation visited Warkotsch's residence.<sup>57</sup>

This encounter not only points to Moscow's interest in promoting an alliance against the Turks, but also reflects Godunov's determination to ensure that other governments knew he had complete control of foreign affairs. Although Tsar Fyodor was the official head of state, both Unrut and Khosrov recognized Godunov as the effective ruler and took care to make several flattering references to his role. The Persian ambassador went so far as to state:

Our Sovereign, His Majesty the Shah, has placed all [his] hope on... Boris Fyodorovich Godunov, for he [Godunov] is very discerning and just. He concerns himself with every good affair between Sovereigns, and his name and glory shine in all the countries of the East and South.<sup>58</sup>

Emperor Rudolf would also come to place a significant measure of hope on Godunov, for his need for assistance grew as the Turkish war progressed. In 1594, "the largest Turkish army seen for thirty years on the Danube" attacked Habsburg

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<sup>56</sup> In 1599, the Persians did indeed send an ambassador, the renegade Englishman Sir Anthony Shirley, to Rudolf's court in Prague. However, this embassy did not travel through Muscovy, but rather "across India and by sea round the whole of Africa." According to N. M. Karamzin, though, some Imperial embassies did travel through Moscow to Persia at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Victor von Klarwill, ed., *The Fugger News-Letters*, trans. Pauline de Chary (London: John Lane, 1924), 231, 280 n. 217; Karamzin, bk. 3, vol. 11, 35 & n. 83. See also Evans, 77.

<sup>57</sup> *PDS*, vol. 1, 1286-1294. See also Soloviev, bk. 4, vol. 7, 244-245.

<sup>58</sup> *PDS*, vol. 1, 1289. The ellipsis replaces Khosrov's rendering of Godunov's titles: "the brother-in-law, servant, and *konyushy* of His Majesty the Tsar, the boyar, and court marshal, and governor of Kazan and Astrakhan." *Konyushy* (sometimes *starokonyushy*) was a ceremonial title corresponding to "Master of Horse." Sergei Pushkarev renders this term as "senior equerry; master of stables." However, these phrases would seem to be more appropriate as translations of the slightly lesser rank of *yaselnichy*, which was also derived from the oldest division of the Tsar's household management. See Pushkarev, 43; also *infra*, 73.

Hungary and Croatia. According to the authoritative military historian Charles Oman, this force comprised at least 100,000 troops from both Asia and Europe, including a significant contingent of Crimean Tatars.<sup>59</sup> Its appearance prompted the Emperor to send Warkotsch to Moscow for the third time. When the ambassador arrived in December, his tone was urgent: "If you want to help, then help now, because the Turk has come against us with all his force."<sup>60</sup>

In response, Godunov and the Duma (Council) promised that the Tsar would send the Emperor a gift of sable and other furs. These could be converted into cash and used to further the war effort. Upon hearing this, Warkotsch expressed much gratitude on behalf of the Emperor and of all Christendom. He also repeated Rudolf's earlier requests that Muscovy restrain the Crimean Tatars and influence Persia to avoid peace with Turkey. Regarding the grand alliance, he revealed that the Emperor, the Pope, and the King of Spain would soon be sending a joint embassy to Moscow for the purpose of establishing an alliance.<sup>61</sup>

In April of 1595, the Muscovite government fulfilled its promise to the Emperor. *Dumny Dvoryanin*<sup>62</sup> Mikhail Velyaminov and *Diak*<sup>63</sup> Afanasy Vlasiev departed for Prague with a generous present of furs. This included 40,360 sable, 20,760 marten, 120 black and silver fox, 337,235 squirrel, 3,000 beaver, 1,000 wolf, and 75 elk

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<sup>59</sup> Oman (1937 ed.), 743-744. In 1594, the Turkish armies succeeded in capturing the fortified city of Raab (Győr). However, the nearby town of Komárno successfully resisted a siege, and the campaign ended without any other significant Turkish conquests.

<sup>60</sup> Soloviev, bk. 4, vol. 7, 247.

<sup>61</sup> Bantysh-Kamensky, 14; Soloviev, bk. 4, vol. 7, 247.

<sup>62</sup> *Dumny dvoryanin* was the third Council rank, after boyar and *okol'nichy*. One possible translation is "Gentleman-Councillor." See Philip Longworth, *Alexis: Tsar of All the Russias* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1984), *passim*; Pushkarev, 17.

<sup>63</sup> The term *diak* (or *d'yak*) is often translated simply as "secretary." However, the *diaki* were not mere clerks or copyists, but rather bureaucratic administrators. According to Pushkarev, "they were assistants or associates to the *boiars* [boyars] and other heads of central government departments (*prikazy*), and sometimes were themselves department heads." [Pushkarev, 12.] Hence, a better translation would be "State Secretary."

skins.<sup>64</sup> When the embassy arrived in August, Emperor Rudolf himself inspected the furs and expressed astonishment at their quality and great number. He declared that neither he nor his councillors had ever seen such a valuable collection, and he inquired how and where it had been gathered. Velyaminov and Vlasiev answered that the furs had come from Siberia and other distant places, but declined to reveal how much they had cost the royal treasury. At the Emperor's request, however, "Bohemian Jews and merchants" estimated the value of the Muscovite gift at eight barrels of gold.<sup>65</sup>

Rudolf was understandably pleased with this contribution to his war chest, and he sought to honor the Muscovite emissaries who had brought it to Prague. Nikolai M. Karamzin writes, "There was no end to the speeches, entertainments, affections; they [the Austrians] gave him [Velyaminov] dinner after dinner, and always with music."<sup>66</sup> The Emperor also planned to convey his appreciation to the Tsar by means of a great embassy to Moscow.

He did so in early 1597, dispatching twenty-two noblemen and ninety-two civil servants under the leadership of Burgrave<sup>67</sup> Abraham of Donath. As Karamzin

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<sup>64</sup> It should be mentioned that a Prague correspondent of the House of Fugger gave a different account of the embassy's cartage. He wrote: "The presents consist of one thousand sables, which, according to what people are telling us, are each worth forty thalers, further, five hundred and nineteen martens, and one thousand black fox, three thousand beaver, three thousand doeskins, and one thousand wolf furs. These wares were covered with seventy-four elk skins." However, this tally must be considered less reliable, not least because it contains some transparent errors. The Tsar did not send 1,000 sables, but rather 1,009 "forties," or 40,360 individual furs. Likewise, he donated 519 forties, not singles, of marten. Klarwill, 192-193; *PDS*, vol. 2, 236-237; Karamzin, bk. 3, vol. 10, ch. 3, n. 309. See also Paul Bushkovitch, *The Merchants of Moscow, 1580-1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 153.

<sup>65</sup> Karamzin, bk. 3, vol. 10, 106 & ch. 3 nn. 309-310; Soloviev, bk. 4, vol. 7, 248; Bantysh-Kamensky, 14-15.

<sup>66</sup> In his official report, Velyaminov claimed to have refrained from this merriment because "the Orthodox Tsar is mourning the death of his dear daughter [Feodosia], and all Russia weeps with him." However, there is good reason to doubt this statement. One observer in Prague commented on the Tsar's emissaries as follows: "At this [banquet] they partook so freely of brandy and heavy Hungarian wines that they had partly to be carried home." Be that as it may, this discrepancy presents the opportunity for a caveat about the journals of Muscovite embassies. These accounts, called *stateinie spiski*, are quite reliable in almost all particulars. However, diplomats did find it difficult to resist the temptation of taking some liberties with the truth in order to portray themselves in the best possible light. Consequently, any self-congratulatory remarks in their records should be considered at least potentially suspicious. Karamzin, bk. 3, vol. 10, 106; Klarwill, 192; Zorin, vol. 1, 308.

<sup>67</sup> A burgrave or *burggraf* ("city count") was a nobleman with hereditary rights to a particular city.

observes, this extravagant embassy served to satisfy both the Russians' and the Austrians' "love of honor." Yet "the splendor and affections did not produce anything important."<sup>68</sup> The Empire was still suffering from its "Long War" with the Turks,<sup>69</sup> and the embassy presented the usual requests: that Muscovy restrain the Crimean Tatars, incite Persia against Turkey, and provide subsidies for Habsburg military efforts against the Turks. The ambassadors claimed that the furs given in 1595 had proven unsalable in Europe; consequently, they asked that in future silver and gold be sent instead.<sup>70</sup>

This request displeased the Muscovite government, which countered by asking when the much-touted anti-Turkish alliance would actually materialize. Burgrave Abraham replied that the wars between the Christian powers of Europe still precluded the conclusion of any agreements. Yet Vasily Shchelkalov, head of the Foreign Office, challenged him on this point, stating that "the previous ambassador, Warkotsch, declared here [in Moscow] that the Emperor had already concluded an alliance with the Pope and the King of Spain."

Burgrave Abraham was forced to reply that Warkotsch must have spoken falsely, in contravention of his instructions,<sup>71</sup> but this did not remedy the situation. In 1593, Emperor Rudolf had written to Godunov: "We ask you to trust our envoy [Warkotsch] as [you would] us ourselves in person."<sup>72</sup> In view of this, attributing deceit to Warkotsch could only reflect badly on the Imperial government.

To make matters worse, Abraham refused to meet with a Papal envoy then in

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<sup>68</sup> Karamzin, bk. 3, vol. 10, 107-108.

<sup>69</sup> The so-called "Long War" between Turkey and Austria lasted until 1606. It ended with the Peace of Zsitva-Torok, which recognized a boundary virtually identical to the one that had been laid down in 1575. Oman, 755.

<sup>70</sup> This incident has received a disproportionate amount of attention in historiography. For whatever reasons, historians who devote only a page or two to the whole of Russo-Austrian relations under Fyodor and Godunov mention that in 1597 the Emperor requested money, not furs. [See, for example, Platonov, *Boris*, 49 (trans. 63); Grey, 97-98; Allen, vol. 2, 409, n. 2.] Unfortunately, this gives the erroneous impression that the Muscovite gift was somehow inappropriate or unappreciated. However, such was not the case; one need only remember that the Austrians themselves asked for furs in 1593 and 1594 and were enthusiastic upon receiving them in 1595. See *supra*, 18, 21.

<sup>71</sup> Soloviev, bk. 4, vol. 7, 249-250; Bantysh-Kamensky, 15.

<sup>72</sup> *PDS*, vol. 1, 1284-1285.

Moscow, even though Shchelkalov urged him to do so.<sup>73</sup> To the Muscovites, this seemed yet another sign that the Empire was not pursuing the possibility of an alliance as seriously as it claimed. For his part, Godunov, while continuing to profess exceptional love for the Emperor, apparently cooled to the idea of military action. He spoke of his great desire to prevent the Crimean Tatars from going to war in Hungary, but added that nothing could be done as long as Poland-Lithuania refused to allow Muscovite troops through its territory. If the route along the Dnieper were open, then the Tsar would send his armies into Crimea and destroy the Tatars; but as things stood, it was impossible.<sup>74</sup>

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The embassy of Burgrave Abraham concluded relations between Muscovy and the Empire during the reign of Tsar Fyodor, who died in January 1598. The Habsburgs had pursued three main goals by means of these relations: dynastic union with Muscovy, acquisition of the Polish throne, and help in fighting the Ottoman Turks. They had clearly failed to achieve the first two. With regard to the third, the Imperial government did succeed in obtaining one large subsidy from Moscow. However, its representatives later claimed that the contribution had been useless, since the Tsar's furs could not be sold in Europe.<sup>75</sup> Moreover, the formation of a broad anti-Turkish coalition had so far turned out to be more mirage than reality.

For these reasons, historians have considered that Russo-Imperial relations of this time were rather unproductive. Platonov remarks: "Both sides could offer little to each other and in general sought more than they gave. Therefore there was much feeling,

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<sup>73</sup> He did so on the grounds that he lacked the authority to conclude any agreements. Even when pressed, he insisted that it was impossible for him to act contrary to his instructions. Soloviev, bk. 4, vol. 7, 250.

<sup>74</sup> PDS, vol. 2, 513-514; Soloviev, bk. 4, vol. 7, 250. See *infra*, 28 n. 10.

<sup>75</sup> This statement of the Imperial embassy may be doubted, for the furs would not have been assessed at eight barrels of gold in 1595 if they had been entirely unsalable. (See *supra*, 21.) However, there is no readily apparent alternate explanation.



compliments, and promises in these relations, but little practical dealing."<sup>76</sup> Yet it must also be remembered that although both sides gave less than they were asked, they also sought considerably more than they expected to receive. The results of their relations appear rather less disappointing when viewed in this light.

Moreover, it may be that there was no such stark contrast between goals and achievements from the Muscovite perspective. What exactly did the government of Boris Godunov hope to achieve through relations with the Empire? First of all, like the Empire, it was interested in driving back the Ottoman Turks and Crimean Tatars. The latter had sent forces to invade Muscovy several times during the 1570s, apparently on Turkish orders.<sup>77</sup> In 1571, they had even sacked Moscow itself. However, since that time the Muscovite government had taken steps to improve its fortifications in the south and to transform the Cossack-inhabited "Wild Field"<sup>78</sup> into a more effective defensive zone against such invasions. These measures went a long way toward containing the Crimean Tatar threat. Though the forces of Khan Kazy Girey did come close to reaching Moscow again in 1591, they "immediately fled in shameful disorder" when confronted by Godunov's army.<sup>79</sup> The Muscovite government continued to send annual tribute to the Khan, but it would soon feel secure enough to reduce the amount of that tribute unilaterally.<sup>80</sup>

Consequently, at the end of the sixteenth century the "infidels" did not pose as great a problem for Muscovy as they did for the Empire. It was the latter power which faced large-scale Turkish invasions during the 1590s and had to appeal for help in combatting them. The Muscovite government, by contrast, was in a position to offer verbal and

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<sup>76</sup> Platonov, *Boris*, 48 (trans. 63).

<sup>77</sup> See *infra*, 72.

<sup>78</sup> The term "Wild Field" (*dikoe pole*) referred loosely to the uncultivated lands which lay to the north and east of the Crimean peninsula — that is, the regions surrounding the Lower Dnieper, Lower and Middle Don, and Lower and Middle Volga Rivers. See Platonov, *Ocherki*, 107-108.

<sup>79</sup> Platonov, *Boris*, 54 (trans. 70-71). See also Skrynnikov, *Boris*, 63-64 (trans. 48-49). On Kazy Girey, see *infra*, 72 & n. 4.

<sup>80</sup> See Soloviev, bk. 4, vol. 8, 371.

material support without becoming militarily involved in the conflict. This was to its advantage — particularly since the Turko-Imperial war, by drawing the Crimean Tatars away to fight in Hungary, had actually increased Muscovite security.

By no means, however, does this imply that Moscow's professions of support for the proposed anti-Turkish alliance were insincere. As we have seen, in the interests of concluding this alliance Godunov even sought to facilitate contacts between Emperor Rudolf and the Persian Shah.<sup>81</sup> However, the failure of the alliance to materialize was a failure of Imperial, not Muscovite policy; and if Russo-Imperial relations during the reign of Fyodor had not yielded any practical results with regard to the Turkish question, this fact was bound to seem more disappointing from the Imperial perspective than from the Muscovite one. The *status quo* presented no acute difficulties to the government of Boris Godunov, but it jeopardized the territorial holdings and seriously strained the fiscal resources of Emperor Rudolf. Hence, despite all the rhetoric about mutual love and common concerns, it is evident that the actual interests of the two powers were somewhat at odds.

We find the same upon examining another main issue of Russo-Imperial relations: Archduke Maximilian's aspirations to the throne of Poland-Lithuania. The Muscovite government consistently expressed support for these aspirations, but it was no doubt less eager than the House of Habsburg for them to be realized. Notably, Godunov declined to furnish subsidies to the Archduke, despite repeated requests from Imperial diplomats. Evidently Moscow's true interests lay elsewhere. What they were may be surmised from the fact that it was on hostile terms with Poland-Lithuania.<sup>82</sup> Encouraging Maximilian in his pretensions served Muscovite interests by promoting conflict between the Empire and the Commonwealth. However, Moscow was not prepared to donate funds for the actual realization of those pretensions, which would

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<sup>81</sup> See *supra*, 18-19.

<sup>82</sup> See *supra*, 23; *infra*, 46 & n. 13.

have entailed dynastic union between the Empire and the Commonwealth.

From this perspective, the apparent lack of "practical dealing" between Muscovy and the Empire was a disadvantage only to the latter. Moscow may have been quite content to remain on the sidelines while the Empire fought against the Turks and Tatars and clashed with Poland-Lithuania. During the reign of Tsar Fyodor, it was able to encourage both eventualities at minimal cost by offering verbal support and a single donation of furs. Consequently, its relations with the Empire during this period may be considered successful precisely because they did not lead to any new practical arrangements.

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Such was the status of Russo-Imperial relations at the close of the sixteenth century. On January 7, 1598, Tsar Fyodor died, and seven weeks later Boris Godunov was elected Tsar by an Assembly of the Land (*Zemsky Sobor*). However, his coronation did not take place until September 1.<sup>83</sup> In the meantime, an Imperial messenger (*gonets*) arrived in Moscow, but the purpose of his mission is unknown.<sup>84</sup> The next diplomatic exchange between Muscovy and the Empire took place in 1599, when Afanasy Vlasiev left for Prague with official tidings of Boris' accession. Vlasiev's embassy forms the topic of the present study and will be narrated in the following three chapters. The first of these deals with his journey through the so-called "free cities" of Germany; the second, with his stay at the Emperor's court; and the third, with his visit to the Archduke Maximilian.

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<sup>83</sup> According to the Muscovite calendar, which reckoned years from the assumed creation of the world, this was the first day of the year 7107.

<sup>84</sup> Bantysh-Kamensky, 15.

## 2. The Muscovite Embassy of 1599 in the "Free Cities" of Germany

"On the 28th day of June of the year 7107 [A.D. 1599], the Great Sovereign, Tsar and Grand Prince Boris Fyodorovich, Autocrat of all Russia, sent his envoy, *Dumny Diak*<sup>1</sup> Afanasy Vlasiev, to his brother, the Great Sovereign, the Roman Emperor Rudolf."<sup>2</sup> Thus begins the official account of the first Muscovite embassy to the Empire after the accession of Boris Godunov. Its destinations included the Hansa cities of Hamburg and Lübeck, the Imperial court of Rudolf II, and the residence of Archduke Maximilian of Austria.

The man chosen to lead this embassy was none other than "the Tsar's favorite,"<sup>3</sup> Afanasy Ivanov Vlasiev. It is not known when this individual first entered government service; but extant sources do mention that in 1584-85 he was a *pod'yachy*, or under-secretary.<sup>4</sup> He was promoted to *diak* (state secretary) no later than 1595, when he and Mikhail Velyaminov travelled to Prague with a large gift of furs for Emperor Rudolf.<sup>5</sup> By 1599, Vlasiev held the rank of *dumny diak*, which indicates that he had been granted membership of the Tsar's Council (Duma).<sup>6</sup>

The embassy of 1599 that Vlasiev led to the Imperial court included two under-

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<sup>1</sup> *Dumny diak* (or *dumny d'yak*) was the fourth and lowest Council rank, after boyar, *okol'nichy*, and *dumny dvoryanin*. Only a very few of the senior *diaki* (state secretaries) attained this rank, having first risen to prominence in the government bureaucracy and then been made members of the Tsar's Council (Duma). One possible translation of the term is "Councillor-Secretary." See Philip Longworth, *Alexis: Tsar of All the Russias* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1984), *passim*; Sergei G. Pushkarev, *Dictionary of Russian Historical Terms from the Eleventh Century to 1917*, ed. George Vernadsky & Ralph T. Fisher, Jr. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 12.

<sup>2</sup> *PDS*, vol. 2, 656.

<sup>3</sup> Vlasiev is so called in N. N. Bantysh-Kamensky, *Obzor vneshnikh snoshenii Rossii (po 1800 god)*, vol. 1 (Moscow: E. Lissner & Yu. Roman, 1894), 15.

<sup>4</sup> S. B. Veselovsky, *D'yaki i pod'yachie XV-XVII vv.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1975), 98.

<sup>5</sup> See *supra*, 21; *PDS*, vol. 2, 202.

<sup>6</sup> See *PDS*, vol. 2, 656; Pushkarev, 12. On Vlasiev's subsequent career, see *infra*, 86-88.

secretaries, Ivan Kurbatov and Stepan Danilov, and an interpreter, Yakov Zaborovsky.<sup>7</sup> These were all Muscovite civil servants. According to the archivist N. N. Bantysh-Kamensky, two foreigners by the names of Kramer and Meyer also travelled with the embassy, but it is not known what function they served or whether they returned to Muscovy with the others in 1600.<sup>8</sup>

Due to the international political situation, this group had to follow a rather circuitous route to the Empire. Although a fifteen-year truce was in place between Muscovy and Poland-Lithuania,<sup>9</sup> relations between the two powers remained antagonistic, and the latter had refused to allow the Muscovite embassy to cross its territory.<sup>10</sup> As a result, Vlasiev and his companions first travelled six hundred miles north to the recently-founded port city of Arkhangelsk,<sup>11</sup> after which they sailed around Scandinavia to the northern shores of Germany.

These circumstances help to explain the curious timing of the embassy, which took place more than a year after the accession of Tsar Boris. As mentioned in the preceding chapter, he had been elected Tsar by the *Zemsky Sobor* (Assembly of the Land) in February 1598. On the Sunday of Shrovetide, February 26, he had entered Moscow in a solemn procession and been congratulated by "the clergy, boyars, and all Orthodox Christianity"; on March 9, the Patriarch had declared him "invested with the Tsarish porphyry"; and on April 30, he had taken up residence in the Kremlin.<sup>12</sup> In the meantime, his subjects had sworn an oath of allegiance. Hence, although his coronation did not take place until September 1, it was quite clear in the first half of 1598 that Boris had succeeded his late brother-in-law, Fyodor Ivanovich, as Tsar and Grand Prince of

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<sup>7</sup> See *PDS*, vol. 2, 685, 715.

<sup>8</sup> Bantysh-Kamensky, vol. 1, 15.

<sup>9</sup> See *supra*, 13 n. 29.

<sup>10</sup> See *infra*, 75-76; *PDS*, vol. 2, 696. At this time, Poland-Lithuania controlled all access points from Muscovy to the Habsburg lands (i.e., the frontier zone from the Baltic Sea in the north to the Crimean Khanate in the south).

<sup>11</sup> The city of Arkhangelsk (Archangel) had been founded near the estuary of the Northern Dvina River in 1585.

<sup>12</sup> S. M. Soloviev, *Istoriya Rossii s drevneishikh vremen* (Moscow: ISEL, 1963), bk. 4, vol. 8, 352-353.

Muscovy.

Moreover, some foreign powers had already been informed of this fact. In early 1598, a Muscovite embassy had been sent to Sweden with news of Boris' accession. The regent of that country, Herzog Karl (Duke Charles, later Charles IX), had responded with a congratulatory letter that had been received in Moscow shortly after the Tsar's coronation on September 1.<sup>13</sup> Later that same month, a Muscovite embassy had left for Poland to inform King Sigismund III that Boris Godunov had acceded to the throne.<sup>14</sup> Why, then, did the new Muscovite sovereign wait until June of 1599 before sending an embassy to his "most dear and beloved brother," the Habsburg Emperor Rudolf II?

Due to the significance of diplomatic recognition from the Emperor, which has been discussed above,<sup>15</sup> it may be surmised that Boris would have thought it prudent to wait until his official coronation before proclaiming his accession to the Imperial court. That being the case, he would not have sent an embassy to Rudolf prior to September 1, 1598. Given the necessity of leaving from the northern port of Arkhangelsk, it was then necessary to wait several more months because of the constraints of climate. The harbor of Arkhangelsk normally remains icebound for about six months out of the year. However, at the end of the sixteenth century the period of impassibility was almost certainly longer: the onset of the "Little Ice Age" had accentuated seasonal extremes, producing several unusually harsh winters in European Russia and elsewhere.<sup>16</sup> According to the "Thousand-year chronicle of extraordinary natural phenomena" compiled by E. P. Borisenkov and V. M. Pasetsky, in 1595 the Russian North experienced "an exceptionally frosty and prolonged winter, which resulted in an increase

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<sup>13</sup> Bantysh-Kamensky, vol. 4 (1902), 134-135. The letter was dated June 14 and reached Moscow on September 17.

<sup>14</sup> Bantysh-Kamensky, vol. 3 (1897), 110.

<sup>15</sup> See *supra*, 8-9.

<sup>16</sup> See Raymond S. Bradley & Philip D. Jones, eds., *Climate since A.D. 1500* (London: Routledge, 1992), 135, 174; Jean M. Grove, *The Little Ice Age* (London: Methuen, 1988), *passim*.

in the frozenness [*ledovitost'*] of the Barents and Kara Seas."<sup>17</sup> The same source mentions that Western Russia faced "an exceptionally frosty and snowy winter" in 1597 and an early winter in 1598.<sup>18</sup> This explains why Boris was forced to wait until the early summer of 1599 before sending Vlasiev and his party through Arkhangelsk.

As it turned out, bad weather delayed the embassy at the estuary of the Northern Dvina River for five days. It was not until July 27 that Vlasiev and his companions set sail across the White Sea in an English ship,<sup>19</sup> which took them on a three-and-a-half-week journey past the shores of Norway and Denmark to the mouth of the Elbe River. Thus, in late August they approached the "free cities" (*vol'nie goroda*) of Germany, which was the Muscovite designation for municipalities governed by *Deutsches Stadtrecht*, or German city law. In brief, this law gave townsmen the right to "direct their economic activity and govern themselves through an elected city council (*Magistrat*) without interference from the local temporal or secular ruler."<sup>20</sup>

The first such "free city" the Muscovites entered was Stade ("Stod"), which lies about three miles west of the Elbe on the Schwinge River. When they had come within ten versts (six miles) of this town, Vlasiev sent an Englishman to inform the "burgomeisters and magistrates and councillors" of the embassy's arrival. The municipal officials sent back word that no ambassadors or envoys of the Muscovite sovereign had come to their city previously, that they did not know any Russian people, and that they had not heard about Vlasiev's trip. Furthermore, they professed concern that the Tsar might have sent these men to spy out their land. Finally, since "the matter

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<sup>17</sup> E. P. Borisenkov & V. M. Pasetsky, *Tsyachiletnyaya letopis' neobichainykh yavlenii prirody* (Moscow, 1988), 322.

<sup>18</sup> Borisenkov & Pasetsky, 322-323.

<sup>19</sup> PDS, vol. 2, 656. Arkhangelsk served as the port of entry for English merchant vessels managed by the "Muscovy Company," a chartered concern which had enjoyed privileged access to Muscovite markets since 1555. No doubt this privileged status contributed to the willingness of the English to transport the Muscovite embassy from Arkhangelsk to the Empire.

<sup>20</sup> Paul Robert Magocsi, *Historical Atlas of East Central Europe* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 37. In his journal, Vlasiev refers to the members of these councils as *burmistry* ("burgomeisters"). However, in reality there could be only one burgomeister, or mayor, so it is more appropriate to call these officials "councilmen."

was new for them," they explained that it would be necessary to consult with a higher authority, the archbishop of Bremen,<sup>21</sup> before allowing the Muscovites to enter the city.<sup>22</sup>

Nonetheless, the officials of Stade soon dispatched a delegation to meet Vlasiev. Secretary Rein Langus, accompanied by about twenty men armed with arquebuses, boarded the English ship and respectfully greeted "the envoy and *dumny diak* of the Most Illustrious [*Presvetleishy*] and Powerful and highborn invincible Great Sovereign, Tsar and Grand Prince, the Sovereign Boris Fyodorovich, Autocrat of all Russia." He then invited Vlasiev into the boats sent from Stade. The latter accepted and disembarked, and the ship set sail for England after firing a gun salute. Vlasiev and his companions were taken to Stade, where they were met by Daniel Bushman and other municipal officials and given lodging.<sup>23</sup>

All this took place on August 20. The next day, Langus came with about fifteen men and ceremoniously presented Vlasiev with a gift of wine from the leading burghers of the city. Vlasiev accepted this gift, using the occasion to request that he be given wagons and food supplies (*korm*)<sup>24</sup> and be sent on immediately to the Emperor. Langus replied that the city officials had written to the Archbishop and were awaiting his reply, but in the meantime the Muscovites would have to remain in Stade.<sup>25</sup>

The Archbishop's edict arrived on August 22. It directed the officials of Stade to render honor to the Muscovite embassy and allow it to continue on its way. This they did, sending Vlasiev off to Hamburg ("Amborkh") that same day with gun salutes and

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<sup>21</sup> The Catholic archdiocese of Bremen included the city of Stade. Its resident archbishop would have been the highest Church authority in the province.

<sup>22</sup> *PDS*, vol. 2, 657-658.

<sup>23</sup> *PDS*, vol. 2, 658-659.

<sup>24</sup> In modern Russian, the word *korm* means "fodder." In earlier times, however, it referred as well to human food and bodily sustenance in general. Muscovite embassies generally requested *korm* at each stopping place. As the *Istoriya diplomatii* (*History of Diplomacy*) notes, "Russian ambassadors abroad utilized everywhere the support of [government] Treasuries and even received monetary subsidies for travelling expenses, since the sums issued by the [Foreign] Office were usually insufficient." V. A. Zorin, et al., eds., *Istoriya diplomatii* (Moscow: GIPL, 1959), 2nd ed., vol. 1, 309.

<sup>25</sup> *PDS*, vol. 2, 659-660.



trumpet fanfare. However, they declined to furnish supplies *gratis*, on account of the fact that Stade was "a small, free place." Regarding this, Vlasiev noted in his journal: "In Stade, Afanasy bought food supplies himself. Stade is a free place; the Emperor is only the titular sovereign,<sup>26</sup> and [in fact] the burgomeisters [i.e., councilmen] rule."<sup>27</sup>

Soon after leaving Stade, Vlasiev sent word ahead to Hamburg so that the officials there would be ready to receive him. This had its effect: about ten versts from the city,<sup>28</sup> he was met by Christopher von Menkus ("Khristofor Vonmenkus"), the chief of musketeers. Von Menkus had come with upwards of twenty soldiers, bringing horses on which Vlasiev and his companions rode into Hamburg. The people of this city, lining up along the streets to watch, welcomed the Muscovite embassy with the sound of trumpets and gun salutes; and some of their leaders came "that same hour" with wine and live sturgeon.<sup>29</sup> Their spokesman, to whom Vlasiev refers variously as Dr. Vanlenmer, Valenmer, Valentmer, and Valenmistr, delivered a brief but polite speech which ended as follows:

If it happens that we are unable to render you certain honors [that you are expecting], you should not be surprised at us; [for we are] free, trading, self-governing people. No Russian ambassadors or envoys have ever come to our city of Hamburg, nor have any Russian merchants visited us. So for us this [situation] is unusual [i.e., unprecedented].<sup>30</sup>

The residents of Hamburg, like those of Stade, did in fact find themselves "unable" to "render the honor" of supplying the Muscovite embassy with foodstuffs. However, they provided three boats free of rent, and on August 24 they presented Vlasiev with a silver vessel (i.e., cup, bowl, or other such object) in honor of the Tsar. They said they

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<sup>26</sup> Lit., "They do not listen to [or obey] the Emperor in anything, only his name."

<sup>27</sup> PDS, vol. 2, 660. The Muscovite government, which supplied foreign embassies with a plentiful allotment of food and other supplies "from the moment of entry onto Russian soil," expected that its own embassies would be treated in a similar manner. [Zorin, 308-309.] However, as a "small, free place" which had no dealings with Muscovy, Stade would have been under no obligation to subsidize the Tsar's embassy.

<sup>28</sup> Ten versts (six miles) is approximately one-third of the total distance between Stade and Hamburg.

<sup>29</sup> PDS, vol. 2, 660-661.

<sup>30</sup> PDS, vol. 2, 662.

had heard that Boris Godunov was encouraging foreign merchants to come to Muscovy, and that they intended to petition him for permission to trade in Pskov and other cities.<sup>31</sup>

This gave Vlasiev the opportunity, as S. M. Soloviev writes, to "extol the might and virtues of his Tsar."<sup>32</sup> He began by listing Godunov's characteristics — charitable, just, stately,<sup>33</sup> judicious, fortunate — and proceeded to laud the manner in which he had guided the country during the reign of Fyodor Ivanovich (1584-1598). The Muscovite envoy described how Godunov, during his regency, had promoted commercial activity, built and strengthened cities in the "Wild Field"<sup>34</sup> and elsewhere, and carried on friendly relations with "all the Great Sovereigns" — the Habsburg Emperor, the Persian Shah, the Turkish Sultan, the Crimean Khan, and others.<sup>35</sup>

Next Vlasiev described the manner in which the new Tsar had come to the throne:

And when, by the judgment of God, the Great Sovereign, Tsar and Grand Prince Fyodor Ivanovich, Autocrat of all Russia, passed away [January 7, 1598], his righteous, blameless, and benign soul<sup>36</sup> departed from this life to God; and according to the will of God, and according to the edict of His Majesty the Tsar, and according to the benediction of [Godunov's] sister, the Great Sovereign, Tsaritsa and Grand Princess of all Russia, the nun Aleksandra Fyodorovna,<sup>37</sup> and on account of the petition and request [*za chelobit'em i proshen'em*] of the most holy Job, Patriarch of Moscow, and of the Metropolitans of all Russia and the Archbishops and Bishops and the whole consecrated ecumenical council

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<sup>31</sup> PDS, vol. 2, 662-663.

<sup>32</sup> Soloviev, bk. 4, vol. 8, 368. See *infra*, 81.

<sup>33</sup> I have followed L. Rex Pyles in translating *dorodny/doroden* as "stately." This word had a number of meanings circa 1600, as evidenced by the following definitions from the *Slovar' russkogo yazyka XI-XVII vv.* (*Dictionary of the Russian Language from the Eleventh to Seventeenth Centuries*): "tall and strong of build, handsome, stately [*vidny*]; valiant, manly, noble; strong, powerful; good." S. F. Platonov, *Boris Godunov: Tsar of Russia*, trans. L. Rex Pyles (Gulf Breeze, FL: Academic International, 1973), 54; S. G. Barkhudarov et al., eds, *Slovar' russkogo yazyka XI-XVII vv.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1975-), vol. 4, 325.

<sup>34</sup> See *supra*, 24.

<sup>35</sup> PDS, vol. 2, 663-664.

<sup>36</sup> Tsar Fyodor was widely considered pious and gentle, though feeble-minded. Having withdrawn from government affairs, he reportedly spent "all the time of his life in spiritual exploits." This perception of the Tsar was no doubt linked to the Muscovite notion of *yurodstvo* ("holy idiocy"), according to which fools were highly esteemed for their alleged prophetic abilities. S. F. Platonov, *Boris Godunov* (Petrograd, Ogni, 1921), 30 (trans. 39); V. O. Kliuchevsky, *Sochineniya*, vol. 3 (Moscow: GIPL, 1957), 18-20.

<sup>37</sup> "Aleksandra" was the name under which Irina Fyodorovna Godunova, the sister of Boris Godunov and wife of Tsar Fyodor Ivanovich, was tonsured after the death of her husband. See Soloviev, bk. 4, vol. 8, 346.

of the Russian State, and also of the Tsars and Tsareviches and many Sovereigns' children of various States, which serve His Majesty the Tsar [i.e., are vassals of the Tsar of Muscovy], and of the boyars,<sup>38</sup> and *voevody*,<sup>39</sup> and *okol'niche*,<sup>40</sup> and princes, and courtiers, and civil and state servitors [*prikaznie i sluzhivie lyudi*],<sup>41</sup> and *deti boyarskie*,<sup>42</sup> and *gosti*,<sup>43</sup> and of all Orthodox Christendom — our Great Sovereign, Tsar and Grand Prince Boris Fyodorovich, Autocrat of all Russia, [at that time] became Great Sovereign, Tsar and Grand Prince, Autocrat of all Russia, in [these] Great States: in Vladimir, and Moscow, and Novgorod, and in the [former] Khanates of Kazan and Astrakhan, and in Siberia, and in all the celebrated States of the Russian Tsardom.<sup>44</sup>

This statement reveals the grounds upon which Boris Godunov based his claims to legitimacy. According to Vlasiev's declaration, which may be taken as representing the official position of the Muscovite government, the sources of authority that had ordained Boris' accession were fivefold: God, the late Tsar Fyodor Ivanovich, Fyodor's wife Irina (Aleksandra) Godunova,<sup>45</sup> the Orthodox Church, and all the subjects, servants, and vassals of the Muscovite state. The first claim, to divine sanction, was a requisite component of any attempt at legitimation at the time.<sup>46</sup> For a Muscovite sovereign, the

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<sup>38</sup> The boyars (*boyare*) formed the highest rank of the Muscovite service elite.

<sup>39</sup> The term *voevoda* designated a military commander or a provincial governor with both military and civil authority. See Sergei G. Pushkarev, *Dictionary of Russian Historical Terms from the Eleventh Century to 1917*, ed. George Vernadsky & Ralph T. Fisher, Jr. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 176.

<sup>40</sup> The *okol'niche* ranked immediately below the boyars in Muscovite civil and military administration. According to S. G. Pushkarev, "they were members of the Boyar Duma [Council] and served as military commanders, ambassadors, judges, and administrators." Pushkarev, 74.

<sup>41</sup> The term *prikaznie lyudi* referred to Muscovite civil servants who worked in the *prikazy*, or government departments. According to S. G. Pushkarev, the term *sluzhivie lyudi* ("service people") usually referred to state servitors who worked in some military capacity. Pushkarev, 56.

<sup>42</sup> The *deti boyarskie* ("boyars' sons") were members of the lesser nobility, often engaged in military service.

<sup>43</sup> *Gost'* ("guest") was a title and rank granted by the Tsar to a very elite group of merchants. In 1598, there were only twenty-one *gosti* in Russia, and their numbers did not increase significantly over the course of the seventeenth century. According to Paul Bushkovitch: "The title... carried with it sufficient privileges to raise the holder above the mass of the Russian merchants in legal status. Legally the *gost'* was no longer a member of the town community: He did not contribute to the [tax] burden, and his house was considered a white place like an ecclesiastical or boyar property. He could own land and serfs in the countryside and was free of the state tavern monopoly." In exchange for such privileges, the *gosti* entered into government service, often as diplomats or tax collectors. Paul Bushkovitch, *The Merchants of Moscow, 1580-1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 13-15, 174.

<sup>44</sup> *PDS*, vol. 2, 664-665.

<sup>45</sup> See *supra*, 33 n. 37.

<sup>46</sup> It will be recalled that Archduke Maximilian of Austria claimed divine sanction for his pretensions to the throne of Poland-Lithuania. See *supra*, 13.

blessing of the Orthodox Church was also necessary, not least as an alleged manifestation of divine sanction. However, the second claim — that Boris' accession happened "according to the edict of His Majesty the Tsar [Fyodor]" — deserves more attention here. Since Godunov lacked any genealogical right to the throne,<sup>47</sup> this claim of assignation by the previous Tsar was of paramount importance in establishing the legitimacy of his rule.

There is considerable doubt about whether Tsar Fyodor actually did appoint Boris Godunov his successor.<sup>48</sup> However, it seems that his *right* to assign the rulership, had he so desired, was accepted in Muscovy. As early as 1497, Grand Prince Ivan III had claimed this right, stating: "What if I am not willing [to give the rulership] to my grandson or my sons? I will give the principality [*knyazhestvo*] to whomever I want."<sup>49</sup> Theoretically, then, Fyodor's assignation of the rulership to Boris would have been sufficient to ensure the latter's legitimacy.

Nonetheless, for practical reasons it was also essential to claim the "benediction" (*blagosloven'e*) of Irina, Fyodor's widow. During the brief interregnum which followed her husband's death, Irina alone had retained the title of a sovereign (Tsaritsa and Grand Princess). Though she did not wish to rule, her title still carried a certain

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<sup>47</sup> See *supra*, 9.

<sup>48</sup> Due to the abundance of contradictory stories, it is not entirely clear what happened during the last hours of the childless Tsar. In Soloviev's account, Fyodor did not specify a successor, but only expressed his desire that the will of God be done. However, Soloviev does mention that, according to Patriarch Job, Fyodor passed the scepter to his wife. Similarly, Platonov states that Irina succeeded her husband immediately upon his death. However, the contemporary Isaac Massa writes that Fyodor "entrusted the empire" to his cousin, Fyodor Nikitich Romanov (later Patriarch Filaret). For obvious reasons, the Romanov family preferred this version, and it found its way into several Muscovite chronicles of the early seventeenth century. But a second contemporary, Conrad Bussow, provides yet another version of events. He claims that several prominent boyars and princes refused the scepter for the sake of appearances before the dying Tsar became exasperated and offered it to whomever would take it. At this moment, Boris saw his opportunity and seized the scepter. Soloviev, bk. 4, vol. 8, 345-346, 691; Platonov, *Boris*, 116 (trans. 156); Isaac Massa, *A Short History of the Beginnings and Origins of These Present Wars in Moscow under the Reign of Various Sovereigns down to the Year 1610*, trans. G. Edward Orchard (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 37; Conrad Bussow, *The Disturbed State of the Russian Realm*, trans. G. Edward Orchard (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 9.

<sup>49</sup> Soloviev, bk. 4, vol. 8, 345.

power of legitimation. Thus, for instance, the *Zemsky Sobor* convened by Patriarch Job found it necessary to ask for Irina's approval before placing Boris on the throne.<sup>50</sup> That being the case, her "benediction" could not but form an essential component of Boris' claims to legitimacy.

This, then, was the manner in which the Muscovite government had instructed its envoy to portray the accession of Boris Godunov. In continuing his speech, Vlasiev sought to present additional evidences of the "rightness" of the new Tsar's rule. He commented on the new Tsar's generosity, declaring that all those in state pay had been given "three salaries together for one year": one in honor of the memory of the late Tsar Fyodor and another to celebrate the accession of the new Tsar, as well as their regular salary.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, he had indeed encouraged foreigners to trade in Muscovy, even granting some of them the high rank of *gost'* and furnishing them with considerable capital.<sup>52</sup> These merchants were permitted to travel freely, even to Persia, without paying duty to the Muscovite government. As a result, according to Vlasiev, all foreigners in Muscovy were now living "in peace and in quiet and in prosperous living."<sup>53</sup> In conclusion, he recommended that the citizens of Hamburg, together with those of Lübeck, send a delegation comprised of their "best people" to ask for permission to trade in Muscovy.<sup>54</sup>

The councilmen were evidently quite impressed with the potential advantages of trading in Muscovy. They expressed their intention of sending a delegation to the Tsar, and stated that Vlasiev's speech provided confirmation of the positive reports they had

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<sup>50</sup> Platonov, *Boris*, 120 (trans. 157).

<sup>51</sup> A Muscovite embassy of 1601 also mentioned this exceptional decree in discussions with representatives of the Crimean Khan. See Soloviev, bk. 4, vol. 8, 371.

<sup>52</sup> According to Vlasiev, Godunov gave 1,000 rubles to some of these merchants and 2,000 to others.

<sup>53</sup> Vlasiev claimed the same for "all of Orthodox Christendom."

<sup>54</sup> *PDS*, vol. 2, 666-667.

already received about Boris. Finally, they wished the Tsar and his children<sup>55</sup> long lives and prosperous reigns. After these conversations, Vlasiev and his companions left Hamburg. They spent the night in a small village and reached Lübeck on August 25.<sup>56</sup>

The burghers of Lübeck were better prepared to receive a Muscovite embassy than those of Hamburg. They had been in contact with the Muscovite government for more than a century,<sup>57</sup> and were therefore well acquainted with the appropriate protocol. The delegation which welcomed Vlasiev knew and correctly recited most of the Tsar's titles,<sup>58</sup> and the city council undertook to supply him and his people with free food and lodging for the duration of their stay. On the day after the embassy's arrival, August 26, several members of the council came and inquired how the Muscovites had fared on their journey. Vlasiev answered that they had fared well, by the grace of God, and mentioned that he had come to Lübeck with a document from the Tsar.<sup>59</sup>

In this letter, the Muscovite sovereign asked the burgomasters, magistrates, and councillors to assist his embassy by sending it to the Emperor along the best route, and with as little delay as possible. The dignitaries of Lübeck kissed the Tsar's royal seal, accepted the document, and expressed their desire to assist Vlasiev in any way they could. They even went so far as to state: "We, the residents of Lübeck, are servants of both Sovereigns: of the Sovereign, Tsar and Grand Prince Boris Fyodorovich, Autocrat

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<sup>55</sup> Boris Godunov had two children: a daughter, Ksenia (1582-1622), and a son, Fyodor (1589-1605). After their father's downfall in the first half of 1605, Fyodor was murdered and Ksenia forced to become the mistress of False Dimitry. For more on Tsarevna Ksenia, see *infra*, 86 & n. 3.

<sup>56</sup> *PDS*, vol. 2, 667-668. Lübeck lies about 40 miles northeast of Hamburg.

<sup>57</sup> As early as 1489, a Muscovite embassy had passed through Lübeck on its way to the court of Emperor Frederick III. Early in the following century, during the reign of Tsar Vasily III (r. 1505-1533), the merchants of this city received the right to trade in Muscovy. Their charter was renewed under Ivan IV (r. 1533-1584) and Fyodor I (r. 1584-1598). Bantysh-Kamensky, vol. 2 (1896), 190-191; vol. 4, 266.

<sup>58</sup> The heads of the delegation greeted Vlasiev as "the envoy of the Most Illustrious and Powerful Great Sovereign of all, Tsar and Grand Prince Boris Fyodorovich, Autocrat of all Russia, of Vladimir, Moscow, [and] Novgorod; Tsar of Kazan; Tsar of Astrakhan; Sovereign of Pskov; Grant Prince of Smolensk, Tver, Yugra, Perm, Viatka, [and] Bolgary; and Sovereign and Possessor of many other States." *PDS*, vol. 2, 668-669. For the Tsar's full title at this time, see *infra*, 42-43.

<sup>59</sup> *PDS*, vol. 2, 668-670.

of all Russia, and of the Emperor Rudolf."<sup>60</sup>

The burghers of Lübeck had heard about Boris Godunov and the new opportunities for commerce in Muscovy from various travellers to that country, including an Imperial diplomat sent to Moscow in 1597.<sup>61</sup> Since they were desirous of trading in Pskov and Novgorod, they asked Vlasiev to carry a letter of petition from them to the Tsar. This, however, he declined to do, advising them instead to send delegates to Moscow. As in Hamburg, he implied that this would produce a positive response, stating: "When considering their petition, His Majesty the Tsar, according to his Tsarish charitable custom, and for [the sake of] his most dear and beloved brother, the Great Sovereign, Emperor Rudolf, will ensure that they are not offended."<sup>62</sup>

On August 27, the city officials returned for further discussion. While continuing to praise Godunov, they expressed serious concerns about the relations between Muscovy and Sweden. According to their account, the regent of the latter country, Duke Charles (Herzog Karl), had been acting in an extremely hostile manner: he refused to let them pass through his land, and earlier that year he had even seized "twenty ships on the sea with people and with goods." They feared that he would make a deal with Godunov, perhaps by ceding over some territory in Livonia, so that the two would stand together against Lithuania and against Lübeck.<sup>63</sup>

Vlasiev answered that such ideas must have come from "some enemy of Christians, someone from the Lithuanian people, who does not want to see good within Christendom." He stated that Godunov had absolutely no intention of assisting Duke Charles in any way, and certainly not of going to war with Lithuania or Lübeck on his

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<sup>60</sup> *PDS*, vol. 2, 670-671.

<sup>61</sup> This was the Imperial messenger (*gonets*) Lucas Magnus. The Russian records of his visit to Moscow may be found in *PDS*, vol. 2, 389-418.

<sup>62</sup> *PDS*, vol. 2, 671-672.

<sup>63</sup> *PDS*, vol. 2, 673-674. These fears were not groundless, Vlasiev's subsequent protestations notwithstanding. According to Soloviev, Godunov hoped to take advantage of the quarrels between Herzog Karl of Sweden and his nominal overlord, Sigismund III of Poland, in order to gain more territory in Livonia. The Tsar's strategy was "to threaten Sweden with an alliance with Poland, and Poland with an alliance with Sweden." Soloviev, bk. 4, vol. 8, 366.

account. In fact, Vlasiev asserted, the Tsar did not normally have diplomatic relations with the Swedish duke, for the latter was not a sovereign in his own right. Charles was subordinate, at least in theory, to Sigismund III of Poland, who in 1592 had succeeded his father as King of Sweden. Therefore, "relations with Herzog Karl... are not fitting for His Majesty the Tsar."<sup>64</sup>

On August 29, Vlasiev's last day in Lübeck, more than one hundred merchants came to express their great esteem for Tsar Boris, Tsaritsa Maria, Tsarevich Fyodor, and Tsarevna Ksenia. They called Boris "our Sovereign" and stated: "We, the residents of Lübeck, all pray to God about their Royal health every hour! And hearing of the health of His Majesty the Tsar and of his son, the Tsarevich, Prince Fyodor Borisovich, we rejoice." But these acclamations, as might be supposed, stemmed from an ulterior motive. During the reign of Tsar Fyodor, the merchants of Lübeck had been granted permission to trade in Pskov and Novgorod, and they were anxious for the new Tsar to renew these privileges.<sup>65</sup>

Vlasiev left Lübeck later that day, taking with him two gifts for the Tsar: a gilded silver goblet and a gold chain. He was escorted out of the city in a grand procession which included about one hundred dignitaries and five hundred musketeers. The Muscovite embassy then journeyed south and reached Lüneberg ("Linborkh") on August 30. Here Vlasiev met with the burgomasters but declined to enter into talks with them; he merely accepted their present of a wine goblet and asked to be sent on to the Emperor without delay. On September 1, the first day of the Muscovite *anno mundi* 7108, he and his companions left for Brunswick ("Bronsvik").<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> *PDS*, vol. 2, 675-676. This declaration, that the Tsar did not have diplomatic relations with Herzog Karl, was not made in very good faith. Vlasiev did admit that a Muscovite embassy had recently travelled to Sweden in order to announce Godunov's accession and to discuss the boundaries of Karelia, but he implied that this was an exception. In actual fact, however, the Muscovite government had been dealing with Herzog Karl every year since 1593. See Bantysh-Kamensky, vol. 4, 132-135.

<sup>65</sup> *PDS*, vol. 2, 677-678; Bantysh-Kamensky, vol. 2, 190-191.

<sup>66</sup> *PDS*, vol. 2, 673, 678-680. The officials of Lüneberg provided Vlasiev with three carts free of rent, but he had to pay for lodging and for food supplies.



They arrived two days later and were met by the Lord Mayor,<sup>67</sup> who brought greetings from Archduke Ernst. This was the first time a member of the Habsburg family had recognized the embassy's existence; and Vlasiev responded with the customary salutation: "I pay respect [*chelom b'yu*] to the Archduke." After the Muscovites had been shown to their lodgings, the mayor and other city officials asked politely to see a passport (*proezzhaya gramota*) from the Tsar. This step was taken in order to verify that Vlasiev was formally authorized to represent the Muscovite government. The officials were shown a document which bore the Tsar's royal seal and appeared satisfied. Vlasiev invited them to copy it, but they did not find it necessary even to read it. Convinced that the bearer was who he claimed to be, they presented him with a gilded silver goblet and some red wine.

Since the officials had inquired about the Tsar's health, Vlasiev assured them that Godunov was not only in good health, but also "Christian, charitable, wise, stately, fortunate, and brave." However, he would not discuss any details of domestic or foreign policy, asking instead to be sent on to the Emperor without any delay. He also learned that Rudolf, in order to survey the situation at the Turkish border, had gone to Linz but would soon be returning to Prague.

Vlasiev left Brunswick on September 4. The next day he arrived in Magdeburg ("Magdeborkh"), where he was given food supplies but not met by any official delegate. He then proceeded to Leipzig ("Lipsik"), where he was not given food supplies but was visited briefly by someone sent by the town council. From there he travelled to Dresden ("Drezn"), the residence of the Saxon Electors, reaching it on September 11.<sup>68</sup>

Before entering the city, Vlasiev sent Ivan Kurbatov and Stepan Danilov to inform the authorities of their arrival and to ask for lodging and supplies. The two under-secretaries reported back that the princes had gone hunting in the countryside, but that

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<sup>67</sup> Vlasiev calls this individual a "grand burgomeister" (*bol'shoi burmistr*).

<sup>68</sup> PDS, vol. 2, 681-685.

their councillors had arranged for lodging. One of these, Dr. Johann Gedleman, cordially welcomed Vlasiev and informed him that the princes were about forty miles away. He also implied that the envoy should produce his travelling documents and other official papers.

This last request, however, ran counter to Vlasiev's instructions. The envoy stated that he had been ordered to give a particular document to the Saxon princes, who lived in Dresden, and that he could not hand it over to anyone else. He added that if what Kurbatov and Danilov had been told was true, and the princes had in fact only gone out to hunt, then they should be returning shortly. Gedleman responded that the princes themselves were quite young (sixteen, thirteen, and twelve years old) and consequently did not participate in the business of government. Their uncle, Frederick Wilhelm, served as regent; but he was away for an extended period of time. As a result, Gedleman offered to take the Tsar's document to the effective rulers, the councillors. Nonetheless, Vlasiev persisted in the same vein as before. He declared that the document from the Tsar was for the princes, regardless of their ages. Since it was not convenient to meet with them at the moment, he promised to have his assistants carry the document to them.

To this, Gedleman apparently acceded,<sup>69</sup> for he began to speak of political matters. He said that the councillors in Dresden were aware that the Emperor had intended to send ambassadors to Muscovy by way of Poland-Lithuania. However, the Sejm (Assembly) had refused to allow this, and a lesser envoy had been dispatched to Moscow by a different route.<sup>70</sup> Vlasiev answered that he himself had not travelled through Poland-Lithuania for the same reason. He explained that the Polish and Lithuanian nobles acted out of a desire to prevent good relations between the Tsar and

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<sup>69</sup> His original resistance, it would seem, was motivated by a desire to determine the purpose of the Muscovite embassy in advance of its formal declaration to the princes. This would have given him and the other counsellors more time in which to prepare a response.

<sup>70</sup> The Imperial messenger (*gonets*) Lucas Magnus was sent through Prussian territory to Riga, and from there to Pskov. *PDS*, vol. 2, 389.

the Emperor. The Tsar, on the other hand, sought to maintain friendship with the Emperor and to assist him in the struggle against the "foe of all Christendom, the Turkish Sultan."<sup>71</sup>

In reply, Gedleman provided some information about the current situation in the war against this foe. He said that the Turkish Grand Vizier had led an army of 100,000 men in to the field that year, and that some additional thousands of Crimean Tatars had gone with him. These were being resisted by Michael the Brave, Prince of Wallachia and Moldavia, who commanded a force comprised of only 40,000 of his own men and 12,000 of the Emperor's. Hence, the prospect of military assistance from Muscovy was indeed a welcome one; and Gedleman inquired directly: "Will His Majesty the Tsar render help to the Emperor against the Turk?" Vlasiev responded to this query in a highly diplomatic fashion:

The Great Sovereign, Tsar and Grand Prince Boris Fyodorovich, Autocrat of all Russia and Sovereign and Possessor of many States, a Sovereign Great, charitable, fortunate, wise, brave, true, just, [and] Christian, for [the sake of] brotherly love and of all Orthodox Christendom<sup>72</sup> always endeavors to and considers every way to render help to his brother, His Majesty the Emperor, against the Turk."<sup>73</sup>

Vlasiev then asked where the Emperor was. Gedleman related that a great epidemic had broken out in Prague, prompting Rudolf to take up temporary residence at Pilsen ("Bil'zin"). To ensure that the Imperial court would be ready to receive him, Vlasiev wrote to the authorities in Prague, asking them to forward his letter to Pilsen. Only the very beginning of this letter has survived in copy. However, the fragment itself is useful as documentary evidence of the Tsar's full title in 1599:

By the grace of God, Great Sovereign, Tsar and Grand Prince Boris Fyodorovich, Autocrat of all Russia, of Vladimir, Moscow, [and] Novgorod; Tsar of Kazan, Tsar of Astrakhan, Tsar of Siberia; Sovereign

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<sup>71</sup> *PDS*, vol. 2, 685-689.

<sup>72</sup> Moscow wanted to emphasize that the bulk of the Christian population under Ottoman rule was of the Orthodox confession. See *infra*, 44-46, 63-64, 71-73.

<sup>73</sup> *PDS*, vol. 2, 690.

of Pskov and Grand Prince of Smolensk, Tver, Yugra, Perm, Viatka, Bolgary, and others; Sovereign and Grand Prince of Nizhny-Novgorod,<sup>74</sup> Chernigov, Riazan, Livonia, Udora, Obdoria, [and] Kondia; and Ruler of all the northern country; and Sovereign of the Georgian Tsars' land of Iberia, and of the Circassian and Mountain Princes' land of Kabarda; and Sovereign and Possessor of many other States.<sup>75</sup>

The most recent addition to this title was the word "Autocrat" (*Samoderzhets*), which may be found in the second line of the above quotation. This term, a calque of the Byzantine *autokrator*, designated an independent sovereign who ruled by divine right. According to Marc Szeftel, "from 1492 it was constantly used by the church,<sup>76</sup> but it did not become a part of the Tsar's official title until 1591, under Ivan IV's son, Fedor, and then only in foreign relations."<sup>77</sup> Even then, however, application of the term remained inconsistent: Imperial emissaries employed it in early 1594, omitted it later that year, and included it again in 1597.<sup>78</sup>

Upon his accession in 1598, Boris Godunov made *samoderzhets* an official part of the title for both foreign and domestic use. Following Ostrogorsky, Szeftel notes that "this is not surprising, for, as an elected tsar, Boris wanted to emphasize his prerogatives of a sovereign in his own right."<sup>79</sup> In other words, recognition as the "Autocrat of all Russia" provided Boris with another non-genealogical proof of legitimacy. It was therefore crucial that this recent addition to the Tsar's title be accepted by the "senior sovereign of the continent," Emperor Rudolf II. In the next chapter, we shall see whether Vlasiev's embassy of 1599 was able to procure this acceptance.

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<sup>74</sup> Lit., "Novgorod of the Lower land."

<sup>75</sup> *PDS*, vol. 2, 690-691.

<sup>76</sup> Use of this term was one way for the Church to assert that Moscow was "the new Constantinople" — i.e., the inheritor and preserver of the true Orthodox Christian tradition after the fall of Byzantium (1453). Marc Szeftel, "The Title of the Muscovite Monarch up to the End of the Seventeenth Century," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, 13.1-2 (1979), 65-66. See also A. Lappo-Danilevskij, "L'idée de l'état et son évolution en Russie depuis les Troubles du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle jusqu'aux Réformes du XVIII<sup>e</sup>" in Paul Vinogradoff, ed., *Essays in Legal History Read before the International Congress of Historical Studies Held in London in 1913* (London: Oxford University Press, 1913), 357.

<sup>77</sup> Szeftel, 66.

<sup>78</sup> Szeftel does not mention this fact; but see *PDS*, vol. 1, 1288, 1428; vol. 2, 511, 516.

<sup>79</sup> Szeftel, 66.

### 3. The Muscovite Embassy of 1599 at the Court of Emperor Rudolf II

Afanasy Vlasiev's account of his entry into Pilsen and his audience with the Emperor has not survived. The narrative in *PDS* recommences immediately after this audience, which was followed by a conference with Rudolf's closest advisors. The text mentions that within an hour after being escorted from the Emperor's presence, Vlasiev met with the so-called *blizhnie bol'shie dumnie lyudi*, or "close, great councilmen." These included President of the Privy Council Wolfgang Rumpf von Wullross ("Volf Rumpf") and Marshal Paul Sixtus Trautson ("Pavel Sikstus Troutsem"), the two ministers who effectively ruled the Empire on behalf of Rudolf.<sup>1</sup> It was with them that Vlasiev discussed the main business of his embassy.

The envoy's opening speech,<sup>2</sup> no doubt prepared in Moscow, began by addressing the central issue of Russo-Imperial relations. By way of preamble, Vlasiev stated:

It is known to His Majesty the Emperor and to you, his councillors, that because of the sin of all Christendom and for the disagreement and disunity of the Christian Sovereigns, God allowed the infidel<sup>3</sup> into Christendom. And the Turkish Sultan took possession of a great Christian State, the Byzantine Empire [*Grecheskoe Tsarstvo*], whence is the beginning and root of the true Orthodox Christian faith.<sup>4</sup>

This rhetoric provided a foundation for the argument that Vlasiev would develop in the rest of his speech. After recounting how the Turks and Tatars were invading Imperial lands and shedding much Christian blood, he averred that the "true Christian

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<sup>1</sup> *PDS*, vol. 2, 691-692; R. J. W. Evans, *Rudolf II and His World: A Study in Intellectual History, 1576-1612* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973), 71. Emperor Rudolf was a recluse who suffered from severe melancholia, and his advisors handled most of the affairs of state. See Evans, 79.

<sup>2</sup> For a translation of this speech, see Appendix A.

<sup>3</sup> The word Vlasiev used was *besermen*, a term which referred especially to the Muslim Turks and Tatars. For more information, see the Glossary.

<sup>4</sup> *PDS*, vol. 2, 692.

Sovereign," Boris Godunov, intended to help in the struggle against the "foe of all Christendom and enemy of the Cross of Christ." The Tsar, he claimed, steadfastly desired to liberate the Orthodox Balkan peoples from Ottoman rule, and to see all Christian sovereigns stand together in love and in union against the Infidel. More than that, he wanted to march personally against Crimea and thus ensure that the Tatars would no longer attack Imperial Hungary.<sup>5</sup> However, as in 1597, the envoy maintained that this course of action was lamentably precluded by the refusal of Poland-Lithuania to allow transit through its territory.<sup>6</sup>

Then followed a list of recent Muscovite efforts to assist the Empire in its war against the Turks. In September 1598, Godunov had sent Mikhail Tatishchev and Ivan Maksimov to Poland with news of his accession to the throne.<sup>7</sup> Vlasiev stated that this embassy had petitioned unsuccessfully for permission to attack Crimea by way of the Dnieper River. Meanwhile, the Persian Shah, the Georgian Kings, and other Eastern potentates had decided to make war on Turkey. By claiming that this was the result of Muscovite diplomacy,<sup>8</sup> Godunov smoothly took credit for the military activities of other states. Through his envoy, he declared that all this had been done out of his "brotherly love and friendship toward His Majesty the Emperor." He also expressed regret at the impossibility of bringing Muscovite troops onto the battlefield, again blaming the Poles who would not even allow Muscovite emissaries through their land.<sup>9</sup>

Four years earlier, in fact, the Imperial Ambassador Warkotsch had managed to

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<sup>5</sup> After a great Muscovite victory over the Crimean Tatars in 1591, Boris Godunov enjoyed an undeserved reputation as a skilled military commander. See R. G. Skrynnikov, *Boris Godunov* (Moscow: Nauka, 1978), 64 [or R. G. Skrynnikov, *Boris Godunov*, trans. Hugh F. Graham (Gulf Breeze, FL: Academic International, 1982), 49]; S. F. Platonov, *Boris Godunov* (Petrograd: Ogni, 1921), 55 (trans. 71).

<sup>6</sup> PDS, vol. 2, 692-694. See *supra*, 23.

<sup>7</sup> See N. N. Bantysh-Kamensky, *Obzor vneshnikh snoshenii Rossii (po 1800 god)*, vol. 3 (Moscow: E. Lissner & Yu. Roman, 1897), 110; S. M. Solov'ev, *Istoriya Rossii s drevneishikh vremen* (Moscow: ISEL, 1963), bk. 4, vol. 8, 359.

<sup>8</sup> This statement has the nature of a partial truth. The Muscovite government may have urged Persia and other states to make war on the Turks, but the latter were naturally pursuing their own interests in doing so.

<sup>9</sup> PDS, vol. 2, 694-696. See *infra*, 75.

obtain permission for Velyaminov and Vlasiev to travel through Poland-Lithuania.<sup>10</sup> However, when Tsar Boris requested the same for Vlasiev's embassy of 1599, the government of Poland-Lithuania had refused. Vlasiev now informed the Imperial advisors of this fact, adding that such behavior showed a lack of concern for the welfare of Christendom. He said that the Poles, in addition to impeding the friendship between the Tsar and the Emperor, had friendly relations with the Turks.<sup>11</sup> This circumstance gave Vlasiev the opportunity to ask a rather loaded rhetorical question: "Is this Christian: to have diplomatic relations with infidel Sovereigns, and to give [them] presents and gifts, and to bribe [them] against Christendom?"<sup>12</sup>

The message from Moscow was clear. The Poles, though they claimed to be Christians, had proven themselves adversaries of Christendom. Not only did they refuse to unite with other Christian states, they attempted to prevent others from doing so as well. Finally, in allying with the Infidel, they contributed to the alleged suffering of "true" — that is, Orthodox — Christians. By contrast, the Tsar was a true Christian and therefore always sought to help the Emperor and the cause of Christendom.

This polemic may be seen as a reaction to long-standing Polish attempts to convince the rest of Europe that Muscovy was not part of Christendom.<sup>13</sup> It reached its climax in

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<sup>10</sup> Bantysh-Kamensky, vol. 1 (1894), 14.

<sup>11</sup> Under the influence of Chancellor Jan Zamoyski, Poland consistently refused to participate in the proposed anti-Turkish league. The exception was 1595, when the *pany* agreed to join on condition that Maximilian personally renounce all claims to the throne and that Rudolf "put a stop to his intrigues for extending his influence in Moldavia and Wallachia." However, the Habsburgs failed to meet these demands, and the Poles continued to maintain peace with Turkey. See W. F. Reddaway, et al., eds., *The Cambridge History of Poland to 1696* (Cambridge: University Press, 1950), 451, 458.

<sup>12</sup> *PDS*, vol. 2, 696-697.

<sup>13</sup> The Catholic country of Poland considered itself *antemurale christianitatis*, Christendom's first line of defense against the heretic and infidel East. It argued that Orthodox Muscovy was not truly Christian, and thus not a part of Europe. See Janusz Tazbir, *Poland as the Rampart of Christian Europe: Myths and Historical Reality* (Warsaw: Interpress, 1983); S. F. Platonov, *Moskva i Zapad* (Berlin: Obelisk, 1926), 11 [or S. F. Platonov, *Moscow and the West*, ed. & trans. Joseph L. Wieczynski (Hattiesburg, Miss.: Academic International, 1972), 5]; Roman Dyboski, *Poland in World Civilization*, ed. Ludwik Krzyzanowski (New York: Barrett, 1950), 16; Reddaway, 569; Philip Longworth, *The Making of Eastern Europe: From Prehistory to Postcommunism*, 2nd ed. (New York: St. Martin's, 1997), 5; Andrzej Sulima Kaminski, *Republic vs. Autocracy: Poland-Lithuania and Russia, 1686-1697* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 3.

Vlasiev's closing remarks. The envoy mentioned that "previously much dishonor was done to Maximilian by Polish people," and that the Tsar was desirous of helping to rectify this situation. After inquiring how the Habsburgs planned to "revenge such vexations and rudenesses," Vlasiev finished with the following statement:

For our Great Sovereign, Tsar and Grand Prince Boris Fyodorovich, Autocrat of all Russia, wants to stand as one against the Polish and Lithuanian land with your Sovereign, His Majesty the Emperor, and to take revenge on them for such rudenesses and misdeeds to Maximilian.<sup>14</sup>

Such was the conclusion which followed logically from Vlasiev's first sentence, in which he echoed the common European belief that "the sin of all Christendom and the disagreement and disunity of the Christian Sovereigns" were responsible for the success of the Turks. This premise implied that it was necessary to purge Christendom of sin by punishing those responsible for its disunity. From the Muscovite perspective, this meant war with Poland-Lithuania.

Yet such a reasoning process served to legitimize rather than determine Muscovite foreign policy. It provided a convenient religious justification for a position which was essentially political. Furthermore, it is not even certain that this invitation to go to war against Poland was entirely sincere. The Imperial government, after all, was aware that Muscovy had a truce with Poland-Lithuania until 1602. Its representatives had mentioned this fact in 1597 when requesting financial, not military, assistance for Maximilian.<sup>15</sup> Thus, it may be that Godunov offered this proposal simply as one more rhetorical sign of his professed love and devotion to the Emperor. If so, there would be nothing out of keeping in a speech which made much of the Tsar's alleged desire to

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<sup>14</sup> *PDS*, vol. 2, 697-698.

<sup>15</sup> Russia and Poland had signed a fifteen-year armistice in August 1587. In 1597, the Imperial emissary Lucas Magnus was asked what kind of help Maximilian required. He answered: "It is currently not possible for your Sovereign, Tsar and Grand Prince Fyodor Ivanovich of all Russia, to assist [Maximilian] with people [i.e., soldiers], because there are still five years until [the end of] the armistice years with Lithuania. So the Sovereign, Tsar and Grand Prince Fyodor Ivanovich of all Russia, should grant Maximilian help from his Royal Treasury." *PDS*, vol. 2, 554; Solov'ev, bk. 4, vol. 7, 250; S. F. Platonov, *Boris Godunov* (Petrograd: Ogni, 1921), 44 (trans. 57). See also *supra*, 13 & n. 29.



march personally against the Crimean Tatars. Such desires cost him little when circumstances already precluded their fulfillment.

The Imperial councillors did not respond immediately to Vlasiev's declarations. Rumpf and his companions merely stated that all they had heard was true, and that they would reply after learning the Emperor's thoughts on these matters. However, one member of the group, Hans von Hornstein ("Yans Fangorsten"), did reveal some information about his recent embassy to Poland. He confirmed that King Sigismund and the Sejm had explicitly refused to ally with the Empire against the Turks.<sup>16</sup> He further asserted that there was presently "great confusion" in Poland-Lithuania, due to the fact that the nobles "do not love the King." Hence, it was unclear who would rule and what foreign policy would be adopted in the future.<sup>17</sup>

On October 6, which was likely a few days later,<sup>18</sup> the Imperial advisors read Vlasiev their response to his speech. First they expressed the gratitude of the Emperor toward Godunov for the latter's love, concern, and desire to help in the struggle against the Turks. For this, they wished him a long and prosperous reign. In honor of the real and intended military operations of Muscovy, Persia, Georgia, and other lands, Rumpf and his comrades stated, "Our Sovereign, His Majesty the Emperor, pays respect [*chelom b'yot*] to his exceptionally beloved brother." They accompanied these words with actual bows of their own.<sup>19</sup>

After these formalities, the councillors turned to more practical matters. They

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<sup>16</sup> From the Polish perspective, "Zamoyski demonstrated the insincerity of the vague promises of the Emperor, who refused to give any reliable guarantee that he would not use the [anti-Turkish] League to further his Imperial interests at the expense of Poland." Reddaway, 458.

<sup>17</sup> *PDS*, vol. 2, 698. See also Appendix C.

<sup>18</sup> It is impossible to determine from the Russian records how much later the second conference took place, since the date of the first has been lost. However, it was almost certainly not the next day, because the word *nazavtree* (meaning "on the next day" or "a day later") is not present. Its absence is meaningful because Vlasiev meticulously included it whenever applicable. Thus, his account of the third round of talks begins as follows: "And on the next day, the 7th day of October, Chancellor Johann Meker came from the Emperor to the envoy and Secretary-Councillor Afanasy Vlasiev." On the other hand, it is unlikely that the councillors delayed more than a few days before responding. *PDS*, vol. 2, 699, 707.

<sup>19</sup> *PDS*, vol. 2, 699-701.

explained that the Emperor now hoped to make peace with Turkey. The war had proven extremely destructive, and he simply did not have enough funds with which to continue it. There was no money in the Treasury for paying mercenaries. Only the Pope and the Spanish King had sent assistance, "and that not very great." Moreover, Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, and Hungary were suffering from an outbreak of plague. Rudolf's only hope, it seemed, was "that His Majesty the Tsar, in accordance with brotherly love and for [the sake of] all Christendom, will not forget His Majesty the Emperor."<sup>20</sup>

The Emperor further asked Godunov not to risk his own person in warring against Crimea, but to send some of his subjects instead. According to the councillors, any action would be appreciated, for the Tatars were a "warlike people" who had inflicted great losses on the Empire. With respect to Poland-Lithuania, the Emperor's representatives expressed their vexation at the impossibility of convincing the lords of that country to support the cause of Christendom. However, they said that it was simply impossible to fight another war at the present time, due to the Imperial government's poor financial situation and the aforementioned epidemic. The "dishonoring of Maximilian," then, could not be avenged before "God gives the [appropriate] time."<sup>21</sup>

In response, Vlasiev repeated that the Tsar was always eager to help, for he sought above all "to liberate Orthodox Christendom from the hands of the infidels." For this reason he had induced the Eastern countries to attack Turkey and wanted to march personally against the Crimean Tatars. Since the Emperor had requested that Godunov not risk his own life in battle, Vlasiev announced:

That is in God's hands. His Majesty the Tsar relies on God's will in everything. He asks and prays that the Lord God would hear the wailing and tears of poor Christians, who have been destroyed by the Hagarite<sup>22</sup> and currently suffer in captivity and [forced] labor. [He asks and prays

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<sup>20</sup> *PDS*, vol. 2, 701.

<sup>21</sup> *PDS*, vol. 2, 702-703.

<sup>22</sup> "Hagarite" was a derogatory term derived from the Biblical story of Abraham and Hagar. It posited a diametric opposition between Muslims (the descendants of Hagar) and Christians (who considered themselves the "new Israel"). Both church and state in Russia held to this view. See Genesis 15-21; Platonov, *Boris*, 58 (trans. 76).

that God] would grant them deliverance and freedom from the infidels. And, asking God for mercy, he himself wants to effect the defense and deliverance of Christians with his own Tsarish person.<sup>23</sup>

Vlasiev continued by asking the conditions upon which the Emperor desired to make peace with Turkey. Also, since the councillors had mentioned that there were plans for a great Imperial embassy to Muscovy, he inquired which ambassadors would be sent and on what business. The councillors responded that the Emperor was seeking a six-year truce and the return of all prisoners. The Ottomans had captured Raab (Győr) and wanted to keep it as part of the settlement, but the Emperor was unwilling to give up such a large, fortified city. However, the councillors remained optimistic about the possibility of concluding a truce, because they believed the war had exhausted the Turks also. As for the embassy, they said that Burgrave Abraham, who had visited the Tsar in 1597, would leave for Muscovy that same year.<sup>24</sup>

This concluded the main portion of the talks between Vlasiev and Rudolf's advisors. The latter stated that the Muscovite embassy would be allowed to proceed on its way without delay, and offered to provide a safe conduct (*opasnaya gramota*)<sup>25</sup> for travel through Poland-Lithuania. Alternatively, he and his companions could be sent back to Lübeck.<sup>26</sup>

Neither of these options suited Vlasiev. He stated that it was impossible for him to travel through Poland-Lithuania without the Tsar's command. He then repeated the account of how King Sigismund and the Sejm had refused to allow Muscovite troops to cross their territory, even though attacking Crimea and assisting the Emperor were important matters for all Christendom. He also reiterated that the Poles, "not wanting to

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<sup>23</sup> PDS, vol. 2, 703-704.

<sup>24</sup> PDS, vol. 2, 701, 704-705; see *supra*, 21-23. There is no record of such an embassy, but that does not necessarily imply that the councillors' statement was insincere.

<sup>25</sup> The *opasnaya gramota* (lit., "dangerous document") was used to ensure safe transit through a hostile state. At this time, Rudolf II was relatively friendly with Poland and evidently had the ability to take even a Muscovite diplomat under his protection in this manner. See Robert M. Croskey, *Muscovite Diplomatic Practice in the Reign of Ivan III* (New York: Garland, 1987), 30.

<sup>26</sup> PDS, vol. 2, 705.

see good," had refused to allow him, Vlasiev, to travel to Prague through their lands. The bottom line, however, was that the Muscovite embassy simply could not enter Poland-Lithuania without an injunction from the Tsar. Nor could it return to Lübeck without first delivering some presents and documents to Archduke Maximilian. After these matters had been discussed, Rumpf and his companions left for the day, again promising to inform the Emperor of all that had transpired.<sup>27</sup>

On October 7, Chancellor Johann Meker visited Vlasiev and communicated the Emperor's appreciation of Godunov's undertakings. He said the Imperial government possessed confirmation that the Tsar had indeed "led" other sovereigns to fight the Turks: the Doge of Venice had written that the rulers of Persia, Yurgench,<sup>28</sup> and Georgia went to war and "captured many cities." After the Chancellor had expressed his master's gratitude, Vlasiev remarked:

Prior to this, I truthfully declared to you, the Emperor's councillors, concerning... the brotherly love and assistance of our Great Sovereign toward your Sovereign, His Majesty the Emperor.... And now the brotherly love and assistance of our Great Sovereign is well known to His Majesty the Emperor from other sides [i.e., sources].<sup>29</sup>

Subsequently, the two representatives discussed how to reach Maximilian with the Tsar's letter and gifts. Vlasiev had been directed to deliver them personally if possible,<sup>30</sup> but Meker reported that the Archduke's whereabouts were unknown. Two weeks passed before Vlasiev learned that Maximilian was in Mariendol, and that it would be possible to travel there.<sup>31</sup> In the meantime, he had only limited contact with the Imperial officials. Chancellor Meker visited twice, once to inquire about a phoney

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<sup>27</sup> *PDS*, vol. 2, 705-707.

<sup>28</sup> Yurgench (Urgench) was the capital city of an ancient khanate around the Aral Sea basin. For further information, see *infra*, 74 & n. 9.

<sup>29</sup> *PDS*, vol. 2, 707-708.

<sup>30</sup> If Maximilian was "in the host [i.e., army] or somewhere in a distant place," then Vlasiev was to send the items with a courier. *PDS*, vol. 2, 707.

<sup>31</sup> *PDS*, vol. 2, 711-712.

diplomat who had travelled to Moscow many years earlier,<sup>32</sup> and once to see how Vlasiev and his companions were faring.<sup>33</sup>

The remaining discussions between Vlasiev and the Imperial advisors dealt primarily with logistical matters. They deliberated at length about which routes to use, how to acquire the appropriate documents, and where to spend the winter. The situation was made more complicated by the necessity of avoiding areas affected by the plague. In addition, the *otpusk*, or official document of "release" from the Emperor's lands, became a subject of considerable dispute. Rudolf (or else his advisors) wanted to send it to Maximilian's residence or to the Muscovites' winter quarters in one of the German cities. However, Vlasiev insisted that to do so would be a violation of protocol, according to which an emissary received his document of release upon leaving the host monarch's court. At one point, he protested rather strongly, even implying that the "brotherly love" so often mentioned in Russo-Imperial affairs was not necessarily immutable:

Everything is being done in violation of precedent. It [would be] appropriate for you, the [Emperor's] advisors [*blizhnie lyudi*], to give warning of this and speak [to the Emperor], in order that His Majesty the Emperor would graciously release me to His Majesty the Tsar, and render the document of release according to previous custom, in order that there would not be any lack of love between our Great Sovereigns.<sup>34</sup>

Another altercation took place over a matter of utmost importance to all Muscovite

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<sup>32</sup> This was a man named Indrik Kramer, who had arrived at the court of Ivan IV claiming to be an Imperial representative. In Vlasiev's words, "he came by swindling, by deceit." The Tsar had treated him as a legitimate emissary, even giving him documents for Emperor Maximilian II. The fraud was not discovered until later. Some years afterward, a different Kramer came to Moscow. The Muscovite civil servants (*prikaznie lyudi*) at first believed him to be the deceiver, but they released him after learning he was not. It is unclear why Chancellor Meker questioned Vlasiev about this affair. *PDS*, vol. 2, 710. For a later example of the same kind of deception, see Kaminski, 201-228.

<sup>33</sup> This occurred on October 15. The chancellor stated simply that he had been sent to inquire how the embassy was doing. Vlasiev responded: "May God grant that our Great Sovereign, Tsar and Grand Prince Boris Fyodorovich, Autocrat of all Russia, and his brother, the Great Sovereign Emperor Rudolf, be healthy for many years. And [may He grant] health to us, their slaves [*kholopy*], in order that they, our Great Sovereigns, would be healthy and joyous and happy in [ruling over] their States!" *PDS*, vol. 2, 711.

<sup>34</sup> *PDS*, vol. 2, 711-714, 721-729. The quote is from column 724.

diplomats: the Tsar's title.<sup>35</sup> On October 20, Vlasiev received a written answer from the Emperor, which he gave to the interpreter Yakov Zaborovsky to read. Zaborovsky noted that "the Tsar's name was not written with the full denomination of the Tsar: 'Autocrat' and the full title were not written."<sup>36</sup> This omission reflects the fact that "Autocrat" was a recent addition to the Tsar's title and had not been required before the accession of Boris Godunov in 1598.<sup>37</sup> Upon Vlasiev's insistence, the mistake was corrected.<sup>38</sup>

For the most part, though, relations between the Muscovite embassy and the Imperial counsellors were conducted with great civility. On October 29, Rumpf and Trautson, who had not put in an appearance for more than three weeks, visited Vlasiev because they had heard he was unwell. The Muscovite envoy gave them essentially the same reply he had given Meker on an earlier occasion:

May the Lord grant that our Great Sovereign, Tsar and Grand Prince Boris Fyodorovich, Autocrat of all Russia, and his most dear and beloved brother, the Great Sovereign Emperor Rudolf, be healthy for many years. And [may He grant] health to us, their slaves, in order that they, our Great Sovereigns, would be healthy and joyous and happy in [ruling over] their States!<sup>39</sup>

Rumpf and Trautson spoke with Vlasiev once more, on November 23. They revealed that the Emperor was planning to send him to Maximilian immediately, as requested. In fact, they revealed, Rudolf needed to turn his attention to other important matters. The Empire was entirely unprepared for the next year's military campaign in

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<sup>35</sup> According to the *Istoriya diplomatii*: "All relations with foreign powers were constructed on the principle of safeguarding the sovereign's "honor." This "honor" manifested itself in the first place in the "denomination," i.e, the title [of the Tsar].... The question of the title always occupied an important place. The insistence of Russian diplomats with regard to this question irritated foreigners. However, West European diplomats manifested no less stubbornness with regard to questions of title. They understood perfectly well that behind the abstract arguments were hiding absolutely practical considerations, insofar as the title expressed specific rights, and every belittling in the title indirectly signified a rejection of these rights." V. A. Zorin, et al., eds., *Istoriya diplomatii*, 2nd ed. (Moscow: GIPL, 1959), vol. 1, 304-305.

<sup>36</sup> PDS, vol. 2, 715.

<sup>37</sup> See *supra*, 43.

<sup>38</sup> PDS, vol. 2, 715-716.

<sup>39</sup> PDS, vol. 2, 716. See *supra*, 52 n. 33.

Hungary; as a result of the plague, no mercenaries had been hired nor levies raised. The councillors said that Rudolf was planning to leave Pilsen and travel through all the healthy areas of the Empire, seeking to gather troops for the war against the Turks.<sup>40</sup>

Vlasiev left Pilsen exactly one week later. On November 29, he wrote to the Tsar concerning his stays in Lübeck and in Pilsen. The following day, the Muscovite embassy departed for Mariendol, where the Archduke Maximilian had his court. It arrived on December 10.<sup>41</sup>

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It is thus evident that the accession of Boris Godunov in 1598 did not bring about major changes in Muscovite policy toward the Empire. For instance, Moscow continued to express support for the Emperor in his war against the Turks, but without taking any military action on his behalf. It also continued to encourage animosity toward Poland-Lithuania, even proposing a military alliance for the ostensible purpose of "avenging the insults" suffered by Archduke Maximilian a decade earlier.

This continuity is not surprising, for Boris had been in charge of Muscovite foreign relations ever since 1588-89.<sup>42</sup> Hence, the main purposes of diplomatic relations with the Empire remained the same after his accession: to enhance the Tsar's legitimacy and prestige, to find a solution to the "Turkish question," and to drive a wedge between the Empire and Poland-Lithuania.<sup>43</sup> With regard to the first of these purposes, Vlasiev's embassy of 1599 succeeded in gaining official recognition for Boris, not only as Tsar and Grand Prince, but also as Autocrat. This was useful in furthering his legitimacy in the absence of genealogical prerogative.<sup>44</sup> With respect to the second, the papers of

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<sup>40</sup> *PDS*, vol. 2, 721-722.

<sup>41</sup> *PDS*, vol. 2, 731, 735.

<sup>42</sup> See *supra*, 4.

<sup>43</sup> See *supra*, 9, 24-26.

<sup>44</sup> See *supra*, 43.

Vlasiev's embassy show that by 1599 it had proven impossible to form a great anti-Turkish league, and that the Emperor was hoping to make peace with the Sultan.<sup>45</sup> As for the third, the Muscovite envoy censured the Poles and Lithuanians at every opportunity, blaming them for preventing Moscow from assisting the Emperor in his war against the Turks. He further denounced their "rudenesses" to the Archduke Maximilian, whose aspirations had proven conducive to conflict between the Empire and Poland-Lithuania. Moscow thus had an interest in maintaining good relations with Maximilian and in keeping his aspirations alive; and it was to the Archduke's residence that Vlasiev travelled after receiving his release from the Imperial court at Pilsen.

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<sup>45</sup> Vlasiev did not object to the proposition of peace, as Boris Godunov had in 1591, but this fact may indicate only that he had not been instructed on this score. Such cannot be confirmed, however, because the text of Vlasiev's *nakaz*, or "order," has not survived.



## 4. The Muscovite Embassy of 1599 at the Court of Archduke Maximilian of Austria

Archduke Maximilian of Austria, as mentioned in Chapter One, had had previous dealings with Boris Godunov. His aspirations to the throne of Poland-Lithuania had entered into the affairs of almost every Imperial embassy to Muscovy after 1587. In 1588, the Muscovite government had sent letters of support concerning this "Polish affair," and thereafter it regularly corresponded with Maximilian and received his representatives in Moscow.<sup>1</sup>

By 1599, Habsburg hopes of attaining the Polish throne had become dormant. However, Maximilian displayed an interest in maintaining communication with the Tsar. Upon learning of Vlasiev's arrival in Prague, he wrote to Emperor Rudolf, asking that the Muscovites be sent to him in Mariendol. He later wrote directly to Vlasiev, expressing his anticipation of the embassy's visit.<sup>2</sup>

When Vlasiev did arrive in Mariendol, he was greeted respectfully by various noblemen. The next day, he received a formal invitation to dine with Maximilian. The official who brought the invitation stated:

When ambassadors or envoys of His Majesty the Emperor are at [the court of] your Great Sovereign, Tsar and Grand Prince Boris Fyodorovich, Autocrat of all Russia, they are [brought] to the table of His Majesty the Tsar, according to his Royal favor. Yet at [the court of] the Roman Emperors, this custom is not followed. For years past, ambassadors and envoys do not eat with them. But Archduke Maximilian, the brother of His Majesty the Emperor, wants to act according to the custom of your Great Sovereign, His Majesty the Tsar. He wants to invite you to eat with him, and he ordered [me] to ask you: Is it possible for you to dine at his [table]?<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See *PDS*, vol. 1, 1049-1069; *supra*, 12-15.

<sup>2</sup> *PDS*, vol. 2, 712, 717-718. Maximilian's letter to Vlasiev was dated November 6 (Gregorian), which would have been October 27 according to the Julian calendar then in use in Muscovy. It reached Vlasiev in Pilsen on October 31.

<sup>3</sup> *PDS*, vol. 2, 737.

Vlasiev accepted this ingratiating invitation and took his company to the Archduke's palace on December 12. When they arrived, Maximilian removed his hat as a sign of respect for the Tsar. He wanted to take Vlasiev by the hand, but the latter gave him to know that this would be inappropriate before the Tsar's name had been pronounced and proper obeisance rendered. Consequently, the envoy himself bowed and delivered a speech on behalf of Tsar Boris and Tsarevich Fyodor. He also handed over their documents and presents. In response, Maximilian inquired about the health of the Tsar and Tsarevich, asserted his love and affection for them, and wished them long lives and happy reigns. He then shook hands with each of the members of the Russian embassy.<sup>4</sup>

In his journal, Vlasiev took note of the scrupulous care which Maximilian took to pay honor to the Tsar:

And while the Envoy and Secretary-Councillor Afanasy Vlasiev executed a bow... and spoke the speech and conferred the documents, and displayed the presents, Maximilian stood the whole [time], withdrawing three steps from his chair. And when [these actions] were finished, he bowed, having removed [his] hat.<sup>5</sup>

Vlasiev also described Maximilian's clothing, as well as the setting and appearance of the dining hall, and mentioned some of the leading noblemen in attendance. He recorded that there was much music and ceremony, but that no dinner was given. Instead, the Russians were invited to dine with Maximilian on December 13.

At the banquet which took place on that date, Vlasiev sat at the head table with Maximilian and certain leading counts. The Archduke proposed two toasts: one to Tsar Boris and Emperor Rudolf, which he drank standing; and the other to Tsarevich Fyodor, which he drank sitting down. After this, Vlasiev drank to Archduke Maximilian.<sup>6</sup>

As the evening progressed, singers and musicians entertained the diners. At some point, Maximilian inquired about the amusements and wild animals of the Tsar's

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<sup>4</sup> *PDS*, vol. 2, 738-740.

<sup>5</sup> *PDS*, vol. 2, 740-741.

<sup>6</sup> *PDS*, vol. 2, 741-744.

kingdom. Unfortunately, Vlasiev's answer, and the rest of his account of the embassy's stay at Maximilian's court, was written on one of several sheets from his official report (*stateiny spisok*) that have not survived. The text resumes in the middle of an undated speech of unknown authorship.

The extract from this speech begins with a reference to Godunov's desire to go to war against the Crimean Tatars. The speaker mentions that the Emperor did not want the Tsar to lead the campaign personally, but to leave command in the field to his generals. He also reiterated the point that the Sultan relied heavily on the Tatars, and hence it would be highly beneficial to restrain them from attacking Hungary. In that case, "it will be[come] possible for His Majesty the Emperor to stand against the Turk." The speaker also affirmed that the long war with Turkey had exhausted the entire Holy Roman Empire, which was why Rudolf now sought peace and did not ask for greater military assistance from the Tsar.

Concerning Maximilian's adventures in Poland, it was stated: "His Illustrious Highness [*Ego Presvetleishestvo*] suffered great misdeeds, rudeness, and losses at the hands of the Poles; and by these [actions] the Poles incensed all of Christendom." However, the speaker added that Maximilian had fallen into such a predicament without the knowledge or support of Emperor Rudolf. Moreover, now that Poland was friendly with the Empire's enemy, the Turkish Sultan, one could only pray that God Himself would take revenge on them for all this.<sup>7</sup>

On the other hand, the speaker claimed that King Sigismund personally had "shown himself dutiful and loving to[ward] the Emperor." He continued:

The king is not at all to blame; one should not reproach him. One should reproach the Poles who are great foes of the Austrian house: the great chancellor of Poland [Jan Zamoyski] and his friends. These do not conceive and do not want advantages for all Christendom, [but] conceive only [its] ruin. They little want the good of their own Kingship.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> PDS, vol. 2, 744-747.

<sup>8</sup> PDS, vol. 2, 747.

King Sigismund's alleged "desire for good" (*dobrokhoten'e*) was another reason Emperor Rudolf did not want to take revenge on Poland at the present time. Maximilian, by contrast, was still eager to do so. The speech closed with an invitation to the Tsar to continue supporting the Archduke's aspirations.<sup>9</sup>

This conclusion would seem to indicate that the speech was delivered by one of Maximilian's representatives. However, it has been used in works of history as evidence of the Emperor's point of view. Sergei M. Soloviev includes part of it in a quotation which is supposed to represent the response of the Imperial councillors to Vlasiev. He combines selections from several different meetings in Pilsen with the passage about King Sigismund's inculpability, concluding that "with these words the Austrian notables [*vel'mozhi*] gave the ambassador to understand clearly about the close alliance of the Emperor with King Sigismund."<sup>10</sup>

Natalia A. Kazakova, whose *Zapadnaya Evropa v russkoi pis'mennosti XV-XVI vekov* (*Western Europe in Russian Writings of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*) contains two paragraphs on Vlasiev's embassy, also treats the unidentified speech as if it originated in the Emperor's council. She quotes from it to show that "Rudolf II... gave him [Vlasiev] to know clearly that he did not support the adventurous plans of his brother [Maximilian]." As additional support for the idea of a breach between Rudolf and Maximilian, she hints that the Imperial court's professed ignorance of the whereabouts of Maximilian was a ploy to keep the Muscovites from meeting him.<sup>11</sup>

These assertions of Soloviev and Kazakova are unjustified, for they are based on a fragment of uncertain provenance. It is far from clear that the speech in question was

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<sup>9</sup> *PDS*, vol. 2, 747-748.

<sup>10</sup> S. M. Solov'ev, *Istoriya Rossii s drevneishikh vremen* (Moscow: ISEL, 1963), bk. 4, vol. 8, 369. See *infra*, 84-85.

<sup>11</sup> N. A. Kazakova, *Zapadnaya Evropa v russkoi pis'mennosti XV-XVI vekov* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1980), 177. See *supra*, 51.

delivered at the Emperor's court by his ministers. In fact, that hypothesis seems rather unlikely. In the first place, the fragment is located in Vlasiev's journal after his account of the embassy's departure from the Emperor's court and its arrival at Maximilian's residence. His transcriptions of the speeches of the Imperial ministers occur dozens of pages earlier.<sup>12</sup> In the second place, it is unlikely that Rudolf would have disclosed existence of disagreements within the Habsburg family to a Muscovite envoy. Yet the author of the unidentified speech did just that, stating that Maximilian wanted to take revenge against the Poles even though his brother, the Emperor, did not. He followed this revelation with a request that Muscovy assist the Archduke. That would be a strange ending for a speech delivered on behalf of the Emperor.

However, there are also problems with attributing the speech to Maximilian's camp. All the Archdukes — Ernst, Matthias, Maximilian, and Albrecht — had to render due homage to their brother Rudolf, for he was both the Emperor and the head of their family. For instance: Maximilian had become regent of Tyrol in 1597 and strongly objected to Rudolf's attempts to take over control of that territory; nevertheless, in 1600 he would write: "I... humbly and completely bow myself before Your Majesty's gracious and sovereign will, to deal with me as may be pleasing."<sup>13</sup> Thus, to ask the Muscovites to support a project which the Emperor had vetoed would place Maximilian in danger of insubordination.<sup>14</sup> It might also run counter to his own interests, for Moscow would be wary of offending the Emperor by offering such support.<sup>15</sup>

Of what, then, is the fragment evidence? It sometimes reveals the position of the Emperor and sometimes that of Maximilian. It further posits a contradiction between the two. One possibility, then, is that the Habsburgs spoke with a forked tongue to the

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<sup>12</sup> See *PDS*, vol. 2, 699ff; *supra*, 48-54.

<sup>13</sup> R. J. W. Evans, *Rudolf II and His World: A Study in Intellectual History, 1576-1612* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973), 59, 62.

<sup>14</sup> It is not inconceivable that he would do so anyway; after all, in December of 1589 he had informed the Tsar that he had no intention of abiding by the conditions of Rudolf's peace treaty with Poland-Lithuania. Yet in that case it later transpired that Rudolf was not actually opposed to Maximilian's doings, regardless of the treaty. See *supra*, 14.

<sup>15</sup> Moscow was already rather leery of providing financial support. See *supra*, 14-15.

Muscovite envoy. The Archduke, eager to punish the Poles for their opposition to his pretensions, may have contradicted official Imperial policy in private talks with Vlasiev.

However, one may also speculate that the speech was delivered by a third party, perhaps in one of the places through which the Muscovite embassy travelled after visiting Maximilian. There is some circumstantial evidence to support this notion: the fragment is directly followed in Vlasiev's journal by a Russian translation of a *Flugschrift* or "news pamphlet" (*vestovaya tetrad'*) published in Nürnberg.<sup>16</sup> In addition, the reference to "the Austrian house" sounds like the words of an outsider; neither Rudolf nor Maximilian referred to themselves in this manner. However, these are admittedly insufficient grounds on which to base any conclusion about the provenance of the unidentified speech.

What is certain is that the fragment should not be used as evidence of the Imperial response to Vlasiev, for there is no proof that that is what it represents. This conclusion seriously undermines the inferences drawn by Soloviev and Kazakova. If the Imperial ministers really "gave the ambassador to understand clearly about the close alliance of the Emperor with [the Polish-Lithuanian] King Sigismund," as Soloviev claims, they did so in a speech which also denounced the Poles and Lithuanians for their friendship with the Sultan, asked God to punish them for this and for their dishonoring of Maximilian, and requested that Muscovy abet the Archduke in his disobedience to the Emperor. If, as Kazakova asserts, the Emperor "gave Vlasiev to know clearly that he did not support the adventurous plans of his brother," he did so in a speech which also asked the Muscovite government to support those very plans. The contradictions inherent in these statements render Soloviev's and Kazakova's conclusions untenable.

The historian must assert only what is justified by the evidence, and no more. Therefore, one may say that Vlasiev's report offers some indication of a disagreement between Emperor Rudolf and Archduke Maximilian, but it is not known where this

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<sup>16</sup> See *PDS*, vol. 2, 748.

information originated. It is unlikely that there was an actual rupture which prompted the Imperial councillors to try to keep Vlasiev from seeing the Archduke, as Kazakova suggests. Maximilian's own letter indicates that he had been away from Mariendol, so it may very well be that the Emperor's advisors did not know exactly where he was.<sup>17</sup>

Most of the remainder of Vlasiev's account of his embassy is missing. The translation of the Nürnberg news pamphlet is also incomplete, but one surviving section provides some interesting information about the negotiations between Emperor Rudolf and the Turks. It seems that peace could not be concluded because both sides were seeking far more than was realistic. The Turks had demanded Raab (Győr), Gran (Esztergom), and all the surrounding cities and regions. They also required that the Empire pay the arrears of annual tribute not paid during the war. In return, they were willing to give up the rather insignificant city of Arlav. The Emperor's representatives, for their part, had asked for the return of "the whole Kingdom of Hungary and Croatia." Upon hearing this, the Turkish delegates had become so angry that they immediately left and proceeded to besiege a small city in the vicinity of Gran.<sup>18</sup>

There are only two other brief documents in *PDS* that relate to Vlasiev's embassy. In December of 1599, Maximilian wrote letters to Tsar Boris and Tsarevich Fyodor, informing them that the Russian embassy had arrived safely in Mariendol and congratulating them on their family's accession to the throne. As usual, he included many expressions of love, friendship, and good will. To Boris, for instance, he wished "bodily health for many years, a happy reign, and a great hand [to] overcome against all foes and opponents."<sup>19</sup> This illustrates that the House of Habsburg had recognized Boris Godunov as the legitimate successor to Tsar and Grand Prince Fyodor Ivanovich, Autocrat of all Russia.

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<sup>17</sup> *PDS*, vol. 2, 718.

<sup>18</sup> *PDS*, vol. 2, 750-751.

<sup>19</sup> *PDS*, vol. 2, 653-656.

## Conclusion

In Chapter One, it was suggested that the Muscovite state of the late sixteenth century pursued three main objectives in its dealings with the Habsburgs: to enhance the Tsar's legitimacy and prestige, to find a solution to the "Turkish question," and to drive a wedge between the Empire and Poland-Lithuania. A close study of the embassy of 1599 bears out this conclusion and suggests a number of additional points that have been overlooked in the historical literature.

With regard to the first objective, as we have seen, the embassy of 1599 secured recognition for Boris Godunov as "Autocrat" (*Samoderzhets*), which was an important sign of his legitimacy in the absence of genealogical prerogative.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, N. N. Bantysh-Kamensky notes that the Emperor first referred to the Tsar as *Presvetleishy* (Most Illustrious) in a letter of May 23, 1600.<sup>2</sup> Since this letter — which unfortunately has not survived — was written in response to Vlasiev's embassy of 1599, Bantysh-Kamensky's observation may be taken as additional evidence of that embassy's success in promoting the Tsar's legitimacy and prestige at the leading European court.

With regard to the second objective, the documents of the embassy of 1599 show that the Muscovite government continued to express complete support for the Emperor in his war against the Turks. However, they also suggest that the government's real position was more complicated. Moscow was not simply pro-Habsburg and anti-Turkish; else why was its envoy so concerned to emphasize the fact that the subject population of the Balkans was primarily of the Orthodox confession? This controversial subject could have been avoided in keeping with ordinary diplomatic practice; in 1593, for example, Imperial delegates had abandoned their usual rhetoric about the need to

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<sup>1</sup> See *supra*, 43, 53-54.

<sup>2</sup> N. N. Bantysh-Kamensky, *Obzor vneshnykh snoshenii Rossii (po 1800 god)*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Lissner & Roman, 1894), 16.



save Christendom when discussing the possibility of an anti-Turkish alliance with representatives of the Persian Shah, who was not Christian.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, the Muscovite government could have directed its ambassadors and envoys to speak only of the "Christian deliverance" and not of the "Orthodox liberation" when at the court of the Catholic Habsburgs. Therefore, its decision to take the opposite path is significant, and suggests a desire to communicate that its support of the Habsburgs was not entirely unconditional. The Orthodox peoples could not be "liberated" from Muslim rule by being placed under Catholic rule. Perhaps, then, Moscow did not want the Habsburgs to advance *too* far against the Turks.

This conclusion tends to support another hypothesis of Chapter One; namely, that the Long War between the Habsburgs and the Turks — which represented a failure of the attempt to "liberate" South-Eastern Europe — actually seemed advantageous from the point of view of Moscow. The war attracted large numbers of Crimean Tatars to Hungary and Croatia, thus removing one threat to Muscovite security;<sup>4</sup> and it weakened both the Turkish and Habsburg Empires without leading to any significant territorial changes unpleasant to Moscow. Thus, the Muscovite idea of a solution to the Turkish question must have differed significantly from the Habsburg one, despite the frequent attestations of mutual interest.

The third objective of Muscovite relations with the Empire in the late sixteenth century was to prevent an alliance between the Habsburgs and Poland-Lithuania. This is quite apparent from Vlasiev's many denunciations of the Poles, which were phrased in such a way as to demonstrate the latter's hostility toward the Empire. It was alleged that the *Rzeczpospolita* had refused to allow Muscovite troops to cross its territory because it did not want the Empire to receive help in fighting the Turks; that it had refused passage to Muscovite envoys for the same reason; that it sent gifts to and pursued close

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<sup>3</sup> *PDS*, vol. 1, 1286-1294. See *supra*, 18-19.

<sup>4</sup> See *supra*, 25; *infra*, 72 & n. 4.

relations with the Turks, enemies of the Habsburgs; and that it had "dishonored" the Archduke Maximilian a decade earlier. Ostensibly as a result of these "transgressions," Moscow declared its "willingness" to fight with the Emperor against Poland-Lithuania.<sup>5</sup>

In spite of these verbal manoeuvrings, Moscow would fail in its attempt to drive a diplomatic wedge between the Empire and Poland-Lithuania. The Poles and Habsburgs ended up on the same side in the Thirty Years War (1618-1648), while Moscow supported the rebellious Czechs.<sup>6</sup> However, the friendly relations between Muscovy and the Habsburgs in the late sixteenth century set a precedent for later cooperation between the two powers. By the end of the following century, they would again find themselves working together against Ottoman Turkey and Poland-Lithuania.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, the relations between Muscovy and the Empire during the time of Boris Godunov must be judged at least a moderate success. This finding contradicts the conclusions of the few historians who had previously considered Russo-Imperial relations of the late sixteenth century. As mentioned above, Sergei Platonov implies that these relations did not have any significant consequences.<sup>8</sup> Sergei Soloviev explicitly puts forth the same interpretation, stating: "The relations of Moscow with Austria could not lead to anything."<sup>9</sup> Hence, the experience of the embassy of 1599 sheds new light on a subject that has received only cursory attention in historiography.

The account of S. M. Soloviev requires the greatest amount of revision. Soloviev's conclusions are highly questionable, for he tends to accept masks of diplomatic rhetoric without penetrating the real policy considerations behind them. Concerning Vlasiev's address to the Imperial councillors, Soloviev writes:

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<sup>5</sup> See *supra*, 45-47; *infra*, 75-77.

<sup>6</sup> See O. A. Vainshtein, *Rossiya i Tridtsatiletnyaya voyna 1618-1648 gg.: ocherki iz istorii vneshnei politiki Moskovskogo gosudarstva v pervoi polovine XVII v.* (Leningrad: OGIZ, 1947), 43.

<sup>7</sup> See Andrzej Sulima Kaminski, *Republic vs. Autocracy: Poland-Lithuania and Russia, 1686-1697* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 13.

<sup>8</sup> See *supra*, 23-24.

<sup>9</sup> S. M. Soloviev, *Istoriya Rossii s drevneishikh vremen*, bk. 4, vol. 8 (Moscow: ISEL, 1963), 369; *supra*, 5; *infra*, 85.

This speech, cunning in the manner of that time [*khitraya po togdashnemu*], having begun with an impossible promise, that Boris himself would go to Crimea, and having ended with a call to war with Poland, shows what pitiful attempts [*zhalkie popytki*] the Muscovite government made in consequence of [its] utter ignorance of the relations between Western states. Godunov hoped through unsubstantiated accusations to induce Emperor Rudolf to a rupture with Poland!<sup>10</sup>

This passage by Soloviev contains several demonstrable errors. In the first place, Tsar Boris did not *promise* to march personally against the Crimean Tatars. He did profess a great *desire* to do so, but this profession was immediately followed by a statement explaining why his desire could not be fulfilled.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the Muscovite envoy did not expect the Imperial councillors to believe that Boris actually intended to lead an army to Crimea; rather, this statement was simply a rhetorical device for conveying the Tsar's professed desire to help the Emperor in his war against the Turks. This fact was understood without difficulty by the Imperial councillors, who gave the expected response; namely, that Rudolf earnestly hoped "his most dear and beloved brother," the Tsar, would not risk his own life in fighting the Tatars. Vlasiev continued the rhetorical exchange by remarking that "His Majesty the Tsar relies on God's will in everything" and therefore could not promise to refrain from taking such a personal risk.<sup>12</sup> Yet to infer from this discourse that Boris sincerely intended to march into war against the Tatars is unwarranted. Both sides understood the diplomatic convention which allowed — indeed required — courteous statements which were, strictly speaking, untrue.

In the second place, the Muscovite invitation to war against Poland-Lithuania was simply a continuation of earlier diplomatic relations with the Empire. Throughout the reign of Tsar Fyodor, Imperial diplomats had repeatedly requested financial support for military ventures against the *Rzeczpospolita*.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, in 1599 the Muscovite

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<sup>10</sup> Soloviev, bk. 4, vol. 8, 369; *infra*, 84.

<sup>11</sup> See *supra*, 45; *infra*, 73-75.

<sup>12</sup> See *supra*, 49.

<sup>13</sup> See *supra*, 13-15.

proposal of a military alliance against that power was phrased as a willingness to help the House of Habsburg achieve its previously stated goals: to place Maximilian on the throne of Poland-Lithuania and to avenge the insults he had suffered in 1587-1589. Contrary to what Soloviev claims, then, this was not a "pitiful attempt... made in consequence of utter ignorance," but rather a reasonable attempt to prevent a rapprochement between Poland and the Empire — through reference to the anti-Polish positions expressed by Imperial diplomats themselves.

In the third place, it is unclear what Soloviev means by "unsubstantiated accusations." The main accusations leveled against the Poles and Lithuanians were that they had dishonored Maximilian a decade earlier, that they currently refused to allow Muscovite soldiers and diplomats to cross their lands, and that they had diplomatic relations with the "enemy of Christendom."<sup>14</sup> The first of these was simply a repetition of the Imperial version of events, as communicated to Moscow through various ambassadors and envoys. The second and third were not unsubstantiated accusations, as Soloviev would have us believe, but known facts that would not have been denied by the Poles and Lithuanians themselves.

Thus, it is hardly justifiable to characterize the Muscovite embassy of 1599 as a "pitiful attempt made in consequence of utter ignorance of the relations between Western states." The Muscovite government knew that Rudolf wanted to have good relations with Poland-Lithuania, but it hoped to discourage such an eventuality by means of a number of rhetorical devices that were easily understood by the Imperial councillors. Hence, it is also inappropriate to describe Muscovite diplomacy as especially "cunning" or "tricky." In this case, however, the fault is not Soloviev's alone; the *Istoriya diplomatii* (*History of Diplomacy*) also speaks of the alleged craftiness and duplicity of Muscovite diplomats. After explaining that it was common for them to "pass off lies as truth," the *Istoriya diplomatii* continues as follows:

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<sup>14</sup> See *supra*, 45-47; *infra*, 75-77.

Russian diplomats of this time thought nothing of alluding to nonexistent documents or declaring [for example] that the Emperors Honorius and Arcadius<sup>15</sup> had sent a crown to the first Muscovite [Grand] Prince Vladimir. When it was pointed out to them that these Emperors had lived six hundred years before Vladimir, they maintained, without blinking, that there had been another Honorius and Arcadius, contemporaries of Vladimir. The obstinacy and sharpness [*rezkost'*] to which Russian ambassadors sometimes resorted created an unfavorable impression among foreign diplomats, who in essence utilized the same methods, but in a more refined form.<sup>16</sup>

In considering whether Muscovite diplomats were more disingenuous than their Western counterparts, it is important to recognize that deception was a standard feature of European diplomacy of the time. Garrett Mattingly characterizes the diplomats of the early modern period as "men sent to lie abroad," representatives who often pursued their nations' goals through trickery.<sup>17</sup> It seems, then, that the craftiness of Muscovite diplomats was less exceptional than existing historiography suggests. It may even be that the Muscovites were *less* artful than their European counterparts; for they apparently took fewer precautions to ensure that their lies remained undetected.<sup>18</sup>

The documents from the embassy of 1599 suggest a few other modifications to related historiography. First, Marc Szeftel's otherwise excellent article on the historical development of the sovereign's title does not mention that use of the term "Autocrat" was irregular even in foreign relations until the accession of Boris Godunov in 1598. The discovery of this fact tends to strengthen his and Ostrogorsky's thesis that Godunov placed special emphasis on the term in order to enhance his legitimacy, and it lends

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<sup>15</sup> The younger son of Theodosius the Great, Honorius reigned over the Western Roman Empire from 394 to 423. His elder brother Arcadius reigned over the Eastern Empire from 395 to 408.

<sup>16</sup> V. A. Zorin, et al., eds., *Istoriya diplomatii*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (Moscow: GIPL, 1959), 318. See the original account of this incident in *The Moscovia of Antonio Possevino, S.J.*, trans. Hugh F. Graham (Pittsburgh: University Center for International Studies, 1977), 129.

<sup>17</sup> Garrett Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1955), 201-206.

<sup>18</sup> The embassy of 1599 included two examples of deception on the part of Vlasiev. In Hamburg, the Muscovite envoy stated that Godunov had good relations with "all the Great Sovereigns," including the Turkish Sultan. However, in Pilsen he gave the opposite impression and harshly castigated the Poles for their dealings with the Turks. In Lübeck, he declared untruthfully that the Tsar did not have diplomatic relations with Duke Charles of Sweden. See *PDS*, vol. 2, 664, 676; *supra*, 17, 33, 39 & n. 64, 46; *infra*, 72-76.

considerable importance to the embassy of 1599, the first to obtain Imperial recognition for Godunov as "Autocrat."<sup>19</sup>

Second, the documents of Vlasiev's embassy reveal that Godunov bestowed the title of *gost'* (great merchant) on several foreigners shortly after his accession.<sup>20</sup> This is not mentioned in the most complete book on the subject, Paul Bushkovitch's *The Merchants of Moscow, 1580-1650*.<sup>21</sup> The topic therefore deserves further study.

Third, Philip Longworth mentions that Tsar Alexis (r. 1645-1676) took the unusual step of promoting commoners to high Council ranks in order to gain personal control over the apparatus of government.<sup>22</sup> A precedent for this may be found in the 1605 promotion of Afanasy Vlasiev, the envoy of 1599, to the rank of *dumny dvoryanin* (Gentleman-Councillor).<sup>23</sup> This action was taken by False Dimitry I, who likely resorted to such measures for reasons not unlike those of Alexis: as an outsider supported by Poland-Lithuania, he needed the Muscovite high officials to be dependent on him if he was to establish authority over the machinery of state.

Thus, a study of the embassy of 1599 has implications beyond the field of diplomatic history. In addition to revising statements in existing historiography (as outlined above), it suggests that the *Smutnoe vremya*, or Time of Troubles, did not begin until sometime after the turn of the century. Although Kliuchevsky, Platonov, Riasanovsky, and others point to a "dynastic crisis" which began in 1598, the records of Vlasiev's embassy imply that there was no such crisis. The Holy Roman Emperor recognized Boris Godunov as Tsar, Grand Prince, and Autocrat of all Russia in 1599, and the following year he added the title "Most Illustrious" in his correspondence with the Tsar. Had there been a dynastic crisis beginning in 1598, Godunov's legitimacy

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<sup>19</sup> See *supra*, 43 & n. 78, 53-54, 63.

<sup>20</sup> See *supra*, 36; *infra*, 82. On the title *gost'*, see *supra*, 34 n. 43.

<sup>21</sup> Paul Bushkovitch, *The Merchants of Moscow, 1580-1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

<sup>22</sup> Philip Longworth, *Alexis: Tsar of all the Russias* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1984), 189-190.

<sup>23</sup> See *infra*, 87 & n. 7.

would have been in doubt, and it would have been more difficult to obtain recognition from the Emperor. Fifteen years later, in fact, Emperor Matthias would decline to recognize Mikhail Romanov, whose ascension had to be considered doubtful in light of the frequent uprisings and government takeovers of the *Smutnoe vremya*.<sup>24</sup>

Tsar Mikhail was recognized by the Emperor in 1616, and his descendents remained on the throne until the February Revolution of 1917. Perhaps, then, it is more appropriate to begin the Time of Troubles in 1601 — the first of three consecutive years of famine — and end it in 1616 — when the Romanov dynasty was officially recognized at the leading court of Europe. At any rate, such periodizations should be based on evidence gleaned from foreign relations as well as from the domestic situation.

That is one reason for urging further study of Muscovite relations with the Empire in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Another is the fact that Boris Godunov showed himself something of a "Westernizer" during his reign. In 1600, for instance, he dispatched Ivan Kramer to recruit European doctors and professors in Lübeck and other German cities, and in 1601 he sent eighteen young boyars to study in England, France, and Germany.<sup>25</sup> This may be considered one of the precedents for the reforms of Peter the Great a century later, and therefore further study of Godunov's relations with the Habsburgs — and the West as a whole — may yield results of consequence for all of modern Russian history.

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<sup>24</sup> See *supra*, 9.

<sup>25</sup> Bantysh-Kamensky, vol. 2 (1896), 190-191; vol. 4 (1902), 266; N. M. Karamzin, *Istoriya Gosudarstva Rossiiskago*, 5th ed., bk. 3, vol. 11 (St. Petersburg: E. Prats, 1843), 52-53.

## Appendix A: Afanasy Vlasiev's speech to the Imperial councilmen (1599)

Afanasy Ivanov Vlasiev, the Tsar's envoy to Emperor Rudolf II, delivered the following speech in Pilsen between September 29 and October 5, 1599.<sup>1</sup> His statements provide evidence of Muscovite rhetorical methods, and in particular the means by which the Foreign Office attempted to counter Polish claims that Muscovy was not really part of Christendom.<sup>2</sup> The Russian text may be found in *PDS*, vol. 2, col. 692-698.

S. M. Soloviev, whose account of Vlasiev's embassy comprises Appendix C, quotes selectively from this speech. For the purposes of comparison, the words and phrases he quotes will appear below in **bold face**.

**"It is known to His Majesty the Emperor and to you, his councillors, that because of the sin of all Christendom and the disagreement and disunity of the Christian States, God allowed the infidel [*besermen*] into Christendom. And the Turkish Sultan took possession of a great Christian State, the Byzantine Empire [*Grecheskoe Tsarstvo*], whence is the beginning and root of the true Orthodox Christian faith. Moreover, he took possession of many other lands, which belonged to the Byzantine Empire — [the lands of] the Bulgarians, Moldavians, and Wallachians, and Serbians, and Bosnians, and many other Christian States. Also, Islamic law was laid down in the city of Korsun,<sup>3</sup> which from ancient times had been of the Orthodox Christian faith, and that [city] is now [the capital of] the Crimean State.**

**"And those Muslim Sovereigns [the Turkish Sultan and the Crimean Khan], being in**

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<sup>1</sup> Due to gaps in the envoy's official report, the exact date of this speech cannot be determined. See *supra*, 48 n. 18.

<sup>2</sup> See *supra*, 46 & n. 13.

<sup>3</sup> A town of Eastern Ukraine located approximately 50 miles south of Pereiaslav.



union, stand as one against the Christian Sovereigns. And their lands wage war, and they take cities, and take Christendom captive. They take people into captivity and kill [them], and they incessantly shed Christian blood. [In this manner] they aggrandize their own name[s], and expand and enlarge their own States.

"But the Christian Sovereigns, because of the sins of all Christians, are not in agreement, nor in loving [relations], nor in union among themselves. They do not stand as one against the infidel. Because of this, oppression and destruction proceed from the infidel Sovereigns to Christendom, and profanity to the Christian faith.

"And now the foe of all Christendom and the enemy of the Cross of Christ, the Turkish Sultan, marches for war with his many hosts. And he sends people [i.e., soldiers and raiders] into the land of your Sovereign, His Majesty the Emperor. And by order of the Turk, the Crimean Tsar [i.e., Khan] Kazy Girey<sup>4</sup> also marches to war with all the Crimean people and with the Belgorodtsy.<sup>5</sup> [He marches] into the Emperor's land and sheds blood in Christendom.

"Yet our Great Sovereign, Tsar and Grand Prince Boris Fyodorovich, Autocrat of all Russia, a true Christian Sovereign, [behaves] according to his Tsarish, charitable custom. He feels unhappy about [the state of] Christendom and wants to provide assistance to His Majesty the Emperor against the Turk. As in the past, [when] he has desired that the Christian Sovereigns unite and stand as one against the infidel, and has concerned himself with this and has intended it; so [too] now His Majesty the Tsar above all concerns himself with and intends the liberation of Orthodox Christendom from the hands of the infidel. [He desires] that all the Christian States would establish themselves firmly in love and in unity with each other, and would stand together as one against the infidel States.

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<sup>4</sup> Khan Ghazi Giray II, known as *Bora* or "hurricane," reigned from 1588 to 1608 and actively participated in the Long War (1593-1606) between the Habsburgs and Turks. See W. E. D. Allen, ed., *Russian Embassies to the Georgian Kings, 1589-1605* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), vol. 2, 411, n. 3.

<sup>5</sup> I.e., the Cossack inhabitants of the region around Belgorod (Bilhorod, Akkerman, Tyras), an ancient town located at the estuary of the Dniester River.

**"And for the Christian deliverance, His Majesty the Tsar has ordered [me] to declare his own Tsarish thought[s] about all Christian good to your Sovereign, Emperor Rudolf. He wants [to give] assistance to His Majesty the Emperor, and to bring about concern for the defense of all Orthodox Christendom. Asking God for grace, he himself wants to go in his own Tsarish person, with his many hosts, [both] Russian and Tatar, [to fight] against the enemy of the Cross of Christ and the foe of all Christendom, the Crimean Tsar. [He wants to go] by the land and water ways of various States, in order to [provide] assistance to Emperor Rudolf, and to bring about freedom from infidel captivity for Orthodox Christendom, and [to create] confusion for the Turk. [He wants] to divert the Crimean from [military cooperation with] the Turk and to destroy [the Crimean]. And in the future, asking God for grace, [he wants] to act militarily against the Turk, in order that the latter would not march for war into the Emperor's land.**

**"But, as is known to His Majesty the Emperor and to you yourselves, his councillors, there is no waterway to the Crimean [Khan] in the land of our Sovereign besides the Dnieper. And along the Dnieper there are cities of the [Polish-]Lithuanian King Sigismund, and lower down on the Dnieper live Cossacks subject to [Poland-]Lithuania [*Litovskie Cherkasy*]. And our Great Sovereign, Tsar and Grand Prince Boris Fyodorovich, Autocrat of all Russia, reciprocating the brotherly love of your Sovereign, Emperor Rudolf, has been concerned about him and about all Orthodox Christendom. It has been his [i.e., the Tsar's] desire to assist His Majesty the Emperor against the Turk by every means. [To this end] he sent his envoy to the [Polish-]Lithuanian King Sigismund to ask for passage down the Dnieper. [He sent] the Gentleman-Councillor [*dumny dvoryanin*] and Master of the Stables [*yaselnichy*] and Governor [*namestnik*]<sup>6</sup> of Mozhaisk, Mikhail**

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<sup>6</sup> This position was generally honorific. See *supra*, 9 & n. 13.

Ignatievich Tatishchev, and the State Secretary [*diak*] Ivan Maksimov.<sup>7</sup> [The object of the embassy was] that King Sigismund would give, for the assistance of His Majesty the Emperor, a route on the Dnieper for a marine host. [Then] our Great Sovereign [the Tsar] could go freely against Crimea with [his] host, and carry the people and supplies in boats, in order to draw the Crimean away from the Turk and to destroy [the Crimean].

"And His Majesty the Tsar, for [the sake of] your Sovereign, Emperor Rudolf, entered into a pact with His Majesty the Persian Shah, Abbas,<sup>8</sup> and had diplomatic relations with him, in order that he [the Shah] would stand with His Majesty the Emperor and with all Christian States as one against the Turk. And he persuaded the Shah to stand with Emperor Rudolf against the Turk. And now this spring the Shah sent his forces to [attack] Turkish cities, and he captured many of them. And Bukhara and Yurgench<sup>9</sup> stand together with the Shah against the Turk. And in order to assist His Majesty the Emperor, on the instruction of our Great Sovereign, Prince Simon, brother-in-law of the Iverian Tsar Alexander, marched against the cities of the Turk which are

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<sup>7</sup> Tatishchev and Maksimov were sent as envoys to Poland in February 1599. In the following year, Tatishchev acted as negotiator when Chancellor Lev Sapieha of Lithuania arrived in Moscow to arrange "eternal peace" between Russia and Poland. S. M. Soloviev records that strong disagreements, especially over the status of Livonia, led to some lively exchanges between the two. On one occasion, Tatishchev declared: "You, Lev, are still very young; you always tell untruths, you lie." Sapieha responded: "You yourself lie, slave, but I was telling the truth the whole time. You shouldn't be speaking with distinguished ambassadors, but with coachmen in the stables; and even these speak more decently than you." This last comment was a slur on Tatishchev's official court title, Master of the Stables, to which post he had been appointed in 1596. S. B. Veselovsky, *D'yaki i pod'yachie XV-XVII vv.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1975), 312; S. M. Solov'ev, *Istoriya Rossii s drevneishikh vremen* (Moscow: ISEL, 1963), bk. 4, vol. 8, 359-362; Allen, vol. 2, 517.

<sup>8</sup> Shah Abbas I of Persia reigned from 1587 to 1629. For a brief summary of his relations with Russia, see Allen, vol. 1, 78-84.

<sup>9</sup> Bukhara and Yurgench (Urgench) were the capitals of two ancient khanates of Central Asia. Russia had diplomatic relations with them and, under the direction of Boris Godunov, sought to draw them under its political control. In 1589, a Russian embassy to Georgia was instructed as follows: "And if they are asked about Bukhara and about Urgench, Prince Semen Grigoryevich and dyak Torkh should say that Bukhara and Urgench and Izyur and Khiva send their ambassadors to our Sovereign; and even now Bukhara and Izyur have sent their ambassadors to our Sovereign asking that he should extend his grace to them and keep them under his royal hand." Allen, vol. 1, 94, 239-240.

close to the land of Iveria.<sup>10</sup> And he captured three cities of the Iberian land which had been under the Turk. And in future the Georgian Tsar Alexander and his brother-in-law Simon and the Kumukh land<sup>11</sup> will stand against and go to war against the Turk.

"All this our Great Sovereign does out of concern for Christendom, and [thus] he manifests his brotherly love and friendship toward His Majesty the Emperor. And our Sovereign, His Majesty the Tsar, intended and wanted to send a host of ten thousand musketeers [*strel'tsy*] with firearms to help the Emperor against the Turk. But this army of our Great Sovereign cannot reach [Imperial territory] except through the lands of Lithuania and Poland.<sup>12</sup> And they [i.e., the King and nobles of Poland-Lithuania] do not allow the forces of our Great Sovereign to pass through Lithuania and Poland.

"Nor do they even allow [Muscovite] envoys and messengers to pass through Lithuania and Poland. For when, according to God's pleasure and His holy will, Boris Fyodorovich [Godunov] became Great Sovereign, Tsar and Grand Prince, [and] Autocrat of all Russia,<sup>13</sup> [and began to rule] in the great celebrated States of the Russian Tsardom, he immediately wanted to send me, his envoy, to His Majesty the Emperor, in order to make known his [accession over the Muscovite] State, and to declare to him his concern and brotherly love and assistance. And he wrote about this to King Sigismund and to the nobles of the [Polish and Lithuanian] assemblies many times, so that they would allow [me] passage through their land; but King Sigismund and the nobles of the assembly [Sejm] did not grant me passage and did not let [me] pass through Polish and

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<sup>10</sup> The Transcaucasian territory of Iveria (or Iberia) corresponds roughly to the eastern half of present-day Georgia. "The Iverian Tsar Alexander" was King Alexander II of Kakheti, who reigned from 1574 to 1605. His sister, Nestan Darejan, married King Simon I of Kartli, who ruled from 1557 to 1569 and from 1578 to 1599. Kartli and Kakheti were two of the three kingdoms into which the ancient state of Georgia had split in the fifteenth century (the other being Imereti). For their relations with Russia, Persia, and each other, see Allen, *passim*.

<sup>11</sup> The Kumukhs were a tribe of Daghestan. Their khanate had its capital at Tarku, a city on the west shore of the Caspian Sea.

<sup>12</sup> See *supra*, 28 n. 10.

<sup>13</sup> For the sake of clarity, this sentence has been shortened by the omission of one repetition of the Tsarish title. The text actually reads, "For when, according to God's pleasure and His holy will, our Great Sovereign, Tsar and Grand Prince Boris Fyodorovich, Autocrat of all Russia, became Great Sovereign, Tsar and Grand Prince, [and] Autocrat of all Russia..."

Lithuanian land. They did not want to see brotherly love and friendship between our Great Sovereign, His Majesty the Tsar, and Your Sovereign, His Majesty the Emperor, and were not concerned about [the fate of] Christendom.

"And [then] our Great Sovereign, His Majesty the Tsar, urgently sent his envoy to King Sigismund to ask for a route on the Dnieper for his host, in order thereby to assist and to help the Emperor; and also [to ask them] to allow me, the envoy of His Majesty the Tsar, to pass through [their land] to His Majesty the Emperor. **But King Sigismund and the nobles of the assembly did not allow passage on the Dnieper for the host of our Great Sovereign, nor did they allow me, the envoy, to pass through [their land] to His Majesty the Emperor.** And [so] our Sovereign, His Majesty the Tsar, sent me to Kolmogory,<sup>14</sup> and from Kolmogory by sea [i.e., through Arkhangelsk and across the White Sea].

"Thus it is evident to our Great Sovereign that the [Polish-]Lithuanian King Sigismund will not allow [Muscovite] envoys and heralds to pass through [his land], because **he does not want to see friendship between our Great Sovereign, Tsar and Grand Prince Boris Fyodorovich, Autocrat of all Russia, and [your] Great Sovereign, Emperor Rudolf, [nor] the good of Christians.** And he [Sigismund] **has diplomatic relations with the Turk, and wants to be in friendship with him; and he allows the Crimean [Tatars] to pass through his land into the Emperor's land;** and he sends them [i.e., the Turkish Sultan and the Crimean Khan] many presents and gifts, bribing [*nakupaya*] them against Christians. And he does not assist the Emperor in any way, nor does he permit [Muscovite] civil servants to pass through [his territory] in order to give help [to the Emperor]. And is this Christian: to have diplomatic relations with infidel States, and to give them presents and gifts, and to bribe them against Christendom?

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<sup>14</sup> A city (also called Kholmogory) located on the Northern Dvina River approximately 40 miles southeast of Arkhangelsk.

**"And previously much dishonor was done to Maximilian by subjects of Poland[-Lithuania]: [when] the Austrian Archduke Maximilian, the son of a Great Sovereign, had turned toward the throne [i.e., had put forth his candidacy], they stood against him with a host, and killed many of his people. And having seized him, they held [him] as if in captivity, and inflicted many damages. And our Great Sovereign, His Majesty the Tsar, feels unhappy and grieves over [the failure of] this good [project]. And previously our Great Sovereign, Tsar and Grand Prince Boris Fyodorovich, Autocrat of All Russia, was concerned about this, and wanted to act militarily in order to assist the Austrian Archduke Maximilian, so that the latter would attain the Polish throne. And in future our Sovereign, His Majesty the Tsar, wants to see Maximilian [reigning] in the Polish Kingdom, and to assist him, and to act in such a way as to avenge the dishonors done by Polish people.**

**"So would His Majesty the Emperor, having thought about this [or consulted] with his brother, the Austrian Archduke Maximilian, and with all the Electors [of the Holy Roman Empire], declare how they intend to act in this matter to avenge the dishonoring [of Maximilian]? And [would they] declare the following through me to our Great Sovereign, His Majesty the Tsar: how will His Majesty the Emperor behave toward Poland[-Lithuania] in the future and [will he] avenge such vexations and rudenesses? For our Great Sovereign, Tsar and Grand Prince Boris Fyodorovich, Autocrat of all Russia, desires to stand as one with your Sovereign, His Majesty the Emperor, against the Polish and Lithuanian land, and to take revenge on them for such rudenesses and misdeeds to Maximilian."**

## Appendix B: Nikolai M. Karamzin's Account of the Muscovite Embassy of 1599

Nikolai Mikhailovich Karamzin (1766-1826) was appointed court historian by Tsar Alexander I in 1803. From then until his death twenty-three years later, he wrote twelve volumes of the (unfinished) *Istoriya Gosudarstva Rossiiskago* (*History of the Russian State*). This work, the first of its kind, profoundly influenced the educated strata of Russian society. In the words of the famous poet A. S. Pushkin: "The appearance of this book (appropriately) caused a sensation and made a substantial impression.... Everyone, even fashionable ladies, hurried to read the history of their native land, a history previously unknown to them. Ancient Russia seemed to have been discovered by Karamzin like America was by Columbus."<sup>1</sup>

The following account of Vlasiev's embassy of 1599 has been translated from volume eleven of the fifth edition of Karamzin's *History*.<sup>2</sup>

[During the reign of Boris Godunov] Russian relations with Austria were, as in the time of Fyodor, highly amicable and not fruitless. *Dumny D'yak* Vlasiev, sent (in June 1599) to the Emperor with news of Boris' accession, boarded a London ship at the mouth of the Dvina and left for the shores of Germany. There, in Lübeck and in Hamburg, the most distinguished citizens met him with great affection [*s velikoyu laskoyu*], with gun salutes and music, praising Boris' already well-known kindness to foreigners and hoping to make use of new opportunities for trade in Russia.<sup>3</sup> [Emperor]

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<sup>1</sup> George Vernadsky, *Russian Historiography: A History*, ed. Sergei Pushkarev, trans. Nickolas Lupinin (Belmont, MA: Nordland, 1978), 52-53.

<sup>2</sup> N. M. Karamzin, *Istoriya Gosudarstva Rossiiskago*, 5th ed. (St. Petersburg: E. Prats, 1843), bk. 3, vol. 11, 34-35.

<sup>3</sup> Karamzin's note 78: "See in the 'Affairs of the Imperial Court' the *Stateiny Spisok* of *D'yak* Afanasy Vlasiev. There, on p. 11: 'And while Afanasy rode toward the city (Hamburg), many people stood [watching] from about three versts outside the city and in the city [as well], and from the city they fired [salutes] in succession, and trumpeters played.' Vlasiev arrived at the Emperor's in October, and returned [to Russia] in the summer of 1600." Cf. *PDS*, vol. 2, 661.

Rudolf, who had left Prague to avoid a deadly plague, was then living in Pilsen, where Vlasiev had discussions with Austrian Ministers. He assured them that our [i.e., Russia's] army had gone [to fight] against the Turks, but that [King] Sigismund had blocked the way through Lithuanian territory to the Danube; that the Tsar, as a true brother of Christian Monarchs and an eternal foe of the Ottomans, had persuaded the [Persian] Shah and many other *Asian Princes* to act forcefully against the Sultan, and was himself ready to go *personally* against the Crimeans, if they helped the Turks; that we had incessantly urged the Lithuanian Nobles [*Pany*] to establish an alliance with the Emperor and with us by elevating [Archduke] Maximilian to the throne of the Jagiellons; [and] that peace-loving Boris would not hesitate even to wage war for the attainment of this [last-mentioned] goal, if the Emperor should decide at some time to take vengeance on Sigismund for the dishonoring of his [i.e., the Emperor's] brother [Maximilian].<sup>4</sup> Rudolf expressed gratitude, but requested from us not people [soldiers], but rather gold for the war with [Sultan] Mahomet III,<sup>5</sup> desiring only that we suppress the [Crimean] Khan. The [Imperial] Ministers told him [i.e., Vlasiev]: "The Emperor, loving the Tsar, does not want him [i.e., the Tsar] to expose himself *personally* to dangers in battles with the barbarians.<sup>6</sup> You have many brave Commanders [*muzhestvennie Voevody*], who can easily subdue the Crimeans without the Tsar's [involvement]: that is the important thing! If it be pleasing to Heaven, then the Polish crown, with the kind assistance of the great-hearted [*velikodushny*] Tsar, will not elude Maximilian; but now

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<sup>4</sup> This is an allusion to Maximilian's unsuccessful attempts to gain the Polish throne following the death of Stefan Bathory in 1586 (see *supra*, 11 n. 18, 12-13). Karamzin's note 79: "See vol. 10, 61."

<sup>5</sup> The documents in *PDS* do not mention this request. It may be that Karamzin confused the response of the Imperial councillors in 1599 with the request of the Imperial embassy of 1597. On the other hand, he may have gleaned this information from documents that were subsequently lost or destroyed. See *supra*, 7, 22.

<sup>6</sup> Karamzin's note 80: "In the report of Vlasiev: 'His Majesty the Emperor is very sorrowful that His Majesty the Tsar himself wants to go in his own person, lest some unfortunate accident [*pritcha*] occur.'" Cf. *PDS*, vol. 2, 701-702.



is not the time to increase the number of enemies."<sup>7</sup> And of course we [i.e., the Muscovite government] did not [actually] intend to work with the sword for the elevation of Maximilian to the Polish throne; for Sigismund, already an enemy of Sweden, was not more dangerous for us than an Austrian Prince on the throne of the Jagiellons. And we did not intend, despite the assurances of Vlasiev, to fight with the Sultan unless absolutely necessary; but foreseeing [the possibility of] such [a necessity] — [and] knowing that [Sultan] Mahomet had malicious intentions toward Russia and indeed had ordered the [Crimean] Khan to devastate her possessions<sup>8</sup> — Boris zealously wished Austria well in the war with that foe of Christendom.

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<sup>7</sup> The passage in quotation marks is not a citation, but rather Karamzin's paraphrase. Cf. *PDS*, vol. 2, 702-703.

<sup>8</sup> Karamzin's note 81: "See the 'Crimean Affairs' of that time."

## Appendix C: Sergei M. Soloviev's Account of the Muscovite Embassy of 1599

Sergei Mikhailovich Soloviev (1820-1879) published his twenty-nine volume *Istoriya Rossii s drevneishikh vremen* (*History of Russia from Earliest Times*) between 1851 and 1879. This monumental work was intended to counterbalance Karamzin's official *History*, which Soloviev had already read "several times before he was thirteen,"<sup>1</sup> with a more liberal, modernist reading.<sup>2</sup> In Soviet historiography, Soloviev came to be regarded as the principal "bourgeois" historian of Russia, as opposed to Karamzin the monarchist.<sup>3</sup>

The following account of Vlasiev's embassy of 1599 has been translated from volume 8 of the Soviet edition of Soloviev's *History*.<sup>4</sup>

[During the reign of Boris Godunov] relations with the house of Austria retained their previous character. In June 1599, Boris dispatched to Emperor Rudolf an envoy, *Dumny Diak* Afanasy Vlasiev, who travelled by sea from Arkhangelsk, by the Norwegian and Danish shores, and then [south] on the Elbe. On the way [representatives of] the government of Hamburg met Vlasiev with honor, and he [replied to their welcome by] extoling the might and virtues of his Tsar. He recounted how Boris, upon his accession to the throne, had ordered that the state servitors [*sluzhivie lyudi*] be given [the equivalent of] three salaries in one year: one [salary in honor of] the memory of the late Tsar Fyodor, the second [to commemorate] his own installation as

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<sup>1</sup> George Vernadsky, *Russian Historiography: A History*, ed. Sergei Pushkarev, trans. Nickolas Lupinin (Belmont, MA: Nordland, 1978), 92.

<sup>2</sup> V. I. Koretsky, "Kommentarii k sed'momu i vos'momu tomam 'Istorii Rossii s drevneishikh vremen,'" in S. M. Soloviev, *Istoriya Rossii s drevneishikh vremen* (Moscow: ISEL, 1963), bk. 4, 711.

<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, R. G. Skrynnikov, *The Time of Troubles: Russia in Crisis, 1604-1618*, ed. & trans. Hugh F. Graham (Gulf Breeze, FL: Academic International, 1988), ix.

<sup>4</sup> Soloviev, bk. 4, vol. 8, 368-369.

Tsar and his long-lasting [*mnogoletny*] health, and the third [as their regular] annual [pay]. [Furthermore] he has remitted taxes, tribute, [and] the levy [*posokha*] for city construction,<sup>5</sup> [choosing instead to] pay for everything out of his own Tsarish treasury. And he has not only rewarded [*or* shown favor to] the Russian people; his charity has also been poured out to all foreigners [resident in Muscovy]. [For example, some] Germans and a Lithuanian, who on account of their sins [i.e., offenses] had been exiled to distant cities, he commanded to be brought to Moscow, [and] he gave them service estates [*pomest'ya*], patrimonial estates [*voitchiny*], houses, and money. And those that wanted to serve, he established in his service with a yearly salary: to [some] foreign trading people he gave a thousand rubles, and to others, two thousand; and he rewarded many with the title of *gost'*.<sup>6</sup> The burgomasters replied: "We have heard truly, that your sovereign is stately, fortunate, and kind; and throughout the whole German land he will always be honored and praised for his favor [*zhalovan'e*] toward [those] poor Livonian Germans.<sup>7</sup>

Having found Rudolf in Pilsen, where he had moved in order to avoid the deathly plague [that had broken out] in Prague, Vlasiev spoke to the leading councilmen [*bol'shie dumnie lyudi*] as follows: "It is known to His Majesty the Emperor and to

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<sup>5</sup> The *posokha* was "an obligation of the taxed [*or* 'burdened'] population of the Russian state to supply from [each] *sokha* a fixed number of people for war (from the fourteenth century), and also for state or societal work (city construction, the construction of bridges, etc.); in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries this was often replaced by monetary payment." The *sokha* was a unit of land measure which varied between 600 and 1,800 *desyatinas*, or 654 and 1,962 hectares, depending on the quality and location of the land. S. G. Barkhudarov, et al., eds., *Slovar' russkogo yazyka XI-XVII vv.*, vol. 17 (Moscow: Nauka, 1991), 209; Vladimir Dal', *Tolkovy slovar' zhivogo velikorusskogo yazyka*, 2nd ed., vol. 4 (Moscow: Russky yazyk, 1991), 283.

<sup>6</sup> *Gost'* ("guest") was a title and rank granted by the Tsar to a very elite and wealthy group of merchants. See *supra*, 34 n. 43.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *PDS*, vol. 2, 666-667. Soloviev modifies the text somewhat. For example, he drops the incomprehensible adjective *razorepn* from the list of Godunov's virtues; and he changes *Nemetskaya Rech'* ("the German *Reich*") to the more generic *Nemetskaya zemlya* ("the German land"). *Razorepn* is probably an accidental misspelling of *raztorepn* (i.e., *ractoropny*), which means "quick" or "smart." This rendering would be consistent with other, similar lists included in the documents of the embassy: on one occasion, Vlasiev states that the Tsar is "charitable and just, stately, and *judicious* and fortunate"; on another, that he is "stately, *wise*, and brave, and fortunate, and kind." *PDS*, vol. 2, 663, 704; emphasis added.

you, his councillors, that God allowed the infidel into Christendom, [and that] the Turkish Sultan took possession of the Byzantine Empire and many [other] lands — [those of] the Moldavians, Wallachians, Bulgarians, Serbians, [and] Bosnians, and other Christian states. Also, Islamic law was laid down in the city of Korsun, which from ancient times had been of the Orthodox Christian faith, and that [city] is now [the capital of] the Crimean State. For the Christian deliverance, His Majesty the Tsar himself wants to go in his own person, with his many hosts, [both] Russian and Tatar, [to fight] against the enemy of the cross of Christ. [He wants to go] by land and water ways, in order to [provide] assistance to Emperor Rudolf, and to bring about freedom for Orthodox Christendom. But, as is known to His Majesty the Tsar [*sic*]<sup>8</sup> and to you, there is no waterway to the Crimean Khan besides the Dnieper, and along the Dnieper there are cities of the [Polish-]Lithuanian king and Cossacks subject to [Poland-]Lithuania. The great sovereign [i.e., the Tsar] sent an envoy to King Sigismund to ask for passage down the Dnieper, but Sigismund and the nobles of the assembly [*panyrada*] did not allow passage [for the Tsar's forces] and did not allow the envoy to pass through [their land] to His Majesty the Emperor. The king does not want to see friendship between our great sovereign and the Emperor, [nor] the good of Christians; he has diplomatic relations with the Turk and allows the Crimean [Tatars] to pass through his land into the Emperor's land [i.e., to despoil the latter]. And previously much dishonor was done to Maximilian, Archduke of Austria, by subjects of Poland [-Lithuania]. Thus, would His Majesty the Emperor, having thought [*or consulted*] with his brother Maximilian and with all the Electors [of the Holy Roman Empire], declare how he intends to act toward Poland and [will he] revenge such vexations and rudenesses? For our great sovereign desires to stand with him as one against Poland

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<sup>8</sup> This is a mistake; it should read "His Majesty the Emperor." Soloviev writes *tsarskoe velichestvo* where the official records have *Tsesarskoe Velichestvo*. See PDS, vol. 2, 694, and *supra*, 73.

and Lithuania."<sup>9</sup>

This speech, cunning in the manner of that time [*khitraya po togdashnemu*], having begun with an impossible promise, that Boris himself would go to Crimea, and having ended with a call to war with Poland, shows what pitiful attempts [*zhalkie popytki*] the Muscovite government made in consequence of [its] utter ignorance of the relations between Western states. Godunov hoped through unsubstantiated accusations to induce Emperor Rudolf to a rupture with Poland! The Emperor's councillors answered: "King Sigismund and the nobles of the assembly refused us; they do not want to stand with us as one against the Turk. So what is there to discuss with them? They are in great confusion; they themselves do not know how they will live in future, [for] they do not love the king. His Majesty the Emperor places [lit., holds] great hope in the great sovereign Boris Fyodorovich; he thinks that by reason of brotherly love and for [the sake of] all Christendom he [the Tsar] will not forget him [the Emperor]. To His Majesty the Emperor, the most vexing [thing] of all regarding the Poles is that he cannot bring them to stand with him as one against the Turk. But there is nothing to be done; it is necessary to endure, even though it is vexing. His Majesty the Emperor is at war with the Turk; and if war starts also with the Poles, then there will be foes on two sides [i.e., fronts], and the Emperor's treasury is lacking due to the Turkish war. But when God gives the time, then the Emperor will begin to act against Poland... To tell the truth, King Sigismund recently showed himself dutiful and loving to[ward] the Emperor. The king is not at all to blame; one should not reproach him. One should reproach the Poles who are great foes of the Austrian house."<sup>10</sup> With these words the Austrian notables [*vel'mozhi*] gave the ambassador [*sic*]<sup>11</sup> to understand clearly that the Emperor was in

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<sup>9</sup> This is not an exact quote; Soloviev has selected and modified the text. Cf. *PDS*, vol. 2, 692-698, and *supra*, 71-77.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *PDS*, vol. 2, 698, 701-703, 747. Here Soloviev combines selections from several different speeches. See *supra*, 48-49, 58.

<sup>11</sup> Vlasiev was actually ranked as an envoy (*poslannik*), not as an ambassador (*posol*). See *supra*, 27.

close alliance with King Sigismund. Therefore, the relations of Moscow with Austria could not lead to anything; Boris could not begin war with the Turks to please the Emperor, and the Emperor could not go to war against Poland to please Boris.

## Appendix D: Afanasy Vlasiev's Career after 1599

When Afanasy Vlasiev led a Muscovite embassy of 1599 to the court of Emperor Rudolf II, he had already attained the rank of *dumny diak*, or conciliar secretary.<sup>1</sup> In subsequent years, he went on to lead an active and colorful career at the top levels of government. After returning from the Empire in 1600, he was one of only two Muscovites present when Tsar Boris swore an oath of peace to the Crimean Ambassador Akhmat Chelibei.<sup>2</sup> In 1601, he replaced Vasily Shchelkalov as head of the Foreign Office, and in August of that year was sent on an embassy to Lithuania with the boyar Mikhail Glebovich Saltykov-Morozov. Their mission was to procure King Sigismund's oath to abide by the terms of a twenty-two year truce just concluded between Muscovy and the *Rzeczpospolita* (Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth). After much wrangling over titles, they finally accomplished this objective and returned to Moscow in January 1602. Later that year, the pair acted as hosts for Prince Johann of Denmark, who had come to Moscow to accept the hand of Tsarevna Ksenia, the daughter of Tsar Boris.<sup>3</sup>

Vlasiev led a third embassy to the Empire in 1603,<sup>4</sup> and the Tsar continued to trust

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<sup>1</sup> See *supra*, 27.

<sup>2</sup> The other was Semen Nikitich Godunov, a relative of Boris. On this occasion, the Tsar called Vlasiev his *blizhny* ("close" or privy) *diak*. See S. M. Soloviev, *Istoriya Rossii s drevneishikh vremen* (Moscow: ISEL, 1960), bk. 4, vol. 8, 373.

<sup>3</sup> Soloviev, bk. 4, vol. 8, 363-367; S. B. Veselovsky, *D'yaki i pod'yachie XV-XVII vv.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1975), 98. Prince Johann died suddenly in October, and Vlasiev and Saltykov subsequently attempted to betroth Ksenia to princes from Germany, Georgia, Austria, and England. Their efforts, however, were interrupted by the downfall of the Godunovs at the hands of False Dimitry in 1605. The latter, upon entering Moscow, forcefully took Ksenia as his mistress and later had her tonsured and confined to a monastery. See Soloviev, bk. 4, vol. 8, 367, 436; N. M. Karamzin, *Istoriya Gosudarstva Rossiiskago*, 5th ed. (St. Petersburg: E. Prats, 1843), bk. 3, vol. 11, 131.

<sup>4</sup> This embassy is not included in *PDS*. However, Karamzin, who must have had access to documents that were later lost or destroyed, states the following: "*Dumny D'yak* Vlasiev travelled to the Emperor again in 1603. We do not know [the contents of] the discussions [he held at the Imperial court]; it is only known that the Tsar assisted Rudolf from his treasury, restrained [the Crimean Khan] Kazy-Girei from new intrusions into Hungary, and attempted to establish friendship between the Emperor and the Persian Shah, to whom Austrian Envoys travelled through Moscow, and who was then fighting valiantly against the Ottomans." Karamzin, bk. 3, vol. 11, 35.

him with a variety of sensitive matters. In the summer of 1604, with Moscow in confusion due to rumors about the pretender known as False Dmitry (*Lzhedimetry*), Boris sent him to inquire of an astrologer. Vlasiev brought back word that recent heavenly phenomena represented a divine warning to beware of traitors and usurpers.<sup>5</sup> In early 1605, during False Dmitry's invasion of Muscovy, he was sent "to question and reproach" the boyar commanders responsible for retreating from Rylsk.<sup>6</sup>

After the death of Tsar Boris, however, Vlasiev quickly joined the pretender and became his advisor. In an unprecedented step, he was promoted to *dumny dvoryanin* (Gentleman-Councillor) despite his non-noble origins.<sup>7</sup> Soon thereafter, in August of 1605, Vlasiev undertook his most consequential embassy, travelling to Cracow to claim the hand of Marina Mniszech on behalf of False Dmitry.<sup>8</sup> In the presence of King Sigismund, he stood proxy for the new Tsar at a betrothal ceremony on November 10.<sup>9</sup>

Upon returning to Moscow, Vlasiev took up the powerful post of Treasurer (*kaznachei*).<sup>10</sup> However, after the fall of False Dmitry less than a year later, Vlasiev was relieved of his position and estates and exiled to Ufa.<sup>11</sup> In June 1606, a Muscovite

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<sup>5</sup> Soloviev, bk. 4, vol. 8, 416.

<sup>6</sup> Veselovsky, 98.

<sup>7</sup> Soloviev, bk. 4, vol. 8, 429. See also S. F. Platonov, *Ocherki po istorii smuty v Moskovskom Gosudarstve XVI-XVII vv.*, 3rd ed. (St. Petersburg: Ya. Bashmakov, 1910), 275. It is possible that this promotion was a reward for assistance already rendered to False Dmitry's cause during the reign of Boris Godunov. One theory holds that Vlasiev had facilitated a conspiracy between the Polish ambassador Leo Sapieha and certain domestic opponents of Boris. See Soloviev, bk. 4, vol. 8, 405.

<sup>8</sup> Marina Mniszech was the daughter of Jerzy Mniszech, a Polish magnate and False Dmitry's most important sponsor. According to a contract drawn up in 1604, Dmitry was to marry Marina after attaining the Muscovite throne. See Soloviev, bk. 4, vol. 8, 409-410.

<sup>9</sup> Soloviev, bk. 4, vol. 8, 435-437; Maureen Perrie, *Pretenders and Popular Monarchism in Early Modern Russia: The False Tsars of the Time of Troubles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 85. Apparently many of Vlasiev's Muscovite customs seemed strange to the Poles, and some of his statements at the betrothal ceremony evoked laughter. When asked if the Tsar had promised to marry any other woman, Vlasiev answered: "How should I know? I was not instructed on this [point]." After being pressed for a more suitable response, Vlasiev declared: "If he had promised [himself] to another bride, he would not have sent me here." Soloviev, bk. 4, vol. 8, 436-437.

<sup>10</sup> Veselovsky, 98.

<sup>11</sup> Platonov, *Ocherki*, 288; Soloviev, bk. 4, vol. 8, 464; Veselovsky, 98. This took place under the new "Boyars' Tsar," Vasily Shuisky. According to some sources, Vlasiev had saved Shuisky from execution for treason in 1605 by persuading False Dmitry to grant a pardon. If so, Shuisky repaid him evil for good. See Soloviev, bk. 4, vol. 8, 428.



embassy to Poland received instructions to discredit him in the following manner:

How could one believe Afanasy Vlasiev? Afanasy is a brigand-destroyer [*vor razoritel'*] of the Christian faith, an advisor of *that brigand* [False Dimitry].<sup>12</sup> He went to your Sovereign, King Sigismund, according to his own will, without the knowledge of the senators [i.e., the boyars of the Duma]."<sup>13</sup>

Yet Vlasiev was not prepared to relinquish the reins of power just yet. In 1610, the leading boyars invited the Polish prince Wlasyslaw to rule in Moscow, prompting Vlasiev to petition King Sigismund for the restoration of his position and estates. In 1611, during the Polish occupation of Moscow, this request was granted.<sup>14</sup>

Nothing is known of Vlasiev's subsequent life. It is possible that he perished along with most of the Polish occupation force in 1612 or 1613, as the "patriotic army" of Minin and Pozharsky besieged and then captured Moscow. In any event, it must be assumed that he was a versatile and talented civil servant, for it was not every *pod'yachy* who could rise through the ranks and become the confidant of Tsars.

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<sup>12</sup> Beginning in 1606, official Muscovy almost invariably referred to False Dimitry as *tot vor* ("that brigand" or "that villain"). For an example related to the subject material of this thesis, see the letter from Tsar Mikhail Romanov to Emperor Matthias, dated July 11, 1613, in *PDS*, vol. 2, 1008-1034.

<sup>13</sup> Soloviev, bk. 4, vol. 8, 488. False Dimitry had renamed the boyars of the Duma "Senators" in an imitation of Polish practice. [See Karamzin, bk. 3, vol. 11, 126.] The embassy of 1606 could not claim that Vlasiev had acted without the knowledge of False Dimitry, but it could impugn the latter's legitimacy and maintain that the "Senate" — i.e., the legitimate ruling assembly of the Muscovite state — had not approved Vlasiev's mission.

<sup>14</sup> Soloviev, bk. 4, vol. 8, 612; Vesclovsky, 98.

## Glossary

**ANTEMURALE CHRISTIANITATIS.** The foremost bastion of Christendom.

**BESERMEN** (also **BASURMAN**, **BUSURMAN**, **BOSURMAN**, **BASURMANIN**).

The infidel; a person not of the Orthodox Christian faith. Used especially as a derogatory term for Muslims, Turks, and Asians.<sup>1</sup>

**BOYAR.** The highest rank of the Tsar's Council (DUMA) and the Muscovite service establishment.

**BURGGRAF** (also **BURGRAVE**). City count. A nobleman with hereditary rights to a particular municipality.

**BURMISTR.** Burgomeister; mayor. Used by Afanasy Vlasiev to denote the members of municipal councils in German Law Cities (**VOL'NIE GORODA**).

**DESYATINA.** A unit of area equivalent to 1.09 hectares or 2.69 acres.

**DETI BOYARSKIE.** Boyars' sons. Members of the lesser nobility, often engaged in military service.

**DEUTSCHES STADTRECHT.** German law code granting townsmen the right to govern themselves and to direct their own economic activity.

**DIAK** (also **D'YAK**). State secretary. Bureaucratic administrator in the Muscovite civil service.

**DIKOE POLE.** The Wild Field. Uncultivated lands in the Lower and Middle Volga, Don, and Dnieper regions, inhabited primarily by Cossacks.

**DUMA.** The Council or "Cabinet" of the Muscovite state.

**DUMNY DIAK** (also **DUMNY D'YAK**). Conciliar secretary. The fourth and lowest rank of the Tsar's Council (DUMA), granted to a very few of the senior DIAKI.

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<sup>1</sup> See Vladimir Dal', *Tolkovy slovar' zhivogo velikoruskogo yazyka*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (Moscow: Russky yazyk, 1989), 53.

**DUMNY DVORYANIN.** Conciliar nobleman or Gentleman-Councillor. The third rank of the Tsar's Council (DUMA), after BOYAR and OKOL'NICHY.

**DVOROVY VOEVODA.** Court marshal. One of Boris Godunov's ornamental titles during the period of his regency.

**FLUGSCHRIFT.** A news pamphlet, often used to disseminate information concerning the success or failure of a military campaign.

**GONETS.** A messenger or "herald." Diplomatic agent of lesser rank than an ambassador or envoy.

**GOST'.** Great merchant. A member of the Muscovite economic elite, whose privileges included exemption from taxes and from the state tavern monopoly. The GOSTI served the state as tax collectors, financial administrators, and diplomats.

**KAZNACHEI.** Treasurer. The post held by Vlasiev during the reign of False Dmitry.

**KONYUSHY (also STAROKONYUSHY).** Master of Horse. A ceremonial title derived from the oldest division of the Tsar's household management.

**KORM.** Food; fodder; supplies.

**MAGISTRAT.** The governing council of a municipality, elected in accordance with German city law (DEUTSCHES STADTRECHT).

**NAKAZ.** The "order" or set of instructions given to a Muscovite diplomat.

**NAMESTNIK.** The appointed governor of a region of the Muscovite state, usually a city and its environs. Often a titular position.

**OKOL'NICHY.** The second rank of the Tsar's Council (DUMA) and the Muscovite civil and military administration.

**OPASNAYA GRAMOTA.** Safe conduct. Used to ensure unmolested travel for an embassy through a hostile state.

**OTPUK.** Official document of release from a sovereign's court.

**POD'YACHY.** Under-secretary. An assistant in the Muscovite bureaucracy.

**POMEST'E.** An estate granted by the Tsar in exchange for service.

**POSOKHA.** A levy of men for military service and state construction projects. Often commuted to monetary payment.

**POSOL'SKY PRIKAZ.** The Foreign Office of the Muscovite state, responsible for all diplomatic missions.

**PRAVITEL'.** Ruler. The official title of Boris Godunov from 1589 to 1598.

**PRIKAZNIE LYUDI.** Civil servants of the Muscovite state.

**PROEZZHAYA GRAMOTA.** Travel document; diplomatic passport.

**RZECZPOSPOLITA.** The Republic (or Commonwealth) of Poland-Lithuania.

**SAMODERZHETS.** Autocrat; an independent sovereign ruling by divine right.

**SEJM.** The legislative assembly of the Polish-Lithuanian state.

**SLUZHIVIE LYUDI.** Servitors of the Muscovite state, especially those engaged in a military capacity.

**SMUTNOE VREMYA.** The Time of Troubles. A period of turbulence in Muscovy at the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth centuries.

**SOKHA.** A unit of land measurement, ranging from 600 to 1,800 DESYATINAS according to the quality and location of the land.

**STAROKONYUSHY.** See KONYUSHY.

**STATEINY SPISOK.** Official report submitted to the Foreign Office (POSOL'SKY PRIKAZ) by a Muscovite ambassador or envoy upon returning to the capital.

**STRELETS.** Musketeer; soldier or guard equipped with a firearm.

**SZLACHTA.** The lesser nobility in Poland.

**VECHNY MIR.** Eternal peace. A final treaty between two states.

**VERST (also VERSTA).** A measurement of distance equivalent to 1.06 kilometers or approximately two-thirds of a mile.

**VESTOVAYA TETRAD'.** See FLUGSCHRIFT.

**VLASTEL'.** Potentate; ruler. Title accorded to Boris Godunov by Imperial diplomats during the period of his regency.

**VOEVODA.** Military commander and/or provincial governor.

**VOL'NIE GORODA.** Free cities. Muscovite name for municipalities governed by German city law (DEUTSCHES STADTRECHT).

**VOTCHINA.** A patrimonial estate.

**YASELNICHY.** Senior equerry; master of stables. Ceremonial title slightly below Master of Horse (KONYUSHY).

**YURODSTVO.** Holy idiocy. The notion that fools possess prophetic abilities and deserve respect for their religious accomplishments.

**ZEMSKY SOBOR.** Assembly of the Land. Electoral body of the Muscovite state.

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