**CHAPTER ONE**

Russia in the Age of Peter the Great

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I

Beginnings

I. RUSSIA IN 1672

Russian Bethlehem, Kolomenskoe,
You delivered Peter to the light!
You the start and source of all our joy,
Where Russia's greatness first burned clear and bright.

Peter Alekseevich Romanov was born in or near Moscow at around one in the morning on Thursday 30 May 1672. A patron saint's `measuring' icon of the apostle Peter made shortly after his birth showed the infant to be nineteen and a quarter inches long. The future emperor's exceptional height was clearly prefigured, but the time and place of his birth, like much else in his life, have been the subject of controversy. For want of concrete evidence locating it elsewhere, the event may be placed in the Kremlin in Moscow, but legends persist, as in the verse by the poet Sumarokov above, that Peter was born in the village of Kolomenskoe to the south of Moscow, where his father had built a wooden palace, or even in Preobrazhenskoe, which later became Peter's favourite retreat and the base for his new guards regiments, formed from the `play' troops of his boyhood. As for the date, most sources accept 30 May, as did Peter himself by honouring St Isaac of Dalmatia, whose feast falls on that day. But at least one record gives 29 May, following the old Russian practice of starting the new day not at midnight but at dawn.4 In those countries which had adopted the Gregorian calendar (which Russia did only in 1918) the date was ten days ahead of those which still followed the older, Julian calendar, and 30 May fell on 9 June. Contemporary Russian chroniclers (using not arabic numerals but Cyrillic letters with numerical equivalents) recorded the year of Peter's birth as not 1672 but 7180, following the Byzantine practice of numbering years from the notional creation of the world in 5509 BC. The year 7181 began on 1 September 1672, which, following the usage of Constantinople, marked the start of the Muscovite new year.

    These peculiarities of time and record keeping provide a foretaste of the different customs observed in the Russia where Peter was born and the West into which he was later to forge a `window'. On the eve of the new century, in December 1699, Peter himself decreed that official records would henceforth adopt calendar years from the birth of Christ in the manner of `many European Christian nations'. When he died on 28 January 1725, there were no arguments about how the date should be recorded. It is appropriate that questions of time and chronology should arise at the outset of Peter's life, for he was to be obsessed with time and its passing, believing that `wasted time, like death, cannot be reversed'. Traditionalists denounced the tsar for tampering with `God's time' by changing the calendar. There were even rumours that the Peter who was to adopt the title `emperor' in 1721 was not the Peter who had been born in 1672. We shall return to these matters later, but let us take a closer look at the Russia into which Peter was born.

    Peter's parents had been married for less than eighteen months when he arrived. On 22 January 1671 nineteen-year-old Natalia Kirillovna Naryshkina married forty-two-year-old Tsar Alexis (Aleksei) Mikhailovich, whose first wife Maria Miloslavskaia had died in 1669 at the age of forty-three after giving birth to her thirteenth child, a girl who did not survive. Given a more robust set of male half-siblings, Peter might never have come to the throne at all. His father's first marriage produced five sons, but in 1672 only two were still alive. The heir apparent, Fedor, born in 1661, had delicate health, while Ivan, born in 1666, was mentally and physically handicapped. There were six surviving half-sisters: Evdokia, Marfa, Sophia, Ekaterina, Maria, and Feodosia, ranging in age from twenty-two to ten. They were not regarded as direct contenders for power: no woman had ever occupied the Muscovite throne in her own right, and the policy of keeping the royal princesses unmarried minimized the complications of power-seeking in-laws and inconvenient offspring through the female line. The practice of keeping well-born women in virtual seclusion also meant that they were unknown to the public.

    When Tsar Alexis died at the age of forty-seven in January 1676, Fedor succeeded him without the formal appointment of a regent, even though he was only fourteen. (Rumours of attempts to place three-year-old Peter on the throne in his stead may be discounted.) Twice in the next six years Peter narrowly escaped being pushed further down the ladder of succession. Fedor's first wife, Agafia Grushetskaia, and her newborn son Il'ia died in July 1681. His second wife, Marfa Matveevna Apraksina, was left a widow after only two months of marriage, by Fedor's death in April 1682. Rumours that she might be pregnant proved unfounded. But this is to leap ahead. In 1672 there was every prospect of Tsar Alexis continuing to rule for many years, and a fair chance, given infant mortality rates, that Peter would not survive for long. Modern readers will treat with scepticism the intriguing story recorded by one of Peter's early biographers to the effect that the royal tutor and court poet Simeon Polotsky predicted Peter's rule and future greatness by the stars on the supposed day of his conception, 11 August 1671.

    Many pages of print have been devoted to Peter's childhood and adolescence. His first two decades will be considered here only briefly, in order to give a context for the changes which he later forced upon Russia--the main subject of this book. I will begin by dispelling a few misconceptions, such as that Peter's early environment was closed and stultifying, dominated solely by Orthodox ritual and concepts. In fact, seventeenth-century Romanov childrearing practices did not exclude `modern' elements. For example, Peter's interest in military affairs was stimulated in the nursery, where he, like his elder brothers before him, played with toy soldiers, cannon, bows and arrows, and drums. Military affairs were the right and proper concern of a tsar almost from the cradle. His father had gone to war with his troops, as Peter was well aware and was proud to recall in later life. On the other hand, Peter's prowess as a soldier, virtually from the cradle (a contemporary compared him to the young Hercules, who strangled serpents), has been greatly exaggerated. The myth that Peter was already a cadet at the age of three has been refuted: in fact, at that age, Peter still had a wet-nurse. Toy weapons were supplemented by spades, hammers, and masons' tools, which no doubt fostered Peter's love of mechanical crafts. The fiercest of Peter's boyhood passions--his love of ships and the sea--is at first sight harder to explain. Why should a boy raised in a virtually land-locked country with no tradition of seafaring have developed such a passion? It is even said that as a boy Peter had a dread of water. But Russia's naval inexperience should not be exaggerated. Most major Russian towns were situated on rivers, which small craft plied. Russians may not have been expert sailors on the high seas, but they knew how to navigate inland waters, and Russian peasant navigators had long sailed the northern coastline. Peter did not see the open sea until he was twenty-one, but there was no lack of stimuli to the imagination closer to hand: toy boats, maps and engravings, and, what he himself identified as the spark which lit the flame, the old English sailing dinghy, the `grandfather of the Russian fleet', which he discovered in the outhouse of a country estate. The fact that it should have found its way to Moscow is not so surprising when one considers that English sea-going vessels had been docking on the White Sea since the 1550s, and that Tsar Alexis had commissioned Dutch shipwrights to build a small fleet on the Caspian Sea in the 1660s.

    In some respects, however, Peter's introduction to the wider world actually lagged behind that of his half-siblings. His brothers Fedor and Alexis (who died in 1670), and even his half-sister Sophia, were taught by the Polish-educated monk Simeon Polotsky, who gave instruction in Latin, Polish, versification, and other elements of the classical syllabus. Polotsky died in 1680, before he had the chance, had it been offered, to tutor Peter. His protege, Silvester Medvedev, was at daggers drawn with the conservative patriarch, Joachim, who, as adviser to Peter's mother, would scarcely have recommended a suspect `Latinizer' as the tsarevich's tutor. Peter thus received indifferent tuition from Russians seconded from government chancelleries; they included Nikita Zotov and Afanasy Nesterov, an official in the Armoury, whose names first appear in records as teachers round about 1683. Not only did Peter's education lack scholarly content; it also seems to have been deficient in basic discipline. His prose style, spelling, and handwriting bore signs of lax methods for the rest of his life. It should be added that there was no question of Peter receiving his education from a Muscovite university graduate or even from the product of a local grammar school or its equivalent. There were no universities in Muscovite Russia and no public schools, apart from some training establishments for chancellery staff in the Kremlin. In fact, clerks (*d'iaki* and *pod'iachie*) and clerics were the only two orders of Muscovite society who were normally literate, many parish priests being only barely so.

    The inadequacies of Peter's primary education were later offset by practical skills learned from foreigners, whom he was able to encounter in Moscow thanks to the policies of his predecessors. Foreigner-specialists first started arriving in Muscovy in significant numbers during the reign of Ivan IV (1533-84). Their numbers increased when Peter's grandfather, Tsar Michael (1613-45), reorganized certain Russian infantry regiments along foreign lines. In 1652 Tsar Alexis set aside a separate area of Moscow called the `New Foreign' or `German' Quarter to accommodate military, commercial, and diplomatic personnel. It was here that Peter encountered officers such as Patrick Gordon, Franz Lefort, and Franz Timmerman, his teachers and companions in the 1680s and 1690s. Residents of the Foreign Quarter also made their mark on Russian elite culture. From the 1650s several foreign painters were employed in the royal Armoury workshops. Alexis is the first Russian ruler of whom we have a reliable likeness, his daughter Sophia the first Russian woman to be the subject of secular portraiture. It was the Foreign Quarter which in 1672 supplied the director and actors for Russia's first theatrical performance. Unlike portraiture, however, which quickly became more widespread, theatricals were discontinued after Alexis's death. During Sophia's regency (1682-9) Huguenots were offered sanctuary in Russia, Jesuits were admitted to serve Moscow's foreign Catholic parish, and invitations were issued to foreign industrialists and craftsmen. In the 1670s and 1680s foreigners were no longer a rarity on the streets of Moscow, and were also well represented in commercial towns on the route from the White Sea port of Archangel.

    Of course, Moscow was not the whole of Russia, any more than a few relatively outward-looking individuals in the Kremlin were representative of Moscow society as a whole. Most Muscovites, from the conservative boyars who rubbed shoulders with them to the peasants who rarely encountered one, regarded foreigners as dangerous heretics, and viewed foreign `novelties' and fashions with intense suspicion and even terror. During the reign of Peter's immediate predecessors, foreigners were still in Russia on sufferance, tolerated as a necessary evil. The building of the new Foreign Quarter in 1652 was actually an attempt to concentrate foreigners and their churches in a restricted locality, away from the city centre, where they had lived previously. Patriarch Joachim urged that mercenaries, the most indispensable of foreign personnel, be expelled, and non-Orthodox churches demolished. Russian culture was prevented from falling further under foreign influence by strict controls. For example, publishing and printing remained firmly in the hands of the Church. It is a striking statistic that in the whole of the seventeenth century fewer than ten secular titles came off Muscovite presses, which were devoted mainly to the production of liturgical and devotional texts. There were no Russian printed news-sheets, journals or almanacs; no plays, poetry or philosophy in print, although this lack was partly compensated by popular literature in manuscript, a flourishing oral tradition, news-sheets from abroad (albeit restricted to the use of personnel in the Foreign Office), and foreign books in the libraries of a few leading nobles and clerics. Presses in Kiev, Chernigov, Vilna, and other centres of Orthodoxy supplemented the meagre output of Moscow printers. Russians were still clearly differentiated from Western Europeans by their dress, although a number were tempted by Polish influence to don Western fashions in private. According to Tsar Alexis's decree of 1675, `Courtiers are forbidden to adopt foreign, German (*inozemskikh i nemetskikh*) and other customs, to cut the hair on their heads and to wear robes, tunics and hats of foreign design, and they are to forbid their servants to do so.'

    The `courtiers' to whom this warning was addressed formed the upper echelons of Russia's service class. Sometimes loosely referred to as `boyars', roughly the equivalent of the Western aristocracy, they belonged to noble clans residing in and around Moscow. The upper crust were the `men of the council' (*dumnye liudi*), the so-called boyar duma, which in the seventeenth century varied in number from 28 to 153 members. Those in the top rank were the boyars proper (*boiare*), next the `lords in waiting' (*okol'nichie*), followed by a smaller group dubbed `gentlemen of the council' (*dumnye dvoriane*), and a handful of `clerks of the council' (*dumnye d'iaki*). All enjoyed the privilege of attending and advising the tsar. Membership of the two top groups was largely hereditary. Unless there were contrary indicators (e.g., serious incapacity or disgrace) men from leading families generally became boyars in order of seniority within their clan. Their numbers were swelled by royal in-laws (marrying a daughter to the tsar or one of his sons usually boosted a family's fortunes) and by a handful of men of lower status who were raised by royal favour. The council's participation in decision making is indicated by the formula for ratifying edicts: `the tsar has decreed and the boyars have affirmed' (*tsar' ukazal i boiare prigovorili*). Nobles immediately below the `men of the council' (often younger aspirants to the grade) bore the title `table attendant' (*stol'nik*), a reference to duties which they had once performed and in some cases still did. Below them were `attendants' (*striapchie*), Moscow nobles (*dvoriane moskovskie*), and `junior attendants' (*zhil'tsy*). In peacetime Moscow nobles performed a variety of chancellery and ceremonial duties. In wartime they went on campaign as cavalry officers. On duty, be it military or civil, they bore their court ranks: *boiarin, okol'nichii, stol'nik* and so on; there was no differentiation by office.

    In 1672 commissions, appointments, and other placings, such as seating at important banquets, were still in theory governed by the code of precedence, or `place' system (*mestnichestvo*), which determined an individual's position in the hierarchy of command by calculations based on his own and his clan's service record and his seniority within his clan. It was considered a great dishonour to be placed below someone who, regardless of ability, was deemed to merit a lower `place'. Such an insult gave grounds for an appeal to the tsar. Increasingly, *mestnichestvo* was suspended in order to allow the Crown a freer hand in appointing officers. For some campaigns it was ordered that military rolls be drawn up `without places' (*bez mest*).

    With the exception of members of the elite sent to serve as provincial governors (*voevody*), outside Moscow the ruler relied on a larger group of the `middle servicemen', provincial gentry (*gorodovye dvoriane*), and `junior servicemen' (*deti boairskie*, literally and misleadingly `children of boyars') to perform policing duties and swell the ranks of the army in wartime. All the categories described above, it should be repeated, were counted among the elite and enjoyed certain privileges, the first of which was exemption from tax and labour burdens (*tiaglo*). The second was the right to land and serfs. Most of the Moscow elite owned both inherited estates (*votchiny*) and service lands (*pomest'ia*), the latter, in theory, granted and held on condition of service, but increasingly passed from generation to generation. The peasants living on both *votchina* and *pomest'e* holdings were serfs, the property of their landlords, who could freely exploit their labour (in the form of agricultural work and other duties) and collect dues (in money and kind). It should be noted, however, that nobles were not automatically supplied with serfs. Some of the top families owned tens of thousands of peasants distributed over dozens of estates, whereas many in the provincial *deti boiarskie* category owned only one or two peasant households, and in some cases worked their own plots. The Muscovite Crown also deployed non-noble servicemen (*sluzhilye liudi po priboru*). Men in this category were subject to a service, not a tax requirement, but they could not own serfs. They included the strel'tsy (`musketeers'), who formed army units in wartime and did escort and guard duty in peacetime, carrying on small businesses and trades when off duty; artillerymen (*pushkari*), and postal drivers (*iamshchiki*). Civilian personnel in the non-noble service category included secretaries and clerks (*d'iaki, pod'iachie*), the backbone personnel of the government chancelleries.

    Most of the non-noble residents of Russia's towns were bound to their communities by tax obligations, apart from a handful of chief merchants (*gosti*), who dealt in foreign trade. Including merchants of the second and third grades (*gostinnye and sukonnye sotni*) and the mass of clerks, artisans, and traders, or `men of the *posad*' (*posadskie liudi*), the total registered male urban population in the 1670s has been estimated at 185,000. In addition, substantial numbers of peasants resided temporarily in towns, which also had shifting populations of foreigners and vagrants, but lacked many of the native professional categories--bankers, scholars, scientists, doctors, schoolteachers, lawyers, and actors--to be found in most contemporary Western European towns of any size.

    If townspeople were less numerous and played a less prominent role in Muscovy than they did in Western European countries, the opposite was probably true of church personnel. The Russian clerical estate was divided into `white' (secular) and `black' (monastic) clergy, the former group, consisting of parish priests and deacons, who were obliged to marry. The prelates--the patriarch, metropolitans, bishops, and abbots of monasteries--were drawn from the celibate black clergy, who also formed the monastic rank and file. The ecclesiastical estate enjoyed considerable privileges. Apart from the royal family and the nobles, only they could own serfs (although, strictly speaking, peasants were attached to monasteries and churches, not individuals). They were exempt from taxation. They had access to church courts. But the rural clergy, like the lesser rural gentry, were often barely differentiated in wealth and education from the mass of the population.

    This brings us to the masses themselves: rural dwellers engaged in working the land--*pashennye liudi*. Roughly 50 per cent were serfs or bonded peasants, living on lands owned by the royal family (*dvortsovye*), nobles (*pomeshchichie*), or the Church (*tserkovnye*). The rest were `State' peasants (*gosudarsvennye*), not bound to any one landlord, but obliged to pay taxes to the State and perform labour duties as required--for example, by providing transport and carrying out forestry and road work. All were eligible for military service, which freed them from obligations to their former owners. Another group of `unfree' persons were slaves, who entered into contracts of bondage with richer people (usually, but not invariably, nobles) in return for loans and support. It has been calculated that as much as 10 per cent of the population may have fallen into this category.

    Thus, in 1672, it was possible to divide the great majority of people in Muscovy into those who performed service (*sluzhilye liudi*), those who paid taxes (*tiaglye liudi*), and those who served the Church (*tserkovnye liudi*). They included the tsar's non-Russian subjects: various tribespeople who rendered taxes in the form of tribute (*iasak*, often in furs) or did occasional military service. Some of the tsar's subjects fell outside these estates: these included socalled wandering people (*guliashchie liudi*) unattached to any locality or category, who were either incapable of performing service or paying taxes--for example, cripples and `fools in Christ'--or who wilfully escaped obligations--runaway serfs, deserters, and religious dissidents, of which the biggest category were the Old Believers, protesters against Nikon's church reform of the 1650s. A number set up communities in remote localities out of reach of the government. Cossack communities, consisting originally of refugees from the long arm of government, maintained a variety of links with Moscow, being either bound in service, like the registered Cossacks of Ukraine, intermittently loyal, like the Cossacks of the Don, or persistently hostile, like the Host of the Zaporozhian Sich.

    This, then, was the Russia into which Peter was born, a country, on the one hand, deeply rooted in tradition and in many ways very distinct from Western Europe, where Russia was still regarded as a `rude and barbarous' kingdom, on the other, increasingly open to the influence of Western people and ideas. In the year 1672 the birth of a Russian prince went more or less unnoticed in the rest of Europe, of which Russia was at best a fringe member. There would have been scarcely any speculation about the new prince's eligibility as a marriage partner, since the Muscovite royal family was known to be uninterested in such foreign involvements, although this had not always been the case. The concept of the European community as `a single, integral system of mutually interdependent states', which came into being after the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia, rested on a Protestant-Catholic balance of power in which Orthodox countries barely figured. But Russia was poised to play an increasingly active role in world affairs. In the reign of Alexis, during the socalled First Northern War (1654-60), it entered the wider sphere of international relations when it was pitted against its old enemies Poland and Sweden. War with Poland began in 1654, as a result of Moscow's provocative acceptance of the allegiance of Ukrainian (Little Russian) Cossacks under their leader Bogdan Khmel'nitsky, who were formerly Polish subjects, and ended in 1667 to Russia's advantage, with Left Bank Ukraine (to the east of the River Dnieper) and Kiev brought under the tsar's rule. But there was no progress during the shorter conflict of 1656-61 with Sweden, which had blocked the way to the Baltic since the 1617 Treaty of Stolbovo removed Moscow's narrow foothold on that sea. At the time Sweden's King Gustav Adolph boasted that Russia could not even launch a rowing boat on to the sea without Sweden's permission. When Peter was born, Russia's only seaport was Archangel, on the White Sea. In the south, Russia and Poland vied for possession and domination of the steppes with the Turks and the Crimean Tatars, who barred Russia from the Black Sea. Direct conflict was usually with the Tatars, who exacted a heavy toll of prisoners and livestock, as well as demanding and receiving annual tribute, known as `gifts'. In 1672 the Turks and the Tatars seized parts of Polish (Right Bank) Ukraine, and threatened incursions across the Dnieper into Muscovite territory. It was this crisis which prompted Tsar Alexis to send envoys all over Europe seeking aid for an anti-Turkish league. In 1676 his son Fedor found himself at war with the Turks and the Tatars. After losing the fort at Chigirin on the Dnieper, and fearing a Turkish attack on Kiev, Moscow made an uneasy twenty-year truce with the Tatars at Bakhchisarai, in January 1681.

II. SOPHIA: THE 1680s

On 27 April 1682 Fedor died childless. The same day, Peter, a month short of his tenth birthday, was declared tsar, on the grounds that his elder half-brother Ivan was `weak-minded'. Matters might have rested there. Ivan's afflictions evidently precluded him from taking an active role in civil or military affairs. There was no written law of succession to rule out the accession of a younger brother under these circumstances. Observance of primogeniture was a matter of custom rather than constitution. Peter's accession had the support of the patriarch, who intervened in such matters in the absence of mature royal males. But Peter's maternal relatives, the Naryshkins, and their hangers-on, who could expect to enjoy considerable power in Peter's minority and to retain key government posts when he came of age, had not reckoned on a lethal combination of unrest among Moscow's armed guard, the strel'tsy, and the fury of the affronted Miloslavskys, kinsmen of Tsar Alexis's first wife, led by Ivan's sister Sophia, that `ambitious and power-hungry princess', as a contemporary described her.

    The Miloslavskys succeeded in harnessing the strel'tsy, who were ultrasensitive to rumours of abuses in high places as a result of a series of disputes over management, pay, and conditions dating from Fedor's reign. After two weeks of negotiations, during which the new Naryshkin government made concessions, to the extent of handing over unpopular officers to strel'tsy mobs, a rumour that Tsarevich Ivan had been strangled by his `ill-wishers' brought rebel regiments to the Kremlin. There on 15-17 May, the strel'tsy settled personal grudges by butchering commanding officers and unpopular officials, and, at the instigation of the Naryshkins' rivals, singled out members of the Naryshkin clan and their associates as `traitors', and slaughtered them. The victims included Peter's uncle, Ivan Naryshkin (who was accused of trying on the crown), and his mother's guardian, the former foreign minister Artamon Matveev, who was accused of plotting to murder Ivan. In all, about forty persons fell victim to axe and pike. The role in all this of Sophia, Peter's twenty-five-year-old half-sister, has been widely debated. Although there is little hard evidence that she had the `Machiavellian' tendencies attributed to her by some writers, still less that she plotted to kill Peter and his mother (who remained unharmed, despite being the easiest of targets), the events of April-May 1682 undoubtedly allowed her to champion the legitimate claim to the throne of her brother Ivan and to emerge as regent over a joint tsardom, with Ivan as senior tsar and Peter as junior.

    No attempt will be made here to chart the further outbreaks of strel'tsy unrest after the dynastic question had apparently been settled, or to examine the role of Prince Ivan Khovansky in the events of May-September 1682, sometimes referred to as the `Khovanshchina', which were complicated by the activities of Old Believers, who enjoyed some support from the strel'tsy. We shall be concerned only with those events and features of Sophia's regency which had relevance for Peter's future policies and reforms. The most immediate consequence of the seven-year regency on Peter's own circumstances was that he was by and large relieved of ceremonial duties, which Sophia was happy to have performed at first by Ivan, who was thus given a prominent, active role in the public eye, and later by herself. It is difficult to overestimate the significance of these seven years for Peter's development. They may be regarded as a sort of `sabbatical' from the routine burdens of rulership, which allowed him to pursue his own interests (military games and sailing) and to build up a circle of friends and assistants at a slight distance from traditional clan networks. Members of the boyar elite predominated in Peter's circle, but foreigners and men of lower rank appeared in greater numbers than in the past. Ivan's role as Orthodox figure-head meant that Peter had less contact with the church hierarchy. It should be emphasized that Peter was neither banished nor persecuted. As for the charge that Sophia `stifled Peter's natural light', rather the opposite was true, although some contemporaries believed that lax supervision and too much contact with foreigners and `low' types ruined the tsar's character. On occasion he was still required to do ceremonial duty--for example, at ambassadorial receptions and important family anniversaries--but by and large his being out of Moscow suited him as much as it did Sophia. If it had one unfortunate effect, it is that it further alienated Peter from Sophia's chief minister and reputed lover, Prince Vasily Vasil'evich Golitsyn (1643-1714), a man with the sort of talent and vision that Peter could have used, had not hostility towards his sister made it impossible later to employ someone so close to her. Under Golitsyn's direction, the Foreign Office pursued policies which provided both foundations and lessons for Peter's future programme. The major achievement was the 1686 treaty of permanent peace with Poland, which ratified the secession of Kiev and its Right Bank hinterland to Moscow (which had been in dispute since the 1667 Treaty of Andrusovo), and Russian rule over Smolensk, Dorogobuzh, Roslavl', and Zaporozh'e. In return, Russia was to pay the Poles 146,000 roubles indemnity `out of friendship', to sever relations with Turkey and Crimea `on account of the many wrongs committed by the Muslims, in the name of Christianity and to save many Christians held in servitude', and to wage war on Crimea. Other clauses included a ban on the persecution of Orthodox Christians in Poland by Catholics and Uniates (thus allowing the tsar a pretext for intervention), permission for Catholics in Russia to hold divine worship (but only in private houses), recognition of royal titles, encouragement of trade, and a pledge to seek the aid of `other Christian monarchs'. Russian suspicion of Catholics was exploited by Prussian envoys in Moscow, who induced Golitsyn and Sophia to offer sanctuary to Protestant exiles from France. In 1689 commercial treaties were signed allowing Prussia trading rights in Archangel, Smolensk, and Pskov, thereby laying the foundations for future Russo-Prussian co-operation during the 1710s.

    Thus Russia joined the Holy League against the Turks, formed in 1684 with papal backing, between Austria and Poland, both of which had lands bordering on the Ottoman Empire, and Venice, Russia's rival at sea, following the relief of the Turkish siege of Vienna in 1683. Russian ambassadors were dispatched all over Europe with appeals for assistance and closer alliance--to Holland, England, Sweden, Denmark, Prussia, France, Spain, Florence, Austria, and Venice. In 1687 and 1689 Vasily Golitsyn led huge armies south to Crimea. On both occasions logistical problems forced the Russian armies to withdraw, on the second occasion with huge losses of men and horses, from thirst and epidemics. Golitsyn's return to Moscow in the summer of 1689, where he was feted as a hero on Sophia's instructions, gave his opponents an opportunity to undermine both him and Sophia, whose public appearances Peter (prompted by his maternal relatives) had begun to criticize. Peter was well into his majority (Fedor, it will be recalled, was tsar without a regent at the age of fourteen); he was married (in January 1689), and his wife, Evdokia Lopukhina, was pregnant; he had troops at his disposal, notably his own `play' regiments and foreign officers; and he had the support of the patriarch. In fact, Sophia's rule was doomed from the start, because it could be perpetuated indefinitely only by disposing of Peter. This she seems never seriously to have contemplated, despite ample opportunities. Even the crisis of August 1689, when Peter believed that the strel'tsy were coming to kill him and fled to the Trinity monastery, may have been engineered by Peter's own supporters in order to force a confrontation between Peter and Sophia which they knew she was unlikely to win, given dissatisfaction with the Crimean campaigns, and which Peter, too wrapped up in his own interests, could not be relied upon to precipitate. August-September saw a stand-off between Sophia and her fast-dwindling forces in the Kremlin and Peter's supporters, massed at the Trinity-St Sergius monastery. The brief clash ended in late September, when Vasily Golitsyn was exiled to the north of Russia, and Sophia was locked up in the Novodevichy convent, were she remained until her death in 1704.

    For the rest of his life Peter associated Sophia with the dark forces of opposition, even if he blamed most of the active wickedness on her male supporters. The perpetrators of the so-called Tsykler plot to kill Peter in 1696-7 were executed over the exhumed coffin of Ivan Miloslavsky, identified by several contemporaries as the master-mind behind the 1682 rebellion. `The seed of Ivan Miloslavsky is sprouting,' wrote Peter, when called back to Russia to deal with another strel'tsy revolt in 1698. He apparently recognized Sophia's `great intelligence', but thought it was overshadowed by `great malice and cunning'. Engraved portraits depicting her wearing a crown and carrying royal regalia were sought out and destroyed, but many copies survived, along with painted portraits set against the background of the double-headed eagle bearing the seven Virtues on its wings, eloquent testimony both to Sophia's political aspirations and to the new cultural trends which she encouraged. At least one of Peter's successors did not share his view. Catherine the Great wrote of Sophia: `Much has been said about this princess, but I believe that she has not been given the credit she deserves ... she conducted the affairs of the Empire for a number of years with all the sagacity one could hope for. When one considers the business that passed through her hands, one cannot but concede that she was capable of ruling.'

III. THE MAKING OF A SOVEREIGN: THE 1690s

There are good reasons for devoting some space to the period between the overthrow of Sophia and Golitsyn and the declaration of war against Sweden in August 1700. The fact that these years have generally been regarded as merely a `prelude' to reform has condemned the 1690s to neglect in general histories, which tend to confine themselves to such selected highlights as the Grand Embassy and the Azov campaigns. Yet this decade is vital for understanding both the man and his Russia, the moulding of Peter's priorities and the clarification of the options open to him, both at home and abroad. For a start, a closer examination of the early 1690s reveals the error of assuming an unbroken line of developing `Westernization' from the 1680s into the new century. The 1690s were not merely a bridge between the cautious modernization of the Sophia-Golitsyn regime and Peter's full-blooded post-1700 variant. Some new trends--in art and architecture, for example--continued and flourished, while others were suspended. The 1690s saw a continuing struggle, to use a cliche, between the `old' and the `new', personified in the figures of the two ruling monarchs: `pious' Ivan making stately progress in his heavy brocade robes and `impious' Peter clad in German dress dashing from shipyard to military parade.

    In a letter to Tsar Ivan, written between 8 and 12 September 1689, Peter wrote: `And now, brother sovereign, the time has come for us to rule the realm entrusted to us by God, since we are of age and we must not allow that third shameful personage, our sister the Tsarevna S.A., to share the titles and government with us two male persons.' In fact, Peter showed little inclination to `rule the realm'. His preoccupation with his own interests for the first few years, then his prolonged absences, first at Azov, then in the West, ceded the centre to others, to the extent that some of the first actions of the new regime appeared to turn back the clock, taking advantage of the removal of Vasily Golitsyn, the `friend of foreigners', to annul concessions made during Sophia's regency and to adopt closer supervision of foreigners in general, in order to stem the spread of heresy from across the borders. Patriarch Joachim was the prime mover. On 2 October 1689 the Jesuit fathers Georgius David and Tobias Tichavsky were expelled. Sanctions were imposed against Jesuits in particular, not Catholics in general, probably because there were some influential foreign Catholics close to Peter, and Russia was still allied to Catholic powers. A decree of 1690 allowed two priests to serve the foreign Catholic community, but the authorities were to take precautions to ensure that they did not try to convert Russians, visit them in their homes, carry on foreign correspondence or turn out to be Jesuits in disguise. In October 1689 the Protestant mystic Quirinus Kuhlman was burned on Red Square together with his works. P.I. Prozorovsky, governor of Novgorod, was warned to take care that `such criminals should not enter the country and that foreigners who in future arrive from abroad from various countries at the border and in Novgorod the Great and claim that they have come to enter service or to visit relatives or for some other business in Moscow, should be questioned at the border and in Novgorod and detained and not allowed to proceed to Moscow until you receive our royal instructions'. All foreign travellers were to be interrogated and asked to provide certificates and passes, and transcripts of such interrogations were to be made. Just before his death in 1690, Patriarch Joachim called a church council to consider the recantation of the monk Silvester Medvedev, who was accused, among other things, of propagating a Catholic view of transubstantiation. Copies of Medvedev's book *Manna* were seized and burnt, and its author was defrocked and beheaded in 1691. Another whiff of Old Russia comes from a report of the uncovering in 1689 of a sorcerers' conspiracy, master-minded by Andrei Bezobrazov, who allegedly attempted to undermine the health of Peter and his mother by casting spells `on bones, on money and on water'. The ring-leaders were beheaded or burnt, other `conspirators' flogged and banished. For a few months after Sophia's overthrow the atmosphere was so oppressive that Peter's friend, the Scottish mercenary General Patrick Gordon, contemplated leaving Russia.

    But in the midst of this resurgence of the old, the new was asserting itself with unprecedented vigour. Despite the Church's dire warnings about the dangers of contamination by heretics, Peter himself was spending more and more time in the company of foreigners. The Foreign Quarter was only a few miles from the Preobrazhenskoe palace, where Peter spent much of Sophia's regency. Peter became a frequent visitor at the homes of Lefort and Gordon, and soon got to know other foreign soldiers and merchants, attending banquets, weddings, and funerals. Lefort's palace, with a splendidly appointed ballroom added, was turned into a semi-official residence for the sort of reception which it was still difficult to hold in the Kremlin, accompanied by `debauchery and drunkenness so great that it is impossible to describe it'. At about this time Peter probably learned Dutch (from Andrei Vinius, a government official of Dutch descent), and also took lessons in dancing, fencing, and riding. In February 1690 the birth of Peter's first child, Alexis, was celebrated not only with the customary church services and bells but also with cannon-fire and drum-beats. Foreign-led infantry regiments were drawn up in the Kremlin, presented with gifts and vodka to mark the occasion, and ordered to fire off rounds of shot, `disturbing the peace of the saints and ancient tsars of Moscow'. Over the next few days there were firework displays, more gun salutes, banquets, and feasts. Conservatives took retaliatory action. On the patriarch's orders, a banquet on 28 February was held without the now customary foreign guests, who were banned; but the next day the tsar dined with Patrick Gordon. Then in March Joachim died. His `Testament', which denounced the policy of hiring foreigners and deplored toleration of other faiths, has been described as the `last gasp' of Old Russia:

May our sovereigns never allow any Orthodox Christians in their realm to entertain any close friendly relations with heretics and dissenters--with the Latins, Lutherans, Calvinists and godless Tatars (whom our Lord abominates and the church of God damns for their God-abhorred guile); but let them be avoided as enemies of God and defamers of the Church.

Joachim's successor was Adrian, consecrated on 24 August 1690. He was to be Russia's last patriarch, his office left vacant after his death in 1700, and abolished altogether in 1721.

    As long as Tsar Ivan was alive, the old guard still retained a figure-head in the Kremlin. After the overthrow of Sophia and Golitsyn, the old Muscovite court life, with its liturgical emphasis, was resumed with a vengeance, cleansed of the `unseemly' female variants introduced by Sophia. Festivals gave special prominence to the history of the Russian Orthodox Church, celebrating earlier hierarchs who had assumed a strong political role, such as Metropolitans Philip and Alexis, and paying homage to the ruling dynasty with requiems for departed royalty (such as Tsarevich Alexis Alekseevich, whose death had not been marked in previous years). Old palace protocols persisted, on paper at least; for example, the practice of listing in order of rank all the nobles `in attendance' (*za nimi Velikimi Gosudariami*) on the tsars at such occasions as summer outings (*pokhody*) to country residences and monasteries. The Church continued to make its contribution to the business of warfare and government: in April 1695 General Avtamon Golovin was issued with icons of the Saviour, the Mother of God, and St Sergius and ten pounds of incense to carry in the campaign to Azov. In September 1697 Prince M. Ia. Cherkassky, the new governor of Tobol'sk, received a set of instructions, the first of which was to go to the Cathedral of the Holy Wisdom and hear prayers for the tsar and his family read by Metropolitan Ignaty of Siberia. A few months later Patriarch Adrian issued a long instruction to churches and monasteries on priorities and procedures.

    Despite the apparent vigour of tradition, the keepers of the palace records could not conceal the fact that one of the tsars was opting out of the usual rituals. Nowhere is the spirit of the new better illustrated than in an entry recorded shortly after Joachim's death. On 27 April 1690 (April was traditionally the start of the royal pilgrimage season) `the Great Sovereign Peter Alekseevich deigned to visit Kolomenskoe'. For his trip a rowing boat was got up to look like a sailing ship; the boyars followed in two boats and strel'tsy went in front in seven, and `as they sailed along the water there was firing from cannon and hand guns'. The `play' regiments, Peter's private troops, went along in smaller craft. Tsar Ivan travelled by land. Thus we see two tsars, one firmly rooted in old Russia, the other looking to new horizons. (Thirty-four years later, in 1724, Peter again travelled to Kolomenskoe along the river, in a small flotilla with Russian and foreign guests who had gathered in Moscow for the coronation of his second wife, Catherine. The interior of the old wooden palace, it seems, had been preserved exactly as it was in the tsar's youth.) In May 1690 we find Peter making a tour of monasteries, but more often than not Ivan carried out such duties alone. This turn of events was noted by contemporaries. Boris Kurakin records: `First the ceremonial processions to the cathedral were abandoned and Tsar Ivan Alekseevich started to go alone; also the royal robes were abandoned and Peter wore simple dress. Public audiences were mostly abandoned (such as were given to visiting prelates and envoys from the hetman, for which there were public processions,); now there were simple receptions.'

    Many of Peter's unofficial activities are recorded in the diary of Patrick Gordon, which provides a secular alternative to the old records which were so deeply rooted in the religious calendar. We learn that on 30 May 1690 Peter spent his birthday at Preobrazhenskoe enjoying gun salutes and target practice. On 19 January 1691 Peter visited P. V. Sheremetev, and the next day Gordon had such a dreadful hangover that he could not get out of bed until the evening. A dinner at Boris Golitysn's on 16 May had similar consequences. And so on. Royal account books for 1690-1 show numerous entries for orders for `German dress' in the royal workshops, made from materials bought from foreign merchants and intended for Peter and members of his play regiments. Peter's enthusiasm for things foreign is indicated by the motley collection of foreign goods shipped to Archangel in 1692: mathematical instruments, two globes, a large organ, four large clocks, five barrels of Rhine wine, and a barrel of olive oil.

    The new was taking its place alongside the old. After the traditional blessing of the waters at Preobrazhenskoe on 1 August, for example, there was firing from guns. Tsaritsa Natalia's name-day celebrations on 27 August 1691 combined the usual church services, visits from churchmen and receipt and dispensing of gifts on the tsaritsa's behalf, with a reception of visitors by the tsaritsa herself (from which, however, foreigners were excluded), followed by gun salutes and fireworks. We must also look to the beginning of the 1690s for the origins of one of Peter's most controversial `institutions', the All-Drunken, All-Jesting Assembly or `Synod'. Sometimes dismissed as an adolescent aberration, in fact the Drunken Assembly flourished throughout Peter's reign. The new trends seemed to be growing inexorably, yet how easily it might all have changed. In November 1692 Peter fell ill, and for ten days was at death's door. There were rumours that many of his supporters were preparing to flee. His recovery signalled the resumption of the new life with a vengeance. In July 1693 Peter set off for Archangel to see the sea. This was an `outing' (*pokhod*) for which the record-keepers lacked the vocabulary. The clerks compromised by listing the courtiers in attendance on Peter in the usual manner, but without reference to their destination. Yet this historic journey had much in common with the royal outings of old. The accompanying retinue was listed according to rank, from boyars to secretaries. Peter travelled with a priest, eight choristers, two dwarfs and forty strel'tsy. During Peter's travels Tsar Ivan's activities were solemnly chronicled, and Peter's absences were sometimes noted--for example, at the requiem mass for the late Tsarevna Anna Mikhailovna on 24 July. Moscow was depleted of courtiers. More than ever, the life-style of the two courts diverged. For example, the Russian New Year on 1 September 1693 was celebrated in Archangel with gun salutes from both foreign and Russian ships in the harbour, while back in Moscow, Tsar Ivan, clad in robes of red velvet, `deigned to go from his royal chambers to the cathedral' to hear the patriarch celebrate the liturgy `according to the usual rites'. On occasion, Peter assumed a traditional role, visiting his father's favourite place of pilgrimage, the St Sabbas monastery at Zvenigorod, in May 1693; but after Tsar Ivan's death in January 1696, more and more rituals were enacted without any tsar at all. An old formula was adopted to cover for Peter's absence, be it on campaign or abroad, i.e., the appointment of a small group of deputies to attend services and ceremonials in his stead. An order to this effect was issued: from 2 April to 1 September 1697 `the tsarevichy, boyars, *okol'nichie* and gentlemen of the duma shall follow behind the holy icons in parades and services', although entries in the palace records reveal that the escort usually comprised only token representatives of these ranks. So, for example, the 1697 Epiphany ceremony was attended by Tsarevich Vasily of Siberia, boyar Prince P. I. Khovansky, *okol'nichii* S. F. Tolochanov, and Secretary Avatamon Ivanov.

    If the early 1690s were a time of exploration and game playing, they also saw the beginnings of serious activity. Peter's first chance to try out his strength came in 1694 when his mother died. The demise of Natalia Naryshkina, a useful figure-head for the leading men, whose power rested upon their relationship to the royal mother, threatened a new configuration of forces which could have worked to Peter's disadvantage. But any thoughts of, for example, using the strel'tsy again against Peter were discouraged by Peter's own forces, based upon the `play' (*poteshnye*) troops. The two regiments took their names from the adjacent royal villages at Preobrazhenskoe and Semenovskoe to the north of Moscow. Their organization--foreign ranks, training, uniforms--was modelled on the new-formation infantry regiments introduced in the 1630s. The story goes that in the 1680s Peter discovered about 300 men idle at a former royal hunting-lodge, and signed them up to play military games. Others were requisitioned from regular units: for example, a drummer and fifteen troopers from the Butyrsky infantry regiment in 1687. Young nobles who might once have served as gentlemen of the bedchamber and in other junior court posts were recruited alongside local lads from a variety of backgrounds. The Semenovsky regiment was formed from the overflow from the Preobrazhensky regiment. Officers and men were all said to be known to the tsar personally. By 1685 the embryonic guards had a scaled-down wooden fortress which Peter named Presburg, with barracks and stables adjacent to the Preobrazhenskoe palace. In deference to foreign expertise, Russians, including the tsar himself, served in the ranks or as non-commissioned officers. A list of officers (*nachal'nye liudi*) of both regiments for 1695 shows that they were all foreigners, although Russian names appear in the next year or so, mostly in the lower officer ranks.

    In September 1694 Peter staged the so-called Kozhukhovo manoeuvres, mock exercises which were `partly political in nature', in which some 30,000 men participated. The `campaign' presented Muscovites with a show of strength, as armies commanded by Fedor Romodanovsky, the `king of Presburg', and Ivan Buturlin, the `king of Poland', paraded through the city. The mock battle included an assault with explosives on a specially constructed fortress, which left twenty-four dead and fifteen wounded. Members of both the Lopukhin and the Naryshkin families were placed on the losing side, perhaps to make the point that Peter did not intend to be beholden to *any* of his relatives unless they proved their worth.

    Soon there were to be opportunities for real service. In the wake of the disastrous Crimean campaigns of 1687 and 1689, which attracted little allied support, Russia began to lose confidence in the Holy League, fearing exclusion from any future peace negotiations with the Turks. Even so, Peter was determined to continue the war in the hope of real gain and in 1695 he reopened hostilities in a campaign against the Turkish coastal fort of Azov at the mouth of the River Don, in an attempt to recover Russian prestige, gain a stronger bargaining position with his allies and ward off Turkish attacks on Ukraine. It was widely believed in 1694-5 that Peter was planning to make another assault on the Crimea, `march with a mighty army against the Crim Tartar, having an Artillery of 80 great guns and 150 Mortars', to bring relief to hard-pressed Poland, rumours which Peter was happy to encourage. In the event, he marched not to Perekop, but to Azov, a plan which may have been suggested by Patrick Gordon. Two armies were dispatched: the joint force of B. P. Sheremetev and the Ukrainian hetman Ivan Mazepa to the Dnieper, to deflect the Tatars from the mouth of the Don, and a smaller unit consisting of the Preobrazhensky and Semenovsky guards and strel'tsy on river craft down the Don.

    Peter wrote to Fedor Apraksin: `In the autumn we were engaged in martial games at Kozhukhovo. They weren't intended to be anything more than games. But that play was the herald of real activity.' In this, as in some subsequent campaigns, Peter ceded nominal command to others. The commander-in-chief was A. S. Shein, while the tsar marched as a bombardier in the Preobrazhensky regiment. The first Azov campaign was a failure, and the fortress remained in Turkish hands. Peter blamed this on multiple command, tactical errors, and technical deficiencies. Foreign engineering specialists were hired for the next campaign, in an effort to avoid such fiascos as mines planted on ramparts far away from the enemy blowing up 130 Russians without doing any damage to the Turks. The Turks, meanwhile, were able to replenish supplies from the sea, with no Russian ships to hinder them.

    This set-back has often been identified as the real beginning of Peter's career, when he was forced to `grow up' and discover `astonishing reserves of energy'. Such formulae should not simply be dismissed as part of a Petrine myth propagated by both tsarist and Soviet writers. Failure did indeed stimulate the implementation of a number of measures, characterized by what was to become the typically `Petrine' use of speed, mass recruitment, and command from above. The prime example was the preparation of galleys at Voronezh on the Don for a renewed campaign in 1696, a huge effort in which thousands of the tsar's subjects were expected to do their bit, from the leading churchmen and merchants, who reluctantly supplied the cash, to the hapless labourers drafted in to hack wood in terrible conditions. Both river craft and seagoing vessels were to support an army of some 46,000 Russian troops, 15,000 Ukrainian Cossacks, 5,000 Don Cossacks, and 3,000 Kalmyks. At the end of May 1696, Peter's land and sea forces laid siege to Azov. By 7 June a Russian flotilla was able to take to the sea and cut off access to Turkish reinforcements.82 Apart from the use of sea power, Russian success was aided by General Gordon's plan of a rolling rampart ('the throwing up a wall of earth and driveing it on the Towne wall') and the services of Austrian engineers. On 18 July the fortress surrendered.

    This victory prompted some striking manifestations of the new culture. In the past, military triumphs had been largely religious affairs, celebrated by parades of crosses and icons headed by chanting priests. Such displays of thanksgiving continued right to the end of Peter's reign--in Russia, as in every other European country, military victory and defeat were interpreted as inextricably linked with God's will--but from now on the religious processions were supplemented, and usually eclipsed, by secular parades bristling with `pagan' symbols. After Azov, triumphal gates of Classical design bearing the legend in Russian `I came. I saw. I conquered' gave a preview of the imperial Roman references and imagery which culminated in the festivities of 1721, when Russia became an empire. There were references to Christian Rome, too, and comparisons of Peter to the Emperor Constantine. In addition to the customary prayers, verses were chanted through a megaphone by State Secretary Andrei Vinius. Peter, wearing German uniform, marched in the parade behind the official heroes Admiral Lefort and General Shein, while the religious authority was parodied by `prince-pope' Nikita Zotov in a carriage. It is said that Peter had in mind not only Roman precedents but also the example of Ivan IV, who organized a similar parade after the conquest of Kazan in 1552. This was the first public display of the new manners, which until then had by and large been confined to semi-private indulgence at Preobrazhenskoe or in the Foreign Quarter. This new openness fanned growing popular disapproval of Peter's foreign ways, which expressed itself in full force in 1698, when the strel'tsy revolted.

    The 1690s saw interesting developments in art and culture. The semi-Westernized Moscow baroque style of the 1680s matured and spread beyond the capital, where masonry churches and civic buildings displayed decorative features such as Classical columns and carved stone and brick ornament inspired by Western Renaissance and baroque originals. Peter's maternal relatives commissioned so many churches in this style that it is often referred to as `Naryshkin baroque'. One of the finest examples, the Church of the Intercession at Fili, built for Lev Naryshkin in 1690-3, had icons which reflected family history--images of SS Peter and Paul, John the Baptist, Alexis Man of God, and St Stephen, the latter bearing a striking resemblance to the young Peter, who often visited the church. An even more remarkable church, commissioned by Prince Boris Golitsyn on his estate at Dubrovitsy in 1690, dispensed with the traditional cupolas (the tower is capped by an open-work crown) and had statues of saints over the parapets and Latin inscriptions inside.

    The painting of the 1690s also exhibits interesting `transitional' features. In January 1692 the Armoury received an order for eleven large pictures for Peter's residence at Pereiaslavl'-Zalessky (where he was experimenting with sailing), the subjects of which were the Saviour, the Mother of God, the martyr Natalia, Alexis Man of God, Alexander Nevsky, Peter and the martyr Evdokia. The family references (Alexander Nevsky, for example, was the patron saint of Peter's second son Alexander, born in October 1691) were almost certainly chosen by Peter's mother rather than Peter himself. But the commission reflected `modern' trends in so far as these were not traditional icon panels but paintings on canvas in frames. There are even more revealing indications of Peter's emerging individual taste: for example, his order in July 1691 for twelve German portraits (*person nemetskikh*) in gilt frames, to be taken to his apartments from the confiscated property of Prince Vasily Golitsyn. In August 1694 a team of painters in the Armoury received orders for twenty-three battle paintings for Peter's apartments, `after the German model', with frames also of German design. Four painters were to take four subjects each, and the rest were to be done by apprentices, `painting different subjects, making use of German pictures [as models]'. In June 1697, when Peter was abroad, the same team of Armoury painters was instructed to paint eight pictures on canvas depicting `troops going by sea, making use of foreign German pictures or engravings, employing the best workmanship'. Again, these were large canvases, evidently executed in some haste, given that the same painters were all dispatched to work in Voronezh in July, and the frames were ordered in August. Painters were called upon to do other jobs to meet new demands: for example, to decorate the new ships built at Voronezh in 1696-7. These few examples indicate clearly the emergence of a distinct secular culture from within the walls of the Moscow Armoury, that early `academy of arts' which housed a secular painting studio separate from the icon-painting workshops only since the 1680s.

    It is very difficult to assess the art of the 1690s because, like the 1696 triumphal gates, so few examples have survived. Accurate likenesses of Peter pre-dating the Grand Embassy are notable by their absence. Earlier engravings, such as Larmessen's double portrait of Peter and Ivan (ca. 1687), are mostly imaginative reconstructions. Evidently others existed but have disappeared; thus, in July 1695 an order was given for a printed `persona' of Peter to be stuck on to canvas and framed. Perhaps Peter's restless activity in the 1690s precluded sitting for portraits. Yet it is with portraits that we shall conclude our examination of the 1690s. The first is the most famous (once thought to be the only) image of the young tsar, painted by Sir Godfrey Kneller in London in 1698, now hanging in Kensington Palace in London. The startling contrast between this wholly Western depiction of a monarch and the few surviving images of Peter's father has often been pointed out, but is worth drawing attention to here: the bearded Orthodox tsar of the 1660s with traditional robes and pectoral and crown crosses gives way to the warrior in armour with a warship in the background. For Kneller, Peter was just another European monarch. All traces of Russian `exoticism' were expunged. Indeed, Kneller used the same set formula--column and crown to the left, warship in the background to the right, royal ermine, and armour--as in his 1680s portrait of James II. Yet there are other portraits of Peter from this period which remind us that the break with Old Russia was far from complete. One by the Dutch artist Pieter Van der Werff shows Peter dressed in the Polish style, while in an anonymous portrait now in the Rijksmuseum he wears Russian dress. A similar contrast may be observed in two much smaller images, produced a year later in an entirely different medium. In 1699 two experimental half-roubles were minted. The first, by Vasily Andreev of the Armoury, shows Peter full face, in icon style, wearing the Crown of Monomach. The second is wholly Western, showing the tsar as a Roman emperor in profile, with laurel wreath and mantle. On the reverse is a collar of St Andrew and a coat of arms. On the eve of the new century and the outbreak of the Northern War, the designers had, albeit unconsciously, expressed the contrast between old and new. Which of the two would prevail? In Peter's mind, at least, the contest was already decided, as were the means for augmenting national prestige and prosperity. The focus would shift from the Black Sea to the Baltic and the country which barred Russia's way, Sweden.

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