

**POLITICAL IDEAS IN THE RUSSIAN HISTORICAL WRITING  
OF THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT:  
MIKHAIL SHCHERBATOV AND NIKOLAI KARAMZIN**

**Vladimir Ryzhkov**

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**Prof. Laszlo Kontler**

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation is devoted to a comparative analysis of the political ideas of two Russian historians of the late eighteenth—early nineteenth cc., Mikhail Shcherbatov (1733–1790) and Nikolai Karamzin (1766–1826), the authors of the two first “full” histories of Russia. It demonstrates that although these historians are usually related to the Age of Enlightenment, their use of contemporary European ideas was specific and based on political notions borrowed from the political thought of the Renaissance and classical Antiquity. Both these historians advocated moral, although not legal, limitations to “despotism”. For Shcherbatov this meant the participation of “virtuous” aristocrats in governing the state together with the monarch. For Karamzin this meant the coordination of the monarch’s policy with the “public opinion” represented by the conservative circles of the nobility. The second part of the dissertation is devoted to a detailed comparison of the last volumes of Shcherbatov’s and Karamzin’s histories, which describe the reigns of Ivan the Terrible and Boris Godunov. By comparing the ways in which both historians constructed the plots of the stories of these two rulers, on the basis of available sources, this dissertation seeks to demonstrate how the political ideas of Shcherbatov and Karamzin were expressed in their historical writing.

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## INTRODUCTION

### **The Problem**

The main purpose of my dissertation is a comparative analysis of the political ideas of two Russian historians: Mikhail Mikhailovich Shcherbatov (1733–1790) and Nikolai Mikhailovich Karamzin (1766–1826). This analysis will be accomplished in particular through the comparison of their two “general” histories of Russia, written at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries. The investigation will be limited only to those volumes which were devoted to the period from the beginning of the reign of Ivan the Terrible (Ioann Grozny) to the accession to power of False Dmitry I. I will focus on those volumes where the ideas of both the historians concerning the nature of Russian autocracy and the reasons for its crises are more salient. Both historians in their own way projected their contemporary political ideals and critical attitudes onto the past. Both of them, using examples from the events of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries, tried to discover the general regularities of political life in Russia. Therefore, a comparison of the two histories provides a unique material for transcending the stereotypical characterizations ascribed to these two historians in the existing literature. On the basis of this material the differences in their political outlooks will be explored, together with a comparison of their interpretations of the events of the two reigns preceding the Time of Troubles.

My analysis omits those volumes of Shcherbatov's *Istoriia rossiiskaia ot drevneishikh vremen* ("Russian history from the ancient times") and Karamzin's *Istoriia gosudarstva rossiiskago* ("History of the Russian state") devoted to the Time of Troubles per se, because these volumes were left unfinished by both historians. Even though certain sections were published posthumously, their main ideas were not clearly formulated.

The creative work of Shcherbatov and Karamzin is normally related to the so-called Age of Enlightenment, even though Karamzin's work stretched well into the nineteenth century when he witnessed the emergence of Romanticism as a special trend in Russian literature and artistic culture. Nevertheless, the first Russian historian who was the representative of Romanticism was not Karamzin, but his critic Nikolai Polevoi, who was influenced by the French Romantic School. This development took place in the beginning of the 1830s, and one of the first expressions of the new influence was Polevoi's critical review of the *Istoriia* by Karamzin. The critic regarded the book as obsolete and written in the categories of the preceding eighteenth century. The later critics of Karamzin adopted this perspective. Consequently, Karamzin's *Istoriia* was routinely attributed to the Age of Enlightenment. In my dissertation I will try, in particular, to refine this image and to demonstrate that it makes better sense to relate Karamzin to one of the branches of Preromanticism (Sentimentalism), and thus, to regard him as a representative of the Late Enlightenment. Periodization in literature and historiography, however, is useful only to some extent as a first approximation, because many trends can exist



simultaneously; even in the creative work of one and the same author one can find diverse stylistic influences.

A more important task as regards periodization in accordance with the opposition between Enlightenment and Preromanticism is to define a set of major ideas which were in the foreground of Shcherbatov's and Karamzin's interpretation of history. Generally, one can say that among the main sources of such ideas for both historians was *The Spirit of Laws* by Montesquieu, with his classification of forms of government and an indication of the main motives of human behavior for each of the forms. Accordingly, Shcherbatov and Karamzin adopted a peculiar notion of the political community as a kind of mechanism subject to rational laws in the same manner as the planets of the solar system are to general laws of gravitation as discovered and mathematically described by Newton. People in society, similarly to celestial bodies, which keep their motion by inertia and gravitation, act under the influence of their rational or irrational interests and passions. The notion of the possibility of the creation of a perfect political community as a kind of machine, which combines the motion of its separate elements (people and social groups) in a way most effective for the "common good," was generally accepted in the Age of Enlightenment. However, for Karamzin, who witnessed the French Revolution, similarly as for Shcherbatov, who was a contemporary of Pugachev's rebellion, the notion that only a utopian state could be rationally constructed was not alien. In reality, the social order and the entire civilization is built on the shaky basis of irrational popular masses, and resembles a ship, which seems to sail on calm waters until it is forced occasionally to encounter the waves of popular unrest.

In the political views of both Shcherbatov and Karamzin one can see common features, yet this work will focus mainly on the differences between them in order to trace the evolution of the historiography of the Russian Enlightenment during the period of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Certainly, the diversity of the positions of Shcherbatov and Karamzin on many issues was conditioned not only by the time span dividing them, but also by their personal backgrounds, as they belonged to different generations and different layers of the Russian nobility. This diversity can be traced in their different attitudes toward the aristocracy, and is connected to their specific social origins. Shcherbatov was one of the descendants of the Rurikid dynasty, and belonged to an ancient princely clan. This was not uncommon as there were plenty of descendants of Rurik and Gedimin among the Russian nobility. It is more important that Shcherbatov inherited vast landed estates (where serfs were counted in the thousands) from his grandfather and father, who had served as generals in the Petrine period. This allowed him to regard himself as a member of the aristocracy and, while he was constantly preoccupied by financial problems, he could still afford a more luxurious style of living than a typical representative of ordinary nobility possessing only one hundred serfs or less. By contrast, Karamzin belonged by birth to the mid-level provincial gentry, and while he lived in Moscow, he maintained his family mainly by the profits from his literary activities. This can help explain the crucial difference in the political outlook of the two historians. Shcherbatov shared the ideal of monarchy without a written constitution, although limited informally by the participation of the aristocracy of birth in the governance of the state. Karamzin, to the contrary, advocated the idea of

autocracy based on the support of wider circles of the rank and file nobility. The restriction of autocracy, according to him, could lead only to oligarchy and the inability of the weakest to defend themselves in the face of oppression by mighty grandees. In his view the autocratic monarch had to perform the role of a defender of the weak and the oppressed. His major function was to provide equal justice for all noblemen irrespective of their proximity to the throne, their wealth, their rank and their titles. I will also demonstrate how this basic difference in political outlook informed Shcherbatov's and Karamzin's different interpretations of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Russian history.

Another important difference between the two writers is a shift from a rationally utilitarian worldview to the one which was more focused on the sphere of human feelings and emotions. Characteristic for Shcherbatov was the notion of political community as a kind of mechanism, which could function more or less routinely. Accordingly, the main task of a statesman was to discover the right laws, allowing the reconciliation of the wills and interests of a multitude of people. In his reasoning, Shcherbatov proceeds from the model of Montesquieu's monarchy and suggests definitions, adapted to Russian conditions, of its "mainsprings." Like the French thinker, Shcherbatov stresses the need in a monarchy for the existence of a mediating layer between the monarch and the people. Thus for him the main problem was how to motivate the members of each layer to guarantee an effective functioning of the state machine.

Karamzin considered a different set of ideas. He proceeds from the concept of a social contract, which is understood to be not a rational bargain between two

interested parties but an emotional relationship based on love, or, in the case of broken contract, based on hatred between the people and the monarch. The political community is destroyed if this bond of love is broken. Because the people are understood as generally loyal to the monarchy, the party that violates the contract tends to be the monarch who misunderstands his obligations towards society, or simply ignores them. Accordingly, the main focus of Karamzin's investigation is the causes of the loss of love between the monarch and the people.

### **The Methodology**

From the methodological point of view this dissertation does not follow any particular school and can be located in the framework of intellectual history, widely understood. The main theoretical grounding emphasizes the importance of political languages and the defining of the intellectual context. First of all, I was inspired by the approach of the so-called Cambridge School in the history of political thought (J. G. A. Pocock and Q. Skinner).<sup>1</sup> An especially important theoretical model for me is Pocock's *The Machiavellian Moment*,<sup>2</sup> mainly its interpretation of Machiavelli's ideas in the intellectual context of Florentine political thought. Following Pocock's approach I trace the connection between such notions as *fate (Providence)* and *virtue*, which are

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<sup>1</sup> See, in particular: Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, vols. 1–3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); J. G. A. Pocock, *Politics, Language and Time: Essays on Political Thought and History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989).

<sup>2</sup> J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 156–182.

as essential for Shcherbatov and Karamzin, as for Machiavelli. Regarding the epoch of Boris Godunov, Karamzin provides an important (although debatable) theoretical explanation of the nature of the political community and the aims to which political power was to aspire. Despite a certain interest in the semantics of historical concepts, I will to a lesser degree rely on the German version of the history of concepts, because my comparison of the two historians centers on a relatively short historical period; I do not seek to analyze concepts as indicators of social changes. Quite the contrary, I try to regard social changes as one of the factors which conditioned the differences of political ideas and concepts used by Shcherbatov and Karamzin.

In my opinion, the analysis of historical narratives, in contrast to political treatises, needs a revision of the methodology of the Cambridge school. This requires a brief digression.

The difference of historical thought in its classical form (which can be traced to the models of antiquity) from political thought can be interpreted in the following way. Political thought tries to describe a certain picture, or a sequence of pictures, whereas historical thought is focused on the dynamics of events. Therefore, metaphorically, political thought can be compared with painting, whereas historical thought is closer to music. A picture can be analyzed as a combination of certain figures. Similarly, a mental picture which represents a political project can be reduced in the final analysis to the combination of concepts, connected with each other in a certain net of meaning. By contrast, the story which is an element of historical thought cannot be reduced to a set of static concepts, like the melody cannot be reduced to a sequence of separate sounds without losing something essential. Thus, we can think

about the meaning of a story as a whole, but any attempt to reduce it to meanings of certain concepts, which we use in the process of narration, would be misleading. In other words, something is changing in our mind in the process of our understanding of a story, and this change as such is a meaning of this story—not any static pictures—which we can imagine in the process of listening.

This led me to the idea that the units of my analysis must not be concepts and their usages, but rather stories and their meanings. How does one work with such stories in the process of analysis?

For classical historians the main element used to construct a narrative was more or less a simple story, which can be compared with an elementary musical melody. Let us take for granted that this story has a certain elementary meaning. To create a story with a more complex meaning a historian, as a composer, can either combine several melodies, or introduce variations of the melody.

Let me give an example. Let us assume that we have an elementary story about the punishment of a vice. Someone breaks a moral rule and then receives a punishment as fate. This story has an elementary moral—one should not break such rules, or else pay. This moral can be regarded as an elementary “meaning” of this story. Now, we can vary this story to create more complex meanings. For example, someone broke a rule, and for a while became more successful than those who kept moral rules. However, the people surrounding him began to mistrust him. Thus he found himself in isolation. After that, misfortune occurred, and nobody wanted to help him, and he perished.

This new story has a certain similarity with the previous one. It is about the punishment of vice. However, the meaning is more complex as there is no personalized fate here which acts to punish a vicious man. He perishes as a result of accident, but also as a result of isolation, which is an effect of his vicious behavior. Thus, we have a variation of the initial story with a different meaning.

Now, we can make this story still more complex. Let us suppose that this person, despite his initial sin, was generous to his fellows. So they initially regarded him as a good person and were ready to forget his misdeed. However, he frequently recalled his previous behavior and expected revenge, as he thought that somebody might do to him what he did to someone else. So, he was suspicious towards his neighbors and gradually isolated himself. Thus, when an accident happened, nobody wished to help—and he perished.

This is again the variation of the same story, but the meaning is still more complex. The meaning is, in brief, that a vicious person cannot trust other people.

In reality, my examples are taken from a particular story, the story of Boris Godunov, a tsar of non-princely origin who ruled in Russia at the beginning of the seventeenth century. And my aim is not simply to analyze the moral meanings of his story, as it was interpreted by my historians, Shcherbatov and Karamzin, but also to connect these interpretations with the political views of these historians.

My aim is, therefore, to trace a historical evolution of meanings. When we use the approach of the Cambridge School, we have to compare, for example, how the use of the concept of virtue has changed from one political thinker to another. We can conduct the same operation by a comparison of the texts of the two historians. But in

this case we compare not the usage of concepts but the usage of stories. We can trace how the meaning of a certain story has been changed by the historians through a certain variation in the same basic story, and ask the questions: Why did such a change take place? How is this connected with the different political views of these two historians?

The answers to these questions will be the topic of my dissertation. Let me now turn to another methodological approach, which I also used in my investigation.

A significant role in my methodology, especially regarding Karamzin, is played by the theory of narrative which has been developed mainly for the study of literary texts. Being inspired by the works of Hayden White, especially by his *Metahistory*,<sup>3</sup> I tried to use the methods of literary analysis for the study of historical narratives. Historical narratives are based on materials borrowed from primary sources rather than pure imagination; nevertheless, I hold that in constructing interpretative schemes a historian retains a degree of freedom, especially when the available sources contradict each other. In this case the choice of one particular interpretation of events from the available versions, and the criticism or ignoring of pieces of evidence which contradict the historian's interpretation, could be conditioned by different rationales. Among these, an important role is played not only by the historian's ideological preferences or his ideas about the desirable or defective organization of the political community, but also by aesthetic considerations, namely the desire to make one's narrative coherent and psychologically convincing for the reader. In contrast to Hayden White, however, I will focus not on the relationship between a genre used by

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<sup>3</sup> Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1973).



a historian in the construction of the narrative and a particular ideology, but on the more specific relationships between the construction of the plot and the political ideal by which a historian is inspired.

An essential role in this study is played by the endeavor to uncover the intellectual context and theoretical sources not connected with Russian history but rather with general ideas related to the organization of political society. In this respect, it was surprising to see how closely the historical interpretations of Shcherbatov and Karamzin are connected with earlier historiography and the political thought of the Renaissance, and even classical antiquity, and not with the historical works and theoretical treatises of the European Enlightenment. Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, the Stoics, and also Machiavelli are no less important for the two Russian historians than their closer contemporaries Montesquieu, Hume, Rousseau, and d'Holbach, although the influence of the latter thinkers should not be underestimated. This influence of classical antiquity, especially in Shcherbatov's case, was partially connected to the peculiarities of Russian educational practices in the eighteenth century, with an important place was assigned to the reading of classical authors. As for Karamzin, he consciously studied ancient historiography as an adult after he chose the writing of Russian history as his major occupation.

## **The Structure**

The structure of the dissertation is as follows:

The first chapter is focused on the political ideas of Mikhail Shcherbatov. I connect his political views with his social and biographical background and provide a detailed analysis of his understanding of the destiny of the human being within the cultural milieu of noble Russia, where honor and virtue are nobleman's prime motives. This is connected with Shcherbatov's ideas about a "republican" monarchy as an ideal political form for Russia.

In the second chapter I provide a description of Karamzin's political ideas on the basis of the analysis of his political treatises. In particular, I interpret his ideas as a specific response to Machiavelli's view of politics. The main focus of this chapter is, however, the artistic characteristics of Karamzin's political texts and their paradoxical dimensions, which exclude the possibility of straightforward interpretation unless taking into account multiple meanings.

The third and the fourth chapters are devoted to a comparative analysis of two sections of Shcherbatov's *Istoriia* and Karamzin's *Istoriia*. In the third chapter, which deals with the reign of Ivan the Terrible, I explore the ideas of both authors regarding reasons why Ivan became a tyrant. I also illustrate the difference between Shcherbatov and Karamzin in their understanding of tyranny. In the fourth chapter, devoted to the two historians' interpretations of the reign of the "usurper" Boris Godunov, the main emphasis is on their ideas concerning possible reasons for the monarch's loss of legitimacy and the collapse of the state.

I decided not to include in the final text of the dissertation two additional chapters devoted to the analysis of interpretations of the second tyrannical period of the reign of Ivan the Terrible and the reign of his son, Feodor Ioannovich. Partially

this was done in order to make the text more coherent. The ideas underlying these sections of each history are also important; however, they are less essential to understanding the difference in political outlook of both the historians.

Finally, in the conclusion I integrate the major ideas of all the chapters and formulate a set of arguments about how the political outlook of Shcherbatov and Karamzin connects with the social and intellectual contexts of their writing.

### **Shcherbatov and Karamzin in Literature on Historical Writing**

Now, let us move to the most important works devoted to the study of Shcherbatov's and Karamzin's historical writings.

The critical discussion of Shcherbatov's *Istoriia* was initiated already during his lifetime, and this allowed him to respond partially to the arguments of his critics. But in general, the criticism of Shcherbatov by Ivan Boltin (1735–1792), which was only partially fair and directed only to the first volumes of the *Istoriia*, meant that Shcherbatov's work was read only by specialists and remained unknown for a wider public. By contrast, the *Istoriia* by Karamzin immediately become widely known and did not lose its popular appeal until the publication of the first volumes of Sergei Soloviev's *Istoriia Rossii s drevneishikh vremen* ("History of Russia from the ancient times") in the middle of the nineteenth century. A detailed analysis of the polemics between Boltin and Shcherbatov deserves a separate inquiry. In general, though, one can say that from the side of Boltin there were mostly factual corrections, which were

only partially true and were based on the authority of Tatishchev.<sup>4</sup> One can assume that Boltin, who did not write a consistent narrative, cleared the ground for his acquaintance, Ivan Elagin (1725–1794), who had decided to create his own version of Russian history. Boltin and Elagin together with Alexei Musin-Pushkin (1744–1817), who was a well-known collector of ancient Russian manuscripts, were members of the same circle of admirers of Russian history.<sup>5</sup> It also can be assumed that one of the motives for such hostile criticism was Shcherbatov's political position as a critic of favoritism, whereas Boltin was under the protection of Grigorii Potemkin, the main favorite of Catherine II.<sup>6</sup>

We can have a notion of the character of criticism against Shcherbatov by members of this circle from the following fragment of the “Preduvedomlenie chitateliu” (“Preface for a reader”) of Elagin to his own history of Russia:

Князь Щербатов обладал искусством много говорить и мало вразумлять Читателя, мало знал не токмо древних летописцев наших, но и настоящий язык Руской. Незнание первого исполняло его повествование небылицами, а последнее ввергнуло в Галлицизму или францословие, не свойственное Рускому наречию. Притом по небрежению землеописания, о котором он и сам признается, яко бы землеописание для Повествователя вовсе не потребно... Но погрешности в повествовании его не изчислимы суть. Некоторые однакожь приписуют ему в похвалу, что он по силе своей написал Рускую Историю, каковой до него не было, и лучше бы, естлиб и никогда к заблуждению Читателей ее не существовало.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Antony Lentin, “‘Rubbishing’ a historian’s reputation: Catherine II, the battle of the books, *querelles d’outré-tombe*, and Shcherbatov’s *History of Russia*,” in *Eighteenth-Century Russia: Society, Culture, Economy. Papers from the VII International Conference of the Study Group on Eighteenth Century Russia*, ed. R. Bartlett (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2007), 267–281.

<sup>5</sup> About the circle of Musin-Pushkin see: V. P. Kozlov, *Kruzhek A. I. Musina-Pushkina i “Slovo o polku Igoreve”* (Moscow: Nauka, 1988).

<sup>6</sup> D. N. Shanskii, *Iz istorii russkoi istoricheskoi mysli: I. N. Boltin* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1983), 22.

<sup>7</sup> Ivan Elagin, *Opyt povestvovaniia o Rossii* (Moscow, 1803), xxxi–xxxii. This work was written in 1790.

Karamzin, in accordance with Miliukov's opinion, sparingly and usually critically refers to his predecessors when he wants to emphasize his disagreement with them.<sup>8</sup> The first to pay a due respect to Shcherbatov as a historian was Sergei Soloviev (1820–1879). As it was necessary for him to justify the need for a new “general” history of Russia, while the widely popular *Istoriia* by Karamzin already existed, it was natural that Soloviev returned to Shcherbatov. Comparing his work with Karamzin's narration, with which he wanted to maintain a critical distance, Soloviev found in the *Istoriia* by Shcherbatov a number of characteristics which from a scholarly point of view looked preferable in comparison to the more artistic *Istoriia* by Karamzin.

In his article “Pisateli russkoi istorii XVIII veka” (“Writers of Russian history of the eighteenth century”), Soloviev provides the following general characterization of Shcherbatov:

...Истории Щербатова принадлежит почетное место в нашей исторической литературе.

Князь Щербатов был человек умный, трудолюбивый, добросовестный, начитанный, был хорошо знаком с литературою других народов, с их историческою литературою; он не изучил всецело русской истории: везде видно, что он стал изучать ее, когда начал писать; он не уяснил для себя ее хода, ее особенностей; он понимает ее только с доступной ему, общечеловеческой стороны, рассматривает каждое явление совершенно отрешенно, ограничивается одною внешнею логическою и нравственною оценкою... Но зато там, где Ломоносов старается только-только украшенно передать известие летописи, Щербатов думает над этим известием... а известно, какую услугу науке оказывает тот, кто первый обращает внимание на известное явление, первый начинает объяснять его, хотя бы его объяснения были и неудовлетворительны; Щербатов не ученый, он занимается историею

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<sup>8</sup> P. N. Miliukov, *Ocherki istorii istoricheskoi nauki* (Moscow: Nauka, 2002), 164.

как любитель; но он занимается историею для истории, сознает, или, чтобы не сказать много, предчувствует в истории науку...<sup>9</sup>

It is important to note here that for Soloviev the *Istoriia* of Shcherbatov is significant neither for its factual details, which might be wrong, nor for its answers to questions that are often based on abstract reasoning and speculation, nor for general moral evaluations. Instead, Shcherbatov is able to ask penetrating questions, and his “perplexities” open the polemics on a number of problems, to which later historians had also paid attention. As for Shcherbatov’s critics, Soloviev explains their success in attacking Shcherbatov’s *Istoriia* in the following way:

Критика благодаря особенно Болтину и Шлёцеру дала большие средства последующим писателям превзойти Щербатова... но относительно глубины взгляда на некоторые важные явления они не сделали большого шага вперед. ...Но почему же, при таких несомненных достоинствах, труд Щербатова не пользовался и не пользуется должным уважением? Это явление объяснить нетрудно: в то время, когда в истории всего более ценили изящество формы, краснописание, труд Щербатова отличался противоположною крайностию, слогом крайне тяжелым, неправильным; стоит прочесть выходки краснописца Елагина против Щербатова, чтобы понять, почему труд последнего так много проигрывал в глазах современников.<sup>10</sup>

In his other article, “N. M. Karamzin i ego literaturnaia deiatel’nost’: ‘Istoriia gosudarstva Rossiiskogo’” (“N. M. Karamzin and his literary activity: ‘The history of the Russian State’”), Soloviev makes a detailed analysis of Karamzin’s text, comparing it with respective places in Shcherbatov’s *Istoriia*. This text, which probably serves to Soloviev as guide for the writing of his own *Istoriia*, is a kind of synopsis and simply records the disagreements between the two historians without a detailed account of why they diverged in their interpretation of the events. Certain remarks, however,

<sup>9</sup> S. M. Soloviev, *Sochineniia*, bk. 16 (Moscow: Mysl’, 1995), 230–231.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 241.

referring to the volumes which I will analyze, are interesting. In particular, Soloviev demonstrates how Shcherbatov and Karamzin use in different ways the detailed, yet biased, evidence of Kurbskii on Ivan the Terrible. This is how Soloviev writes about the character of the tsar, which poses a problem for many historians:

Характер деятельности Иоанна IV, заключая в себе две противоположные стороны, был предметом спора как для ближайшего, так и для более отдаленного потомства. Ум человеческий не любит соединения противоположностей, и от этой нелюбви много страдала и, к сожалению, еще до сих пор много страдает историческая наука; если известное историческое лицо одною стороною своей деятельности производит благоприятное впечатление, то нет недостатка в писателях, которые стараются показать, что это лицо во всех случаях жизни было образцом совершенства, или, наоборот: найдя в деятельности какого-нибудь исторического лица темные пятна, стараются показать, что и во всех остальных его поступках нет ничего хорошего; а если что и есть хорошее, то принадлежит не ему, а другим.<sup>11</sup>

From this Soloviev concludes that the problem which Shcherbatov as well as Karamzin faced was to reconcile the contradictory evidence of sources and to grasp the “actual” character of Grozny.

This is how Soloviev explains Shcherbatov’s reliance on the evidence of Kurbskii:

Первый вопрос, представившийся Щербатову, был вопрос: верить или не верить показаниям Курбского – потому что Курбский писал под влиянием сильной вражды к Иоанну. Имея в виду эту вражду, Щербатов не верит Курбскому, что Иоанн только вследствие клеветы ласкателей своих, вдруг без всякого повода со стороны Сильвестра и Адашева с товарищи удалил их от себя и начал преследовать; Щербатов объясняет перемену в Иоанне другим образом, показывая, что в этой перемене виноваты были и те люди, которых постоянно защищает Курбский. Но, освободив себя от односторонности взгляда Курбского, пополнив то, чего недостает у последнего, Щербатов принимает все частные показания его как истинные; Щербатову нужно было знать только одно:

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 157.

по ненависти к Иоанну Курбский не приписывает ли ему лишних жестокостей?<sup>12</sup>

It follows further from Soloviev's reasoning that Shcherbatov approaches the sources critically, but Shcherbatov's criticism appears to be one-sided, as he isolated a particular case from the "chain of events," and did not see its connection with the preceding and forthcoming events. Moreover, according to Soloviev the same reproach is applicable to Karamzin. On his attitude to the evidence of Kurbskii, Soloviev writes the following:

...давая полную веру показаниям Курбского об Иоанне IV, он не хочет знать о его показаниях об Иоанне [III] и сыне его Василии; не хочет знать о той связи, которою соединяется деятельность Иоанна IV с деятельностью отца и деда, которую показал Курбский... С другой стороны, принимая все известия Курбского о царствовании Иоанна IV, внося их в текст своего рассказа, Карамзин, однако, не хочет принять основной мысли Курбского и таким образом допускает в своем рассказе противоречие, темноту, что делает рассказ неудовлетворительным; отношения Иоанна к Сильвестру и Адашеву описаны по Курбскому, и в то же время Иоанн является везде самостоятельным.<sup>13</sup>

Soloviev asserts that the decision is contained in the evidence of Ivan himself, who in his first response letter to Kurbskii proves the notion that he, Ivan, was indeed dependent in the period of "Izbrannaia rada" (Chosen council). As Soloviev remarks, "В рассказе Карамзина мы находим очень слабое влияние известий, сообщаемых Иоанном, влияние рассказа Курбского господствует: удержана резкость, внезапность перехода в отношениях царя к Сильвестру и Адашеву, резкость перехода от расположения к холодности..."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 157–158.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 158.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 165.



In this example one can see that Soloviev reasons not as a historiographer, but as a practicing historian of Russia. He is not concerned with the causes of why Shcherbatov and Karamzin chose one or another interpretation of the events. Soloviev argues with them as with colleagues, opposing their interpretations to his own understanding of events—the idea of the struggle of Moscow grand princes (which Grozny continued and exacerbated) against the boyar aristocracy, for “state” principles as opposed to those of “kinship,” which were defended by Kurbskii and others. The deviations of Karamzin, whom Soloviev regards as his major opponent, from this explanatory scheme, Soloviev interprets as a result of Karamzin’s adherence to the “artistic” rendering of events, as a result of his desire to represent Grozny as an object for “historical painting.” Therefore, in accordance with Soloviev’s account, Karamzin depicts the “hero of virtue” in the first part of his story and the “monster of tyranny” in the second part. Karamzin allegedly strives only to present a colorful picture, while leaving the task of explaining the contradiction to the reader.<sup>15</sup>

I have described Soloviev’s reflections in details because he is a typical example of how historians of that period (and many historians even in the twentieth century) approached the works of historians of the past. Their evaluation was short on historicity—the understanding of the difference of worldview and even aims of history writing peculiar to the analyzed authors. Deviations between a historian’s interpretation and those of his predecessors were regarded as a result of the lack of sources, their misunderstanding, or their “artistic” depiction of events.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 173–174.

Soloviev at least paid respect to his predecessors, and with all his criticism of them, he subjected their opinions to detailed analysis. A different approach was used by Nikolai Polevoi (1796–1846), who was the first after Karamzin to write a new version of Russian history, under the influence of French Romanticism. He rejected the work of Karamzin entirely, declaring his approach to have been obsolete. This is how Polevoi characterized the *Istoriia gosudarstva rossiiskago*:

В целом объеме оной нет одного общего начала, из которого истекали бы все события русской истории: вы не видите, как история России примыкает к истории человечества; все части оной отделяются одна от другой; все несоразмерны, и жизнь России остается для читателя неизвестною... Карамзин нигде не представляет нам духа народного, не изображает многочисленных переходов его, от варяжского феодализма до деспотического правления Иоанна и до самобытного возрождения при Минине. Вы видите стройную, продолжительную галерею портретов, поставленных в одинакие рамки, нарисованные не с натуры, но по воле художника и одетых также по его воле. Это летопись, написанная мастерски, художником таланта превосходного, изобретательного, а не *История*.<sup>16</sup>

Thus, Polevoi reproaches Karamzin for something which is absent in his history—a Romantic depiction of the “national spirit” in its historical development. He also notes Karamzin’s emphasis on the portrayal of persons and characters, while the historical conditions of their deeds are constructed by the historian’s imagination. A special irony of Polevoi is directed to what can be called the anti-historicity of Karamzin, or his endeavor (following the entire classical historiography) to draw lessons from history. Having paid attention to the following phrase from the preface to Karamzin’s *Istoriia*—“Правители, законодатели... действуют по указаниям Истории... И простой гражданин должен читать историю. Она мирит его с

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<sup>16</sup> N. A. Polevoi and Ks. A. Polevoi, *Literaturnaia kritika* (Leningrad: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1990), 43–44.

несовершенством видимого порядка вещей, *как с обыкновенным явлением во всех веках...*<sup>17</sup>—Polevoi objects:

...нам говорят, что история полезна, ибо

1-е. Правители народов справляются с нею, как судьи со старым архивом, дабы решать дела так, как их прежде решали. Совершенная несправедливость!

2-е. Граждане видят, что *зло всегда было, что люди всегда терпели*, почему и им *надобно терпеть*. Утешение, подобное тому сравнению, которое употребил Карамзин в IX томе, говоря, что русские так же славно умирали под топорами палачей царя Иоанна IV, как греки умирали при Термопилах!<sup>18</sup>

Here one can see that this is not only a methodological disagreement, but the political divergence of Polevoi with the conservative position of Karamzin. However, Polevoi limits himself to irony without an explicit continuation of his thought, probably because of the obstacles posed by censorship.

Still, the distance separating historians from their predecessors often suggests that a transfer will take place from a direct polemic to the attempt to evaluate historically the specific character of—Enlightenment—historiography, to understand it in the framework of its peculiar tasks, which are different in respect to the aims of the latest “historical scholarship.”

This is how Vasilii Kliuchevskii (1841–1911) estimates Shcherbatov’s activity in his lectures on Russian historiography:

Щербатов приступил к своей работе без достаточной учено-технической подготовки и потому допустил немало ошибок, за которые ему потом больно досталось... Таких ошибок можно найти обильный запас в его рассказе. Но для нас важны не они, а взгляд автора на задачи русского историографа. Щербатов не просто излагает события, на каждом шагу он их обсуждает и часто сопоставляет их с событиями западноевропейской

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 41–42.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 42.

истории, которую он знал лучше русской. Его рассказ есть сравнительно-историческое изложение событий... Вообще, Щербатов удачнее угадывал вопросы, чем разрешал их, – и в этом его главная заслуга. Щербатов – человек умный и очень образованный, но без особенных дарований; история его написана тяжелым языком. Это вместе с отзывами Болтина помешало успеху его истории в обществе.<sup>19</sup>

One can recognize here the repetition of some of Soloviev's evaluations in a more concise formulation, and at the same time the indication that Shcherbatov interpreted historical events by trying to compare them with events of European history, of which he was better informed. In this one can see a hint that the "specifics" of Russian history, the idea so appreciated by Romantics that Russian history has its "special way," was alien to Enlightenment historiography.

Much more curious is Kluchevskii's evaluation of Karamzin. What attracts attention here is a penetrating comparison of his *Istoriia* with a theatrical play.

Карамзин смотрит на исторические явления, как смотрит зритель на то, что происходит на театральной сцене. Он следит за речами и поступками героев пьесы, за развитием драматической интриги, ее завязкой и развязкой. У него каждое действующее лицо позирует, каждый факт стремится разыграть в драматическую сцену. По временам является на сцену и народ; но он остается на заднем плане, у стены, отделяющей сцену от кулис... Он выводится не как историческая среда, в которой действуют герои, а тоже в роли особого героя, многоголового действующего лица. Герои Карамзина действуют в пустом пространстве, без декораций, не имея ни исторической почвы под ногами, ни народной среды вокруг себя... Они не представители народа, не выходят из него; это особые люди, живущие своей особой героической жизнью, сами себя родят, убивают один другого и потом куда-то уходят, иногда сильно хлопнув картонной дверью.<sup>20</sup>

Here, the important distinction is drawn between the type of history, which was practiced by scholars, particularly by Kluchevskii himself in the late nineteenth—early twentieth century, and the classical type of historiography, of which

<sup>19</sup> V. O. Kluchevskii, *Sochineniia v deviaty tomakh*, vol. 7 (Moscow: Mysl', 1989), 208–209.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 274.

Karamzin was a late representative. For this manner of history writing the main task was to describe “deeds,” actions of people, and while they were concerned with the reasons behind actions, for historian it was important to clarify first of all the motives of the actors. These motives could be rational, in which case it was necessary to describe the situation of the appearance of the hero, and show the aims he set for himself and how he expected to fulfill them. Or there could be irrational motives, feelings, and passions; for example, anger, cruelty, and an uncontrolled thirst for power. In this case it was important for the historian to find out what the main character features of the hero were, and demonstrate the connection of his actions in a particular situation with these features of his character. For the later historians, who were under the influence of scientific methodology, in the foreground there were “objective processes” in society, which were perceived as a kind of “environment” by analogy with the physical environment. Accordingly, one could study processes such as, for example, “centralization”—by analogy with “crystallization,” a certain natural process, which always takes place under a certain temperature, pressure, and concentration of solution. In this paradigm the activity of historical figures, for example Ivan the Terrible or Andrei Kurbskii, was perceived as a more or less conscious facilitation or hampering of these processes. The agents of the actions could be considered not necessarily historical persons, but rather institutions or social groups, such as the “state” or “aristocracy.” In this paradigm the politics of Grozny were perceived as a realization of the historically necessary process of centralization, while his personal characteristics added to this process a certain shade, without changing its essence. This has nothing in common with the idea about the “insane

tyrant,” who had suddenly begun to kill his subjects. Kliuchevskii’s criticism of Karamzin was partly connected with the idea that Karamzin did not see such “transformations of the environment” and instead of explaining the actions of historical figures as caused by these transformations, he derived these actions from their character, inner motives, and intentions. Besides, Karamzin’s approach is based on the assumption that people with the same character would act similarly, irrespective of their medieval or contemporary dress, and disregarding the scenery. The essence of human beings does not change over time, and this provides the historian the right to evaluate historical figures on the basis of abstract moral judgments, instead of taking into account the specific historical situation. In this sense, Karamzin’s thinking lacks “historicism,” which became one of the most important achievements of later Romantic historiography.

Kliuchevskii notes not only what is absent in Karamzin, but also what is present in his writing as a peculiar characteristic of this type of historiography:

Но, лишённые исторической обстановки, действующие лица у Карамзина окружены особой нравственной атмосферой: это – отвлечённые понятия долга, чести, добра, зла, страсти, порока, добродетели. ...Но Карамзин не заглядывает за исторические кулисы, не следит за исторической связью причин и следствий, даже как будто неясно представляет себе, из действия каких исторических сил складывается исторический процесс и как они действуют. Поэтому у него с целой страной совершаются неожиданные перевороты, похожие на мгновенную передвижку театральных декораций... Зато нравственная правда выдерживается старательно: порок обыкновенно наказывается, по крайней мере всегда строго осуждается, страсть сама себя разрушает и т. п. Взгляд Карамзина на историю строился не на исторической закономерности, а на нравственно-психологической эстетике. Его занимало не общество с его строением и складом, а человек с его личными качествами и случайностями личной жизни...<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 275–276.

Kliuchevskii's observations are very penetrating, but they are only partially true. As I will try to demonstrate, Karamzin's work cannot be reduced to the transformation of history into a kind of Shakespearian play; his notions of how society should be organized also play a significant role in his choice of one of many possible interpretations of historical events. Clearly, then, the process of the development of society in the form meant by Kliuchevskii, that is an object of historical sociology, certainly was not a goal for Karamzin. He was interested in "causes" of events, but these causes belonged to a moral dimension, they were lodged in the virtues and passions of those governing the people, whom the fate of a large number of people depended on. Sometimes Karamzin was looking for the causes of incomprehensible historical phenomena in the hidden work of Providence, in the realization of a certain divine design for Russia. The "people," which as Kliuchevskii wrote were on the "backstage" of Karamzin's writings, actually played a more important role, as they expressed by their opinion "divine judgment" in evaluating the fairness or unfairness of the behavior of those who acted on the main stage. In this sense, if we pursue the analogy with drama, the people play for Karamzin the role of the ancient choir, prompting the reader (like spectators in a theater) how to react to certain actions of the main characters. Moreover, this is an emotional moral reaction rather than a rational judgment. What is appreciated is not the effectiveness of the policy, but its moral component: cruelty. "Effectiveness" is even condemned, while the victims, though not entirely innocent, are sympathized with.

Now, let me turn from the opinions on Shcherbatov and Karamzin by prominent historians, who themselves wrote "general" histories of Russia, to a special

historiographical work written also by serious historian and a later well-known politician of the liberal camp, Pavel Miliukov (1859–1943).

Miliukov compares Shcherbatov with his opponent Boltin, regarding them as representatives of “rationalist” and “scientific” approaches to history, respectively. The latter signifies the search in history for general regularities, defining the “morals” of a certain people and determining their gradual transformations. Here Miliukov continues the idea of Kliuchevskii, who saw in Boltin a predecessor of the scientific methods of the next century, which were focused on the objective conditions of historical processes instead of searching for causes of particular events. Miliukov finds in Shcherbatov’s writings the opposite approach to the task of historical explanation.

В приложении к истории, рационалистическая точка зрения есть по преимуществу индивидуалистическая. Личность, более или менее свободная, является с этой точки зрения творцом истории. Ход событий объясняется, как результат сознательной деятельности личности, – из игры страстей, из политических и иных расчетов, из силы, хитрости, обмана, – словом, из действия личной воли на волю массы, с одной стороны, и из подчинения этой массовой воли, – по глупости, по суеверию и иным мотивам, – с другой стороны. В подборе такого рода объяснений и заключается *прагматизм* историка. Цель прагматического рассказа считается достигнутою, если историческое событие сведено к действию личной воли, и если это действие объяснено из обычного механизма человеческой души.<sup>22</sup>

By “rationalism” Miliukov understands the explanation of historical events by deliberate actions of persons, motivated by a sort of “rational” calculation. Of course, irrational “passions” are always present, but they could be also “rationally” explained by a historian. This looks strange within a customary opposition between “reason” and “passions,” but, probably, such evaluation of Shcherbatov’s way of reasoning can be

<sup>22</sup> Miliukov, *Ocherki istorii istoricheskoi nauki*, 54.



regarded as a projection of Miliukov's own worldview. A more exact explanation requires a closer analysis of Miliukov's liberal outlook, but this would lead us too far from our main topic.

If one accepts Miliukov's viewpoint, which is a continuation of the position of Soloviev and Kliuchevskii, Shcherbatov's narration should be separated into discreet "actions," each of which is explained rationalistically by the analysis of the motives, calculations, aspirations, and passions of acting individuals. Further on I will demonstrate that this is not entirely true, and that the general construction of the narrative (at least in the later volumes) influences essentially the interpretation of particular episodes. The examples mentioned by Miliukov are taken from the first volumes which were written by Shcherbatov in his early, "pre-critical" period, and Miliukov could have failed to notice this influence. Probably because of this, he regards Shcherbatov as unable to manage the vast amount of raw material which was in his hands.

У современников история Щербатова... приобрела дурную репутацию. Ее считали сухой и скучной; и, конечно, она была написана не для большой публики. Что гораздо хуже, – ее считали некритичной и полной ошибок; это было справедливо относительно первых томов, на которые обрушилась критика; но, как общая оценка всех 15-ти томов, – такой отзыв не может считаться справедливым. Наконец, ее считали не продуманной, не проникнутой общей идеей; и это было совершенно справедливо, так как рационалистические приемы толкования событий по самому своему свойству оставались слишком внешними и не могли дать внутренней связи изложению. Но можно поставить вопрос, в какой степени эта особенность труда Щербатова зависела от личных свойств историка, и в какой степени она вытекала из самых свойств поставленной задачи.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 63–64.

In other words, Miliukov indicates the inability of Shcherbatov to achieve an historical synthesis in the sense in which Soloviev wrote about it, that is, to trace a “general direction of history.” But Miliukov also understands that this inability stems from his different understanding of the task of the historian. Yet, Miliukov saw this task only in the choice of pragmatic explanations. One can say that Miliukov felt that he was confronted with another historical paradigm, but he did not extend his analysis, limiting himself only to ascribing “rationalism” to it, which reduces this mode of explanation only to a search for personal motives. This is partially true, but obviously insufficient, because Shcherbatov was interested not so much in the causes of events, as in their evaluation, but rather in uncovering the significance of these events or political actions from the perspective of his ideas about true or erroneous policy, and his general ideas on the right and wrong functioning of the political mechanism. It is this that brings coherence to Shcherbatov’s narration, yet not the type of coherence for which Miliukov was looking.

Regarding Karamzin’s *Istoriia*, Miliukov took a strongly critical position. Using the early thought of Karamzin in his *Pis'ma russkogo puteshestvennika* (“Letters of a Russian traveler”), when Karamzin only aimed to “animate and paint in color” Russian history, Miliukov ascribes the same intention to the mature Karamzin.

Мы имеем все основания думать, что, и сделавшись сам историком, Карамзин не изменил своих взглядов на задачи исторического произведения... История должна быть занимательна: по соображениям утилитарным, по соображениям эстетическим, по соображениям патриотическим, – как бы то ни было, но история должна быть занимательна... Таким образом, за неимением причинной связи между событиями, Карамзин придумывает свою связь, *стилистическую*; читателю, положившемуся на Карамзина, эта связь могла бы показаться причинной, если бы весь рассказ не был рассчитан на быстрое, легкое

чтение, после которого никакого воспоминания обо всей этой искусственно нанизанной нити событий все равно не остается...

Помимо стилистической связи событий, у Карамзина есть и другой литературный прием, не менее вредящий научному достоинству изложения. Это – его психологическая мотивировка действий. Щербатов, мы видели, тоже любит психологическую мотивировку, хотя и отделяет ее от строго-фактического изложения; но любимые мотивы обоих историков так же различны, как рационализм Щербатова и сентиментализм Карамзина. Герои Щербатовской истории действуют преимущественно из политических видов. Герои *Истории государства Российского* руководятся в своих действиях «нежною чувствительностью».<sup>24</sup>

As we will see further, Miliukov is partially right in his criticisms, although he also recognizes the scholarly significance of Karamzin's references.<sup>25</sup> But without denying the artistic aims of Karamzin's work with sources, and his intention to present history in a more entertaining way, I do not regard this artistic style as the only aim of Karamzin. Historical narrative is for Karamzin, as we will see, intended to express and justify a distinct political doctrine: autocracy as it was understood by Karamzin. One can read about this in detail in the chapters of this dissertation which are devoted to a close reading of the *Istoriia gosudarstva rossiiskago*. Now it is important to note that Miliukov denies the “scientific character” of Karamzin's work, regarding it only as a work of art based on the events of Russian history. I consider this evaluation to be unfair and reflecting a lack of understanding, on the part of a representative of a later “scientific” paradigm in historiography, of the aims and motives by which the representatives of the other Enlightenment paradigm were guided. For the latter it was important to “understand” Russia, which they imagined as an entity defined by the conditions of its geographical position but generally unchanging in time. As a living

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 153–156.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 152.

organism, which is changing from youth to old age but remains identical to itself, Russia, in accordance with this point of view, could only perish or disintegrate but could not change its essence. This did not exclude development in the sense of growing maturity, a gradual more articulate expression of Russia's original features. These features would be expressed most completely in contemporary Russia, but their origin could have been found in antiquity. Therefore, looking narrowly at the characteristics of an ancient country, Karamzin and Shcherbatov sought in them the reflection of phenomena of contemporary Russia, resolving different problems in comparison with the "scientific historiography" of Soloviev, Kliuchevskii, and Miliukov, who looked for the regularities of the "historical process of the development of society."

Another important idea of Miliukov can be illustrated by the following quotation:

Влияние щербатовской истории не ослабевает до самого конца *Истории государства Российского*. Конечно, Карамзин самостоятельно изучает свои источники, но и тут Щербатов указывает ему, где, когда и что надо изучать. ...Но не только в указаниях на источники помогает Карамзину Щербатов; еще сильнее обнаруживается его влияние в самом рассказе. Часто порядок изложения Щербатова принимается и Карамзиным; еще чаще Карамзин принимает отдельные толкования и предположения Щербатова... Видно, что том щербатовской истории всегда лежал на письменном столе историографа и давал ему постоянно готовую нить для рассказа и тему для рассуждения... В результате пересказа и переделки тяжеловесные, неуклюжие фразы Щербатова превращаются в блестящие, закругленные и отточенные периоды Карамзина; но очень часто настоящий смысл и задние мысли этих красивых периодов мы поймем только тогда, когда будем иметь перед глазами параллельное изложение Щербатова.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 148.

All of this is partially true, but in his desire to “expose” Karamzin, Miliukov seems to have gone too far. Indeed, a comparison of the texts of Shcherbatov’s and Karamzin’s *Istoriia* sometimes makes the impression that Karamzin tries to answer questions that Shcherbatov asks. But it is important that he answered them in his own way. One can reproach Karamzin for not referring to Shcherbatov in each case that he answers one of Shcherbatov’s puzzles or reproduces with some corrections his ideas, but in his notes Karamzin usually does not refer to the secondary literature, only to primary sources. This concerns the difference in understanding why a scholarly apparatus is needed in historical works. In Miliukov’s time, in the age of scholarly monographs and academic schools, the requirement of acknowledging of one’s predecessors was certainly much stronger.

Moreover, as I will demonstrate, Karamzin did not always follow Shcherbatov in the interpretation of particular facts and in the very manner of constructing the narrative. The difference is connected, in particular, with the fact that both histories have different ideological directions, which in many ways define the mode of ordering events into a narrative sequence. Shcherbatov and Karamzin posed different questions because they were preoccupied by different problems in their contemporary Russia. Shcherbatov tried to justify the need for dividing power between the monarch and a “virtuous” aristocracy. Karamzin strove to prove the necessity of a formally unlimited autocracy and, simultaneously, a union based on mutual love and trust between the monarch and the people. Both historians tried to see in ancient times the origins of an “ideal” state of things and to demonstrate that the state would collapse if rulers deviated from the right direction of policy. Certainly, depending on the difference of

the aims of Shcherbatov and Karamzin, their interpretations of particular historical periods in their entirety, and particular historical events as well, also differ. The details can be found in the chapters of this work devoted to the analysis of particular episodes of each author's *Istoriia*.

Miliukov's work was a kind of high point in the historiographical development of our topic in pre-revolutionary Russia. The Soviet period was in this, as well as many other respects, more a degradation rather than a development, although even there, among massive ideological sediments, one can find sometimes valuable ideas.

The stereotypical opinion of Shcherbatov and Karamzin was, certainly, that they were reactionary noble historians, supporters of autocracy and serfdom, so there was little sense in discussing them at length. On the other hand, it was impossible to deny their significance for historical scholarship, as on the same ground one would have had to reject the entire pre-revolutionary historiographical tradition, except the works of Marxist historians. Therefore, one had to make a compromise and distinguish "progressive" and "reactionary" features in the writing of "noble" and "bourgeois" historians. This is how it was done, for example, by Nikolai Rubinshtein (1897–1963) in the first quite comprehensive work on Russian historiography which was published in the Soviet era (1942). Rubinshtein's evaluation of Shcherbatov was the following:

Внутренняя связь историко-политических воззрений Щербатова нашла яркое выражение в его выступлениях в Комиссии об Уложении 1767–1768 гг. Щербатов явился здесь ярким поборником социальных и политических привилегий дворянства против притязаний купечества и крестьянства. Он выступал с историческим и политическим обоснованием исконности крепостнических прав дворянства... Более дальновидный представитель своего класса, Щербатов глубоко ощущает

внутренние противоречия и назревшие трудности. Но далекий еще от понимания внутренней закономерности социально-экономического развития общества, он склонен искать конечного разрешения вопроса в политической деятельности власти... Отсюда его требование более решительной дворянской политики правительства и притязание на более непосредственное участие самого дворянства в управлении, подкрепляемое историческим обоснованием совместного управления царя с его боярами. Отсюда известная оппозиция «просвещенному абсолютизму» Екатерининского царствования... Эта оппозиция Щербатова была оппозицией «справа», консервативной оппозицией.

Политические взгляды Щербатова нашли отражение в его исторической концепции, исходившей из дворянской политической программы...<sup>27</sup>

Proceeding from the connection, characteristic for Marxism, of the historical theory of Shcherbatov with his political ideas, which in their turn were conditioned by the “class attachment” of a given historian, Rubinshtein, nevertheless, quite correctly argues that the historical constructions of Shcherbatov cannot be understood without taking into account his attitude towards the political problems of contemporaneous society. Shcherbatov quite consciously took the position of defending the privileges of his own social group. It is quite another matter that this group was not a well-defined “class,” possessing definite objective characteristics, but rather an “imagined community.” Shcherbatov imagined the “Russian aristocracy” on the model of a Western European one, and attributed to it the “virtues” which had to be transmitted from generation to generation by means of an aristocratic upbringing. At the same time it is important to note that Shcherbatov distinguished clearly the “nobility of service,” which emerged in Russia due to the Petrine “Table of Ranks,” and the “nobility of birth,” stemming from the Muscovite boyar aristocracy of the pre-Petrine age.

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<sup>27</sup> N. L. Rubinshtein, *Russkaia istoriografiia* (St. Petersburg: Izdatelstvo Sankt-Peterburgskogo universiteta, 2008), 131.

Yet, political views are one thing, and the construction of a particular historical narration, based on primary sources, is another. This is how Rubinshtein tries to connect the political “conservatism” of Shcherbatov with his historiographical method.

Передовая мысль французских просветителей, обращенная к приближающейся буржуазной революции, все решительнее выдвигает проблему исторического синтеза, вопрос единства и закономерности исторического развития. ...Идея единства исторического развития превращается в теорию прогресса...

Отмеченное направление... видит в разуме, в просвещении основную творческую, движущую силу исторического развития...

Французские материалисты... делают попытки подчинить рационалистическое построение всемирно-исторического процесса законам природы, воздействию географической среды. ...

На другом полюсе в это же время происходит дальнейшее заострение чисто прагматического направления, чуждого философскому обобщению, опирающегося на единичный факт в его конкретной и индивидуальной обусловленности. Психологический прагматизм... приобретал теперь консервативный характер по отношению к революционным идеям нового времени... прагматическое направление закреплялось в Англии и нашло свое наиболее полное выражение в XVIII в. в трудах... Дэвида Юма. ...

К прагматизму Д. Юма обратился идеолог дворянской России Щербатов.<sup>28</sup>

We can see here the imposition, typical for Soviet Marxism, of the scheme of “class struggle” to all phenomena, the search for “progressive” (in this case, the French Enlightenment thinkers, especially “materialists”) and “reactionary” trends (among whom he ranks the “English” thinkers under the leadership of the Scottish Hume). Shcherbatov is linked to Hume because the former quoted the latter in the preface to the first volume of his history. Shcherbatov’s tendency, noted by the pre-revolutionary historians to give psychological explanations for the actions of his protagonists appears, for Rubinshtein, an occasion for linking him with the

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 135–137.



“reactionary” English trend, and this is directly connected with the “reactionary” political position of Shcherbatov, his criticism “from the right” of the enlightened absolutism of Catherine II.

Rubinshtein pays tribute to Shcherbatov as a historian, but only in the high esteem of his work on the preliminary collection and processing of historical sources.

Может быть, неблагодарный, невыигрышный по своим внешним качествам, но большой и упорный труд Щербатова, собравшего воедино огромные «припасы» исторических знаний о России и связавшего их в одно целое, был, однако, серьезной и необходимой ступенью в формировании исторической науки в России.<sup>29</sup>

As for the particular theories of Shcherbatov, devoted to special historical periods, Rubinshtein tries to regard them as a direct reflection of his political ideas. This, for example, is how he characterizes Shcherbatov’s interpretation in his *Istoriia* of the period of the reign of Ivan the Terrible:

Первоначальным политическим успехам – восстановлению самодержавия – противостоял конфликт с боярством, опричнина и казни Грозного. Это историческое противоречие получило свое внешнее разрешение в разделении истории царствования Грозного на два периода. Здесь Щербатов столкнулся с острой проблемой современности, так ярко отраженной в его публицистике, доказывавшей историческую роль крупного боярства... в первый период Иван IV окружен добрыми советниками и царствует мудро, умеряя свои страсти, а во второй период, поддавшись своим страстям и погубив своих советников, он привел государство к разорению. ...Словом, сила Грозного – в совете боярском, разрыв с боярством и нарушение их прав – вина Грозного и причина московского разорения. Эта тема позже была развернута Н. М. Карамзиным.<sup>30</sup>

The schematic character of Rubinshtein’s approach, for which the main goal was to demonstrate the “class nature” of Shcherbatov’s views, led him to ignore the

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 152–153.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 149–150.

difference between the ideas of Kurbskii and their interpretation by Shcherbatov and Karamzin. All the three authors appear as the defenders of the “interests” of the boyars in their struggle for participation in governing the state.

On the other hand, the very attempt of historians to connect the interpretation of specific phenomena of the past with the actual contemporary questions can be salient—especially for the historiography of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, which was not limited by the demand of “historicism” proclaimed by Romantic historiography. But, certainly, the study of the interaction of historical interpretation and political ideas, and moreover the ideas and place of a particular historian in a social and cultural world of his period, must be specific rather than based on preconceived “class” schemata. Let us note that Rubinshtein himself writes here about “grand boyars,” allegedly advocated by Shcherbatov, whereas earlier the same author ascribed to Shcherbatov a commitment to the “interests of nobility” as a whole. Probably, the idea that the petty nobility and the great landowning aristocracy may treat autocracy differently seemed from the point of view of “class struggle” an insignificant detail because the issue was related to different groups within the same “class.”

Let me finish here the detailed analysis of the historiographical views of those who wrote about Shcherbatov and Karamzin. I will provide here only a brief overview of later developments. More details on the literature concerning the political views of Shcherbatov and Karamzin can be found in further chapters.

In the works of Ivan Fedosov<sup>31</sup> and Sergei Peshtich,<sup>32</sup> a Marxist approach to the analysis of the works of Shcherbatov was developed. At the same time, already in 1960-ies, the gradual overcoming of former stereotypes began. This was especially clear in the works of philologists, in particular Zemphira Rustam-Zade.<sup>33</sup> In the United States and England there appeared interesting works by Antony Lentin<sup>34</sup> and Joan Afferica<sup>35</sup> analyzing the political views of Shcherbatov. Interesting observations are also suggested in an article by Marc Raeff.<sup>36</sup> These Western works partially continue the pre-revolutionary tradition of liberal historiography of the political views of Shcherbatov. In regard to Karamzin, the first serious analysis was undertaken by Richard Pipes.<sup>37</sup> He indicated “monarchy,” as analyzed by Montesquieu, as a point of departure for Karamzin in his understanding of autocracy. This is not entirely accurate, but it provides a salient inspiration for a more detailed study. Later, the political views of Karamzin were analyzed more comprehensively by Joseph Laurence Black.<sup>38</sup> Already at the end of the Soviet period pioneering works on Karamzin were

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<sup>31</sup> I. A. Fedosov, *Iz istorii russkoi obshchestvennoi mysli XVIII stoletii: M. M. Shcherbatov* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1967).

<sup>32</sup> S. L. Peshtich, *Russkaia istoriografiia XVIII veka*, pt. 3 (Leningrad: Izdatelstvo Leningradskogo universiteta, 1971).

<sup>33</sup> Z. P. Rustam-Zade, *M. M. Shcherbatov, ego publitsisticheskie i literaturno-khudozhestvennye proizvedeniia* (PhD diss., University of Leningrad, 1967).

<sup>34</sup> Antony Lentin, “Introduction,” in *Prince M. M. Shcherbatov: On the Corruption of Morals in Russia*, ed. Antony Lentin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969).

<sup>35</sup> Joan Afferica, *The Political and Social Thought of Prince M. M. Shcherbatov* (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1966).

<sup>36</sup> Marc Raeff, “State and Nobility in the Ideology of M. M. Shcherbatov,” *The American Slavic and East European Review* 19 (October 1960): 363–379.

<sup>37</sup> Richard Pipes, *Karamzin's Memoir on Ancient and Modern Russia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959).

<sup>38</sup> J. L. Black, *Nicholas Karamzin and Russian Society in the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975).

published by Natan Eidelman<sup>39</sup> and Yurii Lotman.<sup>40</sup> They uncovered the “second layer” in his political texts, that is, the peculiar paradoxes evidenced in Karamzin’s combination of the love of freedom with the defense of “autocracy.”

Since the end of the Soviet period, there have appeared more works on the two historians who in the Soviet period did not attract much attention for political reasons. Particular mention must be made of the pioneer work on Shcherbatov by the philosopher Tatiana Artemieva.<sup>41</sup> The study of Karamzin’s writings in accordance with already established traditions belongs to the sphere of literary studies (works by Yurii Stennik,<sup>42</sup> Liubov’ Sapchenko,<sup>43</sup> and Olga Goncharova<sup>44</sup>). Yet, a serious and detailed analysis of Shcherbatov’s and Karamzin’s *Istoriia* from a new historiographical standpoint has not appeared yet. The dissertation by Svetlana Kalinina,<sup>45</sup> valuable in many respects, characterizing Shcherbatov’s activity as a statesman, avoids the analysis of his political writings. In the dissertation of Nikolai Serechenko,<sup>46</sup> the connection of Shcherbatov’s political writings with his political

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<sup>39</sup> N. Ya. Eidelman, *Poslednii letopisets* (Moscow: Kniga, 1983).

<sup>40</sup> Yu. M. Lotman, *Sotvoreniie Karamzina* (Moscow: Kniga, 1987).

<sup>41</sup> T. V. Artem’eva, *Mikhail Shcherbatov* (St. Petersburg: Izdatel’stvo Sankt-Peterburgskogo universiteta, 1994).

<sup>42</sup> Yu. V. Stennik, *Ideia “drevnei” i “novoi” Rossii v literature i obshchestvenno-istoricheskoi mysli XVIII – nachala XIX veka* (St. Petersburg: Nauka, 2004).

<sup>43</sup> L. A. Sapchenko, *N. M. Karamzin: Sud’ba nasledii (Vek XIX)* (Ulianovsk: Ulianovskii godudarstvennyi universitet, 2003).

<sup>44</sup> O. M. Goncharova, *Vlast’ traditsii i “novaia Rossiia” v literaturnom soznanii vtoroi poloviny XVIII veka* (St. Petersburg: Izdatel’stvo RKHGI, 2004).

<sup>45</sup> S. G. Kalinina, *Gosudarstvennaia deiatel’nost’ M.M.Shcherbatova. Idei i praktika, 1767–1790* (PhD diss., University of Moscow, 2004).

<sup>46</sup> N. V. Serechenko, *Istoricheskie i politicheskie vzgliady kniazia M. M. Shcherbatova: faktor individual’nogo sotsial’nogo opyta* (PhD diss., University of Moscow, 2008).

career has been studied. The dissertation by Maria Kozlova<sup>47</sup> traces Shcherbatov's use of literary images connected with antiquity. Generally, one can say that the texts of Shcherbatov, especially his *Istoriia*, have not been comprehensively studied. By contrast, on the *Istoriia* by Karamzin there exists a wide range of scholarly literature. Especially useful is a book by Vladimir Kozlov,<sup>48</sup> published in the Soviet period, which is devoted to the perception of the *Istoriia* by contemporaries and later generations. The same author analyses the image of Boris Godunov in Karamzin's *Istoriia* and draws similarities between historian's description of this ambitious grandee and the aristocratic opinion on Alexander I's favorite Mikhail Speransky.<sup>49</sup> Thus, Kozlov demonstrates that Karamzin's historical narrative can be read as a political message for historian's contemporaries. Valuable interpretations of Karamzin's *Istoriia* can be found in recent works in the field of literary studies, particularly by Caryl Emerson, Andrew Wachtel, and Kevin Platt.<sup>50</sup> But the political language of Karamzin and the intellectual influences which were creatively adopted in his *Istoriia* still await study.

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<sup>47</sup> M. I. Kozlova, *Retseptsiiia antichnovsti v istoricheskoi mysli XVIII veka (opyt M. M. Shcherbatova)* (PhD diss., University of Kazan, 2011).

<sup>48</sup> V. P. Kozlov, "Istoriia gosudarstva Rossiiskogo" N. M. Karamzina v otsenkakh sovremennikov (Moscow: Nauka, 1989).

<sup>49</sup> V. P. Kozlov, "N. M. Karamzin o Borise Godunove (K kharakteristike obshchestvenno-politicheskikh i istoricheskikh vzgliadov)" in *Obshchestvennaia mysl' v Rossii XIX veka* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1986), 19–34.

<sup>50</sup> Caryl Emerson, *Boris Godunov: Transpositions of a Russian Theme* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986); Andrew Wachtel, *An Obsession with History: Russian Writers Confront the Past* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990); Kevin Platt, *Terror and Greatness: Ivan and Peter as Russian Myths* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011). I am especially grateful to Prof. Andreas Schönle for these references.

The present work does not aim at a comprehensive analysis of each *Istoriia*. Rather, it focuses primarily on the uncovering and comparison of the political ideas that influenced the formation of each historian's specific interpretation of political events in the reigns of Ivan the Terrible and Boris Godunov. In this statement of purpose it might be possible to detect a certain influence of Marxist historiography, but I hope that I have managed to overcome the schemata of the Soviet period due to the use of the methodology of the intellectual history.

## CHAPTER 1: THE POLITICAL IDEAS OF MIKHAIL SHCHERBATOV

### *§1.1 Narratives of Corruption: History and Utopia in the Political Writings of Prince Mikhail Shcherbatov*

#### **Introduction**

Prince Mikhail Mikhailovich Shcherbatov (1733–1790) has been for a long time a victim of an anachronistic approach towards the history of ideas. In liberal Russian historiography (and by continuation in most of the Western ones, not to speak of Soviet Marxism) he was regarded as a “conservative,” even a “reactionary” champion of aristocratic privileges, and a defender of serfdom. At the same time, beginning from Herzen’s publication of Shcherbatov’s treatise, *O povrezhdenii nraov v Rossii* (*On the Corruption of Morals in Russia*), together with Radishchev’s *Puteshestvie iz S. Peterburga v Moskvu* (“Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow”), Shcherbatov’s merits as a critic of autocracy and despotism were acknowledged by liberals. Herzen’s interpretation, influenced by the confrontation between “Westernizers” and “Slavophiles” of his own time, regarded Shcherbatov and Radishchev as two poles of anti-despotic polemics, the former as a critic from the point of view of the past, the latter (a radical and a critic of serfdom) from the point of view of the future. Of course, this meant that the liberal program, including the abolition of serfdom and the

parliamentary democracy, was regarded as a norm in respect to which the political thinkers of the eighteenth century must be judged “progressive” or “reactionary.”

In the Soviet era, I. A. Fedosov<sup>1</sup> was the first who made an attempt to rehabilitate Shcherbatov, at least partially, as a representative of the Russian Enlightenment, though the author still regarded his protagonist as a defender of the “class interests” of the *pomeshchiks* and the “feudal” aristocracy. The dissertation of Z. P. Rustam-Zade<sup>2</sup> (who was not a philosopher, but a philologist) gave a more complimentary description, underlining the enlightened (and therefore “progressive”) characteristics of Shcherbatov’s thought. In the West, significant contributions were made by Marc Raeff,<sup>3</sup> Joan Afferica,<sup>4</sup> and Antony Lentin,<sup>5</sup> the latter published the English translation of *On the Corruption of Morals* together with a substantial introduction of monographic length. However, with all the reservations, the same conclusion was made, namely, that Shcherbatov’s thought contained a peculiar mixture of “progressive” and “reactionary” traits, or rather he used some “progressive” ideas of the Western Enlightenment in order to substantiate his essentially “reactionary” political program.

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<sup>1</sup> I. A. Fedosov, *Iz istorii russkoi obshchestvennoi mysli XVIII stoletia: M. M. Shcherbatov* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1967).

<sup>2</sup> Z. P. Rustam-Zade, *Zhizhn' i tvorchestvo M. M. Shcherbatova* (St. Petersburg: Lejla, 2000). This is a publication of the text of her *kandidatskaia* dissertation: *M. M. Shcherbatov, ego publitsisticheskie i literaturno-khudozhestvennye proizvedeniia* (PhD diss., University of Leningrad, 1967).

<sup>3</sup> Marc Raeff, “State and Nobility in the Ideology of M. M. Shcherbatov,” *The American Slavic and East European Review* 19 (October 1960): 363–379.

<sup>4</sup> Joan Afferica, *The Political and Social Thought of Prince M. M. Shcherbatov* (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1966).

<sup>5</sup> Antony Lentin, ed., *Prince M.M. Shcherbatov: On the Corruption of Morals in Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969).



The exchange of opinions about Shcherbatov, which took place at the Fourth International Conference of the Study Group on Eighteenth-Century Russia in July 1989,<sup>6</sup> shows that nothing had significantly changed in that time in comparison with the works of 1960s. For example, one of participants of the discussion, Gerald I. Leonard asserted:

Despite Shcherbatov's many positive and progressive ideas, the thrust of his thoughts on the most important issues of his time, such as serfdom, was essentially negative by modern standards as well as by the standards of those we today consider the best of his contemporaries. Because Shcherbatov was unable to transcend his own background and personal concerns, some of his contemporaries, most of whom like Shcherbatov accomplished nothing, are today viewed with more respect and admiration.<sup>7</sup>

As for contemporaries, the author here probably has in mind Radishchev, but one can reasonably doubt whether it is possible to measure the degree of "progressiveness" using a very exceptional intellectual, such as Radishchev certainly was, as a "norm." The phrase "best of his contemporaries" expresses the author's sympathy for a presumably pro-Western and proto-liberal intellectual, but it has nothing to do with the task of mapping the intellectual trends of the period. Another participant of the same conference, Emmanuel Waegemans, considering Shcherbatov's utopia *Puteshestvie v zemliu ofirskuiu* ("Voyage to the land of Ophir"), concludes:

What remains of the utopia when the idyllically drawn landscape of Ophir is disturbed at every moment by guns, fortresses, military settlements, courts and prisons, forced labor (also for political offences), capital punishments, informers and censorships?.. Shcherbatov does not even mention the existence of literature in Ophir. Consequently, there is nothing more to discover in the

<sup>6</sup> The materials of discussion were published as: A. G. Cross and G. S. Smith, eds., *Literature, Lives and Legality in Catherine's Russia* (Nottingham: Astra Press, 1994), 45–78.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

intellectual sphere on Ophir; Ophir is the end, the culminating point of human civilization. In other words, Shcherbatov's Ophir is neither an idyll nor a utopia, but a dictatorship ... And although Shcherbatov was certainly not the only one who had such opinions concerning society, he still has designed a project which not only does not appeal to the readers of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, but which would also have been rejected by his 18<sup>th</sup>-century contemporaries as being too conservative, too anti-historical (as far as the role of nobility is concerned), and as too forward-looking (as far as the perfectibility of the dictatorial police state is concerned).<sup>8</sup>

First of all, one has to take into consideration that Shcherbatov's utopia is not just a product of an unlimited imagination, but partially a depiction of the real Russia, with some reforms projected by the author, as if they were already implemented. So, prisons, fortresses, and poor people are the elements of this realistic environment. Secondly, the well-ordered police state (Raeff) as an ideal of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century political thinkers is not very attractive for a contemporary reader, who approaches it with the recent "totalitarian" experience in mind. But with such criteria one could also describe Plato or Rousseau as the predecessors of "totalitarianism." However, was this ideal actually "conservative" or "obsolete" for Russia in Shcherbatov's time? Why did he choose such "police" means to accomplish his aim, a morally uncorrupted society? Why was the notion of "corruption" so important for his construction of the historical narrative? These are questions which have to be answered irrespective of our contemporary political preferences. So, the ahistorical approach to Shcherbatov's ideas is probably convenient for liberal ideological purposes, but it hardly leads to the development of a contextually informed intellectual history.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 58–59.

Recent scholarship, due to the continuous efforts of scholars such as Antony Lentin and some new authors (including an increasing number of Russian scholars)<sup>9</sup> gradually proceeds in a different direction, trying to understand Shcherbatov's thought in the context of the ideas which were regarded as a part of the intellectual mainstream in his own time. This is not an easy task, because the intellectual world of the Russian Enlightenment in the middle of the eighteenth century, when Shcherbatov's mind was formed, still needs a closer investigation. Some of his views, which were not expressed directly but existed as hidden presuppositions, look alien for an unprepared modern reader. It is enough to mention that the very idea of a gradual open-ended progress towards the best condition of humankind was quite alien for Shcherbatov's thought. Instead, he rather thought in terms of the inevitable corruption of any political society, in the framework of the classical cyclical paradigm (like in Polybius' history of Rome, for example).<sup>10</sup>

The main task of my further efforts will be to shed a light on Shcherbatov's intellectual background, and to investigate the conceptual framework in which his ideas become understandable. As for ideological evaluations, let us put them aside, at least on this stage of the analysis.

The following text is only an initial description of Shcherbatov's intellectual background and a tentative analysis of several key texts. I will also make an attempt to put these texts in a comparative framework of several texts of the Western Enlightenment, which can be identified as sources of inspiration for the Russian

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<sup>9</sup> The first work of this sort without Soviet ideological prejudices is: T. V. Artemieva, *Mikhail Shcherbatov* (St. Petersburg: Izdatelstvo Sankt-Peterburgskogo universiteta, 1994).

<sup>10</sup> Polybius, *The Rise of the Roman Empire* (London: Penguin Classics, 1980), 303–311, see also ch. 4.

thinker. Finally, I will outline a point of view, from which Shcherbatov's main work, the *Istoriia rossiiskaia ot drevneishikh vremen*, could be looked at.

## **The Biographical Context**

### *The Education of the Russian Gentleman*

Prince Mikhail Shcherbatov, the future historian, was born in Moscow on 22 June 1733. His father, general-major Mikhail Shcherbatov was at that time the governor of Arkhangelsk, earlier having served as a military commander in Peter I's army. The Shcherbatovs were a noble family with ancient roots, the scions of the dynasty of Rurikids, the medieval princes of Kiev. The names of their ancestors, the descendants of Chernigov princes, often appeared on the pages of Muscovite chronicles. The representatives of this clan of so-called service princes (*sluzhilye kniaz'ia*) were connected by common ancestry and intermarriages with other members of the Muscovite old aristocracy, such as Dolgorukovs, Golitzins, and others. The members of these and several other old aristocratic families, in a sense, ruled Russia together with her tsars, in spite of the fact that the country was an autocratic monarchy and tsars were the only legitimate source of political decisions. The mighty clans of *boyars* (including service princes) were highly influential in Muscovite politics as advisors of the tsars and as persons by whom the orders of monarchs were implemented.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Among the sizeable literature on the subject the most influential piece is: Nancy Kollmann, *Kinship and Politics: The Making of the Muscovite Political System, 1345–1547* (Stanford: Stanford University

In the period of Peter I's rule, representatives of this old aristocracy were forced back from power by the "new aristocracy," recruited from lower strata of society. Several favorites from modest noble (and even non-noble) families, who began their service from relatively humble positions, obtained influence and wealth due to their close cooperation with Peter in the days of the Northern War (1700–1721) and in the period of inner reforms, which met a hidden opposition on the part of the Russian elite. A number of foreign specialists, mainly military, but also on the civic and diplomatic service, also gathered around the throne, diminishing the influence of the Muscovite hereditary aristocrats.

This does not mean, however, that the majority of the hereditary aristocracy did not accept Peter's Europeanization of Russia and looked with nostalgia at the Muscovite past. As a rule, they also benefited from Peter's reforms. It is especially true for Mikhail Shcherbatov's closest relatives.<sup>12</sup> His father, Mikhail Yurievich (1678–1738), served in one of the two guard regiments (*Semionovskii*), organized by Peter in his youth to protect himself against his ambitious sister Sophia and to form the kernel of the future Russian regular army. These regiments were later used as the reserve of personnel, from which Peter and his descendants appointed officials for the highest positions on the state service. Shcherbatov's father was appointed initially (in 1731) as *ober-comendant* (head of the garrison) of Moscow and later (in 1732) as *gubernator* (governor) of Arkhangelsk, the main Russian port town on the North.

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Press, 1987). About the continuation of the tradition of kinship politics even in the eighteenth century, see Valerie Kivelson, "Kinship Politics/Autocratic Politics: A Reconsideration of Early Eighteenth-Century Political Culture," in *Imperial Russia: New Histories for the Empire*, ed. J. Burbank and D. L. Ransel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 5–31.

<sup>12</sup> See their biographies in the Russian Biographical Dictionary (*Russkii Biograficheskii Slovar'*).

Shcherbatov's grandfather, Yurii Fedorovich, was also a military commander; he was heavily wounded in the battle near Narva (1700). He had a more traditional outlook and in 1730 became a monk under the name Sophronii; he died in 1737. The biography of another one of Shcherbatov's relatives, his father-in-law, Ivan Andreevich Shcherbatov (1696–1761), from the other branch of the clan, is especially revealing. He served initially in the *Preobrazhenskii* regiment (the other one of Peter's two guard regiments), and in 1719–1721 lived in England, studying French, English, mathematics, astronomy, and navigation. From 1721 he served as a diplomat, and later became *polnomochnyi ministr* (ambassador) in Spain (1726–1731) and Britain (1739–1746). He was, therefore, one of the “nestlings of Peter's nest,” a member of the part of the old ruling elite, which accepted Peter's Europeanization of Russia as necessary for her “greatness” and enjoyed the possibilities of the new cultural development, trying to imitate the lifestyle of the European aristocracy.

Young Mikhail Shcherbatov belonged to the next generation, among whom, as the result of Russia's openness to the West, new demands towards the education of young noblemen began to spread, including the milieu of the rich aristocrats of the two capitals, St. Petersburg and Moscow. Shcherbatov lost his father at the age of five, and the task of his upbringing, in accordance with new standards, was taken by his mother, née Princess Solntzeva-Zasekina (from an old Muscovite aristocratic family as well). She managed to give her son the best possible education available at home. Unfortunately, nothing is known about Shcherbatov's teachers. From memoirs of

Chevalier de Corberon,<sup>13</sup> we know that Shcherbatov's command of French was as if it was his native language.

As was usual in that time, young Shcherbatov was enrolled in his father's *Semionovskii* regiment, but he was granted a leave of absence until the end of his education. Finally, he spent several years in actual service, but probably never participated in a real military campaign. In 1762, immediately after the issuing of Peter III's *Manifest o volnosti dvorianstva* (the privilege for nobles, which liberated them from obligatory service), he retired with the relatively low rank of captain and settled in his manor, Mikhailovka near Yaroslavl,<sup>14</sup> attempting to bring into better condition his considerable estates while continuing with self-education. In that time he also began his lifelong mission, the writing of the "full" Russian history "from the ancient times," a task which he perceived initially as simply useful for self-educational purposes.

At that time he had already obtained a sort of literary experience, due to several publications in the magazine *Ezhemesiachnye sochineniia, k polze i uveseleniiu sluzhashchiia* ("The monthly compositions serving for utility and amusement"), which was published by the Russian Academy of Sciences under the editorship of Gerhard Friedrich Müller (1705–1783). This prominent Russian historian of German origin, who was appointed official historiographer of Russia after the death of Mikhail Lomonosov, encouraged Shcherbatov in his amateur interest in national history. Among Shcherbatov's first publications (1759) were translations of the

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<sup>13</sup> Marie Daniel Bourrée Corberon, *Un Diplomate français à la cour de Catherine II, 1775-1780 : Journal intime du chevalier de Corberon*, 2 vols., ed. L. H. Labande (Paris: Plon, 1901).

<sup>14</sup> The remnants of the church, built by his father, still exist here.

“moral discourses” from the French-language Berlin magazine *L’Abeille du Parnasse* (“The bee of Parnassus”), extracts from Stoic philosophers, a compilation from different sources about the “utility of civic laws,” “Opravdanie perevodov” (“The justification of translations”) (1760, translated from French), and other similar works. These compositions demonstrate the interest of young Shcherbatov in moral philosophy, political theory, and didactic belletrism. He also translated several fragments from the *Universal History*, published in London in 1730–39 (actually, from its French translation, published in Amsterdam).<sup>15</sup> For the period of Shcherbatov’s service in Petersburg we have the evidence (the so-called “Olsufiev’s report”) of Shcherbatov belonging to a Masonic lodge (together with many other representatives of Petersburg aristocracy, including his future historical adversary, Ivan Boltin).<sup>16</sup>

Shcherbatov’s unpublished translations of that time give us the opportunity to understand his intellectual world, reading preferences, and favorite authors. Here one can find complete or partial translations of Beccaria’s *On Crimes and Punishments* (1750–1760), Voltaire’s *The Age of Louis XIV* (1758), Tasso’s *Jerusalem Delivered*, Pope’s *Essay on Man* (1753), Montesquieu’s *Considerations of the Causes of the Grandeur and Decadence of the Romans* (1753), and a fragment of *The Spirit of the*

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<sup>15</sup> *The universal history, from the earliest account of time to the present. Compiled from original authors*, ed. G. Sale et al., vols. 1–7 (London, 1730–1739). French translation: *Histoire universelle ... traduit de l’anglais par une société de gens de lettres* (Amsterdam, 1742–1792). See Lentin, *Prince M.M. Shcherbatov*, 19, fn.

<sup>16</sup> “Doneseniie o masonakh,” in vol. 4, div. 3 of *Letopisi russkoi literatury i drevnosti* (Moscow, 1862), 52.



*Laws*,<sup>17</sup> Fénelon's *The Instructions for the Advisor of the King*, and also Cicero's *On Duties* (1757). These were predominantly political, philosophical, and moralistic works.

### *The Political Career until the Conflict with the Empress*

In 1767, after the four years of retreat, Shcherbatov was elected as a deputy of the nobles of Yaroslavl *uezd* (district) for participation in the Legislative Commission, and summoned by Catherine II in order to work out a new code of laws (*Novoe ulozhenie*). Besides its direct purpose, this was an attempt by Catherine II to obtain a wide elite support after the dethroning of her spouse, Emperor Peter III, who was later killed by the brother of her favorite Orlov. Catherine claimed that her “revolution” was carried out against a tyrant, who was unable to rule, in order to establish an enlightened monarchy which would be based on the system of clear and comprehensive laws.<sup>18</sup> One can assert that this political program initially had a wide support, at least among the nobility, and Shcherbatov was one of the champions of these plans. His speeches in the Legislative Commission, where he was among the prominent speakers, were devoted mainly to the defense of the rights and privileges of the nobility against the claims of the representatives of the other estates. It is wrong, however, to conclude on this ground that Shcherbatov, even in this period, can be regarded as a defender of the obsolete feudal privileges against a nascent Russian

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<sup>17</sup> This is a translation of bk. 25, ch. 13, which is a plea of Jews against abuses of the Spanish Inquisition. This is an interesting source of Shcherbatov's views on religious tolerance.

<sup>18</sup> For a detailed account of this Commission see: Isabel de Madariaga, *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 139–183.

capitalism. He insisted, for example, on the exclusive rights of the nobility to possess serfs. But one can hardly label the opposite claim of the merchants, who also wanted to use serf labor, “pro-capitalist.” One has also to take into account that the manufactories that were established on the estates of rich landlords, including Shcherbatov himself, were an essential part of Russian economic modernization in that period. Moreover, the serfs of rich landlords were the main producers of goods, which Russia exported abroad in exchange for Western products, which were necessary for the new European lifestyle of the nobility, especially in the two capitals.

Shcherbatov’s interest in the development of commerce was expressed in his composition of the project of a code, which described the rights and privileges of the middle estate (*srednii rod liudei*). He also wrote a code which described the legal status of artisans and artists.

After the dissolution of the Legislative Commission, Shcherbatov’s interest in economic matters found a further expression in his appointment as a member of the Commission on Commerce. In 1771 he was also appointed a *heroldmeister*, a head of the department associated with the Senate, which had to maintain the lists of nobles, including genealogical information, and to recommend deserving noble candidates for different state offices. This new position was in accordance with Shcherbatov’s historical interests, and he also enjoyed in this period a good standing with the Empress, who supported his historical works and gave him several special assignments of this sort. For example, he was commissioned to put in order the papers from the *cabinet* (office) of Peter I, and as the result of this the *Znurnal* (“The daily memoirs”) of Peter was published in 1770, and *Tetradi zapisnye* (“The notebooks”) in

1774. In 1773 Shcherbatov, whose vast estates were burdened with significant debts, asked the Empress for financial help with the mediation of her secretary Kozitskii, and his request was satisfied. Shcherbatov also obtained permission to use the state archives, which were normally closed for private persons, for his historical investigations and was formally appointed as a historiographer. In 1773 was also raised to the court rank of *kamerger* (chamberlain).

### *The Critical Turn*

It is difficult to say when exactly Shcherbatov's hidden opposition to Catherine's rule began. His 1772 commentary on Catherine's *Nakaz komissii* ("Instruction to the legislative commission"), written five years after publication of the *Nakaz*, contains already a criticism of Catherine's rule, which, for Shcherbatov, had a tendency towards despotism.<sup>19</sup>

Also in his notes, which were preserved in manuscripts from the time when Shcherbatov served as a secretary of the Military Council after the end of the Russo-Turkish War (1768–1774), one can see that his attitudes towards the statesmen, members of this council, were quite critical. The closest associates of the Empress were characterized by Shcherbatov in a very frank language. In particular, about Count Kirill Razumovskii he writes, "Невзирая на подлость его рождения, сей муж имеет довольно разума и просвещения, но разум его так леностью и беспечностью его затушен, что... он и здравый свой рассудок... ленится к

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<sup>19</sup> Mikhail Shcherbatov, *Neizdannye sochineniia* (Moscow: OGIZ-SOTSEKGIZ, 1935), 16–63. For a partial English translation, see Antony Lentin, ed., *Enlightened Absolutism: A Documentary Sourcebook* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Averro, 1995), 34–37.

существенной пользе употребить.” About Prince Alexandr Holitsin he says, “Тихой и скромной его обычай делает почитать в нем более достоинства, нежели в нем действительно есть... Впрочем он всегда предан сильной стороне двора, и от искания своего тшится счастье и спокойствие свое получить.” About Count Nikita Panin he writes, “Человек тихой... хотя блистательного и быстрого разума не имеет, однако не лишен здравого рассудку; медленность его в делах делает многие затруднения, а неумеренная привязанность его к тем, кого он любит, часто затмевает в нем самую любовь к отечеству.”<sup>20</sup>

These comments were written in 1775–1777. In September 1777 an open conflict took place, which led to Shcherbatov’s alienation from the court life. As a result of this episode, formally he was promoted in ranks, but actually he was sent from St. Petersburg to Moscow, and his further career as a potential associate of the Empress was over.

The reason was apparently trivial. We know details from Shcherbatov’s manuscript “O sebie” (“About myself”),<sup>21</sup> which was written immediately after the event. There existed a rule that servicemen could be promoted to the next rank for committed service during a particular period of time or for exceptional merits. Therefore, a serviceman, who had obtained a particular rank earlier, was counted as “elder by service” in comparison with his colleagues and, accordingly, had priority for a promotion. This rule could be broken if somebody had special merits, in which case he could “outpace” his “elder” colleagues. The reason for the conflict was that

<sup>20</sup> Quoted from: N. Eidelman, “O tom cheloveke, kotoryi izobrazhen na portrete,” in vol. 5 of *Panorama iskusstv* (Moscow: Sovetskii khudozhnik, 1982), 317–318.

<sup>21</sup> Shcherbatov, *Neizdannye sochineniia*, 112–118.

Shcherbatov was “outpaced” by his colleagues, Nepliuev and Samoilov. The former took bribes, as Shcherbatov wrote, not for himself but for the wife of the *general-prokurator* (head of the Senate). Moreover, rumors had it that he was her lover. The latter, who “badly knew the laws” and was also corrupted, happened to be the spouse of the sister of Prince Grigorii Potemkin, the almighty favorite of the Empress. These two, though Shcherbatov was “elder by service,” obtained the offices of senators and were promoted into the next rank earlier. Shcherbatov reacted by writing a letter to the Empress, in which he counted all his merits, including the numerous publications and historical works, and asked for promotion into the next rank. Meanwhile, he stayed at home and did not fulfill his service duties.

The Empress’ reaction was relatively mild. After an exchange of messages, in which the Empress tried to convince the serviceman to fulfill his duties patiently, she promised him generous rewards in the future. Meanwhile Shcherbatov insisted that it was just to promote him in the next rank, taking into account that his colleagues were already promoted, and the historian finally received the position of the head of the *Kamer-Kollegia* (the department, which had to collect a particular sort of taxes, and whose main office was in Moscow) and was promoted into the next rank. But Catherine did not intend to tolerate such an annoying person among her associates, and his career as a courtier was over.

It is not an easy task to explain Shcherbatov’s behavior in this case. As the means to an actual promotion this sort of behavior was evidently counterproductive. It seems that this was an emotional explosion, a display of the long-lasting distress created by observing the strength of subservience and kinship ties, which led to the

promotion of the corrupt relatives of influential persons instead of people who had obtained merit by their “services to the fatherland.”

Already in “O sebie” Shcherbatov began to make some generalizations about the “weak” rule of the monarch and the “despotic” power of her wicked favorites. Probably, the particular event of 1777 was only a trigger, which transformed Shcherbatov’s hidden discontent into a peculiar kind of “secret” polemics with Catherine and her associates. During the next several years until Shcherbatov’s death, each step of Catherine’s policy was subjected to the caustic criticism of the angry prince. This was not just a grumble of a serviceman with thwarted ambitions; actually, Shcherbatov developed a consistent political project as an alternative to Catherine’s “disorderly rule.”

Let us now look at several texts, written by Shcherbatov in his last years (1782–1790).

### **The Quasi-Laudatory Discourse: Peter I and His Vices**

The critical attitude towards Peter I was already well established among the Russian elite during the reign of Catherine II. Enlightened noblemen (and women, as we will see) from Catherine’s milieu frequently drew a contrast between the humane rule of the Empress and the harsh, despotic methods of Peter.<sup>22</sup> An example of this was the opinion of Princess Dashkova, née Vorontsova (a participant of the court revolution,

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<sup>22</sup> See for the numerous examples: Nicholas Riasanovsky, *The Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 34–55.

which brought Catherine into power), which she expressed in her talk with the Austrian chancellor Kaunitz in Vienna in 1780.

За столом он говорил о предметах, близких моему отечеству и, между прочим, обратил разговор на Петра I. Ему, заметил он, Россия обязана, как своему политическому творцу, величайшими благодеяниями. Я опровергала это мнение, приписывая его заблуждениям и предрассудкам иностранных писателей...

«Впрочем, я готова признать заслуги этого необыкновенного человека. Он был гений, деятельный и неутомимый на поприще улучшения своей страны; но эти достоинства были омрачены недостатком воспитания и буйством его самовольных страстей. Жестокий и грубый, он все, что было подчинено его власти, топтал без различия, как рабов, рожденных для страданий. Если б он обладал умом великого законодателя, он, по примеру других народов, предоставил бы промышленным силам, правильной реформе времени постепенно привести нас к тем улучшениям, которые он вызвал насилием... Его тщеславное намерение поднять Петербург волшебным жезлом своей воли, до того было безжалостным распоряжением, что тысячи работников погибли в болотах... При Екатерине, заметила я, Петербург процвел в четверо больше, как по красоте так и обширности общественных зданий, царских дворцов, и постройка их не стоила нам ни усиленных налогов, ни чрезвычайных мер, никакого стеснения».<sup>23</sup>

One can recognize here the comparison which could please the Empress: during her rule Petersburg grew presumably without any burden for the people, in contrast with Peter's time when harsh methods were used.

The monument of Peter I (the so-called "Bronze horseman") by Falconet was unveiled in Petersburg on the 7 (18) September 1782, with the inscription "from Catherine II to Peter I." This phrase expressed simultaneously the ideas of continuity and competition. On the occasion Sumarokov, one of the leading poets of the time, wrote the "inscription," which ends with the following phrase, "PETER gave us

<sup>23</sup> *Zapiski kniagini E. R. Dashkovoï* (Moscow: Nauka, 1990), 172–173. For the English translation see: *The Memoirs of Princess Dashkova*, trans. and ed. Kiryl Fitzlyon (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 180–181.

existence, CATHERINE the soul.”<sup>24</sup> Such was the ideological mainstream of the moment.

Count Sergei Petrovich Rumiantsev (the third son of the well-known *field marshal* Petr Rumiantsev), who had just returned from his foreign trip, published in 1783 (vol. 3, 4),<sup>25</sup> in the magazine *Sobesednik* (“Interlocutor”), edited by Dashkova, an article with the eulogy to Peter, which was met by Catherine with irritation: the author, an admirer of Peter, did not include in his article the usual comparison with Catherine’s “enlightened rule.”<sup>26</sup>

Shcherbatov’s manuscript “Razsmotreniie o porokakh i samovlastii Petra Velikago” (“Discourse about the vices and despotism of Peter the Great”)<sup>27</sup> (written about 1782, as he mentions the opening of Peter’s monument as a recent event) must be interpreted in this ideological context. The historian compares Peter’s allegedly despotic rule with unnamed contemporary rulers, and this comparison is rather in Peter’s favor. There is no mention of Catherine at all, and this silence is even more telling than a direct criticism.

Let us have a closer look at Shcherbatov’s arguments. Already in “O sebie” Shcherbatov opposes the “just” practices of Peter I to the self-deceiving policies of contemporary monarchs:

Печально, о цари! и ваше состояние. Самолюбие ваше влечет вас любить  
льстецов, а они уподляют ваши сердца, они лесть и трусость свою

<sup>24</sup> Riasanovsky, *The Image of Peter*, 38.

<sup>25</sup> See the article in the Russian Biographical Lexicon.

<sup>26</sup> See: V. Proskurina, *Mify imperii. Literatura i vlast' v epokhu Ekateriny II* (Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2006).

<sup>27</sup> It was published for the first time only in 1859.



надевают на вас приятную узду, и что более вы самовластны являетесь, то более вы невольники ваших любимцов... И тако бегите льсти, размышляйте сами с собою и твердо исполняйте, что на правилах истинны основано. Петр великий вам тому пример. Он был груб, но правосуден; за смелость бивал людей, коих же и награждал; он умер, удары и побои его забыли, а помнят его правосудие и как наш век, так и будущие его имя будут обожать.<sup>28</sup>

The criticism of rulers abused by flatterers is obviously directed towards Catherine, as it is clear from the context of “O sebie.” Flatterers, for Shcherbatov, have created obstacles for Catherine, who has not kept her promises to fulfill Shcherbatov’s “just” demands. Peter, when he lived, behaved otherwise, despite his alleged despotism.

In the “Razsmotreniie o porokakh i samovlastii” Shcherbatov continues the topic by systematically refuting the accusations, usual in the age of Catherine, towards Peter’s rule and character. He enumerates Peter’s services to Russia: the fleet, the regular army, the towns he built, the fortresses he fortified, the people he enlightened by sciences and arts, the commerce he established, the laws he introduced in a short time. So, due to Peter’s deeds, Russia rose from weakness to strength, from disorganization to organization, from ignorance to enlightenment.<sup>29</sup> These are commonplaces, of course, and Shcherbatov proceeds further to deal with Peter’s alleged vices. The author counts the following: 1) Peter was excessively severe, he liked punishments and bloodshed and personally beat his subjects, he killed his own son; 2) Peter was predisposed to voluptuousness and luxury; and 3) he pushed despotism towards its extremities.

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<sup>28</sup> Shcherbatov, *Neizdannye sochineniia*, 117–118.

<sup>29</sup> *Sochinenia kniazia M. M. Shcherbatova*, vol. 2 (St. Petersburg, 1898), col. 27–28.

Shcherbatov tries to explain all these vices as the expression of the usual practices of the time when Peter was born. It is true that he received a poor education, but was he also faced with the sad need to overcome prejudices, based on superstitious faith. Peter's son was imprisoned and punished by death because he became a danger to the well-being of the fatherland. Iunius Brutus, who sacrificed his son in ancient Rome, is the example of similar behavior. The beating of Peter's associates was a fatherly punishment and was not regarded as a deprivation of honor. Peter was not at all an admirer of luxury, but some degree of it was necessary in order to impress foreigners. Peter's sexual behavior was indeed vicious, but it did not distract him from state affairs and affected his body, not the soul. As for the despotism, it was the result of necessity, because his subjects were unenlightened, so he could not ask them for advice and was forced to act despotically. But, for Shcherbatov, Peter understood the mutual obligations of the ruler and his subjects.<sup>30</sup>

Finally, Shcherbatov tries to give an answer to his own possible critics, who could claim that he is a defender of despotism.

Instead of a direct answer he poses several rhetorical questions: Has a contemporary ruler, who intends to use despotic methods, found the people without any enlightenment? Has this ruler observed without pomp and with diligence all the parts of the state? Has he undertaken many labors and dangers for the sake of the fatherland? Does he listen without anger to even rude contradictions in his subjects, and is he ready to receive the truth? Only such a ruler, for Shcherbatov, could legitimately use despotic methods. However, who can fulfill all these demands?

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., col. 49.

This is, certainly, a hint at the Empress. The implication is that her subjects are already enlightened, and could give reasonable advice. Such advice is especially necessary because she hardly knows the true condition of the different parts of her country. She travels with such pomp that she cannot see the real life of her subjects. She is not prepared for hard work, at least in comparison with Peter. She does not like to be exposed to the truth and prefers flatterers to honest and bold advisors. Therefore, there are no reasons for any despotic means on her side. Moreover, there are no reasons for the criticism of her associates, which she herself encourages, in respect of the despotic methods of her great predecessor.

As one can see, Shcherbatov uses here the particular representation of the age of Peter for the indirect criticism of Catherine's rule, with its pomp and trust in favorites and flatterers. One can also easily recognize that the image of pre-Petrine Russia is here far from complimentary. "Ancient Russia" is presented as a barbarous country, in which the blind pride and religious prejudices prevented borrowing "useful" accomplishments from more advanced countries.

Several years later (about 1786), however, Shcherbatov presented an altogether different image of the "ancient Russia."

### **The Moral Lesson of Modern History**

Shcherbatov's treatise *On the Corruption of Morals in Russia* (written between 1786 and 1787) was not intended for publication. It was a kind of moral lesson for his

descendants, though it cannot be excluded that Shcherbatov intended his work for a wider audience. Regardless, the manuscript had to be hidden, and only the descendants and their closest friends could read it. Some of them, probably, made copies, and one of these copies was published by Herzen in London in 1858.<sup>31</sup> Together with Shcherbatov's other "secret" writings, it can be used to investigate the historian's political views, which were less openly expressed in his works intended for publication.

In this treatise Shcherbatov goes in quite a different direction in comparison with his defense of Peter against the criticism of Catherine's associates. Now Peter himself is under attack, though it is important to understand that it is not the Europeanization of Russia that causes Shcherbatov's criticism. Peter's reforms are regarded as useful and necessary, but in some aspects "excessive." Moreover, Peter's fault was not that he tried to bring Russia from "barbarity" to "enlightenment," but that he did not complete this process by the establishing of a system of laws, which were necessary for Russia in her new "enlightened" condition. The result was that the transformations of Russia, which were initiated by Peter, led to unexpected results: the "external" conditions (the military might, accomplishments in art and sciences, and the development of commerce) significantly improved, but at the same time the "internal" condition of the society, its moral health, deteriorated dangerously.

At first sight this looks similar to the point of Rousseau's first *Discourse*: the development of arts and sciences leads to the corruption of morals. But Shcherbatov's argument is more specific. Moreover, one cannot be sure that he even read the first

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<sup>31</sup> For the textological history of the manuscript and its copies, see Lentin, "Introduction," in *Prince M.M. Shcherbatov*, 103–109.

*Discourse*, although in one of his texts (the critical analysis of Catherine's *Nakaz*, written in 1772/73),<sup>32</sup> one can find a reference to Rousseau's *Social Contract*.<sup>33</sup> It is clear, however, that the plea against the corruptive effect of civilization is not an original invention of Rousseau,<sup>34</sup> and later I will try to reveal the possible common source for Rousseau and Shcherbatov.

Let us have a closer look at Shcherbatov's treatise.<sup>35</sup> The key notion of *On the Corruption of Morals in Russia* is, certainly, "corruption" (*povrezhdenie nravov*), which is opposed to "virtue" (*dobrodetel'*). These terms can be used for the characterization of rulers as well as the society. The latter usage is connected with the former: the dissolute ruler, for Shcherbatov, corrupted society by the very example of his or her behavior, because subjects naturally try to imitate their ruler. But there are also deeper reasons, namely, the natural human predisposition towards pleasures. Such a predisposition always exists, but in a relatively rude society, where only simple pleasures are accessible, the self-interested desire of its members for pleasures is not destructive to such an extent as in a civilized society. Therefore, special laws are necessary in Russia, "civilized" by Peter, in order to prevent the destructive effects of the dissemination of luxury and avarice. However, because such laws were absent or insufficient, and post-Petrine rulers were careless and themselves vulnerable to

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<sup>32</sup> Shcherbatov, *Neizdannye sochineniia*, 192, see comment 11 by Pavel Liubomirov.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 23. This is Shcherbatov's comment on article 13 of the *Nakaz*.

<sup>34</sup> See about the origin of some ideas of Rousseau's first *Discourse*: Helena Rosenblatt, *Rousseau and Geneva: From the First Discourse to the Social Contract, 1749–1762* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 10–87.

<sup>35</sup> I will refer below to the following edition: "Prilozheniia," in *O povrezdenii nravov v Rossii kniazia M. Shcherbatova i putestvie A. Radishcheva* (Moscow: Nauka, 1985). For the English translation I will refer to the edition with the translation by Antony Lentin.

excessive pleasures, the forces of corruption became irresistible and the state found itself in the danger of complete destruction.

Shcherbatov describes the situation in contemporary Russia in very dramatic terms.

...вера и божественный закон в сердцах наших истребились... Гражданские узаконения презираемы стали. Судии во всяких делах нетоль стали стараться... учинить свои заключения на основании узаконеней, как о том, чтобы, лихоимственно продавая правосудие, получить себе прибыль...

Несть ни почтения от чад к родителям, которые не стыдятся открыто их воли противоборствовать и осмеивать их старого века поступок. Несть ни родительской любви к их исчадию... Несть искренней любви между супругов, которые часто друг другу, хладно терпя взаимственные прелюбодеяния... Несть родственнические связи, ибо имя родов своих ни за что почитают, но каждый живет для себя. Несть дружбы, ибо каждый жертвует другом для пользы своя; несть верности к государю, ибо главное стремление почти всех обманывать своего государя, дабы от него получать чины и прибыточные награждения; несть любви к отечеству, ибо почти все служат более для пользы своей, нежели для пользы отечества...<sup>36</sup>

In other words, the unexpected side effect of Peter's reforms was the destruction of social ties, which were preserved in "ancient Russia," though only because it was the country of "barbarous," rude customs, and the morals of its people were based on religion. Peter, while "civilizing" Russia, destroyed many necessary bounds, which protected the society from a moral deterioration.

For example, it was generally good to purify religious beliefs from superstitions, such as false miracles, designed by corrupted priests in order to increase their incomes. However, depriving unenlightened people of superstition, Peter simultaneously destroyed their faith in the Divine Law. As a result, good morals,

<sup>36</sup> *O povrezhdenii nraov v Rossii*, 60–61; Lentin, *Prince M.M. Shcherbatov*, 114–115.

which were based on faith, began to fall into dissolution, because of the lack of another type of enlightenment.<sup>37</sup>

Shcherbatov gives also another example:

Разрушенное местничество (вредное впрочем службе и государству) и не замененной никаким правом знатным родам, истребило мысли благородной гордости во дворянах, ибо стали не роды почтенны, но чины и заслуги и выслуги; и тако каждый стал добиваться чинов, а не всякому удастся прямые услуги учинить, то, за недостатком заслуг, стали стараться выслуживаться, всякими образами льстя и угождая государю и вельможам; а при Петре Великом введенная регулярная служба, в которую вместе с холопами их писали на одной степени их господ в солдаты, и сии первые по выслугам, пристойным их роду людям, доходя до офицерских чинов, учинялися начальниками господам своим и бивали их палками. Роды дворянския стали разделены по службе так, что иной однородцов своих и век не увидит. То могла ли остаться добродетель и твердость в тех, которые с юности своей от палки своих начальников дрожали, которые инако, как подслужами, почтения не могли приобрести, и быв каждый без всякой опоры от своих однородцов, без соединения и защиты, оставался един, могущий предан быть в руки сильного.<sup>38</sup>

As one can see, this is not even the criticism only of Peter's measures. The abolition of rights of precedence (so-called *mestnichestvo*) took place during the rule of Peter's predecessor, tsar Feodor Alexeevich (Peter's oldest brother). Peter's "Table of Ranks," with its German names of particular ranks, was actually only a continuation of the trend, which took place already in Muscovy in the seventeenth century, namely the preference of individual merits over birth (more exactly, over collective merits of a clan of *boyars*, accumulated during several generations of service).

Therefore, the actual threat, which, for Shcherbatov, put the state in danger, was not even luxury as such, but the destruction of aristocratic clans as a result of

<sup>37</sup> *O povrezhdenii nraov v Rossii*, 80–81; Lentin, *Prince M.M. Shcherbatov*, 152–155.

<sup>38</sup> *O povrezhdenii nraov v Rossii*, 80; Lentin, *Prince M.M. Shcherbatov*, 153.

increasing egoism. Corruption, for him, is the replacement of the idea of “honor of name” (and “name” does not belong to an individual, but to a clan as a whole) by the idea of individual accomplishments, which can be obtained not only by “straightforward deeds of merit” but also by a subservience in respect to grantees.

What was corrupted, in the final analysis? It was a kind of “natural sociability,” which united together the members of a clan, relatives, “friends” (it can be asserted that these words mean not just personal relationships, but a form of mutual support in service and in everyday life), fathers and sons, spouses, etc. Such sociability was steadily destroyed in the post-Petrine period and was replaced by the artificial sociability of Peter’s *Assemblies*. In other words, the norms of the “natural” patriarchal aristocratic household (which included relatives, clients, and even servants) were replaced by “artificial” politeness, based on the pursuit of individual self-interest.

This theoretical construction, which can be inferred from Shcherbatov’s description of “corruption,” can be read in the context of Montesquieu’s notion of the monarchy, as the political mechanism moved by “honor.”<sup>39</sup> For Montesquieu, “honor” is, certainly, a modification of self-interest; it is based on a human vice, namely, pride—the desire of an individual to be appreciated by others. In a monarchy this vice is useful, because it motivates an individual to perform his obligations just as if he strove for the common good. In other words, in this kind of political mechanism, self-interest, due to elaborated laws, serves the well-being of a political body as a whole.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>39</sup> There are numerous references to the *Spirit of the Laws* in Shcherbatov’s texts.

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, Montesquieu, *Selected Political Writings*, ed. M. Richter (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1990), 130–131 (*The Spirit of the Laws*, bk. 3, ch. 7, “The Principle of Monarchy”).



In a republic (particularly in an aristocratic one) the political mechanism is based on another principle, namely, “virtue.”<sup>41</sup> That is, aristocrats, if they are virtuous, strive for the well-being of a political body on the ground of their good morals. These morals can be corrupted, and in this case, in accordance with the ancient Aristotelian and Polybian account, an aristocracy degenerates into an oligarchy. The modern remedy against such destructive development, proposed by Montesquieu, is the establishment of the monarchy, based on laws.

This is, probably, what Shcherbatov had in mind when he wrote about the necessity of new laws for Russia, which Peter failed to establish. As the nobles are already corrupted by avarice, luxury, and egoism, the only way to save the Russian state from destruction is to establish a true monarchy, based on the rule of law. But if some remnants of “natural” virtues were preserved at least in some aristocratic families, it would be possible to create a kind of a mixed monarchy, where the elements of the monarchical political mechanism would be counterbalanced by the elements of aristocratic rule. The only way to accomplish this aim is to create a political system which could prevent the promotion of wicked persons to the highest ranks of service and, by contrast, could encourage the promotion of virtuous men.

This task, for Shcherbatov, is not impossible to accomplish, but the main condition for this is the appearance of a virtuous monarch. The treatise ends with a fragment, which expresses such a hope.

...должно просить бога, чтоб лучшим царствованием сие зло истреблено было. А до сего дойти иначе не можно, как тогда, когда мы будем иметь государя, искренно привязанного к закону божию, строгого

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 128.

наблюдателя правосудия, начавших с себя, умеренного в пышности царского престола, награждающего добродетель и ненавидящего пороки, показующего пример трудолюбия и снисхождения на советы умных людей... умеющего разделить труды, что принадлежит каким учрежденным правительствам, и что государю на себя взять, и наконец, могущего иметь довольно великодушия и любви к отечеству, чтобы составить и предать основательные права государству, и довольно тверда, чтобы их исполнять.

Тогда изгнанная добродетель, оставя пустыни, утвердит среди градов и при самом дворе престол свой, правосудие не покривит свои вески ни для мзды, ни для сильного; мздоимство и робость от вельмож изгонятся, любовь отечества возгнестится в сердца гражданские, и будут не пышностию житья и не богатством хвалиться, но беспристрастием, заслугами и бескорыстностию. Не будут помышлять, кто при дворе велик, и кто упадет, но, имея в предмете законы и добродетель, будут почитать их яко компасом, могущих их довести и до чинов, и до достатка. Дворяне будут в разных должностях служить с приличною ревностию званию их, купцы престанут желать быть офицерами и дворянами; каждый сократится в свое состоянии, и торговля уменьшением ввозу сластолюбие побуждающих чужестранных товаров, а отвозов российских произведенной процветет; искусства и ремеслы умножатся, дабы внутри России сделать нужное к пышности и великолепию некоего числа людей.<sup>42</sup>

One can see that Shcherbatov is not at all in opposition to Peter's reforms, and he even regards luxury as necessary for "a certain number of people." But his aim is to arrest the evil consequences of luxury and voluptuousness, to prevent their penetration into the lower strata of society, where virtue (which, for Shcherbatov, should belong to aristocrats) could not counterbalance their evil effects. Thus, the aim of Shcherbatov's political project is to create a mixed monarchy, where the principles of "honor" and "virtue" act together. This is certainly in a sharp contrast with Montesquieu's vision of these principles as mutually exclusive.<sup>43</sup>

In this mixed monarchy, projected by Shcherbatov, the principles of "virtue" and "self-interest" must motivate different strata of society. For high servicemen,

<sup>42</sup> *O povrezhdenii nraov v Rossii*, 129–130; Lentin, *Prince M.M. Shcherbatov*, 259.

<sup>43</sup> See: Montesquieu, *Selected Political Writings*, 128–129, bk. 3, ch. 5: "Virtue is not the Principle of Monarchical Government."

“grandees,” virtue is necessary, and they must keep under control all other layers of society. For merchants, by contrast, virtue, patriotism, and self-sacrifice for the common good will not at all be necessary, these men can be perfectly useful even if they pursue their egoistic self-interests. But it is necessary to have just and uncorrupted judges, in order to keep the activity of merchants under control. As for rank-and-file noblemen, it is not exactly clear from Shcherbatov’s description which principle must motivate them, but if we suppose that “honor” can be connected with “rank,” then probably “zealous service” must be motivated by the sort of self-interest which can be reduced to the promotion in ranks, and this perfectly fits into Montesquieu’s framework of “honor” as the principle of the true monarchy.

Let us now turn to the question of how history is used in this treatise. The main opposition in Shcherbatov’s text is that between the “rude” but “uncorrupted” “ancient Russia,” on the one hand, and “enlightened” but corrupted modern Russia, on the other hand. It is important to realize, however, that the word “ancient,” which is used here, does not refer to a particular period of time. Rather, it acquires the character of a general description, a kind of a moral evaluation, which connects “old” and “good,” as an expression of the parental power. The fact that Shcherbatov associates with these “ancient morals” some peculiar traits of pre-Petrine Russia is a rhetorical device, which he uses in order to give his abstract moral reasoning the form of a concrete historical reality.

In other words, “ancient Russia,” as presented in the treatise, is not an attempt to describe the real Russia as it existed before Peter I. Rather, it is an attempt to find in the past some characteristics, which are useful for the construction of Shcherbatov’s

historical opposition in order to prove, that he does not propose something entirely new, but tries to “restore” a kind of “virtue,” which did exist previously.

Thus, Shcherbatov invented an abstract political scheme, supplementing it by some apparently realistic details from the Russian past to create the impression that his project was possible to realize. To confirm this statement, let us consider the sequence of examples, which Shcherbatov gives in order to support his thesis that the “rude,” unenlightened Russia was also “virtuous.”

One of Shcherbatov’s examples is about the life of “primitive peoples”:

Отложа все суровости следствий непросвещения и скитающейся жизни диких народов, рассмотрим их внутренния и не истребленные, влиянные природою в сердце человеческое добродетели. Худы ли или хороши их законы, они им строго последуют; обязательства их суть священы, и почти не слышно, чтобы когда кто супруге или ближнему изменил; твердость их есть не вероятно, они за честь себе считают не токмо без страху, но и с презрением мученей умереть; щедрость их похвальна, ибо все, что общество трудами своими приобретает, то все равно в обществе делится, и нигде я не нашел, чтоб дикия странствующие и не просвещенные народы похитили у собратей своих плоды собственных своих трудов, дабы свое состояние лучше других сделать. А все сие происходит, что несть в них и не знают они сластолюбия, следственно и никакого желания, клонящегося в ущерб другому, а к пользе себе, иметь не могут.<sup>44</sup>

This is, certainly, the well-known myth of the “noble savage,” but it is important that Shcherbatov depicts these “barbarians” as creatures who are naturally sociable. For him, nature (or God) instills into the hearts of men initial virtues, which in this rude state of society provide its members with such admirable characteristics, as trustfulness, resolution, generosity, etc. The reason for this is that in such a society, which knows only simple pleasures and primitive commodities, there exists no motivation for competing for superiority in consumption, as there is no luxury and no

<sup>44</sup> *O povrezhdenii nraov v Rossii*, 62; Lentin, *Prince M.M. Shcherbatov*, 117.

possibility to express pride by the use of refined food and drinks, costly ornamented clothes, or excessively decorated houses.

Shcherbatov's other example is about ancient Rome.

Юлий Цесарь, толь искусный в познании сердец человеческих, яко искусен в военных и политических делах, который умел побеждать вооруженных противу его врагов и побежденных сердца к себе обращать. Не иное что ко утверждению своея похищенные власти употребил, как большия награждения, дабы, введши чрез сие сластолюбие, к нему якобы ко источнику раздаяней более людей привязывались. Не токмо всем своим поступком изъявлял такая свои мысли, но и самими словами единожды их изъяснил. Случилось, что ему доносили нечто на Антония и на Долабелу, якобы он их должен опасаться. Отвечал, что он сих в широких и покойных одеждах ходящих людей, любящих свои удовольствия и роскошь, никогда страшиться причины иметь не может. Но сии люди, продолжал он, которые о великолепии ни о спокойствии одежд не радят, сии иже роскошь презирают, и малое почти за излишнее считают, каковы суть Брутус и Кассий, ему опасны в рассуждении намереней его лишить вольности римский народ. Не ошибся он в сем, ибо подлинно сии его тридцети тремя ударами издыхающей римской вольности пожертвовали. И тако самый сей пример и доказует нам, что не в роскоши и сластолюбии издыхающая римская вольность обрела себе защищение, но в строгости нравов и в умеренности.<sup>45</sup>

This example certainly does not mean that Shcherbatov's aim is to rebel against despotism, just as the previous one does not mean that Shcherbatov strives for returning Russia into the condition of barbarity. The aim of these examples is to prove that "virtue" is somehow connected with the denial or at least limitation of luxury and "voluptuousness" (*slastoliubie*, in the original text), and the same moral lesson is given by the example of the "ancient Russia."

Shcherbatov's image of this "ancient Russia" is not, certainly, an innocent barbarian society, as some degree of "enlightenment" already existed there. It is not ancient Rome with its republican liberty. Pre-Petrine Russia, for Shcherbatov, was a

<sup>45</sup> *O povrezhdenii npravov v Rossii*, 61–62; Lentin, *Prince M.M. Shcherbatov*, 117.

hierarchical society, a monarchy, and some kind of luxury was already spread among the highest ranks of *boyars*. But the condition of the pre-Petrine Russia can be described as relatively “rude” in comparison with Russia after Peter’s reforms. And due to its “rudeness,” it was also a relatively “innocent” society. Although luxury existed, it did not have a corruptive effect yet.

In “ancient Russia,” as it is depicted by Shcherbatov, everyday food, dress, and buildings were relatively simple, not too expensive. However, Russians knew the hierarchical division, which was symbolized, for example, by the “magnificence” of clothes. Let us, for example, look at the following excerpt:

Се есть все, что я мог собрать о роде житья, выезде и одежде царской, а сие самое и показывает, коликая простота во всем оном находилась. Бояре и прочие чиновники по мере их состояния подобную же жизнь вели, стараяся притом, из почтения к царскому сану, никогда и к простому сему великолепию не приближаться. А более всего сохраняло от сластолюбия, что ниже имели понятия о перемене мод, но, что деды нашивали, то и внучаты, не почитаясь староманерными, носили и употребляли. Бывали у бояр златотканые, богатые одеяния, которые просто золотами называли, и не инако надевали, когда для какого торжественного случая повелено им было в золотых ко двору собираться; а посему сии одежды им надолго служили, и я заподлинно слышал, что не стыдились и сыновья по кончине родителей своих тоже платье носить.<sup>46</sup>

For Shcherbatov, the stable hierarchy expressed itself in the potentially durable things such as clothes, which did not need essential renovation for the next generation because their main elements were made of the incorruptible metal. In other words, the expressions of richness in this “ancient” society were not an effect of an uncontrollable desire of sensual pleasures, but only the symbols of hierarchical positions of the highest state servants and the tsar.

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<sup>46</sup> *O povrezhdenii nravov v Rossii*, 67; Lentin, *Prince M.M. Shcherbatov*, 127.

Shcherbatov's "ancient Russia" was also not an ideal society in regard to natural sociability, in comparison with the idyllic "barbarian condition." The clans of *boyars* competed for supremacy; pride and vainglory already existed in pre-Petrine Russia. But his description of external "magnificence," strongly connected with rank, allows him to make the impression that the evil consequences of corruption were at least arrested in this relatively stable society. "Ancient Russia" is described as a closed system with strong codes of behavior, based on the rules of religion. The superstitions, which isolated the Russian elite from Western "enlightened" countries, provided, at the same time, an antidote to the unbounded striving for pleasures. Proud *boyars* regarded Westerners as inferior people, who were not acquainted with the true religion, and therefore, there was nothing worth borrowing from them.

Peter's opening of Russia to the influence of the West changed the situation. The mechanism of the progress of corruption, as it is depicted by Shcherbatov, resembles the mechanism of political submission as an effect of *amour-propre*, as it is described by Rousseau in his *Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality among Men*. It was a kind of competition, in which each aristocratic family tried to acquire as much external brilliance as possible, partly imitating the luxurious courts of Peter's descendants, and partly in order to entertain influential persons, for example, numerous favorites of the successive Empresses. As a result, expenses started to exceed the aristocrats' income from normal sources (exploitation of serfs), and the only way for them to maintain themselves was to ask for donations from the monarch or her favorites. This undermined the spirit of noble independence. Responsible statesmen were pushed aside by dishonest flatterers, and aristocrats became

accustomed to ignoble tricks in order to acquire the means to increase their incomes (judges became dishonest, husbands tolerated adultery of their spouses with influential persons, etc.). This led to despotism, and even the good-hearted monarchs, deceived by their dishonest favorites, became harsh oppressors without even knowing it. People lost their former respect towards laws, morality, and religion. Avarice became the main spring of behavior, while honest service and noble honor counted for nothing.

For Shcherbatov, the only way out was to request God to send Russia a good monarch, who would give new fundamental laws to the country. The particularities of this new order are depicted by Shcherbatov in his utopia, which I will describe later. Now, it is important to sum up.

The history of Russia after Peter's rule was composed by Shcherbatov in such a way as to serve as a proof that further reforms are necessary in order to balance the corrupted political mechanism and create a good polity instead of a demoralized one. In other words, historical narrative serves as a moral lesson, which demonstrates what happens if some basic principles are violated. Therefore, history is used to promote a particular political project.

### **“The Empire of Ophir”**

To understand Shcherbatov's political project let us now turn to his depiction of an ideal society. It is necessary to understand that his ideas fit in the framework of a classical cyclical theory of the rise and fall of political entities. Each polity has its own



circle of life, from its establishment to a relatively perfect condition and subsequently to the inevitable degradation. However, it is also possible, from Shcherbatov's point of view, to reestablish the already corrupted polity by the creation of a new system of laws. Such renovation, as one can see at the end of the treatise *On Corruption*, happens as a result of the appearance of a good ruler, who gives the polity new laws and by his own example of obeying them ensures their acceptance by the society.

For this newly emerging political entity only a limited scope of perfection is possible, because the original lawgiver makes only the basic fundamental laws and all particulars are to be regulated gradually by the common efforts of the ruler and the representatives of society. The main criterion, which allows distinction between a good and a bad political mechanism, is its vulnerability towards corruption. To some extent corruption is inevitable, but good laws can at least slow this process down, providing durability to the polity. The original lawgiver can be compared with the maker of a complex machine; it is necessary to tune it (to develop particular laws and regulations), but any essential changes will cause only its destruction.

The key question within such a framework is how to prevent corruption. To propose an answer, Shcherbatov uses the means of utopia as a literary genre. He wrote the story of the Empire of Ophir<sup>47</sup> (the name comes from the Bible), which is an idealized Russia, supposedly situated in the far south of the southern hemisphere. Using this literary device, Shcherbatov depicts the country which is in many respects similar to Russia (cold climate, vast territory, partially covered by forests, etc.), but, in contrast to its prototype, has a perfect political organization. Ophir is a monarchy, but

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<sup>47</sup> Mikhail Shcherbatov, *Sochineniia*, vol. 1 (St. Petersburg, 1907), col. 750–1060.

the monarch rules together with the powerful elite, and even the common citizens participate in political affairs (they can give advice in respect to the regulations of their particular activity). The members of the elite, who are divided by ranks, are described as virtuous (because promotion is given in accordance with virtue),<sup>48</sup> but the population as a whole is not. This is why numerous policemen and even military forces are necessary in order to prevent crimes, public disorders, and even rebellions. Policemen are at the same time priests, whose function is to supervise not only public behavior, but also the private morals of the citizens. Thus, political liberty, that is the participation of a citizen in a functioning of political mechanism, is based on the absence of a negative liberty, which is the right of the citizen to do what he pleases within the boundaries of law. In Shcherbatov's imagined world, citizens ought to serve the common good at their best, in accordance with their descent, education, and talent, and the exact and detailed particular regulations are provided in order to ensure that each man and woman fulfills his or her duty properly. Self-interest, therefore, is submitted to the common interest even in the lowest strata of society, but this is not because of honor, but because of the good police and the habit of submission to the laws.

Besides detailed regulations of the particular forms of service, there are also strict regulations of consumption, in accordance with ranks. Each rank has its particular clothes, particular quality of foods, beverages, dishes, and particular size of houses (which must be clean and without excessive decorations). The use of horses in cities is prohibited for private citizens (it is reserved only for the Emperor and his

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<sup>48</sup> But the fact that the promotion takes place means that self-interest in the form of the desire of promotion (Montesquieu's "honor") also moves this political mechanism.

suite). The aim of all these regulations is to prevent excessive luxury, which is the main source of corruption. In this world there is private property, there are rich and poor people, but there are no beggars, nobody dies from hunger, and rich and powerful citizens compete for giving shelter to the sick and injured.

The Empire is not completely isolated, though only inner trade exists and contacts with the civilized world are basically prohibited (the narrator, a French officer of Swedish origin, comes to this place only because of a shipwreck). There are belligerent neighbors on the borders of this Empire, and this is why maintaining an essential military force is necessary. However, soldiers are settled and have families, they have their plots of land or work as artisans, and the recruitment is mainly from their offspring, so the burden for the other part of the population is minimal.

Shcherbatov devotes special attention to the courts and their procedure, which is fast and open for private visitors, who, due to the perfect and common education of the citizens (though in accordance with their status and talents), are familiar with the laws. This system guarantees that court decisions are always just and impartial. The punishments are severe, but the need to resort to them is rare, because crimes themselves are rare in this ideal polity.

In sum, one can say, that the Empire of Ophir is an example of a well-ordered police state, which is as perfect as is possible in this world, with its people weak and vulnerable to corruption, who can be made relatively virtuous only by the close supervision and constant suggestion (in schools in childhood and by priests-policemen in adulthood) that virtuous behavior is as useful for each particular individual as for the common good.

One can easily find a source of Shcherbatov's imagination in Fénelon's depiction of the good polity, established by Mentor in Salente (in Fénelon's imaginary travel story, *Telemachus, Son of Ulysses*). For example, Mentor instructs Idomeneus, the king of Salente, about rules which can provide well-being for his subjects:

All foreign merchandise that might introduce luxury and effeminacy was prohibited. The dress and diet of all the different ranks were regulated; together with the size, furniture, and ornaments of their houses ... Mentor also visited without delay the arsenals and the different magazines, to see that the arms and other warlike stores were in good order: for, he said, a state ought always to be prepared for war in order to prevent its ever being reduced to the disagreeable necessity of engaging in it ... Public schools must be erected in which the youth may be taught to fear the gods, to love their country, to respect the laws, and to prefer honor to pleasure and even to life itself. There must be magistrates to watch over the families and the morals of individuals that compose them.<sup>49</sup>

People in Salente are divided into seven ranks (in Ophir into fourteen, as in Peter's Table of Ranks). The officials of Ophir are particularly interested in artillery (the narrator happens to be a knowledgeable man in this respect), and this is in accordance with the warlike spirit of the Salentians, who are always prepared to defend their city. There are also public schools in Ophir, with the main stress on moral instruction. In Ophir, as in Salente, special magistrates must supervise the private morals of citizens.

The main difference is, however, that Fénelon underlines the necessity to resettle "redundant" artisans from the city to the countryside, in order to involve as many people as possible in agriculture. Shcherbatov does not put a stress on this, although in one place he protests against the transformation of some villages into towns (and peasants into city-dwellers). But this is rather a veiled criticism of

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<sup>49</sup> Francois de Fénelon, *Telemachus, Son of Ulysses*, ed. and trans. P. Riley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 162–172.

Catherine's establishing of new *uezdy* (local administrative regions), for which she transformed some villages into towns as the centers for these regions. Shcherbatov's concern was not the priority of agriculture, as it was for the French author, because for Russia the typical problem was the underdevelopment of industry and commerce, not overdevelopment. Moreover, if Fénelon traditionally underlines physical vigor, in contrast with effeminacy, as a necessary part of virtue (his story takes place in ancient Greece), Shcherbatov focuses on the significance of technical improvements, which are necessary for economic well-being and also for military strength (artillery, construction of fortresses, etc.). Thus, one can find a Russian specificity, which is expressed in Shcherbatov's reworking of Fénelon's ideas.

The Russian author does not answer the question how this technical, industrial, and commercial (within the internal market) progress, which he admires as "useful" (in contrast to Rousseau, who was also inspired by Fénelon, though by different aspects of his ideas),<sup>50</sup> is connected with an unchanging moral and social order. In other words, Rousseau's question whether "arts and sciences" will finally corrupt even a relatively durable polity is not answered in Shcherbatov's text. Probably Shcherbatov was not as radical in his conclusions as Rousseau and understood only non-"useful" arts as a possible source of corruption.

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<sup>50</sup> See: Patrick Riley, "Introduction," in *Telemachus*, xvi–xviii.

## Conclusions

Nicholas Riasanovsky writes in the conclusion of his analysis of Shcherbatov's image of Peter I:

Shcherbatov's thought had never been notable for its consistency. Still, the glaring contradiction between his general enthusiastic, thorough, elaborate, and carefully considered praise of the reformer and the new sweeping critique, between the Russian Enlightenment image of Peter the Great and the message of "On the Corruption...", must have cried for a resolution. This issue was put to rest by historian's death shortly after the completion of his iconoclastic work ... The gist of the moralist's criticism of the reformer in that work was not that the first emperor had not been enlightened enough or that he needed Catherine the Great to accomplish what he had merely started and not even that he had made a particular mistake or mistakes, but rather that, unexpectedly, the new turning itself proved to be a disaster. This approach to Peter the Great and his reforms, directly opposed to the letter and spirit of the Russian Enlightenment, was to become prominent in subsequent periods of Russian history.<sup>51</sup>

As I tried to prove, this approach to Shcherbatov as a predecessor of Slavophiles with their sweeping criticism of Peter's reforms, which, for Slavophiles, led Russia away from its specific national way of development, is misleading. Shcherbatov, even in *On Corruption*, states that Russia had to imitate the example represented by more enlightened countries.

The main shortcoming of Riasanovsky's approach is the image of "the Russian Enlightenment" as an ideological monolith. As many recent works on the European Enlightenment have demonstrated, there was no such thing as "the Enlightenment," but rather different varieties of it.<sup>52</sup> Certainly, the common movement for

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<sup>51</sup> Riasanovsky, *The Image of Peter*, 62.

<sup>52</sup> Roy Porter and Mikuláš Teich, eds., *The Enlightenment in National Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

improvement can be found in all the national versions of enlightenment,<sup>53</sup> but the particular agenda for this “improvement” was different not only for different countries, but also for different ideologists, who belonged to different social strata. Thus, Shcherbatov’s version of enlightenment was one of many possible versions, and his image of a perfect society fits in the same framework as the works of some Western European thinkers, such as Fénelon.

The question was, however, how this image, borrowed from the early French Enlightenment, had to be adopted in order to be acceptable as a project for the underdeveloped Russian society. In this case the striving for the creation of a perfect moral order contradicted the aspiration to develop commerce, industry, and “useful” arts, which were necessary, in particular, for the defense of the country. As a result, some idyllic characteristics of Fénelon’s peaceful society (although prepared for defense) had to be reconsidered. For example, Peter I, for Shcherbatov, had to conquer some territories on the Baltic in order to create ports necessary for commerce. This does not contradict, however, Shcherbatov’s condemnation of the conquest of Crimea and part of Poland by Catherine. These countries, alien to Russia by their climate or population, were, for him, rather excessive additions, more harmful than useful.

It is true that one can easily find “inconsistencies” in Shcherbatov’s thought, because his points, which he tries to prove, sometimes contradict each other. However, one has to take into account the fact that the use of history in order to illustrate abstract moral ideas leads inevitably to some contradictions. Shcherbatov’s *Istoriia* can be divided, therefore, into several stories; each of them has its own

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<sup>53</sup> John Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment: Scotland and Naples 1680–1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

meaning and presents a separate moral and political lesson. For example, the first part of the fifth volume about Ivan the Terrible proves the greatness of this ruler, who always had good advice from his *boyars* and managed to put their clans under strict control to avoid inner strife. The second part of the same volume demonstrates how the wicked tyrant, who ruled by fear, not by laws, led his country to a military disaster when it was defeated by the Polish King Stefan Bathory. In both cases the main hero is the same person, Ivan IV, but the moral lessons are different, and Shcherbatov himself recognizes this contradiction and tries to give a psychological explanation for Ivan's tyrannical behavior. The cause of this "inconsistency" is not only the contradictions in the sources (which certainly exist), but also the aim of the "classicist" historiography, which imitates the ancient ideal of history as the *Magistra Vitae*.

This is only an introduction to the further analysis of Shcherbatov's main ideas. The next aim is to develop this theoretical scheme and to demonstrate how Shcherbatov's political project influenced his interpretation of the history of ancient Russia (or rather "histories," as it follows from the previous section).



## ***§1.2 The Moral and Political Meaning of Shcherbatov's Istoriiia***

The purpose of this section will be to analyze how the political ideas of Shcherbatov were expressed in his historical writing, using as an example the description of the Time of Troubles in the last volumes of his *Istoriiia*. The text of *Istoriiia* can be regarded as a result of putting the material, borrowed from sources, in a particular conceptual framework, with a purpose to draw a moral and political lesson, applicable to the contemporary situation of Shcherbatov's time. The order of analysis will be exactly the reverse: I will start with Shcherbatov's political agenda, uncover the origin of his conceptual framework and his particular use of concepts adopted from several theoretical models, and, finally, I will show how he organized material about the Time of Troubles taken from Russian and foreign sources in order to fit it into his set of categories to accomplish his political purpose.

### **Political Context**

In the period of writing of the last, sixth and seventh, volumes of his *Istoriiia*, Shcherbatov became increasingly critical towards Catherine and her rule. The main object of his criticism was the system of favoritism and, in particular, the overwhelming influence of Prince Grigorii Potemkin in state matters. Shcherbatov was irritated by the luxurious lifestyle of Catherine's favorites, by the promotion of their numerous relatives without regard to their merits, by the habit of giving nobility

to their low-born supporters and dependants, and most of all by the fact that, due to the influence of favorites, the families of high-born Muscovite aristocracy, that is the circle to which Shcherbatov belonged himself, were pushed aside from power.

It would be wrong, however, to reduce Shcherbatov's discontent to his unfulfilled ambitions only. His criticism was directed on many issues, which were of acute importance for the Russian nobility of that time, and not only for the nobility. First of all, it was the system of lawlessness, the arbitrary rule of strong and well connected, who, because of imperfect and confusing laws, were able to influence a court to make a decision in accordance with their interests. This made property owners, nobles as well as commoners, vulnerable and insecure, and in some cases even their freedom was under threat. Another issue was the spread of luxury, for which the court society set the example. For that reason many nobles, especially in the two capitals, were forced to spend more than their income could allow. As a result the traditional moral values, especially in aristocratic circles, were undermined, and striving for an additional income tempted many high officials to resort to illegal means. Besides the two Russo-Turkish wars, the permanent disturbances in Poland and the additional war with Sweden placed a heavy burden on the Russian peasants, indirectly threatening to ruin their landlords, and, moreover, the officials had shown their incompetence during the famine in several central *gubernias* in 1788. Thus, in spite of the personal motives, Shcherbatov's criticism had serious grounds, and can be understood as a phenomenon comparable with such critical voices as Fonvizin's and Radishchev's, although the latter was an adversary of serfdom and Shcherbatov was an ardent defender of it, with strong paternalistic overtones.

In his secret writings, first of all in his treatise *On Corruption*, Shcherbatov expresses his discontent with the arbitrary methods of Catherine's officials and the empress' tolerance towards her corrupted servants quite directly. In his published writing, mainly in *Istoriia*, he arranges his material in such a way that an attentive reader could draw a lesson from past events in accordance with Shcherbatov's hidden intention. To accomplish this purpose he uses the historical figure of Boris Godunov, a first advisor of tsar Feodor Ioannovich, in order to demonstrate how the unlimited power of the unscrupulous favorite led eventually to the near destruction of the Russian state.

### **The Conceptual Framework: The Classical Background**

Unfortunately, we do not have detailed information about Shcherbatov's readings, thus the sources of his ideas can be restored only by his fragmentary mentions of particular authors and by comparison. From the Ancients he definitely knew Plato and Cicero well (as he mentioned them in his treatise about the education of a young gentleman), and from moderns he referred many times to Montesquieu and Rousseau. As a rule, Shcherbatov read ancient authors in French translations, and we can also assume that he used second-hand compendiums or renditions of ancient authors, composed contemporaneously or by earlier French scholars. He could also borrow some general ideas from the English Universal History (in French translation), which was published in the 1760s–70s. As it is impossible to discover his obscure secondary

sources, we will point out the initial origin of the political ideas, which were used by Shcherbatov, putting aside the way in which he came to particular concepts.

In common with the Ancients, Shcherbatov built his political theory on the ground of a particular moral teaching. His particular choice resembles closely the ideas of Stoicism, with its basic opposition of virtues and vices. A virtuous man acts on the ground of reason and nature. A reasonable action is based on the ability to make proper judgments about what is good and what is bad for the self-preservation of a human being as a reasonable individual. Reason here is opposed to passion, which is a disturbance of the human mind, preventing it from proper judgments. For example, fear is an exaggerated idea about a possible threat, which narrows the human mind, and prevents an individual from acting with the necessary decisiveness and courage. By contrast, caution is based on a realistic account of possible threat and allows an individual to find reasonable measures to avoid future harm. Accordingly, the quality of cowardice, which inclines an individual towards fear, is a vice, and the opposite quality, courage, is a virtue. As we will demonstrate, Shcherbatov's characterization of historical personages is partially based on these distinctions. It is important to emphasize here that this is a kind of rationalistic ethics, which means that morally wrong deeds are understood as based on erroneous judgments about things that are necessary for the self-preservation of an individual. The striving for self-preservation (not of just a physical existence, as for animals, but also of a moral integrity) is defined by Stoics as natural, and this is how the idea of nature (and natural behavior) comes into the picture.

Shcherbatov's idea of how to connect the moral qualities of individuals and the good or bad organization of a political community can be traced back to Plato (especially the *Republic*), who draws the analogy between three parts of the human soul and three layers of human society. The ideal case, for Plato, is where the basest level of the human soul, striving for sensual pleasures, would be under control of the second, spiritual part, which seeks glory, honor, or the esteem of fellow citizens, and this part, in turn, must be under control of the highest part, reason, which is an aspiration for the Truth (or the highest Good). By this analogy, Plato draws in his utopian vision of society a three partite division of social layers. The basest is that of commoners, whose occupation is to provide subsistence for themselves and for other members of community, and it is enough for them to be industrious on the basis of their striving for pleasures. The medium layer is that of guardians, who must be courageous; their main function is to protect the state and to prevent themselves, and the lower level, from excessive pleasures (they live, in Plato's utopia, a communal life without private property). The highest level is that of rulers-philosophers, who basically strive to lead a contemplative life, and who are forced by their fellow citizens to sacrifice this striving for the well-being of the community. These wise men (or one of them, who is appointed as a king) serve as rulers and judges; they give and maintain the laws, etc. This is, however, an ideal picture. In practice as it often happens, for an individual as well as for a community, this hierarchy of moral motives and social layers undergoes destruction, and, for example, a striving for pleasures starts to dominate the society. This can be named a moral corruption. This corruption leads the individual towards a vicious life, for example, he spends his life in excessive

eating, drinking, and sexual acts, as his striving for pleasures breaks the hold of reason. A society of such individuals, for Plato, becomes first the rule of a mob (to which Plato's attitude is definitely negative) and then transforms itself into a tyranny. The tyrant is the individual who leads the life of sensual pleasures and maintains his power by excessive cruelty. The monarchy (of a philosopher-king) and the tyranny here are already two opposite poles of the best and worst government, and these forms of government are connected with a reversal of social hierarchy and the moral condition of the members of the community.

In his treatise *On Corruption*, Shcherbatov also directly connects the moral condition of society and the form of government (for him, Catherine's Russia is on its way from a monarchy to a despotic rule, and this is partly because of the spread of luxury). He also points out a reversal of the social hierarchy as the result of the rule of some of Catherine's favorites. One can remark, however, that Shcherbatov's own utopia, *Puteshestvie v zemliu ofirskuiu*, does not go so far as Plato's *Republic*, as the Russian author allows private property on all levels of the hierarchy; his noblemen combine the functions of rulers, judges, and military men (as in Russia), and he allows, at least for noblemen, a degree of social mobility (thus, Plato's two highest social levels are merged into one, and no "communism" is presupposed for them, though strict limitation of consumption are introduced to prevent luxury).

The next important (though, probably, indirect) ancient source of Shcherbatov's political ideas is Aristotle. The most relevant is, in this respect, Aristotle's opposition between kingship and tyranny, which is based on a different principle in contrast with Plato. In his *Politics*, Aristotle starts with a simple division

of three basic forms of government, that is, a government of one (monarchy), of few, or of many. Each of these forms can be good or corrupted, in accordance with the political virtue of the ruling body. This political virtue does not have a direct connection with the motives of the individual in his private life, but is rather simply his readiness to sacrifice his particular interests for the well-being of the community as a whole. Accordingly, monarchy becomes a good form of rule (kingship) if the monarch governs for the sake of all (is virtuous in this specific sense) and it becomes a bad form (tyranny or despotic rule) if he governs for his own sake. Similarly, the rule of the few is aristocracy (rule of best), if the ruling group serves the interests of the community (the common good), and oligarchy if they rule for themselves. Finally, Aristotle separates the rule of the many in accordance with the same principle, as *politeia*, a virtuous rule for the fatherland of the majority of citizens, or the people's rule (sometimes it is called ochlocracy) as a rule of, for example, common people directed against the interest of a noble and rich minority. Such a kind of a simplified classification scheme was used by Polybius in his description of late republican Rome as a best kind of polity, combining the advantages of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, which mutually prevent each other from corruption.

In Shcherbatov's early treatise, "Raznyia razsuzhdeniia o pravlenii" ("Different discourses on forms of government"),<sup>54</sup> one can find a similar but somehow simplified scheme, in which the Russian author separates the three basic forms (monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy) and points out their advantages and disadvantages in such a way, as a good monarchy looks similar to Aristotle's

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<sup>54</sup> Shcherbatov, *Sochineniia*, vol. 1, col. 335–354.

kingship, but is under the threat of becoming a tyranny, and a similar transformation can occur with aristocracy (which tends to become oppressive towards common people). Democracy is blamed for a constant discord and the strife of parties pursuing their particular interests, and in this negative attitude toward the people's rule Shcherbatov is closer to Plato than to Aristotle.

However, this is not all that can be said about Aristotle as a probable indirect source of Shcherbatov's ideas.

In the third book of *Politics*, Aristotle proposes a more elaborate scheme, based on the division of the political community into three classes, that of the poorest citizens, the citizens of moderate wealth, and the richest citizens (who are usually also high-born, and possess other privileges, such as, for example, a good education). Also he proposes the distinction between the rule in accordance with established law and the rule in accordance with arbitrary decisions of the ruling body. He also discriminates between the people who are accustomed to a despotic rule and are ready to submit voluntarily to such a governments (such are for him Persians and other Asians, who are slaves by their very nature), and the peoples who are free by nature (such as Greeks and Europeans in general) who basically do not normally tolerate a despotic rule, though can voluntarily submit to such a rule on a temporary basis in extraordinary circumstances.

All these dimensions (class division, lawful or arbitrary rule, free or slavish people) can be combined with previous divisions (number of ruling individuals and their virtue), which makes resulting classifications rather complex. For our purposes we can focus only on several types and on the dynamics of their mutual



transformations, as these types were used by Shcherbatov in his description of the evolution of the Russian monarchy.

The most relevant in this respect will be book 4, section 10 of *Politics*, where Aristotle discusses the reasons for the destruction and preservation of monarchies. He asserts here that “royal rule is of the nature of an aristocracy,” whereas “a tyranny is a compound of oligarchy and democracy in their most extreme forms.”<sup>55</sup> This is because, Aristotle explains, a king acquires his place due to his merits, virtue, and benefits to the community,<sup>56</sup> and he continues to be a king while his function is “to be a protector of the rich against unjust treatment, of the people against insult and oppression.”<sup>57</sup> Aristotle adds that “the king seeks what brings honour” and “the guards of a king are citizens of the state, but of a tyrant, mercenaries.”<sup>58</sup> The kingship is contrasted with tyranny, combining the vices of two other corrupted forms of government: “As of oligarchy so of tyranny, the end is wealth” and “Both [oligarchies and tyrannies] mistrust the people.”<sup>59</sup> And “From democracy tyrants have borrowed the art of making war upon the notables and destroying them secretly or openly, or of exiling them because they are rivals and stand in the way of their power; and also because plots against them are contrived by men of this class, who either want to rule or to escape subjection.”<sup>60</sup> Aristotle gives at this place the well-known example of the

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<sup>55</sup> *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. 1 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 2080 (1310b, 1–5).

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 2081 (1310b, 32–35).

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, (1311a, 1–3).

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, (1311a, 7–8).

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, (1311a, 10–13).

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, (1311a, 15–20).

advice given to a tyrant by Periander, that to preserve his power he must cut off the highest ears of corn, “meaning that he must always put out of the way the citizens who overtop the rest.”<sup>61</sup>

Aristotle’s description of the community here is not entirely idealistic (he does not assume that all citizens are virtuous) and not entirely realistic (there are some virtuous individuals). If it happens that a monarch is virtuous, then he functions as a mediator between two hostile groups: that of privileged (which means wealthy, of noble origin, educated, etc., all together or separately) and that of non-privileged. The former (if one realistically assumes that they are not particularly virtuous) tend to be insolent and greedy, the latter are usually envious. If there are no mediators between them (the middle class usually serves as such a mediator, and, if it is strong enough, this can lead to the establishment of *politeia*, the best form of government for Aristotle), then the result can be oligarchy (if the privileged are stronger and can subdue the other group) or people’s rule (this is possible if the non-privileged are stronger due to their multitude). The presence of the king, who protects them from each other, allows a balancing these groups, provided that their mutual respect to the virtuous power prevents them from an abuse of force.

The tyrant can, in some sense, also serve as a balance, as he treats unjustly both conflicting groups, but his position (he relies on mercenaries) is vulnerable, so he usually prefers to abuse the privileged, who are more dangerous toward his power, and this can give him the support of the non-privileged, who hate the former group. The tyrant can be crude towards the common people as well, but if he wants to

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., (1311a, 20–23).

preserve his power, then it is better for him to deceive them, which is facilitated by the fact that they are badly educated and poor.

Aristotle devotes a separate section to the discussion of measures by which tyrants can preserve their power. They can be reduced to the following three: “he sows distrust among the subjects; he takes away their power; and he humbles them.”<sup>62</sup> The first point is especially important, as it leads to the destruction of social ties. As Aristotle wrote about a tyrant, in particular, “he must not allow common meals, clubs, education, and the like; he must be upon his guard against anything which is likely to inspire either courage or confidence among his subjects.”<sup>63</sup> Tyrants also use spies, and this produces the fear to speak openly and, again, creates mutual distrust.<sup>64</sup> Other measures tend to produce the same result, that is, to isolate people from each other in order to prevent conspiracy, in particular, “to sow quarrels among the citizens; friends should be embroiled with friends, the people with the notables, and the rich with one another.”<sup>65</sup> This idea of destruction of social ties was used by Shcherbatov in his depiction of Godunov’s rule.

Such are vicious tyrannical means. But it is also possible for a tyrant if not to be, then at least appear to be, a king. As Aristotle writes, “the salvation of a tyranny is to make it more like the rule of a king.”<sup>66</sup> Of course, in this case he will still be a tyrant, because he has no other way to rule over unwilling subjects: in the other case

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 2086 (1314a, 28–29).

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 2085 (1313b, 1–4).

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., (1313b, 12–17).

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., (1313b, 17–19).

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 2086 (1114a, 35).

he would lose his power. “But though power must be retained as the foundation, in all else the tyrant should act or appear to act in the character of a king.”<sup>67</sup> The behavior of such a “half-wicked” tyrant Aristotle describes as follows: “And whereas states consist of two classes, of poor men and of rich, the tyrant should lead both to imagine that they are preserved and prevented from harming one another by his rule, and whichever of the two is stronger he should attach to his government.”<sup>68</sup> Besides this manipulation by contradictions between the two groups of society, a tyrant, who wants to preserve his power, must be, at least partially, beneficial for the community as a whole: “He ought to show himself to his subjects in the light, not of a tyrant, but of a steward and a king. He should not appropriate what is theirs, but should be their guardian; he should be moderate, not extravagant in his way of life; he should win the notables by companionship, and the multitude by flattery.”<sup>69</sup> Among the measures which can deceive the common people, Aristotle mentions religious devotion. A tyrant “should appear to be particularly earnest in the service of the gods.”<sup>70</sup> This, as we will see, is also used by Shcherbatov in his description of Godunov’s behavior.

In a word, a tyrant must behave like a king if he can, and must resort to tyrannical means only if it is necessary for the preservation of his power. One can recognize here the familiar teaching of Machiavelli, only without a deliberate representation of the kingly appearance of the tyrant as a virtue of a “virtuous” prince.

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., (1314a, 35–40).

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 2088 (1315a, 33–37).

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., (1315b, 1–5).

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 2087 (1314b, 39–40—1315a, 1).

We will see further, Shcherbatov's tsar, Boris Godunov, behaves in accordance with Aristotle's "recommendations" for tyrants. But Godunov eventually fails to preserve his power, not to speak of his manipulative behavior aggravating the tensions between social groups and eventually bringing political disorders even closer. His "half-wicked" character tends, for Shcherbatov, to be wicked for the time being, and he begins to be hated by all, in spite of his attempts to preserve a kingly appearance. To understand why this happens in Shcherbatov's conceptual framework it is necessary to revert to the Stoics' moral teaching.

Let us start from the political issue. In book I of his treatise *De Clementia* ("On Mercy") Seneca opposes the merciful king and the cruel tyrant. The tyrant is characterized as follows: "Contradictory motives drive him to self-contradiction. He is hated because he is feared, and being hated makes him want to be feared."<sup>71</sup> A tyrant cannot trust even his own lackeys: "No one can hold the good will and loyalty of servants whom he employs to work the instruments of torture."<sup>72</sup> The tyrant's psychological conditions are described as wholly unhappy, moreover, any betterment is impossible: "Gloomier and more troubled than any defendant in court ... he has reached the point where he cannot change his ways. For quite the worst thing about cruelty is that you have to press on with it. There is no way back to something better. The only protection for crime is more crime. And what could be more wretched than to be, as he now is, *obliged* to be bad?"<sup>73</sup> The result is a particular character, that is, of a man tormented by suspicion and hatred of his subjects and neighbors, which creates

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<sup>71</sup> Seneca, *Moral and Political Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 144 (I 12.4).

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 144–145 (I 13.2).

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 145 (I 13.2).

his own suspicion towards his environment and even self-hatred: “Wielding power by slaughter and pillage, he arouses suspicion in all his dealings abroad and at home alike. Resorting to arms though afraid of arms, with no trust in the loyalty of friends or the piety of his children, wherever he looks around at what he has done or what he is going to do, he uncovers a conscience full of crimes and torment. Often fearing yet more often longing for death, he is more hateful to himself than to those who are his slaves.”<sup>74</sup>

The opposite in regard to this tyrannical behavior and character is the behavior of a merciful king:

Contrast him with one whose care is for all without exception. While guarding some things more than others, he nurtures every part of the commonwealth as though it were part of himself. Inclined to the milder course, even when it may be of use to punish, he reveals his reluctance to apply harsh remedies. Free in mind from all trace of enmity or wildness, he exercises his power in an indulgent and beneficial manner, eager only to win the approval of the citizens for his commands ... Affable in conversation, accessible and easily approached, amiable in expression ... favourably disposed to requests that are reasonable without being harsh even to ones that are not, he is loved by a whole state ... What people say about him is the same in secret as in open ... Such a prince, protected by his own deeds, has no need of guards.<sup>75</sup>

Seneca calls such a ruler “Father of the Fatherland,”<sup>76</sup> as his behavior towards subjects is like the behavior of a father towards children: “No one in his right mind, surely, would disinherit a son for a first offence ... he first makes many an attempt to reclaim a character still not set though already inclined to the worse. Only when all hope is lost does he resort to extreme measures.”<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., (I 13.3).

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 145–146, (I 13.4–5).

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 146 (I 14.2).

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., (I 14.1).

Let me return to the point of Aristotle's half-wicked tyrant. Is it psychologically possible to be such a ruler without slipping off into a vicious circle of fear and hatred? The answer of Stoics would be certainly negative, as a king must be perfectly self-restrained, and his virtue demands a reasonable action without any *pathos* (a Greek word, which can be translated as "emotion" or "passion," the former translation better expresses negative evaluation, but can be confused with a Christian concept of sin; for Stoics, however, this is rather misjudgment, created by a disturbed state of mind).

There is the important difference between Peripatetics and Stoics at this point.<sup>78</sup> For Peripatetics, reason and emotion are two distinct abilities of mind, the latter gives an action its strength and vigor, and the former defines the right measure, which fits the circumstances. For example, the reaction to an unexpected blow by an enemy warrior or by an unreasonable child must be different, though pain and the initial anger can be the same. In both cases, the initial emotional impulse is natural and necessary, but the degree of restraint must be different. For Stoics, by contrast, emotion and reason are the disturbed and undisturbed condition of the same mind. Accordingly, it is expedient to act always on the ground of reason and get rid of emotions, as the latter are always exaggerated and prevent an actor from the right evaluation of a situation. If we now compare the king and the tyrant in this respect, it becomes clear that the former acts on the ground of reason, whereas the latter on the ground of passions. Accordingly, the former is patient and cautious, whereas the latter is tormented by anger and fear. In Aristotle's view, a tyrant can be cruel towards his

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<sup>78</sup> See the revealing discussion of this issue in the introduction to the Cambridge edition of Seneca's treatise *On Anger*, by J. M. Cooper and J. F. Procope, in *Moral and Political Essays*, 5–10.

potential enemies but can still retain a degree of self-control in order to appear as a king. His vicious passions are restrained (but not suppressed entirely) by reason. For Stoics this is impossible, as a tyrant accustomed to uncontrolled expression of cruelty and suspicion inevitably loses the ability for reasonable action and becomes a slave of mutually enforcing passions of anger and fear.

Stoics, Seneca included, are much more pessimistic in some respect, as for them the ability of self-control, once broken, cannot be easily restored, and crime can lead only to other crimes.

As we will see further, this is exactly how Shcherbatov describes the psychological evolution of Godunov, who tried to be (or at least to appeared to be) a king. But steadily, as he committed cruel deeds again and again, he became more and more inclined towards tyrannical behavior, and became feared and hated by his subjects, being unable to trust anybody. So, his fall became inevitable.

The development from Aristotle to Seneca demonstrates increasing concern with the character of a ruler, instead of focusing on the moral condition of a ruling society. Aristotle's characterization of the kingship as an aristocratic monarchy based on the rule of law, in contrast with the arbitrary rule of a tyrant who uses the mutual hatred of wealthy and poor classes to sustain his rule, gives way to Enlightenment interpretations of monarchy.



### **Shcherbatov's Combination of Montesquieu's Political Concepts and the Stoic Idea of "Natural" Self-Preservation**

Shcherbatov refers to Montesquieu's *The Spirit of Laws* with all the possible respect. This does not prevent him from disagreement with some conclusions of the French thinker, especially regarding Russia. He accepts, in general, a three partite division of the forms of rule into republican (which includes democracy and aristocracy), monarchical, and despotic (or tyrannical) species, each based on a specific motivation of its ruling elite: virtue for the republic, honor for the monarchy, and fear for the despotism. However, Shcherbatov does not fully accept Montesquieu's idea that "virtue is not the principle of the monarchy." To understand this disagreement it is necessary to look at these principles in some details. First, one can recognize that Montesquieu's understanding of virtue is not conventional. This is not a kind of moral perfection, but the purely political principle, that is the love of the citizen for his fatherland and its laws. These laws promote equality, though not an extreme one: excessive wealth and unlimited ambition are damaging for a republic, as they create a threat of domination of particular interests of stronger citizens over the common well-being of a community. This is why Montesquieu's republic is possible only in a small city, like Sparta, and the transformation of Rome from the city-state to the vast empire inevitably led, for him, to the fall of the ancient republic. It is better for the stability of the republic to be a state of farmers-warriors, with a moderate wealth and modest culture. This is because the flourishing of arts (with the exception of special ones, such as music, in Plato's ideal city) creates effeminacy and can be dangerous for the

morals of citizens, while excessive commercial wealth can lead to the prevalence of mercenary motives and undermines the necessary devotion of citizens to the common cause. For these reasons, with all his admiration towards ancient republics, Montesquieu is rather skeptical in respect to contemporary examples. For modern times he prefers monarchy, which is based on another principle, that is honor. This is for him an aspiration for distinctions, a kind of selfish motive, to some degree even a vice, as the main concern of an ambitious person is to obtain a distinction in respect to his fellow citizens. However, due to wise laws, this kind of society can be arranged in such a way as to reward individuals, whose activities serve the glory of a monarchy and the common good of its subjects. Thus, ambitious individuals, in order to fulfill their selfish desires, that is, to acquire the sins of distinction from the monarch, are to accomplish honorable deeds, which are useful for the political community.

Such an ironical way of thought (a version of “unsocial sociability”) is rather alien for Shcherbatov. For him the main motive of the nobility, at least in the Russian monarchy, is “love for the tsar and the fatherland” (he usually uses this formula as an indivisible whole). This means that his idea of the monarchy is partially based on Montesquieu’s political virtue (the love of the fatherland), though without overtones of the love of republican laws. At the same time, Shcherbatov does not exclude other motives, such as the nobles’ determination to defend collectively their possessions (that is, their shares of land) against enemies of the country, as well as an aspiration to receive symbolical and material rewards from the monarch. The last motive is similar to Montesquieu’s honor, though for Shcherbatov this is a natural self-interest, which is not vicious if these rewards are obtained due to merit, and not because of a shameful

activity or a kinship to powerful men. Such a blend of virtuous and selfish motives (though not harmful for the community), which mutually support each other, can be regarded as an indication that Shcherbatov probably had in mind a kind of a mixed monarchy in Polybius' sense, that is a combination of the rule of monarch with a kind of the aristocratic representation, for example, in the form of the old Muscovite *Duma*. Of course, in Shcherbatov's Russia, there was no such aristocratic institution, but, at least, he thought that the Muscovite *Duma*, in which the old boyar aristocracy was represented, was such an admixture of the aristocratic and the monarchical institutions. Therefore, it was possible to regard the ancient Russian monarchy as a mixed form, a blend of the aristocracy and the monarchy. This made it possible to regard the tyranny of Ivan the Terrible and his successors, including Godunov, as a result of the corruption of initial principles of virtue and honor, which, for Shcherbatov, worked together in "ancient Russia." The rule of tyrannical tsars, which eventually led to the civil war, could, in accordance with this view, serve as a warning for future tyrants, including Catherine, whose intentions were to destroy the agreement between the aristocracy and the crown.

The main problem, however, was whether it was possible to understand virtue and honor as mutually compatible with each other, whereas for Montesquieu these principles were in contradiction to each other. First, one must take into account that virtue in aristocracy does not presuppose, for Montesquieu, such strong restrictions of self-interests as in a democratic republic. As he asserts:

An aristocratic government has an inherent vigour, unknown to democracy.  
The nobles form a body, who by their prerogative, and for their own particular

interest, restrain the people; it is sufficient that there are laws in being to see them executed.

But easy as it may be for the body of the nobles to restrain the people, it is difficult to restrain themselves ... Now such a body as this can restrain itself only in two ways; either by a very eminent virtue, which puts the nobility in some measure on a level with the people, and may be the means of forming a great republic; or by an inferior virtue, which puts them at least upon a level with one another, and upon this their preservation depends.

Moderation is therefore the very soul of this government; a moderation, I mean, founded on virtue, not that which proceeds from indolence and pusillanimity.<sup>79</sup>

It is clear that a “great republic,” where the nobles restrict themselves in such a way as to be similar to other citizens, was not an ideal which Shcherbatov has in mind for Russia. But for the “ancient Russia” he could regard Montesquieu’s “lesser virtue” as, probably, a suitable principle. At least, one can understand Shcherbatov’s eulogy for the relative modesty of the Russian aristocrats in seventeenth-century Muscovy in such a way, in contrast with luxury and licentiousness of his own time. So, to which extent and how is this “lesser virtue,” moderation, compatible with Montesquieu’s honor?

At this point I can propose a hypothesis. As we already know, Shcherbatov’s understanding of virtue is partially based on the doctrine of Stoics, for whom self-preservation was a principle for the determination of “natural” and “reasonable” behavior. Let us be reminded that this was not a physical self-preservation of just a body, but a preservation of an individual as a reasonable, socially responsible human being (which in some cases could even demand a suicide, if the destruction of the

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<sup>79</sup> I used the Russian edition: Montesquieu, *O dukhe zakonov*, bk. 3, ch. 4 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1955), 181–182. English translation is taken from: Charles de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws*, trans. Thomas Nugent, rev. J. V. Prichard. Based on a public domain edition published in 1914 (London: G. Bell & Sons, Ltd.), rendered into HTML and text by Jon Roland of the Constitution Society, accessed 26 Dec. 2011, [http://www.constitution.org/cm/sol\\_03.htm#004](http://www.constitution.org/cm/sol_03.htm#004).

physical body was a condition for the preservation of a virtuous soul; this of course implied immortality of a soul). “Reasonable” behavior for Stoics implied an understanding of the person as a member of a human society (not only a polis, but for some Stoics even humankind as a whole). This means that “self-preservation” can be understood as a preservation of a social individual, of a person as a member of a given community, for example, of the aristocratic elite. If we combine this idea with the “preservation” of the aristocracy, which is, for Montesquieu, a purpose of moderation (equality among themselves) of the members of the aristocratic elite, then the result will be that the “political virtue” in an aristocracy can be understood as the maintaining of a collective distinction of aristocrats, as the ruling body, in respect to the common people, while distinctions within the elite must be limited in such a way, as to promote solidarity and mutual support between the members of this elite. This implies that the ambition and the aspiration for distinction in respect to his fellow aristocrats must be, for an individual member of the elite, subjected to the highest principle, that is a preservation of the elite as a whole. This gives a criterion of how to separate an “excessive” ambition (striving for honor) from a “natural” one. A “natural” ambition implies that an aristocrat strives for the “self-preservation” as a member of aristocratic elite, that is, he is determined to preserve his aristocratic social status. An “excessive” ambition means that he attempts to receive such signs of esteem, which make him distinct and excessively powerful in respect to other members of the aristocratic community and allows him to dominate, and thus such an ambition threatens to destroy the mutual solidarity of aristocrats and makes them vulnerable to the attempts of their common subjects to destroy this form of

government altogether (and to establish, for example, the rule of the mob or a tyranny).

In other words, “virtuous” honor (or virtuous, natural, reasonable ambition) in respect to “excessive” honor is the same as the cautious behavior of a reasonable Stoic sage in respect to the fear of an undisciplined man, whose mind is not trained in accordance with Stoics’ doctrine. An aristocrat, who is trained to subordinate his ambition to the higher purpose of preservation of an aristocracy as a whole, is an ideal member of an aristocratic republic based on the principle of “moderation.”

This hypothesis, which presupposes that Shcherbatov’s understanding of a way to combine honor and virtue in the “aristocratic monarchy,” based on the peculiar combination of Montesquieu’s ideas with the Stoics’ moral teaching, can be substantiated by the evidences from one of Shcherbatov’s “secret” treatises: “Opravdanie moikh myslei i chasto s izlishneiu smelostiiu izglagolannykh slov” (“The justification of my ideas and words pronounced often with an excessive courage”). Shcherbatov writes here about himself as follows: “Хотя я с природы рожден и гораздо горячего или, лучше сказать, чувствительного нрава, однако сдерживать его умею...”<sup>80</sup> This refers, certainly, to the Stoics’ ideal of a sage, though in an ideal case an individual must be trained not to suppress “disturbances of mind” altogether. At least this shows Shcherbatov’s aspiration to the Stoics’ ideal, though possibly with Christian overtones (in the Christian ascetic doctrine passions are inevitable, though one can contain them with the help of God; but we have no references to such a help in this particular excerpt, so it is rather the Stoics’ idea of self-discipline). The next

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<sup>80</sup> Mikhail Shcherbatov, *Sochinenia kniazia M. M. Shcherbatova*, vol. 2 (St. Petersburg, 1898), col. 247.

excerpt from the same text is a “political” application of the same Stoic principle: “Однако не скажу я, чтобы не имел ни любочестия, ни желания удовольствий и моих спокойств. Но любочестие мое состоит: возможно быть полезну обществу, а желание моих спокойств и удовольствий подчиняю моей должности.”<sup>81</sup> The word “должность” (*dolzhnost*) is used here in the sense of Cicero’s treatise *De Officio*, that is, a moral obligation, duty, which does not necessarily refer to any official position. We can see in this last excerpt that an ideal way of behavior, which Shcherbatov aspires to follow, is to submit “ambition” to a Stoics’ ideal of virtue, that is, in this case, the fulfillment of obligations necessary for the well-being of society.

This can be understood also in light of the Platonic idea of subjection of lower motives to higher ones. The “love to the fatherland and the tsar” is the highest motive, to which all other must be submitted. This does not mean that other motives should be suppressed altogether, but they are necessary and “natural” to the extent that is necessary for “self-preservation.” This means that “ambition” and “honor” are necessary and useful since they serve as a support for patriotic virtue and help preserve a person in his social standing as a member of the aristocratic ruling elite. In the same way the striving for pleasures and comfort can be useful while it serves a preservation of a physical existence of an individual, but excessive pleasures can be harmful for one’s health, and excessive comfort can lead to effeminacy, which is harmful for a military spirit essential for a nobleman. Similarly, an excessive ambition, which is not contained by the aspiration to preserve solidarity among the ruling elite, can be harmful to the very principle of aristocracy, that is, “moderation.”

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., col. 248–249.

To sum up, in the aristocratic monarchy projected by Shcherbatov (which existed, as he believed, in “ancient Russia”), the republican aristocratic principle of virtue and the monarchical principle of honor work together in such a way such that ambition is contained by the aristocratic political virtue of “love of the fatherland” together with “moderation.” As for commoners, it is not necessary for them to be virtuous in this sense, as they are disciplined by the laws, which are executed and secured by the aristocratic elite in its own interests. Of course, there is a danger that such elite would be excessively suppressive towards the common people. However, this can be prevented by a good monarch, thus the mixed monarchy is a better government than a pure aristocracy, provided that the monarch is virtuous. But what if he is not? Could the arbitrary deeds of an evil monarch be at least contained by the presence of the aristocratic elite? Shcherbatov’s answer to this question in respect to Russia, in contrast with Western monarchies, could not but be ambiguous, as he was well aware that in Russia, even in “ancient Russia,” there were not any legal limitations to the tsar’s arbitrary rule.

The historical description of the tyrannies, which preceded and accompanied the Time of Troubles, could be regarded by Shcherbatov as precisely the way to answer this and other related questions. What happens if a tyrannical monarch destroys the agreement between monarchy and aristocracy? Could a republican monarchy at least preserve itself?



### ***§1.3 Shcherbatov and Montesquieu:***

#### ***The Concepts of Virtue and Honor (Ambition)***

The aim of this section is to trace the intellectual context of Shcherbatov's ideas concerning the connection between the concepts of "virtue" and "honor" (ambition). We will demonstrate that, in comparison with Montesquieu's understanding of these concepts, Shcherbatov makes some important modifications, which allows him to propose a specific kind of monarchy for Russia, which is based on aristocratic "virtue," like Montesquieu's republic, for which virtue is a main "spring." However, Shcherbatov's "virtue" differs from Montesquieu's, as it needs additional support from a monarch, so it is a kind of "weak virtue" and bears some resemblance with Montesquieu's "honor" and "moderation."

In Shcherbatov's time, Russia had no option to be a free state, such as the constitutional monarchy of the British model, and the only available choice for this country was between a lawful monarchy and an unlimited despotism.<sup>82</sup> When Catherine II asserted in her *Nakaz* that Russia was a European state, she implied that in accordance with Montesquieu's classification, Russia was a European monarchy, not an Asiatic despotism. Whether Catherine's intentions at the time of the composition of the *Nakaz* were sincere or not, the choice itself depended on the ruler's

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<sup>82</sup> Sergei Pol'skoi has recently published a manuscript by Shcherbatov that can be regarded as a project of constitution for Russia. In my opinion, this project did not suggest a limitation of monarch's power by any institution. In Shcherbatov's view, it was better for the monarch to rule together with an aristocratic council, but he was not legally obliged to do so. See: S. V. Pol'skoi, "Potaionnye' sochineniia kniazia M. M. Shcherbatova i ego zapiska 'Mnenie o zakonakh osnovatel'nykh gosudarstva,'" *Izvestiia Samarskogo nauchnogo centra Rossiiskoi akademii nauk*, vol. 12, 2 (2010): 217–222.

personality. It was sufficient for Russia to have a less benevolent successor to the throne to be transformed into a despotic condition. Even Catherine herself, especially in the last years of her rule, was regarded by many contemporaries, Shcherbatov among them, as rather a despot, not as a monarch who ruled on the basis of a constant system of laws.

In these circumstances, one possibility for a political writer in Russia was to persuade the ruler to play the role of monarch instead of tyrant. Another possibility, in the case that there was no hope of persuading the current ruler, was for the author to engender the expectation that the next ruler would be better in the future. Anyway, political recommendations could only be made in the well established genre of a *Mirror of Princes*, and their realization depended on the good will of the monarch. His or her choice between the roles of a good monarch and a bad despot was itself an expression of a whim, and these roles could be switched at any moment.

The hopelessness of this situation could be softened, however, by one's belief, that a reasonable ruler would not intentionally destroy his or her own realm. Of course, passions could temporarily obscure a ruler's reason, so that she would act in a harmful way toward her own country. However, the basic interests of the ruler would always coincide with the common good of his or her subjects. Thus, it is enough to awaken his or her reason, and it will allow a ruler to understand the arguments of those who assert that monarchy based on firm laws can be a stable form of government, whereas despotism will sooner or later lead the realm to a collapse.

It is easy to see that the language of "passions," "reason," "interests," and "common good," used here can be related to the mainstream seventeenth- and

eighteenth-century moral philosophy of “unsocial sociability.” The problem is, however, that in Shcherbatov’s writings one can hardly find a purely scientific endeavor to construct a society, where self-interests of particular individuals work for the common good due to a wise system of laws. As I will demonstrate later, Shcherbatov made such attempts, but they were mixed with the idea that people have certain natural sociability (and therefore are not naturally self-interested creatures). Besides, in Shcherbatov’s writings one can easily recognize an appeal to aristocrats to observe a certain moral code, and this modality of appeal is hardly compatible with the task of inventing laws, which would be able to organize naturally self-interested individuals into a society.

Within this mixed genre and complex, while not always coherent, theoretical framework, Shcherbatov’s political writings can be interpreted as realizations of a certain rhetorical strategy. On the one hand, his aim is to convince readers that the current condition of Russian state is a masked form of despotism, and in order to avoid a catastrophe it is necessary to change the existing form of government. On the other hand, he proposes some particular improvements that would bring Russia toward the establishment of a good form of government, which must be, for him, a mixed monarchy. One can guess that potential addressees of this latest kind of writing, which for a while must be kept secretly “in the depths of his family,” are for future generations of “citizens,” who will be happy enough to live under a well intentioned ruler. Shcherbatov probably hoped that these people would use his ideas and projects to help the ruler to establish a well ordered state. Such ideas are expressed most fully in the utopian novel *Puteshestvie v zemliu ofirskuiu*. As for his numerous critical

writings, their aim was, besides the possible use of demonstrating how a good ruler must not act, to serve as a channel of expression for Shcherbatov's own disillusionment in Catherine's regime.

Shcherbatov's rhetoric, both in its negative (critical) and positive (utopian) sides, is based on the opposition of bad and good rule, despotism and true monarchy. Despotism is, for him, a result of "infection" of a political community by a certain disease, whose name is selfishness. Let us look at this opposition in detail.

The basic definition of monarchy in contrast with tyranny can be found in Aristotle's *Politics*. A despot rules a political community for his personal utility, whereas a monarch rules for the common good of its citizens. In another passage Aristotle asserts that the rule of monarch is based on laws, whereas a despot rules without any laws.

The definition of monarchy, proposed in Montesquieu's *The Spirit of Laws*, is a further development of these ideas. The monarchy is based on laws, which are obligatory for all, including the ruler himself, whereas despotism is based on whim, in other words, it is an arbitrary rule. Besides, for Montesquieu, in monarchy intermediate powers have to exist, which can restrain the ruler's whimsical moves. These powers are, basically, corporations of nobility (represented, for example, in France by parliaments), so Montesquieu's definition is actually a transformed version of a medieval model of mixed monarchy. The power of a monarch is mitigated by a quasi-republican body, a corporation of noblemen. Furthermore, Montesquieu adds to his definition the basic motifs or "springs," which set these forms of government in motion. For despotism it is fear, whereas for monarchy it is a love of honor which

motivates its nobles to serve the common cause, without sacrificing their selfish interests.

Against this intellectual background Shcherbatov's opposition between despotism and a true monarchy possesses several distinct characteristics. First of all, his definition of despotism does not refer only to a certain political behavior of a ruler or her own moral condition, but to a particular moral condition of a society as a whole. For him, despotism is not only a system based on the terror of the ruler towards the subjects (on fear, as in Montesquieu's definition). Even a ruler who seems to be benevolent towards her subjects can be a despot, if there are no legal restraints to her arbitrary will. And the condition of this is that the "republican" body of noblemen ceases to perform its restrictive function, because it is corrupted by the selfishness of its members.

Rhetorically, the definition of good and bad "rule of one" is expressed in Shcherbatov's writings by two opposite clusters of notions. On the one side is monarchy, where one can find laws that are strictly observed, a stable policy based on clear principles and utility for the state, and the aspiration of the aristocratic elite to act for the sake of their common realm. On the other side is despotism, where laws can be easily avoided by a despotic ruler and his or her associates. Here, there is no stable policy, and all depends on the occasional fluctuation of the ruler's will and on people, chosen by chance. Where the aristocratic elite is demoralized, and the place of "sons of the fatherland" is occupied by unscrupulous and cynical magnates, the only motivation is selfish interest and a desire to obtain gifts and profitable positions from the ruler.

These definitions are partially based on Shcherbatov's personal experience, which was generalized and explained by references to the conventional dichotomy of lawful monarchy and arbitrary rule. As he wrote in the "Pis'mo k vel'mozham praviteliam gosudarstva" ("Letter to magnates, governors of the state"):

Я видел над собою многие несчастья, был обманут счастьем, претерпел в имениях своих ущерб...<sup>83</sup>

Apparently Shcherbatov refers here to a case he lost in court, although there is no direct confirmation of this. Only in one of his letters to his son Dmitry (1 October 1786) does Shcherbatov mention the judicial contest with his neighbors in Kostromskaia gubernia.<sup>84</sup> Anyway, his general opinion about Catherinian courts is very negative, and he connects this not only with corruption among lower court officials, but also with the depraving influence of powerful magnates. As he exclaims, addressing them,

Вижу ныне вами народ утесненной, законы в ничтожность приведенные; имение и жизнь гражданскую в неподлинности: гордостью и жестокостью вашею лишены души их бодрости, и имя свободы гражданской тщетным учинившееся, и даже отнятия смелости страждущему жалобы приносить.<sup>85</sup>

In this excerpt Shcherbatov's notion of despotism indirectly refers to "fear," which in Montesquieu definition of despotic rule plays the role of a "spring" that puts in motion this political mechanism. Shcherbatov, however, refers to fear in another sense. In Montesquieu's usage, "fear" refers to a serviceman or a subject, who obeys

<sup>83</sup> Mikhail Shcherbatov, "Pis'mo k vel'mozham praviteliam gosudarstva," in vol. 2 of *Sochinenia kniazia M. M. Shcherbatova* (St. Petersburg, 1898), col. 270.

<sup>84</sup> *Pamiatniki moskovskoi delovoi pis'mennosti XVIII veka* (Moscow: Nauka, 1981), 71–72.

<sup>85</sup> *Sochinenia kniazia M. M. Shcherbatova*, vol. 2, col. 270.

the ruler's command because of his fear towards that ruler. In Shcherbatov's usage the matter concerns the situation in which a citizen, a party in the court, has no protection and is not connected with powerful persons. He loses his case, although he is right in accordance with existing laws. He cannot even challenge the unjust decision, as his appeal will be outright rejected because of the pride and cruelty of a powerful magnate, who sits in the Court of Appeal. Thus, "fear" is not a moving principle in this kind of political regime. On the contrary, it is a hampering principle, which deprives citizens from the courage to use their legal rights in accordance with their legitimate interests.

Instead of "fear," Shcherbatov advances another moving principle which is characteristic for despotic rule. This is *samstvo*, "selfishness," which means simultaneously the pursuit by a person of his or her self-interests, as against the common good, and the making of decisions on the basis of one's arbitrary will, inspired by passions and impetuous desires as against actions that are based on calm reasoning and an enlightened understanding of conditions and consequences of an action. In this definition "self-interest" is not a reasonable interest, which, for Shcherbatov, has to be in agreement with the interests of society, due to mutual dependence of its members. On the contrary, "self-interest" as opposed to the common good is a preference by a person of his imagined needs, as he or she feels them at the moment, a desire to enjoy his or her pleasures without regard to consequences of such behavior for fellow humans. Such desire, therefore, is connected with hardheartedness and pride, in the sense of unfounded contempt towards others.

Let me underline here the contrast with Montesquieu. For him “ambition,” being an expression of self-interest, is a positive leverage in a monarchy. This perfectly fits into the framework of “unsocial sociability.” For Shcherbatov “selfishness” has to be condemned, not used. We will see below, however, that Shcherbatov has his own notion of “noble ambition,” which he does not reject as vicious. Such a kind of ambition is not, therefore, an expression of “selfishness,” but rather a kind of “self-love,” which is morally neutral. One can say that for Shcherbatov “ambition” is natural for a nobleman, whereas it is unreasonable “selfishness” for an ignoble individual. For the former, therefore, “noble ambition” is not “unsocial,” it is a part of his “natural” desire to preserve his social standing.

Shcherbatov describes expressions of *samstvo* at the court in the following words,

Там все люди к единому концу стремятся, дабы, обманывая государя и отягощая народ, исполнить свои хотении; бегут без памяти, встречающихся им или пресекающим путь без жалости поражая. ... Там нет ни дружбы, ни родства, и никакой составляющей общество связи. Дружба, ежели она является, не иное что, как некоторой заговор, между некоего числа людей учиненной, дабы достигнуть до какого конца, и она так скоро разрушается, как разбойническое сие общество кому не нужно становится, и не токмо разрушается дружба, но вражда место занимает, дабы кому одному других низвергнуть. Родство и свойство толико токмо памятуется, колико родственника и свойственника можно в подпору и для исполнения своих намерений употребить; а связь, являющая составлять общества, ни что иное, как токмо друг друга обмануть; там мщение безконечное, ибо не токмо мстят тем, которые какое зло соделали, но и самым тем, о которых сумневаются, что могут зло соделать, или и сравнятся со властью дошедших до вышней степени людей. Забвение Божиих и человеческих законов есть безмерное; ибо несть клятвы, которой бы не нарушили для исполнения своих желаний, и несть должности Божественного закона, которую бы не презрили для удовольствия своего. ... Владычествует тут забвение человеческих законов. Единственно все управляется самонравным хотением, несть ни малаго почтения к законам, долженствующим обеспечивать каждого гражданина. Вопиющий подданной о лишении своей чести и имени тщетно вопли производит и слезы проливает; не вникнут его жалостной



глас, не трогают его слезы; младенцы безвинные, страдавшие от несчастной участи своих родителей, незаконно их состояния лишенных, не могут ни на малое время тронуть сии зараженные самством сердца... Самство при дворе из человека, созданного для общества, и долженствующего быть полезным другим, делает такого чудовища, которое все жертвует себе, и не токмо полезен, но вреден обществу человеческому становится; недостойным учиняется не токмо быть в сословии людей, но ниже в сообщество тигров не годится.<sup>86</sup>

Shcherbatov emphasizes here the destruction of social ties, such as kinship and friendship, in a society of people, infected by *samstvo*. The result of this is a constant war of all against all, with a purpose to approach the ruler, to win his or her favor and to eliminate potential competitors. All alliances here can be only temporary and occasional, against somebody, and while the purpose to overthrow a rival is reached, such alliance will be immediately destroyed, and its members will fight with each other. As for the lowest people, there is no pity for these poor victims of injustice, no sympathy with them, even in respect to innocent children, so even wild beasts can express more compassion to creatures of the same kind. Shcherbatov emphasized also deception of a ruler, as well as fellow courtiers, as the normal style of behavior for people at court.

Let us compare this description with Montesquieu's remarks about courtiers:

Let us compare what the historians of all ages have asserted concerning the courts of monarchs; let us recollect the conversations and sentiments of people of all countries, in respect to the wretched character of courtiers, and we shall find that these are not airy speculations, but truths confirmed by a sad and melancholy experience.

Ambition in idleness; meanness mixed with pride; a desire of riches without industry; aversion to truth; flattery, perfidy, violation of engagements, contempt of civil duties, fear of the prince's virtue, hope from his weakness, but, above all, a perpetual ridicule cast upon virtue, are, I think, the characteristics by which most courtiers in all ages and countries have been

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<sup>86</sup> Mikhail Shcherbatov, "Razmyshleniia o samstve," in vol. 2 of *Sochineniia kniazia M. M. Shcherbatova* (St. Petersburg, 1898), col. 430–432.

constantly distinguished. Now, it is exceedingly difficult for the leading men of the nation to be knaves, and the inferior sort to be honest; for the former to be cheats, and the latter to rest satisfied with being only dupes...

So true is it that virtue is not the spring of this government! It is not indeed excluded, but it is not the spring of government.<sup>87</sup>

Montesquieu aims here to prove, that virtue is not a principle of monarchy and proposes, instead, honor as a moving principle for this kind of rule. Honor assures a kind of unsocial sociability in a well organized monarchy, as it makes people act for the sake of the common good:

Ambition is pernicious in a republic. But in a monarchy it has some good effects...

It is with this kind of government as with the system of the universe, in which there is a power that constantly repels all bodies from the centre, and a power of gravitation that attracts them to it. Honour sets all the parts of the body politic in motion, and by its very action connects them; thus each individual advances the public good, while he only thinks of promoting his own interest.

True it is that, philosophically speaking, it is a false honour ... but even this false honour is as useful to the public as true honour could possibly be to private persons.

Is it not very exacting to oblige men to perform the most difficult actions, such as require an extraordinary exertion of fortitude and resolution, without other recompense than that of glory and applause?<sup>88</sup>

He also asserts that in a despotism this principle does not work, as all are slaves in respect to the despot, and there are no distinctions, so nobody can be higher than any other subject.<sup>89</sup>

Shcherbatov's despotism or *samovlastie* (selfish rule) seemingly lies in between Montesquieu's monarchy and despotism. One can assert that, instead of Montesquieu's "false honor," Shcherbatov's monarchy is based on "true honor."

<sup>87</sup> Montesquieu, *O dukhe zakonov*, 181–182, bk. 3, ch. 5. Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws*, accessed 26 Dec. 2011, [http://www.constitution.org/cm/sol\\_03.htm#005](http://www.constitution.org/cm/sol_03.htm#005).

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 184, ch. 7.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 184, ch. 8.

Montesquieu's and Shcherbatov's descriptions of the court also have many similar traits, but their conclusions differ from each other.

One possible explanation for this is that Montesquieu regards despotism and monarchy as two ideal types with sharply distinctive characteristics. By contrast, Shcherbatov's *samovlastie* is defined on the ground of opposition between essence and appearance, the world of real and stable things and the world of elusive phenomena, shadows, and phantoms. There are no real laws in *samovlastie*, as they can be easily avoided by powerful people. There are no stable distinctions between people based on gentlemanliness and merit, although it seems that they exist. But actually these distinctions depend on favor and the ability to connive the despot's passions. As a result, this kind of rule looks like true monarchy, whereas actually it is despotism. There are shadowy laws and phantasmal distinctions between people, but all these are like constructions from soap foam, which disappear at the first gust of wind.

This kind of rule is based on the mutual deception of the ruler and his or her subjects. They deceive a sovereign by flattery and hiding the real state of things; the ruler deceives them by pretending that he or she is a monarch and acts on the ground of laws, whereas in practice arbitrary rule takes place. In one's part each small governor acts in the same way, and thus becomes a small whimsical despot. There is no fear in this system, except a fear to lose the occasionally obtained favor of the monarch, so that a monarch can appear as a benevolent person, very generous towards his or her associates. However, people suffer from the heavy burden, as they are obliged to maintain an army of such dissolute despots, their life, honor, and property

are not protected, and they are afraid to protest, as the ruler will not protect them from the vengeance of their rich and powerful authorities.

Shcherbatov compares this state of affairs with the last years of the Roman republic, as he writes the following accusatory passages to magnates:

Грубой и властной ваш обычай, а паче, когда несчастный народ видит вас подкрепленных какими временщиками, до того доводит народ, что он впадает в некое онемение, видя себя вами обижена, видя вами разрушенные законы... претерпевая угнетение и разорение, не смеют даже жалобу на вас производить... Таковое ослабление народа, вами причиненное, не точно ли есть такое, о каковом Цицерон, при падении Римския республики, говорит в письме своем к Куриону: «Sed, me hercule, ne cum veneris non habeas jam quod cures, ita sunt omnia debilitate jam prope et exstincta,» но страшуся, что не можешь ты найти способов употребить твоих попечений, ибо тоlikое есть zde ослабление разумов, и скажу почти истребление. А по сем: «Miseris temporibus ac perditis moribus» – от несчастных времен и разврата нравов. Се есть обыкновенные следствия утеснения: разумы придут в ослабление, сердца в уныние, и нравы развратятся, и люди, желающие своего счастья, не могли получить оное прямыми и законными путями, обратятся к подлости и обману.<sup>90</sup>

Here one can see the same idea as in the previous quotation from Montesquieu: deception on the highest levels leads to corruption of the lowest strata of society. As a result, for Shcherbatov, the entire fabric of mutual relations between members of society is corroded; this is a consequence of despotism and the constant breaking of laws by powerful magnates and the ruler. Not only do they deceive the subject, they are deceived themselves. Thus, although they may be thought otherwise, they have not profited from this situation:

Вы подвергнуты к тысяче обманов, чинящих вас подверженных презрению самых тех, которые вам наиболее раболепствуют; законы приходят в ослабление, ибо находят их безсильных безумные ваши поступки исправить; сердца и разумы уподляются, нравы повреждаются,

<sup>90</sup> *Sochinenia kniazia M. M. Shcherbatova*, vol. 2, col. 285–286.

и приключенное вами зло не мимоходящее, но долговременное становится... А самое сие уже безумие ваше и показывает; ибо, если вы не взираете на защищение законов, если счастье переменится, если вас непостоянная fortuna будет угнетать, в чем вы найдете себе защищение?<sup>91</sup>

In other words, distinctions in this kind of rule are based on fortune. While someone is on the top, he uses the opportunity to break laws with impunity to his own advantage, in order to suppress others. But fortune is unsteady, so a magnate with all his clients and relatives can be easily overthrown, and in this case he will be a victim of oppression from associates of a new favorite. Thus, advantages from this kind of rule, even for members of its elite, are temporary and in the long run illusory.

Shcherbatov appeals to the reason of magnates, who can understand their sad condition and behave more properly. Here lies, however, a problem: If this unstable condition of the society is a result of a long process of corruption, initiated by a despotic rule, when can it be reverted by efforts of a particular person? As the Roman republic declined for institutional reasons, not because some of its citizens happened to be vicious, despotism, as Shcherbatov describes it, is a result of the corruption of a true monarchy. Of course, any historical process takes place as a complex of actions of particular persons, thus appeals towards them to be reasonable, if not even virtuous, can make some effect. But this is not enough to prevent a disease of corruption if there are institutional reasons for decline.

Let me stress here, that, in comparison with Montesquieu, Shcherbatov is closer to a classical idea of despotism as a result of moral corruption within a true monarchy. For Montesquieu, despotism and monarchy are different forms of

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., col. 286.

government, based on different principles. The evolution from one to another is possible; however, this is a result of certain intentional actions of a monarch and his subjects, which lead to the destruction of the basic principles of the monarchy.<sup>92</sup> For Shcherbatov, this evolution towards despotism is rather an unintended result of the spread of “selfishness.”

To understand better Shcherbatov’s treatment of this problem, it is necessary to realize how he imagines the normative ideal of a true monarchy.

Here again one can say, that his model of the monarchy lies in between Montesquieu’s monarchy and republic. As with Montesquieu’s republic, Shcherbatov’s monarchy needs “virtue.” First of all, it is necessary to have a virtuous monarch; but virtue of a certain group of subjects (aristocracy) is also necessary. Shcherbatov writes in his pamphlet *On Corruption* the following:

А до сего дойти иначе не можно, как тогда, когда мы будем иметь государя, искренне привязанного к закону божию, строгого наблюдателя правосудия, начавших с себя, умеренного в пышности царского престола, награждающего добродетель и ненавидящего пороки, показующего пример трудолюбия и снисхождения на советы умных людей, тверда в предприятиях, но без упрямства, мягкосерда и постоянна в дружбе, показующего пример собою своим согласием с своею супругою и гонящего любострастии – щедра без расточимости для своих подданных и искавшего награждать добродетели, качества и заслуги без всякаго пристрастия, умеющего разделить труды, что принадлежит каким учрежденным правительствам, и что государю на себя взять, и наконец, могущего иметь довольно великодушия и любви к отечеству, чтобы составить и предать основательные права государству, и довольно тверда, чтобы их исполнять.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>92</sup> Montesquieu, *O dukhe zakonov*, 256, bk. 8, ch. 6; Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws*, accessed 26 Dec. 2011, [http://www.constitution.org/cm/sol\\_08.htm](http://www.constitution.org/cm/sol_08.htm).

<sup>93</sup> *O povrezhdenii nraov v Rossii kniazia M. Shcherbatova i puteshestvie A. Radishcheva* (Moscow: Nauka, 1985), 129–130; Lentin, *Prince M.M. Shcherbatov*, 259.

Besides personal virtues, such as family virtue and religiosity, as well as generosity and constancy in friendship, Shcherbatov emphasizes here that power must be divided between a monarch and intermediate powers. This means that at least some citizens have to participate in governing of the state, citizens chosen for their merits and qualities. Another condition is good fundamental laws, which must be strictly obeyed, first of all, by the monarch personally. These are initial conditions, and as such a good monarch will chose to fill the highest position of service with virtuous and honest people, and laws will be obeyed as well on the lowest levels of the state.

Тогда изгнанная добродетель, оставя пустыни, утвердит среди градов и при самом дворе престол свой, правосудие не покривит свои вески ни для мзды, ни для сильного; мздоимство и робость от вельмож изгонятся, любовь отечества возгнездится в сердца гражданские, и будут не пышностью житья и не богатством хвалиться, но беспристрастием, заслугами и бескорыстностию. Не будут помышлять, кто при дворе велик, и кто упадет, но, имея в предмете законы и добродетель, будут почитать их яко компасом, могущих их довести и до чинов, и до достатка.<sup>94</sup>

As one can see, ambition exists in Montesquieu's model of monarchy and is also a principle of Shcherbatov's monarchy. But in contrast with Montesquieu, ambition is connected in this description with virtue, with love one's country, whereas the French thinker explicitly states that virtue is the "spring" only for a republic and is not the moving principle for a monarchy. Thus, Shcherbatov is here in disagreement with Montesquieu, and for the Russian thinker, the monarchy with its good laws will not work unless its servicemen are not merely honest but also virtuous citizens. In this sense one can suppose that Shcherbatov's understanding of monarchy is a combination of Montesquieu's monarchy and republic.

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<sup>94</sup> *O povrezhdenii nravov v Rossii*, 130; Lentin, *Prince M.M. Shcherbatov*, 259.

The problem of comparison is, however, more complex. Montesquieu's understanding of the concepts "honor" and "virtue" is not exactly the same as Shcherbatov's understanding of *chestolubie* ("love of honor," "ambition") and *dobrodetel'* ("virtue"). Montesquieu juxtaposes "honor" and "virtue" ("political virtue") as expressions of self-love and love to the republic, respectively. As he writes,

in well-regulated monarchies, they are almost all good subjects, and very few good men; for to be a good man a good intention is necessary, and we should love our country, not so much on our own account, as out of regard to the community.<sup>95</sup>

This means, that a "good man" in a republic acts virtuously because of love for the community, whereas a "good subject" in a monarchy, driven by ambition, acts honestly because of self-love, as he expects to be honored for his deeds. By contrast, in Shcherbatov's writings one cannot find such strict opposition. "Love of honor" is, certainly, a kind of "self-love," but it can be combined with love of one's own country. At the same time, "virtue," as a kind of readiness to spill one's blood and to sacrifice one's comfort for the good of the state, does not contradict "self-love," that is, the desire to obtain rewards for one's efforts. However, "self-love" as a natural characteristic of all human beings is opposed, in Shcherbatov's view, to "selfishness," *samstvo*, which can be understood as the desire to obtain honors and rewards without proper service, as a result of kinship ties amongst the tsar's favorites. In this sense Shcherbatov distinguishes between "true" or "noble" ambition (based on "self-love") and "false" or "ignoble" ambition, based on "selfishness."

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<sup>95</sup> Montesquieu, *O dukhe zakonov*, 183, bk. 3, ch. 6; Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws*, accessed 26 Dec. 2011, [http://www.constitution.org/cm/sol\\_03.htm#005](http://www.constitution.org/cm/sol_03.htm#005).



Let us put aside for the moment such subtle distinctions and return to the idea that Shcherbatov's monarchy is a combination of Montesquieu's monarchy and republic. To be more specific, it is necessary to realize which kind of republican monarchy Shcherbatov projects and what kind of republic must be, for him, present in this combination.

Shcherbatov's classification of forms of rule, as it is presented in his treatise "Reflections on Legislation in General," includes the following three forms: monarchy, rule of magnates (*vel'mozhnoe pravlenie*), and popular rule (*narodnoe pravlenie*). As for despotism (*samovlastie*), this is not a separate form but a corrupted form of a monarchy.<sup>96</sup> Shcherbatov also asserts that in real cases these pure forms hardly exist and actual states are mixtures of several forms:

Но не было и несть ни у единого живущаго в градах народа точно чистаго какого из сих правлений, но все единое с другим мешалось, ибо монарх не может править без вельмож, вельможи не могут править без начальника и без народа, ни народ без начальников сам себя управлять.<sup>97</sup>

Однако везде есть единая власть превосходящая, которой соответствует умоначертание народное, и коей законы, в рассуждении политического состояния, соответствовать должны...<sup>98</sup>

In this last sense,

...Российская Империя есть монаршическаго правления, яко и сама Ея Величество в наказе своем изъясняется, что «надлежит иметь хранилище законов, ибо законы в нем должны тверды пребывать под тению монаршей власти».<sup>99</sup>

<sup>96</sup> Mikhail Shcherbatov, "Razmyshleniia o zakonodatel'stve voobshche," in vol. 1 of *Sochinenia kniazia M. M. Shcherbatova* (St. Petersburg, 1896), col. 383–384, 387.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 384.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 386.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 390.

The following discussion in Shcherbatov's treatise concerns this "popular frame of mind" (*umonachertanie narodnoe*), in which one can easily recognize Montesquieu's "springs." The interpretation differs, however, from Montesquieu's descriptions:

Монархия требует честолюбия, ибо единое нас честолюбие к престолу царскому привязует и побуждает человеку перед человеком делать низкости; в вельможном правлении требуется особливая добродетель, ибо кто хочет между равными себе иметь преимущество, тот должен добродетелью своею принудить их ему оное уступить. Таковы были Брутус, Цинцинатус, Павл Эмилий, Фабий и Марцелус. В народном же правлении не столь должно иметь добродетелей, сколь блистательных качеств и пронырства, каковы были: Периклес, Цесарь и Кромвель.<sup>100</sup>

For Montesquieu, indeed, the principle of monarchical rule is "honor":

Honour, that is, the prejudice of every person and rank, supplies the place of the political virtue ... here it is capable of inspiring the most glorious actions, and, joined with the force of laws, may lead us to the end of government as well as virtue itself.<sup>101</sup>

And later, writing about principles of education for each kind of rule,

Montesquieu states his understanding of honor more explicitly:

There is nothing so strongly inculcated in monarchies, by the laws, by religion and honour, as submission to the prince's will; but this very honour tells us that the prince never ought to command a dishonourable action, because this would render us incapable of serving him ... It insists also that we should be at liberty either to seek or to reject employments, a liberty which it prefers even to an ample fortune.

Honour therefore has its supreme laws ... The chief of these are that we are permitted to set a value upon our fortune, but are absolutely forbidden to set any upon our lives.

The second is that, when we are raised to a post or preferment, we should never do or permit anything which may seem to imply that we look upon ourselves as inferior to the rank we hold.

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., col. 386–387.

<sup>101</sup> Montesquieu, *O dukhe zakonov*, 183, bk. 3, ch. 5.

The third is that those things which honour forbids are more rigorously forbidden, when the laws do not concur in the prohibition...<sup>102</sup>

Montesquieu understands “honor” as a moral code, based on prejudice. It gives the individual, who possesses this quality, courage to resist the demands of superiors, or even the ruler, when these demands contradict the prescriptions of this code. It makes a person proud enough to look at appointments and dismissals with indifference. This is not the type of ambition which implies aspiring to the highest positions of the state service without regard to the means of attaining the goal, but rather the kind of ambition which is an aspiration of a proud person to be respected without regard to any position and property, except for an inner dignity. Such “honor” is inherent to a given person due to his strict obedience to the code of honor.

By contrast, ambition, or “love to honor” (*chestoliubie*), which Shcherbatov regards as characteristic for a monarchy, is based on humiliation, on the ability of a person to make humble gestures towards his superiors, in order to obtain some advantages such as gifts or promotion. At the same time, Shcherbatov praises strength of mind (*tverdost*) as a necessary virtue for a good magnate in a true monarchy. This is the ability to resist the improper demands of superiors, which are contrary to the utility of the state. This is for Shcherbatov a virtue, but it can be inspired by “honor” in Montesquieu’s understanding of the term. Maybe the closer analogy to Montesquieu’s “honor” is Shcherbatov’s “noble honor” (*blagorodnaia gordost*). Shcherbatov does not assert that this is a principle of monarchy as such, although this can be a principle of a true or ideal monarchy. For Shcherbatov, however, it is better to treat this “noble honor” as a kind of virtue.

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 189–190, bk. 4, ch. 2.

For Montesquieu, the principle of republican rule in its aristocratic form is “moderation”:

An aristocratic government has an inherent vigour, unknown to democracy. The nobles form a body, who by their prerogative, and for their own particular interest, restrain the people; it is sufficient that there are laws in being to see them executed.

But easy as it may be for the body of the nobles to restrain the people, it is difficult to restrain themselves. Such is the nature of this constitution, that it seems to subject the very same persons to the power of the laws, and at the same time to exempt them.

Now such a body as this can restrain itself only in two ways; either by a very eminent virtue, which puts the nobility in some measure on a level with the people ... or by an inferior virtue, which puts them at least upon a level with one another, and upon this their preservation depends.<sup>103</sup>

Montesquieu emphasizes here equality between members of the aristocracy, equality, which is provided by moderation, a kind of self-restriction, based on a moral code.

By contrast, Shcherbatov underlines inequality, as he defines republican rule as one in which its leaders, in order to be distinguished in respect to others, must possess superior moral qualities (with reference to some distinct figures of Roman republican history).

Strictly speaking, one definition does not contradict the other, as the need for special qualities for a distinction presupposes initial equality among aristocratic members of the republican elite. Nevertheless, the contrast between the focus of Montesquieu and Shcherbatov is essential, and it is even more so in regard to democracy.

For Montesquieu, the moving principle of democracy is “love of the laws of one’s country,” which he calls “political virtue” and which presupposes equality.

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 181–182, bk. 3, ch. 4.

what I distinguish by the name of virtue, in a republic, is the love of one's country, that is, the love of equality. It is not a moral, nor a Christian, but a political virtue; and it is the spring which sets the republican government in motion, as honour is the spring which gives motion to monarchy. Hence it is that I have distinguished the love of one's country, and of equality, by the appellation of political virtue.<sup>104</sup>

...but virtue is a self-renunciation, which is ever arduous and painful.

This virtue may be defined as the love of the laws and of our country. As such love requires a constant preference of public to private interest, it is the source of all private virtues...

This love is peculiar to democracies. In these alone the government is entrusted to private citizens. Now a government is like everything else: to preserve it we must love it.<sup>105</sup>

For Montesquieu, this “political virtue” is love of fatherland, based on affection for its laws, and as all citizens participate in the governing of such a polity, they must be equal.

A love of the republic in a democracy is a love of the democracy; as the latter is that of equality...

The love of equality in a democracy limits ambition to the sole desire, to the sole happiness, of doing greater services to our country than the rest of our fellow-citizens...

Hence distinctions here arise from the principle of equality, even when it seems to be removed by signal services or superior abilities.<sup>106</sup>

Montesquieu emphasizes equality, which is a ground for any distinctions created by a talent. By contrast, Shcherbatov's definition of popular rule emphasized qualities necessary to be a leader in democracy—some brilliant qualities, which make a person attractive, and his “craftiness” (*pronyrlivost*), that is, the ability to reach his aims by flexible and deceptive behavior. It is important that two of three examples provided by Shcherbatov are future dictators: Caesar and Cromwell. This means that he sees democracy as unstable and always on the edge of a dictatorship.

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 161 (after the author's Preface).

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 191, bk. 4, ch. 5.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 197, bk. 5, ch. 3.

Let us now return to the question: What elements of republican rule can be regarded as necessary for Shcherbatov's ideal monarchy as he projected it for Russia? In other words, which kind of "virtue" can one imagine as a distinctive quality of people in a monarchy, so as to help it to be a true monarchy, in contrast with a rule of one, slipping into despotism.

From the outset, it is clear that democracy, with its ambitious popular leaders, is incompatible with Shcherbatov's monarchy, unless a monarch was such a leader himself. Rather, one can say that Shcherbatov's true monarchy would be a mixture of monarchy, based on ambition, and aristocracy (*velmozhnoe pravlenie*), based on some equality among aristocrats (moderation), with distinctions based on personal merits or outstanding moral qualities (as with celebrated Roman senators).

If we look, however, on qualities which are regarded by Shcherbatov as necessary for magnates in monarchy, we hardly find anything outstanding, but rather demands for honest service.

...что есть вельможа? Се есть не иной кто, как человек, который по роду ли своему, по достоинству ли, или по случаю, возвышенный превыше других равных ему человеческих тварей; приближен к престолу царскому и обогащенный щедродаровитостию Монарха от сокровищ народных...

Но сие несть механическое возвышение, коим можно и навоз на верх высокой башни положить, но возвышение метафизическое, знаменующее, что кто возвышен перед другими саном, тот должен возвыситься и добродетельми.<sup>107</sup>

What is striking here is the idea that in a monarchy promotion depends entirely on the personal preference of a monarch. So one has to take for granted that a person can be placed in the highest position of service, not for his merits or for noble birth,

<sup>107</sup>*Sochinenia kniazia M. M. Shcherbatova*, vol. 2, col. 271.

but just occasionally, by chance. However, in spite of this, Shcherbatov proclaims, that such a person must be virtuous. Why so? Let us leave this question undecided for a while.

Приближены вы к престолу царскому. Но для чего? Не для того ли, чтобы верно ему служить и чтобы его милосердия чрез вас в низайшей части подданных отражались?.. Вы к престолу царскому приближены с тем, чтобы учинить любима вашего государя... Вы обогащены щедродаровитостию Монарха от сокровищ народных; то чем же вы можете ему и народу воздать? Не совершенной ли то верностью к тому, кто вас обогащает, усердием и нелицемерным откровением своих мыслей, хотя бы они противны ему были, являя сим, что вы в подвигах ваших к его службе вы не сами себя в предмет имеете, не собственный ваш прибыток, но славу Монарха, которому служите.<sup>108</sup>

The idea is that if one supposes that a monarch is virtuous, virtues of magnates must be a continuation of the virtues of a monarch, and, in particular, mercy must be one of such virtue. Besides, a kind of resistance to improper impulses of the monarch, which are in contradiction with her true and reasonable interest, is necessary. Let us remark that it must be a very virtuous monarch who will appoint and tolerate a person who can resist her commands, even if this is for the sake of utility for the state, as a monarch will later acknowledge.

Монарх есть один; все видеть и все обнять в государстве, а паче в пространном, не может. Он определяет разных правителей, коим уделает часть своя власти, дабы способом и посредством оных повсюдова законы были исполняемы; дабы знаки его милостей повсюду разливались; дабы каждый безопасен был о своей жизни, чести и имениях. Но власть сия препоручается не на самопроизвольность каждого, но есть предписании законов, которых частные правители должны токмо исполнителями быть... исполнители, представляющие лицо отца народа, то есть милосердые и снисходительные, а к тому справедливые и тщательные... и всеми способами тшачиися, не токмо силою законов, но и своим примером, ввести благонравие в народ,

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., col. 272.

утвердить его умоначертание, возвысить его душу, без чего никакая добродетель быть не может...<sup>109</sup>

This is an image of a virtuous magnate as a teacher of morals for the common people, just and merciful, and strictly obedient to the existing laws.

Вы определены быть исполнители законов; но прилагаете ли вы прилежное ваше старание достигнуть до совершенного познания оных, вникнуть в притчины сочинения каждого из них?<sup>110</sup>

Видны в суждениях ваших предубеждения к лицам... Законы для того составлены, что они лицепрятия не имеют... да отступление человека от известных ему правил накажется, а не потому, что кто внушил управляющему вельможе о ком худо, или ему что показалось.<sup>111</sup>

Лучшие из вас, затвердя, как сороки, слово *милосердие*, не знаете, что оно знаменует, послабляете вящим преступлениям.<sup>112</sup>

Другие, напротив того, думая строгостью одною все привести в порядок... не взирая ни на слабости, ни на обстоятельства, ни иногда на невозможность, за удовольствие считают токмо наказания налагать.<sup>113</sup>

Разные встречаются вам дела, а между тем и такая, которые требуют особливового разбору актов. Вы вступаете своими особами, не войдя ни в обстоятельства, ни в силу актов... судите в единую минуту, решите без справок и граждан в разорение приводите.<sup>114</sup>

All these phrases refer to a specific kind of virtue, that is, the fulfillment of laws with understanding. This is not just obedience, but mercy, as a law permits, or justice, when connivance of a crime is harmful. This is a taking into account of all circumstances, careful analysis of all legal documents, etc. In other words, fulfillment of laws needs not just mechanical acts, but capability for reasoning and aspiration for justice and mercy, and also competence in legal matters—and all these are virtues, as Shcherbatov understands them.

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid., col. 273–274.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., col. 274.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., col. 275.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., col. 276.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., col. 277.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., col. 277–278.



Now, can we make a conclusion that all this has something in common with republican virtues? These are virtues of judges, and in its Russian version, initiated by Peter I, a senate with its *colleges* combined administrative and judicial functions. And one can say that a judge, within the limits of his competence, shares with a monarch her power. In this sense he is a citizen with the right to participate in governing of the state. And, in this framework, he must be virtuous on the same ground, as Montesquieu's citizen of the republic must be virtuous. Otherwise, the system of true monarchy, where power is divided (see above), will be destroyed, even if a monarch is personally virtuous. It will be only a hierarchical pyramid of despots, where laws serve only as decorations, but are easily evaded.

Let us return to the question of appointments. What can be the mechanism, which provides such virtuous citizens, which will be able to serve as such just and merciful judges? As all appointments depend on a monarch, the republican mechanism of elections will not, evidently, work here. Montesquieu's "spring" of honor is substituted, in Shcherbatov's model, by ambition (*chestolubue*), which in itself cannot guarantee virtue, as this ambition can be satisfied by humiliation in respect to superiors in order to be promoted.

Shcherbatov's answer is to cultivate the special corporation of hereditary servicemen, bounded not by ambition, but by "noble love of honor" (*blagorodnoe chestoliubie*), which is an aspiration to a glory of one's kin. Thus, in accordance with this idea, a virtuous monarch will have a reserve of candidates, a true aristocracy. Its members, for Shcherbatov, will be citizens, whose motivation is love of fatherland, in

contrast with servicemen, whose only aspiration will be their personal career and vested interests.

However, as appointments still depend on a monarch, the good will of a monarch and her readiness to encourage members of this corporation, by appointments and by generosity to its representatives, is necessary to set this system in motion. Thus, the virtue of the aristocracy in even such a true monarchy is a specifically weak virtue, as it is unstable and depends on the monarch's behavior. It is not even an aristocratic virtue in Montesquieu's aristocratic republic, a self-restriction or moderation. This is like the reflected light of planets in comparison with the light of stars; the former has as its source something else. And this explains Shcherbatov's repeated statements, that when a ruler behaves despotically, the spirits of the noblemen fall. It can be compared with a sail, which will not work without wind. The same way aristocratic virtue in a monarchy will not inspire a nobleman, unless supported by public acknowledgment of his services; in a monarchy this can be expressed only by rewards and promotion by a monarch.

In comparison with Montesquieu's republic, therefore, where virtue is a prerequisite for proper functioning of the system, in Shcherbatov's ideal monarchy virtue, while present, is a result of something else; it at least needs the support of other "springs." The contrast with Montesquieu's monarchy is even more interesting. Montesquieu regards it as possible to invent such laws, which will use human passions, such as biases, connected with honor, in order to create a kind of "unsocial sociability." People will behave as if they are virtuous, although they are not so in their hearts. Shcherbatov uses another theoretical construction. He believes that people

can and must be truly virtuous, even in a monarchy, but this virtue is dependent and unstable.

This can be explained as follows:

Shcherbatov had a peculiar vision of a natural community, which did not include all the people, but rather only aristocrats, connected by kinship ties. Within this community people were connected by mutual obligations in such a way, that their self-love did not contradict the common good. Thus, it was possible to be virtuous in such a society without self-sacrifice. Later on corruption took place, and this harmonious society was destroyed by the spread of “selfishness.” In the new society a contradiction emerged between self-love and virtuous behavior, as a person, who wanted to be virtuous, being surrounded by “selfish” people, could serve the common good only by the prejudice of her legitimate interests. In other words, excessive self-love and selfishness of the majority of the people demands excessive virtue and self-sacrifice from the minority, which wants to preserve its virtue.

Let us now suppose that a virtuous monarch appears who wants to restore this society and to overcome corruption. Possibly he could count on a few individuals, who are ready for self-sacrificing behavior (in Montesquieu’s terms they possess “political virtue”). But, probably, this would not be enough, because such people can hardly be well preserved under a previously corrupted rule. Therefore, such a monarch needs the support of more numerous individuals. One can define this group as having a weaker and unstable virtue, which cannot be satisfied by itself, but needs additional incentives. This is, in a sense, passive virtue, which does not contradict self-love. Such people would be virtuous in an uncorrupted society, but within the corrupted

environment they need rewards for their good deeds. Their virtue can be inspired by a virtuous ruler, whose rewards they regard as signs of recognition of their own virtue, but their virtue does not contradict their self-love and is, in a sense, only a continuation of the ruler's virtue.

The problem here is basically the same as that of Montesquieu's republic. It is connected, basically, with the fact that political virtue is, in a sense, unnatural. In other words, it is not natural for a normal individual in normal circumstances to prefer interests or needs of other people to her own interests. In special cases, however, republics can exist, but to support them one needs very powerful means, such as a special system of education, etc. In this sense monarchy and despotism are more natural, as they can be supported by the natural inclinations of individuals, by their passions. The idea of wise laws in Montesquieu's monarchy is the idea that such laws are possible, which use biases, connected with the love of honor, in order to use people's base motives for high aims, to make them serve the common good.

Shcherbatov believes that in a monarchy it is possible to create a virtuous aristocracy, which will be able to sacrifice their personal interests for the "utility of the state," or, at least, for the interests of this aristocratic corporation as a whole. Virtue can be understood here as a kind of self-restriction, as these sacrifices will not be too burdensome. And the idea is that these self-imposed restrictions (for example, limitations of excessive luxury or rejection of outrageous breaking of laws) will be compensated not only in the long run for the corporation as a whole, but also for a particular individual; a virtuous ruler will reward virtuous subjects by gifts and promotion.

One cannot judge such virtue too highly; patriotism, which needs gifts for its expressions looks, at least, questionable. But gains for the state can be material, whereas rewards will be mostly symbolic, if they fulfill mostly the aspiration for glory and respect from fellow members of society. In this case it is not so different from the republican system where the ruler plays the role of representative of public opinion.

This allows a reformulation of the question as the problem is not what to call this aspiration in order that it be respected by fellow citizens; virtue, which needs support, or vanity, bias, and vice, which does not need support. The problem is actually how to create such system of laws which will ensure behavior useful for the common good, using people's egoistic aspiration to be respected by others, or even to have high social status (with corresponding material privileges). In other words, how should this weak and shaky virtue be supported by lower motives more effectively and naturally for self-interested individuals?

Virtuous behavior is still possible due to support from other factors. One of them is the presence of a good and virtuous monarch. But another factor—as in Montesquieu's model—is the existence of good laws. In other words, this weak and dependent virtue can be supported by institutional factors. And the creation of a true aristocracy is only one of them.

### ***§1.4 Shcherbatov: The Spirit of Laws in a Republican Monarchy***

Shcherbatov asserts that the current condition of Russia is *samovlastie*, arbitrary rule. Moreover, the current condition is moving from bad to worse, as the corruption of morals is in progress, and social ties have undergone destruction. However, arbitrary rule is the worst kind of political form, and it is doomed to an eventual catastrophe.

И я приравниваю живущих под самовластием людей тем мореходцам, которые в жестокою бурю лишились кормила, мачты и парусов своего корабля, и коих робкие служители, с тяжелыми вещами, кинули в море компас и все другия для примечания соделанныя орудия. Плывет еще корабль, но при дыхании бурных ветров ни управляться не может, ни знать мелей и камней, ни места своего течения. Спокойны-ли на нем сидящие? Иногда достигает счастливаго пристанища, но то не правило, а нечаянность его доведет.<sup>115</sup>

Shcherbatov believes, however, that to remain for a long time in such a condition is impossible for an enlightened people:

Таково есть деспотичество, таковы суть его вредные следствия. А потому я и заключаю, что в просвещенном народе оно быть не может. А ежели оно и случится, не может быть продолжительно. Хотя может стать, какия посторонния обстоятельства и учиняют его продолжаться несколько боле, нежели-б то надлежало, но сие токмо ему жесточайший конец приготовляет. Ибо, в самом деле, если всякий размотрит обязательства свои к Божиему закону, к отечеству, к самому себе, к семье и ближним своим, то узрит, что долг и благосостояние его влечет его низвергнуть сего кумира, никогда твердых ног не имеющаго.<sup>116</sup>

Therefore, the process of sliding down into despotism must be reverted, sooner or later. But how is it possible in the given circumstances? What can motivate the

<sup>115</sup> Shcherbatov, "Razmyshleniia o zakonodatel'stve voobshche," in vol. 1 of *Sochinenia kniazia M. M. Shcherbatova*, col. 387–388.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 388–389.

elite, which currently prefers individual pleasures to fulfillment of its duties, to a kind of self-restriction?

Shcherbatov's hope is for future generations. They will be better educated and they will realize Shcherbatov's plans to establish a monarchy, or at least support a good monarch, who will establish fundamental laws.

Я не емь законодатель, не льщу себя иметь таковыя удобства, но емь простой гражданин, чувствующий и разделяющий народную тягость... желаю, яко жертвою душевною, добраго гражданина мысли, какия мне встретились, начертать – не для того, чтобы видели оне свет, но чтоб, по крайней мере, дети мои со временем узнали о мыслях их отца, исправили-бы мои заблуждения и последовали бы тому, что полезное для отечества найдут; а общим бы образом научились тому рвению и усердию, которое меня ежечасно к службе отечества моего побуждает, кое влагает новый жар в охладевшую мою кровь и ослабевшее болезнями тело мое возбуждает.<sup>117</sup>

Shcherbatov believes, therefore, that his enthusiasm, his love of the fatherland, will be transferred to future generations, and his descendants, who will live under other circumstances, will have the possibility of realizing, at least partially, his projects.

Such optimism about the future is grounded on the belief that the current state of Russia, characterized by prevalence of *samstvo* among its elite, is somehow unnatural, whereas mutual understanding of human obligation to one another is natural and normal, and therefore will be restored after a period of temporary deviation. In other terms, human beings are sociable by their very nature, and this point of view refers, of course, to Aristotle's formulations:

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., col. 357.

it is evident that the state is a creation of nature, and that man is by nature a political animal. And he who by nature and not by mere accident is without a state, is either a bad man or above humanity...<sup>118</sup>

The proof that the state is a creation of nature and prior to the individual is that the individual, when isolated, is not self-sufficing; and therefore he is like a part in relation to the whole. But he who is unable to live in society, or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself, must be either a best or a god: he is no part of a state. A social instinct is implanted in all men by nature...<sup>119</sup>

Shcherbatov also regards a human being not as an isolated entity, but as a creature which by its nature needs other people:

Взирая на человека, на его рождение и младенчество, требующих безпрестанной помощи, на слабость его самому собою защищаться и на невозможность, чтоб мог и самое нужное к своему естествованию без помощи других приобрести, все нам показывает, что предмет природы есть, чтобы человек жил в обществе, а самое общество требует от него многих должностей, дабы взаимно ему за оныя воздать.<sup>120</sup>

This argument has a certain similarity with Pufendorf's substantiation of his understanding of the concept of natural law:

But in one respect man seems to be in a worse state even than the brutes—that scarcely any other animal is attended from birth by such weakness. Hence it would be a miracle, if anyone reached mature years, if he have not the aid of other men, since, as it is, among all the helps which have been invented for human needs, careful training for a number of years is required, to enable a man to gain his food and clothing by his own efforts ... whatever advantages now attend human life have flowed entirely from the mutual help of men. It follows that, after God, there is nothing in this world from which greater advantage can come to man than from man himself.<sup>121</sup>

However, Pufendorf continues this argument by discussing possibilities for men to harm each other, and natural law is necessary mainly to avoid conflicts.

<sup>118</sup> *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, 1987–1988, vol. 1 (1253a, 1–5).

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 1988 (1253a, 25–31).

<sup>120</sup> Mikhail Shcherbatov, “Razsmotrenie o zhizni chelovecheskoi,” in vol. 2 of *Sochinenia kniazia M. M. Shcherbatova*, col. 387.

<sup>121</sup> Samuel von Pufendorf, *The Two Books on the Duty of Man and Citizen According to the Natural Law*, trans. Frank Gardner Moore (New York: Oceana Publications, 1964), bk. 1, ch. 3, accessed 26 Dec. 2011, [http://www.constitution.org/puf/puf-dut\\_103.htm](http://www.constitution.org/puf/puf-dut_103.htm).



Shcherbatov, by contrast, emphasizes not the danger which people can be for their fellows, but their mutual utility. Thus even elementary needs cannot be satisfied without other people:

...каждая должность есть обязательство, а каждое обязательство есть тягость, следственно, поелику обязаны мы обществу, и общество обязано нам, от коего ежедневно чувствуем себе благодеяние; войдем в себя и престанем тужить о тягости нашей для общества, понеже мы с лихвою заплачены от онаго. Ибо не можно, чтоб один человек возмог толико соделать для всех, колико все ему пользы соделают.<sup>122</sup>

It is certainly true, for Shcherbatov, that people can cause each other not only useful services but also troubles. These latter, however, are rather occasional things:

...ни вкусить хлеба, ни одеться, ни жить не можем, чтобы великое число людей не воспомоществовали нам. Воззрим еще, что житие в обществе сохраняет нас от хищных зверей, от нашествия врагов, или от насилий и хищения развратных людей, что по большей части законы, на коих общество утверждается, чинят нашу безопасность, как в жизни, так и в имениях.

...Правда, подвергнуты мы к обману от друзей, к злобе и мрежам завистливых, к огорчению от неблагодарных, коим услуги учинили; к укорению и презрению от вельмож; к несправедливостям судей... – но все сие зло есть случайное и не всегда пребывающее, а блага суть повседневныя и всегда ощущаемыя разумному разсмотрителю.<sup>123</sup>

For Shcherbatov, mutual help and fulfillment of one's social duties is normal and reasonable, whereas egoistic behavior is abnormal, and the harm created by it bears occasional character.

Therefore, it is possible to assert the existence of "natural law," which regulates relationships between members of society in such a way that goods, received by the individual from the society, are balanced by her contribution toward the well-

<sup>122</sup> *Sochinenia kniazia M. M. Shcherbatova*, vol. 2, col. 388.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 389.

being of others, in other words, by one's fulfillment of duties. This is justice in the sense of achieving balance between each person's input and output.

Let me underline here the contrast between Shcherbatov's outlook and the "modern" view, which was a theoretical basis for the entire discussion on "unsocial sociability." This "modern" view began with self-regarding individuals who pursued their own ends. And, being based on this presupposition, the aim of a political theorist was to explain how a society was possible. In other words, the idea was to construct such laws, due to which self-interested individuals could reach common aims, while, at the same time, their motives remained egoistic.

By contrast, Shcherbatov's basic intuition was "classical," it was an intuition of human beings as essentially social and dependent on each other. Accordingly, "sociability" for him was among "natural" characteristics of people, while "selfishness" was a result of "corruption" of this natural state of things. One can guess why such an intuition was possible in Catherine's Russia, and probably the answer can be found in the fact that Shcherbatov's view was conditioned by his aristocratic milieu, for which kinship ties were of great importance. The more important question is, however, whether Shcherbatov himself realized this essential contrast between his basic intuition and views of the European thinkers he referred to. It seems that he did not have a clear vision of this difference, but instead intuitively selected such European ideas which were not contrary to his basic intuition.

In particular, he rejected the idea of human equality. First of all, for Shcherbatov, human beings are not equal in respect to their abilities.

Лейбниц, во изыскании естественных вещей и самого единого роду не нашел ни одной подобной другой... и понеже есть толь бесконечная разность в наружных чертах тварей, то коль более она может быть во внутренних расположениях человека... кажется, сама природа, предупреждая наши суемудрии и располагая порядок общежития человеческого, разными дарованиями разных людей снабдила, яко мудро распределяя единых быть правителями и начальниками, других добрыми исполнителями, а наконец третьих слепыми действующими лицами...<sup>124</sup>

Shcherbatov thus constructs a “natural” social hierarchy, and moreover it must be stable from one generation to another; each member of society has inborn duties, his or her predestined place in the social exchange of mutual services.

...но если мы присовокупим и многие прилагательные качества, которые человек в общежитии чрез воспитание и науку приобретает, то сие нам докажет, что не токмо не находится личное равенство между человека и человека, но может оно и потомственное быть...

Все сведения наши мы чрез чувства получаем... а все сие чтоб получить чувствование чего бы то ни было, зависит от случая и обстоятельств;

...родившийся человек от благородных родителей, служащих или служивших в разных должностях своему отечеству, кроме превосходного научения, которое попечениями их получает, насматривается, как должно ему обходиться с высшими, с равными и низшими себя; в беседах родителей своих слышит о прежних приключениях, внимает похвалу добродетели и охуления пороков; чрез разные их разглагольствования научается о состоянии политическом, гражданском и военном своего отечества... вся жизнь благородно рожденного юноши должна быть наполнена непрерывными наставлениями учением ли, беседою ли, или примером для всеяния в сердце его тех благих семян, кои должны произвести плод полезный отечеству во время свое.

...всех вышеписанных преимуществ и удобностей низкороденный иметь не может; а потому и заключаю, что благородство должно быть потомственно.<sup>125</sup>

Shcherbatov starts with inborn qualities, but afterwards proceeds to demonstrate that qualities necessary for special services of nobility can be transmitted only within the family, from one generation to another. This reasoning is based on the

<sup>124</sup> Shcherbatov, “Razmyshlenie o dvorianstve,” in vol. 1 of *Sochinenia kniazia M. M. Shcherbatova*, col. 222.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 223–226.

presupposition that education will be ideal, so the previous generations will transfer to their children only ideal moral qualities. This is already in contradiction with the thesis of *On Corruption*. It is a description of a desired condition of state, not of the real one.

By this separation of society into two parts, which has to be closed for outsiders, Shcherbatov creates the ground for separation of laws into two kinds: for commoners they define their duties towards society, besides which they are free to improve their own life as they are pleased; and for nobles, by contrast, laws have to define their rights or privileges, which create the space of freedom. This presupposes that nobles will voluntarily, as “sons of their fatherland,” use their abilities for the service of society. They are not forced to do so by the laws themselves. Laws only grant the possibility of the development of their abilities by education, whereas motivation to serve their own country must be moral, not legal. In other words, nobles must be virtuous, whereas it is enough for commoners to obey the law.

Shcherbatov writes the following comparing nobles and commoners:

...воззрим на службы их, на безпокойства, на разлучение с семьей своей, на отлучение от дому своего и на упущение своего домоводства и сравним все сие с жалованьем, которое благородные служащие за службу свою получают, то по верному исчислению найдем, что служащий благородный, сохраняющий благопристойность сану и имени своего, большую часть собственных своих доходов в разсуждении службы проживает. А по сему купец, мастеровой и крестьянин, что от родителей своих получил или что сам приобрел, пользуется тем, яко его есть, не имея нужды по званию своему ничего лишнего делать. Един дворянин ни жизни, ни крови, ни времени спокойнаго, ни имения своего не имеет, а все он жертвует отечеству.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid., col. 247.

This reasoning again is based on the image of an ideal nobleman who sacrifices his life and possessions to his fatherland. Of course, one can suppose that this is a result of an ideal education and noble upbringing. However, if one does not take such virtue for granted, is it possible to find any natural motivation for such self-sacrificing behavior?

Разные страсти владычествуют над человеком, но главнейшею считаю я честолюбие, поелику сия страсть есть ничто иное, как преобразование самого самолюбия. Сия страсть, побуждающая человека ко всем благородным подвигам, затмевающая в душе его тягость трудов, жестокость болезни и ужас смерти, есть накрепчайшая подпора государства... благородный воспоминает своих предков и считает их заслуги, почитает мертвые тени их, но почти совместником им становится, желая сравняться или и превзойти; их прозвание, которое он носит, ежечасно ему воспоминает, что он должен себе, предкам своим и отечеству; яко некоторый дух безпрестанно ему вопиющий, да сохранит имя неврежденно, которое он от благородных родителей получил...

Я должен теперь сказать о низкорожденном: не зрит он и не знает знатных своих предков, не побужден славою их, не поощрен именем своим; но он человек, и честолюбие ему сродно. Но какое он честолюбие будет иметь, честолюбие подражательное благородным или почти можно сказать завидливое? Но и то охулить не можно, если он добродетельными стезями к предмету своему пойдет, и достижение удостоивает его сравняться с благородными; но каждый чувствует, что он побудительных причин имеет меньше, а потому и труднее сему быть, Государства же не трудные способы должны изыскивать, а легчайшими стараться себя управлять.<sup>127</sup>

Shcherbatov separates two kinds of love of honor (*chestoliubie*). On the surface level it looks similar to “honor” as a principle of Montesquieu’s monarchy. But after a closer look, one can recognize that striving for honor is itself motivated by a desire to imitate deeds and glory of one’s ancestry. This is, in accordance with Shcherbatov’s own words, a “transformation of self-love.” It can be described as a feeling of belonging to a certain group of people, which includes dead and living

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., col. 226–228.

members, and even future offspring. This feeling is combined with the desire to preserve and increase the “glory” of the family name of this group. Thus, “self-love” in Shcherbatov’s usage is transformed into not simply “love of an individual self,” but into the love to one’s relatives and the feeling of belonging to their own chain of ancestors and descendants.

Shcherbatov separates this “honor,” a social quality by its nature, with the “ambition” as a desire to obtain individual honors from a ruler, which can lead to subservience and loss of “hardheartedness.”

Of course, it is easy to criticize Shcherbatov’s construction of society as an ideological one, in which the real burdens of taxpayers and serfs, extracted from them by the force of law, are presumably balanced by only possible services of a nobleman, which he is free to make. The balance is equal only if one regards all noblemen as virtuous. However, social justice is not the issue, which is of great importance for Shcherbatov in this case; he is rather concerned with the effectiveness of the system, or, in his own words, utility toward the state.

He recognizes, for example, that military talents can be found among representatives of all estates, and sometimes nature can create a possible military commander among peasants:

Не лишен от природы ни единый человек способностей приобрести все сии нужные знания [military—V.R.] и может статься, что между пахарей мы многих бы Александров и Цесарей нашли, но они, родясь с сохой, с сохой и умирают, никогда не подозревая таких дарования иметь; ибо никогда им не было случая, чтоб оныя открылись, и семена внутри их души бесплодны остаются; то должно ли по сумнению, коль оно справедливо ни есть, с опасностью многия тысяч раз ошибиться, Александров, Цесарей и Сципионов у сохи искать? И не долг ли есть всякаго правительства искать в том состоянии удобных к службе себе

людей, где с вероятностью уповаает скорее их найти? а сия вероятность и обращается на сих благородных.<sup>128</sup>

The government must look for military commanders among well-born people not because nature limits distribution of talents only to this estate, but because only representatives of this estate can have the occasion to manifest such talents, and the state must limit itself only by effective actions, and not to waste time and efforts looking for talented people among commoners.

This is, certainly, the deliberate defense of aristocratic privileges contra the principle of meritocracy, implemented by Peter's *Table of Ranks*. It is necessary, however, for Shcherbatov's ideological construction to substantiate the idea that such privileges would be, indeed, justified and that aristocratic servicemen would serve their country more eagerly than their ignoble fellows.

It is hard to prove, however, as this could be true only in an ideal state, whereas in reality the old aristocracy was a victim of autocratic policy, which promoted people not on any systematic ground, but arbitrarily.

Надлежит наперед мне сказать, что я *знатными фамилиями разумею*. Оныя суть не токмо те, которыя древность свою теряют в темноте времен, и многих венценосных особ считают своих предками, но которыя также и в службе Государства в знатные чины были производимы, и налагаемы на них были важныя должности; ибо сокрытое достоинство их, от крови производящее, в Монархическом правлении долгое время преимущество крови сохранить не могло. Много есть у нас таковых старобытных родов, которые древностию свою могут с наивеличайшими фамилиями считаться: но обстоятельства, случаи, разныя бывшие перемены, унизили их роды, стеснили разум и удручили дух, и они едва из унижения своего осмеливаются возникнуть своею главою. О таких-то я говорю, что они были из мелкого дворянства...<sup>129</sup>

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., col. 237–238.

<sup>129</sup> Mikhail Shcherbatov, *Pis'mo kniazia Shcherbatova, sochinitelia rossiiskoi istorii, k odnomu ego priiatelu, v opravdaniit za nekotorye sokrytnye i iavnye okhuleniia, uchinennye ego istorii ot gospodina*

In the real Russia, “the dignity coming from blood” was not used as a valuable resource by the state; instead, people were appointed to important positions because of different “circumstances, occasions, and alternations.” This led to the situation where the presumable eagerness of representatives of the old aristocracy to serve their country essentially weakened; they lost their spirit and had to lower their ambitions in respect to “new people,” promoted by rulers.

It should be noted here that among enlightened reformers in Europe it was not unusual to project the transformation of the aristocracy of birth onto an aristocracy of virtue and merit. This way of reasoning, however, was quite alien to Shcherbatov, who, on the contrary, emphasized that the imitation of the “glorious deeds” of one’s noble ancestors is a way to inspire “honor” and “virtue.”

Shcherbatov’s regret for the descent of the old aristocracy is, however, merely rhetorical, as he understood that even its restoration can hardly bring back presumably good morals of ancient aristocrats, as the process of corruption of morals have gone too far already. This rhetorical sadness can be compared with his sympathy for those thinkers of the late Roman republics, who expressed regret in respect to their lost liberty, whereas they understood that, because the majority of citizens are corrupted by luxury, there is no way back to the good old times.

In his treatise *On Corruption*, Shcherbatov writes:

Юлий Цезарь, толь искусный в познании сердец человеческих, яко искусен в военных и политических делах... не что иное ко утверждению своея похищенные власти употребил, как большие награждения, дабы,

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*General-Maiora Boltina, tvortsa primechanii na istoriiu drevniia i nyneshniia Rossii g. Leklerka* (Moscow, 1789), 109–110.



введши чрез сие сластолюбие, к нему, якобы источнику раздаяней более людей привязывалось... Случилось, что ему доносили нечто на Антония и на Долабелу, якобы он их должен опасаться. Отвечал, что он сих в широких и покойных одеждах ходящих людей, любящих свои удовольствия и роскошь, никогда страшиться причины иметь не может. Но сии люди, продолжал он, которые о великолепии ни о спокойствии одежд не радят, сии иже роскошь презирают, и малое почти за излишнее считают, каковы суть Брутус и Кассий, ему опасны, в рассуждении намереней его лишиться вольности римский народ. Не ошибся он в сем, ибо подлинно сии его тридцети тремя ударами издыхающей римской вольности пожертвовали. И тако самый сей пример показывает, что не в роскоши и сластолюбии издыхающая римская вольность обрела себе защищение, но в строгости нравов и умеренности.<sup>130</sup>

Shcherbatov's sympathy for austere and modest republican morals was expressed also in his treatise on government:

...никакое другое правление нам не подает толь великого числа знатных примеров любви к отечеству... республиканцы почитают себя единым родом, в котором каждой имеет некую особливую часть себе во удел, от которого он более или меньше прибытку получит, по мере доброго состояния, в котором все другие части будут находиться. Равность, иже есть удел республиканцев, чинит, что каждой старается, колико ему возможно, приобрести некоторое почтение, а редкость награждений делает, что ради дубовой, или дерновой короны, иль ради некоторого украшения дому... не щадит ничего для приобретения почтения от своих сограждан.<sup>131</sup>

This ideal is, however, unavailable in a society where there is no such social cohesion, and thus usually a society is unable to induce an individual to prefer the common good to one's own. On the other hand, the society where the diametrically opposed principle prevails, when each prefers one's interests to the common good, cannot be stable and corresponds with an unlimited despotism. Therefore, the task is, for Shcherbatov, to find the golden mean between these two extremes, and to find a way to combine personal and common interests in order to avoid, as far as possible,

<sup>130</sup> *O povrezhdenii npravov v Rossii*, 61–62; Lentin, *Prince M.M. Shcherbatov*, 117.

<sup>131</sup> Shcherbatov, "Raznyia razsuzhdeniia o pravlenii," in vol. 1 of *Sochinenia kniazia M. M. Shcherbatova*, col. 350.

their contradiction. Shcherbatov understands that in a real state one can find only a few people who are able to sacrifice themselves for the common cause, and a wise lawgiver cannot expect to find support for the state only in such people.

Therefore, the task to find right laws can be specified as the task to find such laws which can place into a balance the striving for personal advantages and the fulfillment of necessary social duties.

This is the same task which Montesquieu tries to decide on by introducing the principle of honor as a “spring” for monarchy. Shcherbatov’s idea, however, is different, and it is closer to Montesquieu’s “spring” for an aristocratic republic, that is, “moderation.” Although Shcherbatov does not use this concept, he asserts that the level of consumption for members of the aristocratic elite must be limited by a kind of self-command. This is connected, in Shcherbatov’s writings, with the image of a diligent landowner. Let us look at this issue in detail.

It is quite surprising to find in one of Shcherbatov’s texts, in spite of expressing at many times admiration for ancient Roman republicans with their rough, if not ascetic, way of life, the following excerpt:

...а сие и подаст нам верной способ к заключению, кто чувствительнее ощущает *удовольствие, что есть единая цель жизни человеческой.*<sup>132</sup>  
[italics mine—V.R.]

If pleasure is the only aim of human life, then how can self-restriction in the sphere of consumption be substantiated? The idea looks very similar to ancient moral theories, starting with Aristotle and Plato, with, probably, Cicero and the Stoics as an

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<sup>132</sup> Shcherbatov, “O vygodakh nedostatka,” in vol. 2 of *Sochinenia kniazia M. M. Shcherbatova*, col. 398.

immediate source. The idea is that satisfaction of sensual desires cannot bring true happiness, as satisfaction of a desire creates more desire, and the thirst for newer and newer pleasures cannot create satiety. True pleasure can be only the fulfillment of human predestination, which is a full manifestation of one's talents and abilities for the sake of a common good (and this is possible, for Aristotle, only in a perfect polity). Shcherbatov's application of this idea to the specific Russian reality—the life of landowners in their estates—can be briefly formulated as follows:

True satisfaction (happiness), which gives the possibility to reconcile personal utilities with the common good, lies in the situation where a person can see at last the fruits of one's long labor, and can share one's feeling of satisfaction with fellow citizens, as they also can feel the utility of one's labor for the good of all. It can be emphasized that not only the result, that is, the material fruits of labor, are important, but the public recognition of one's efforts. Besides, the idea of labor implies some self-restriction, as one has to overcome his or her natural laziness and the desire for tranquility. Labor also assumes some patience towards necessary hardships and even, to some extent, sensual sufferings. But the motivation here is, so to say, suspended pleasure, which will be more intensive due to this suspense, in comparison with immediately satisfied impulsive desires. And, besides sensual satisfaction, which is not suppressed fully, but only deferred, this kind of pleasure implies the feeling of self-realization and a heightened self-esteem, supported by respect expressed by others. Approving looks of others are very important here, this is why the demonstration of these fruits of labor must be public.

All these feelings are expressed in Shcherbatov's description of the happiness of a landlord, who demonstrates for his fellows improvements in his estate:

Но воззрим, какое же удовольствие все деревенское его [the noble of modest means—V.R.] строение и заведение приносит. Он, с друзьями своими сошед в сад, останавливается на всякой дорожке; с удовольствием показывает высоту и густоту... В парниках показывает разные цветы; веселится, видя их красоту или чувствуя благовоние; рассказывает, откуда корни и семена доставал... Идет к строящимся беседкам, показывает их гостям своим; сказывает, что сам чертил план и фасад, и как хочет их убрать; требует совета у своих приятелей... Идет к некоторым зачатым строениям, показывает их своим друзьям; с футом в руках размеривает сам, указывает каменщикам и плотникам, инде их исправляет, где сделали ошибки, инде дает им награждение. Входит в огород и близ стоящие оранжереи, показывает разные растения; делает приметить величину грунтовых деревьев, их плодоносие... срывает плоды, подносит их своим друзьям и спрашивает, как находят вкус... Потом идет на конской и скотной двор... входит в то место, где хранится молоко; делает примечать спокойствие и удобность сего строения и подчует разным молоком.

Все сие с таким удовольствием, а иное и с какою жадностью исполняет, что, является, не только всякое дерево, плод и цветок, но и каждый листок его веселит. Бездушная вещи, является, учинились его служителями, для соделания его удовольствия и обще все так и каждое является сумму его благополучия прибавлять, и каждая будто бы составляла то, что может его счастливым сделать.

...все с трудом приобретено... все малое и с нуждою исполняется; но все по мере употребленных трудов, веселит... все оживотворяет дух и делает удовольствие.<sup>133</sup>

The connection of these personal pleasures with the common good is not immediately evident, but in another place Shcherbatov wrote that a nobleman, if he has excessive income, must spend it, in contrast with a merchant, whose credit depends on the size of his capital. And one kind of spending is agricultural experimentation, of which Shcherbatov's gardening was just one example.

An ideal nobleman is, for Shcherbatov, a landowner of modest means, who is not poor (that is his physical need can be satisfied), but who needs to apply his own

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid., col. 411–413.

efforts, his own labor, in order to keep his house in accordance with the appropriate way of life (*blagoprystoinost'*) for his social status.

Thus, instead of hiring a professional architect or engineer, Shcherbatov prefers to work himself, as this is not only cheaper but also satisfies his ambitions of being a talented creator and a well-educated gentleman inventor.

And in this status he needs the approval of his friends, who have to share his constructive ideas and give useful advice.

The same principle can be applied to other kinds of public activity. The honest service of a nobleman, for example, can be motivated by his desire to receive ultimately a position where he can be respected for the results of his services to his fellow citizens, and this can be combined with enough means to have a relative comfort (*spokoistviia*). These services can include, for example, wise instructions or even laws, if citizens' participation in the creation of laws would be allowed. This could be possible, however, only in the case of a relatively perfect policy. In a despotic state such honest services are at risk of not only lack of final satisfaction, but also may be harmful for a nobleman, as his not so scrupulous fellows will be ready to defame and eliminate him by their intrigues, as he is an obstacle for their self-interested machinations.

Не могут хорошие законы быть, если не на нравах основаны и нравственными добродетелями не подкрепляются...

Но дабы сии нравы и обычаи возгнездились в сердцах народа, надлежит, чтобы правительство неусыпным оком бдило награждать добродетели и укрощать пороки, ибо в самом деле путь добродетели есть жесток. Возьмем пример придворного, когда единой, любя отечество и государя, не отверзает уст своих на лесть, лжу и клевету, когда пред недостойными временщиками колена не приклоняет, когда последует единым стезям добродетели, хочет служить, а не угождать, и лишенный защитников в бедности и презрении оставлен пребывает; с

другой страны, когда другой, жертвуя все своему честолюбию, не помышляя о добродетели и о должности гражданина, льстя своему государю, утверждает его пороки, соплетаёт ков на ближняго, пред временщиками раболепно трусит и, одним словом, коего все слова суть ложь, все мысли – злоба и дела – преступлении, и таковой богатством, силою и честью одарен. То кто, зря сии примеры, осмелится быть добродетелен, ибо мало таких сыщется, которые бы были добродетели для ее самое со исключением своей пользы. Сие же можно положить и к другим состоянием людей. То как тут можно народу добродетельну быть, где пороки выгоды пред добродетелию имеют?<sup>134</sup>

In other words, one cannot expect that the majority of the people will prefer the way of virtue, with a chance of harming their own well-being, to the way of vice. And in a despotic society the love of honors (*chestoliubie*) will motivate people to act dishonestly, as their promotion depends only on the opinion of their seniors, not on utility, which their actions bring for the society. This is in striking contrast with Montesquieu's view, which is based on the presupposition that one's ambitious efforts will be estimated in accordance with their correspondence to the common good, not in accordance with one's personal connections and subservience.

Therefore, in a monarchy there are not just laws, which have to motivate people to prefer honest behavior to dishonest behavior, but good customs in the moral sphere. And these customs, in accordance with Montesquieu's maxim, cannot be transformed by laws, but only by good example, which is the monarch's own virtuous behavior.

...всегда бывает закон презрен, когда он обычаями не подкреплен; но в воле монаршей состоит примером своим ввести и обычаи. Когда же что определить законам, а обычаем то не тщится утвердить, то сие доказует его неосторожность.<sup>135</sup>

<sup>134</sup> Shcherbatov, "Zamechaniia Shcherbatova na Bolshoi Nakaz Ekateriny," in Mikhail Shcherbatov, *Neizdannye sochineniia*, 33–34.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

Thus, the difference between the despotic condition of the state and the true monarchy is that informal rules or customs motivate people in a despotism to dishonest behavior, whereas in a true monarchy they are motivated to honest and even virtuous behavior. But this is not a republican virtue, which motivates people to sacrifice their own well-being for the common cause, but a kind of weak virtue, which needs support from above. This weak virtue works only in a situation where honest behavior is rewarded (materially and by honors), whereas vicious behavior is punished. In other words, the difference between monarchy and despotism is a system of rewards. Monarchy promotes virtuous and honest servicemen, whereas in a despotic state people are promoted on the basis of their subservience to their seniors, or on the basis of arbitrary choice of favorites, without regard to their moral qualities.

...ни у какова народа законы к развращению общества и нравов не клонятся, но нигде они силы иметь не будут, естли сам государь пример добродетели не подаст; ибо в сем последнем случае самые злые в угодность государю добродетельны будут стараться учиниться. Но в таком государстве, где открытым неприятелям большим под видом порядка судебного меньшие в жертву придаются, где знает государь о злых качествах его советников, прельстясь токмо некоторою их острою, довольствуясь их называть «нужное зло», не токмо поверенности своей от них не отнимают, но и предпочитают их тем, в честности тех кои сами уверены, - в таком государстве, говорю я, могут ли законы довольно быть сильны, чтобы против толь злого примера нравы поправить?<sup>136</sup>

The existence of written laws does not itself transform despotism into a monarchy, as the formal fulfillment of legal formalities cannot secure disuse of laws by the mighty and powerful against their weaker competitors in courts. Only a custom of honest behavior, created by examples given by a virtuous monarch, can create such

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 38.

an atmosphere in society, in which such disuse of one's powerful position can be prevented.

Let us return for a moment to the classical definitions of monarchy in contrast with despotism. For Aristotle, in a monarchy a ruler acts for the sake of the common good and rules on the ground of laws. For Montesquieu, the laws must exist, but also intermediate powers, composed by the representatives of a relatively independent aristocratic elite, which can contain the irrational despotic impulses of the monarch. Shcherbatov demonstrates that all these principles are not sufficient in the situation of a corrupted political body, in which the policy of the previous monarch has perverted the characteristics of monarchical rule. The laws do not really work and are used as a mask for lawlessness and coercion of the mighty and influential towards their weaker fellows, with the following consequences: the representatives of the elite lose their ability to resist arbitrary decisions of the ruler and his or her associates, and the social cohesion between members of the elite is also lost, as each cares only about his personal interests; the commoners are also depraved by bad examples from above; and only the rest of aristocracy, people devoid of power and living in asylums of their estates, as in exile, still preserve their virtuous qualities, although they cannot employ them to the service of the fatherland, except partial agricultural improvements to their household.

One can imagine, however, that at some point the situation will change and a good, if not virtuous, and well intended monarch will come to power. What can he do with such a corrupted society, and how can the rest of the virtuous aristocrats support him?



Shcherbatov's vision of necessary changes implies, first of all, that these virtuous people will return to a powerful position, but this is not enough. It is necessary to change the customs of the already corrupted people, and to change institutional conditions, in which a monarch and his new honest governors will act. One cannot expect that they will be as virtuous as ancient republicans, so here one has to deal with weak virtue, which needs a right system of rewards and punishments for its support.

What are the basic institutional principles which can help to transform a corrupted society into one with good morals? How is it possible to help well intentioned but weak people to overcome their weaknesses?

The first issue such a monarch of good intentions has to deal with is the establishing of fundamental or unchangeable laws. What is the principle on which such laws can be grounded? How can it be guaranteed that such laws will not be a result of the arbitrary decision of the lawgiver, but will be coordinated with "laws of nature"?

The answer, given by Shcherbatov, at first glance seems to be a continuation of his defense of aristocratic privileges; however, a reasonable point exists in this chain of reasoning, substantiating this idea, which cannot be reduced to simple aristocratic biases.

This point is formulated by Shcherbatov, *inter alia*, when he treats different rights and privileges of noble estate:

Есть у нас щедротою монаршею изданные дворянския права, почерпнутые по большей части из старых узаконений с малою прибавкою новых прав. Несть мое намерение, бывши дворянин, и

мыслить о каком прибавлении оных в разсуждении полезных прав, ибо каждое исключительное право может быть тягостно другим чинам в государстве... Но что касается до почетных прав, яко до старшинства родов, показующих, как давно какой род отечеству услуги свои оказывает, сие есть дело *историческое*, и *бывшее не бывшим никакая на свете власть сделать не может*.<sup>137</sup> [italics mine—V.R.]

The reason for laws in a monarchical state is, by the way, to prevent despotism:

...понеже монарх несть вотчинник, но управитель и покровитель своего государства, а потому и должно быть неким основательным правам, которые-бы не стесняли могущество монарха ко всему полезному государству, но укрощали-бы иногда беспорядочныя его хотения, по большей части во вред ему самому обращающияся.<sup>138</sup>

The idea that the gentility of the aristocratic clans does not depend on a recent monarch, but is already a historical and therefore unchangeable reality, creates a basis for a system of constant laws as long as a connection between aristocratic origin and some, at least symbolic, privileges will be established. For example, Shcherbatov proposes to connect birth with records in noble registries and distribution of places during noble assemblies:

А потому не можно сказать, чтобы алфавитный список, кто прежде кого должен быть в дворянской книге записан, не делал прискорбия дворянам. Самое старшинство родов, казалось бы, и вело к предписанию председательства по родам дворянских собраний, ибо там *не чиновники, но дворяне* заседают [italics mine—V.R.]; а самое бы сие заседание, показуя каждому, что берет место по преимуществу своего древняго рода, побуждало бы подражать добродетелям своих предков.<sup>139</sup>

It is important to pay attention here to the contrast between nobles and officials. The hierarchy of officials depends exclusively on a monarch, who can

<sup>137</sup> Shcherbatov, “Razmyshleniia o zakonodatel’stve voobshche,” in vol. 1 of *Sochineniia kniazia M. M. Shcherbatova*, col. 395–396.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., col. 390.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., col. 396.

promote them on the ground of his or her arbitrary approval of their merits, whereas the hierarchy of aristocratic clans depends on their services in the time of former monarchs and, therefore, cannot be changed by any arbitrary decision of a current ruler.

As soon as the state has such a hierarchy of aristocrats with symbolic rights, each of them is motivated to preserve the honor of its clan, which can serve as a relative guarantee against shabby performance, as such performance can undermine the honor of their family name.

This is a variety of the feeling of honor, which is an aspect of Montesquieu's principle of "honor." However, Montesquieu's principle can be understood as a desire to receive promotion (love of honors, *chestoliubie*), which is not a guarantee against dishonest behavior. By contrast, Shcherbatov's principle is essentially conservative, and in this sense it is kindred to the principle of self-preservation, provided that the understanding of self includes one's inherited social status.

This is, of course, relevant only for the highest representatives of aristocracy, but they can give examples to lower noblemen, thus, honest aristocrats will become, for Shcherbatov, moral leaders for lower nobility.

In accordance with Shcherbatov's idea, this will allow a ruler to have a reserve of honest people for promotion into important positions of state service.

At the same time, the preservation of the aristocracy as a necessary social layer to guarantee that the monarchy will not be transformed into despotism needs the fulfillment of some material conditions. As it was already stated, the transmission of aristocratic qualities from one generation to another takes place not by blood, but

through a specific kind of education, by imitation of their parents' behavior, their services to the state, and their abilities to command others. In other words, an aristocratic way of life is essential for the upbringing of youth, and this implies that parents have to have enough material means. They need not necessarily be rich, but at least they cannot be poor, as poverty is in itself a humiliating condition. Thus the family in which a future aristocrat has to be born and educated within must have enough material resources to keep decency (*blagoprystoynost'*), that is, to live a life which is regarded in a society as appropriate for a given social status.

In a monarchy the source of such income must not depend entirely on state service, as firmness of aristocratic character implies, that sometimes, due to the resistance against authorities, a nobleman can at least temporarily lose his position in office. Therefore, the main source of income has to be the landed property. Due to this, a nobleman can preserve his relative independence in circumstances depending on his relationships with his seniors in service.

Moreover, the motivation for service, which is honor, does not contradict, even in a case of a lost office, the motivation to have the pleasure of seeing the results of one's improvements to his household. Thus, honor of serving one's country receives a material support from another motivation, which is lower, but not dishonest and even can be regarded as fulfillment of a patriotic duty.

This means, however, that the state must guarantee at least a degree of safety to landed property, without overburdening its peasants by taxes and recruitment.

This leads us to another direction of Shcherbatov's thought: his demand that such laws concerning economy must be established, which will not allow the extortion

of resources from the landed sector of the economy to such an extent as to put in danger the ability of the landed aristocracy to preserve its socially appropriate way of life.

For Shcherbatov, this problem is no less important than the ways of the preservation of the virtue and honor of an aristocracy, as it creates material conditions for such preservation.

And to guarantee this Shcherbatov proposes the ways by which the nobility can participate in designing the system of appropriate laws.<sup>140</sup>

At this point Shcherbatov's reasoning acquires an interesting twist, which can be briefly formulated as follows: the people, represented first of all by the corporation of nobility, become not only an object, but a subject of politics and also of history. And this is expressed by the fact, that instead of Montesquieu's idea of monarchy the main point of reference for Shcherbatov becomes Rousseau's concept of the people as the sovereign (although Shcherbatov does not use this term directly).

One can find a direct quotation from the *Social Contract* in Shcherbatov's criticism of Catherine's *Nakaz* to the Legislative commission.

Article 13 of Catherine's *Nakaz* claims:

Какой предлог самодержавного правления? Не тот, чтоб у людей отнять естественную их вольность, но чтобы действия их направить к получению самого большого ото всех добра.<sup>141</sup>

Shcherbatov responds to this as follows:

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid., col. 367–370.

<sup>141</sup> The quotation from the *Nakaz* is taken from: Shcherbatov, *Neizdannye sochineniia*, 23, see first fn.

Не может быть другого предмету кроме сего ни в каком правлении; ибо, говорит Руссо: «понеже великие правители первоначально были избранны народами для утверждения их благополучия, то во учинении с сими правителями договора между уступленных прав народ не мог свою естественную вольность уступить, яко вещь такую, без которой его благополучие никак соделаться не может; а если бы, последует сей писатель, и нашелся такой неосторожной народ, которой бы свою естественную вольность уступил, то должно его почитать яко безумного, от которого никакой договор силы не имеет». Но должно здесь рассмотреть, соответствует ли самодержавная власть такому первенствующему договору. И сие мне кажется сумнению подвергнуто, ибо можно ли тут надеяться на сохранение естественной вольности, где власть законодательная и исполнительная в единой особе сообщена, которая, не быв подвергнута никаким законам, по своим изволениям, часто от своенравей и страстей происходящим, применяет нравы и законы и содержит подданных в таком состоянии, что они ни один час не могут быть уверены не токмо в сохранении своих именей, но и самой жизни?<sup>142</sup>

This quotation refers to the *Social Contract*,<sup>143</sup> and Shcherbatov's acceptance of this idea implies that he regards sovereignty as an attribute of the people, not the monarch. That is, although in a monarchy power is transferred to the ruler, she does not become a sovereign, rather the people still preserve that right, together with their "natural liberty." Shcherbatov's further comments demonstrate that he regards the combination of executive and legislative power in the hands of the monarch in Russia as a kind of usurpation which leads to despotism (*samovlastie*). Therefore, to prevent this, the legislative power has to be preserved in the hands of the people through legislative commissions, for example, projected by Shcherbatov in his treatise "Razmyshleniia o zakonodatel'stve voobshche" ("Reflections on legislation in

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>143</sup> I used the Russian edition: J.-J. Russo, *Traktaty* (Moscow: Nauka, 1969). The English translation was taken from: Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract or Principles of Political Right*. trans. G.D.H. Cole (London, 1782), accessed 26 Dec. 2011, <http://www.constitution.org/jjr/socon.htm>. The reference is to the bk. 1, ch. 4. *Traktaty*, 156. See translation of this part of the *Social Contract*, accessed 26 Dec. 2011, [http://www.constitution.org/jjr/socon\\_01.htm#004](http://www.constitution.org/jjr/socon_01.htm#004).

general”).<sup>144</sup> Of course, this presupposes Shcherbatov’s acceptance of the idea of separation of powers.

In this light Shcherbatov’s understanding of monarchy, as the political form appropriate for Russia, can be treated not through Montesquieu’s understanding of this term, but through Rousseau’s idea of a monarchy. For Rousseau, a monarchy is a form in which power is concentrated in the hands of one, but the sovereignty is still preserved by the people or the political community. This means that a monarch becomes a kind of magistrate, a person in office whose attempt to use his power for the sake of his own interests must be regarded as usurpation of the rights of the sovereign, that is, the political community as a whole.

In this respect the difference between monarchy and republic, which is of such importance in Montesquieu’s model, loses its importance for Shcherbatov. Monarchy becomes only a form of government, together with aristocratic and democratic republics, whereas the main difference is between a polity where the sovereign rights and liberty of the political community are preserved, and a polity where, as in autocratic Russia, the sovereign right is usurped by a despot or even by a collective body of rulers, as in an oligarchy. It can be noted, however, that both a republic and a monarchy are, for Montesquieu, “moderate” forms of government, whereas despotism is an “extreme” one. In this respect Shcherbatov’s combination of monarchy and some elements of republican rule is not entirely unthinkable within Montesquieu’s theoretical framework.

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<sup>144</sup> Shcherbatov, *Sochineniia*, vol. 1, col. 355–426.

In Rousseau's *Social Contract* one can find the image, which can explain Shcherbatov's understanding of the historical evolution of the Russian state and his hopes for the future. Rousseau writes:

As the particular will acts constantly in opposition to the general will, the government continually exerts itself against the Sovereignty. The greater this exertion becomes, the more the constitution changes ... sooner or later the prince must inevitably suppress the Sovereign and break the social treaty...

Government undergoes contraction when it passes from the many to the few, that is, from democracy to aristocracy, and from aristocracy to royalty. To do so is its natural propensity...

Indeed, governments never change their form except when their energy is exhausted and leaves them too weak to keep what they have ... It is therefore necessary to wind up the spring and tighten the hold as it gives way: or else the State it sustains will come to grief ... when the prince ceases to administer the State in accordance with the laws, and usurps the Sovereign power. A remarkable change then occurs: not the government, but the State, undergoes contraction; I mean that the great State is dissolved, and another is formed within it, composed solely of the members of the government, which becomes for the rest of the people merely master and tyrant. So that the moment the government usurps the Sovereignty, the social compact is broken, and all private citizens recover by right their natural liberty, and are forced, but not bound, to obey.<sup>145</sup>

Here the state is compared with a clock in which the “springs” that keep it together and put in motion are steadily corroded, and this forces the sovereign to make the government more and more concentrated, stronger, by periodical revision of the existing form of government. The weakening of the springs is compensated by compressing them even more. Finally, the usurpation takes place, which can be compared with breaking the clock; the springs are split, and the polity is kept together only by force. This gives the people the right to reshape the political mechanism and to establish a new one, which will serve their interest instead of the interest of the few members of government.

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<sup>145</sup> J.-J. Russo, *Traktaty*, 214–216. Rousseau, *The Social Contract or Principles of Political Right*, bk. 3, ch. 10, accessed 26 Dec. 2011, [http://www.constitution.org/jjr/socon\\_03.htm#010](http://www.constitution.org/jjr/socon_03.htm#010).



Shcherbatov regards this revolutionary scenario as neither desirable nor inevitable. For him, the evolution of a government from a less to a more concentrated condition can be reversed. In Rousseau's model the force of the "springs" expresses the ability of the government to rule in a given form of the political regime, whereas for Shcherbatov, in accordance with Montesquieu's ideas, there are more important "springs." These are motives of members of society, by which they are inspired to act for the sake of the common good. Between the self-sacrificing severe virtue of the classical republic and the unlimited egoistic hedonism of despotic rule lies an intermediate zone, and for Shcherbatov it is possible to find a stable point in this zone, where a further transformation of a political organism towards despotic rule can be prevented. This is possible due to a social hierarchy, in which members of the aristocratic estate, inspired by weak virtue or honesty (connected with aristocratic honor), are able to resist the arbitrary decisions of the ruler, inspired by his or her passions, and direct the ruler's actions in accordance with his or her own long-term interests, that is, the well-being of the ruler's own state. This weak virtue or honesty allows each member of society to pursue his or her own material interests as long as it is necessary for the preservation of their social status, but, at the same time, excessive luxury is excluded by obligatory moderation, based on the principle that richness must be a result of one's improvements in his landed household, not a result of the ruler's gifts based on his or her arbitrary decisions. Seeking for promotion without merits is also excluded, and thus only the long and honest service allows a person to improve his social standing.

All this, of course, can be called utopian, as there is no proof in Shcherbatov's writings that the restoration of such virtuous nobility (even in this weak sense) is even possible after decades of corruption, which he himself is eager to denounce. His hope that a restoration of the true aristocracy is possible is more of an irrational belief than a conviction based on rational arguments. Nevertheless, such is Shcherbatov's belief, and it is based on his own experience as a rational landowner, although unsuccessful in accordance with his own evaluation in his career of the state service. As an owner of the estate he could be, in a close temporal prospective, quite optimistic, and he could hope that his descendants, provided that the condition of the state would be "normalized," could make a more successful career.

And this was in striking contrast with Rousseau's catastrophic vision of the near future for France.

## CHAPTER 2: THE POLITICAL IDEAS OF NIKOLAI KARAMZIN

### *§2.1 The Peculiarities of Karamzin's Political Outlook and Its Connection with Sentimentalist Poetics*

In contrast to Shcherbatov's biography, Karamzin's life and creative work are well described in translation,<sup>1</sup> thus I will turn directly to the analysis of Karamzin's political views.

For Shcherbatov's political teaching his ethical views are pivotal, while for Karamzin it is poetics that is in the foreground of his attitude towards politics. The comparison of St. Petersburg with a stage and Moscow with an auditorium shows already that public opinion only estimates the activity of state officials, but does not act in the sphere of politics. Of course, this estimation is not yet aesthetical in the first place, but presupposes certain aesthetics, as it is the poet, in particular Karamzin himself, who performs a mediating role between society and state, as a kind of a channel that brings the public opinion to the state. In one of his poems, Karamzin compares himself with Proteus—he does not have his own views, which would express a partial standpoint, the interests of a particular group. He is neither on the side of the poor against the rich, nor on the side of the rich against the poor. He only, as a lens, enlarges the views of both and makes them visible, while staying neutral

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<sup>1</sup> See the section "Secondary Literature on Karamzin in English" in the bibliography.

himself. In this sense he is identical to the sovereign. The latter, according to Karamzin, does not have private interests; he accumulates the interests of the entire society. Similarly, the poet expresses the interests of everyone, though by turn, taking one mask after another, being inspired by one or another public sentiment. In this respect, even *Istoriia gosudarstva Rossiiskago* (“History of the Russian State”) and especially *O drevnei i novoi Rossii v ee politicheskoi i grazhdanskoi otnosheniakh* (*Memoir on Ancient and Modern Russia*) cannot be regarded as expressions of Karamzin’s own views. In the *Istoriia* he is a patriot and a champion of a strong state. In the *Memoir* he is a conservator. However, he wrote both of these works not on his own behalf, but rather to express the views of a certain group, which at the moment was perceived as an exponent of some particular position of “common opinion.” Karamzin himself composed in the form of a dialogue (similar to the dialogue of Melodor with Philalet, or, in a less explicit form, in “Mysli ob istinnoi svobode”—“Thoughts on the true liberty”). Similar to Plato’s dialogues, the discussion remains open, and does not lead to any definite decision or conclusion, which could be identified as the author’s conclusion. He stays “behind the scenes,” allowing his heroes to express one or another particular truth, while his own role is reduced to being “honest.” It is an honesty of an artist, who wants to keep his clear conscience and internal peace. However, he does not act himself, but only contemplates, giving a free rein to act for others.

This position of Karamzin has something in common with Adam Smith’s notion of an impartial observer, although it is hard to speak of any direct influence of Smith on Karamzin. It is more likely that their ideas, stemming from close premises,

developed in a similar direction. A more evident source of Karamzin's approach was Kant. The Russian thinker had a personal meeting with the latter at a young age, and according to his own evidence, studied his writings. Kant's antinomies of pure reason do not presuppose the possibility of their consistent reconciliation. Karamzin introduces such antinomies in the sphere of public thought—for example, the irreconcilable contradiction between the position of “aristocrats” and “liberalists,” both of which can only partially be justified. The way out, suggested in “Thoughts on the true liberty”—a pure consciousness—is a kind of a refraining from judgments, a pure contemplation on moral phenomena, uncomplicated with personal “interest,” distorting the judgments of those who act in the sphere of politics, rather than just observing the activity of others.

Therefore, to characterize the views of Karamzin it is less important to highlight his “position” than to understand his frame of reference, with a priori set of incompatible “positions.” Each of these contains a certain proportion of true and false ideas, as it carries the “interest” of a certain group, and it is only together that they constitute what could be called a “public opinion.” Thus, the latter, by definition, appears to be internally inconsistent.

### **Republic vs. Autocracy**

In characterizing Karamzin's views, the dialogue of two ideologies as represented in the novel *Marfa-posadnitsa, ili pokoreniie Novgoroda* (“Marfa the Posadnik's

Widow, or the Submission of Novgorod”) carries a great significance. This is how the ideology of the advocates of autocracy (often ascribed to Karamzin himself) is reproduced in the mouth of Kholmiskii, an envoy of Ivan III to Novgorod:

Народы дикие любят независимость, народы мудрые любят порядок, а нет порядка без власти самодержавной. Ваши предки хотели править сами собою и были жертвою лютых соседей или еще лютейших внутренних междоусобий... Великий Новгород был всегда десницею князей великих, когда они славили делами имя русское... Святослав с дружиною новгородскою рассеял, как прах, воинство Цимисхия, и внук Ольгин вашими предками был прозван *Владетелем мира*...

Если жизнь и собственность священны в Новгороде, то скажите, чья рука оградила их безопасностью? Здесь (указывая на дом Ярослава) – здесь жил мудрый законодатель, благотворитель ваших предков, князь великодушный, друг их...

Вольность!.. Но вы также рабствуете... Бояре честолюбивые, уничтожив власть государей, сами овладевали ею. Вы повинуетесь – ибо народ всегда повиноваться должен, – но только не священной крови Рюрика, а купцам богатым... Привыкшие к выгодам торговли, торгуют и благом народа; кто им обещает злато, тому они и вас обещают... Скоро, скоро вы соберетесь на звук *Вечевого колокола*, и надменный поляк скажет Вам на лобном месте: «*Вы – рабы мои!*»...

Иоанн все предвидит, и, зная, что разделение государства было виною бедствий его, уже соединил все княжества под своею державою и признан властелином земли русской...

Но радость его не будет совершенна, доколе Новгород... не возвратится под сень отечества... здесь Иоанн... воскресит счастливые времена, когда не шумное Вече, но Рюрик и Ярослав судили вас как отцы детей, ходили по стогнам и вопрошали бедных, не угнетают ли их богатые? Тогда бедные и богатые равно будут счастливы, ибо все подданные равны пред лицом владыки самодержавного.<sup>2</sup>

It is important to emphasize several points here. First, the Novgorod “liberty” (*volnost’*), in accordance with this position, appears to be a vestige of “savage” times, while civilized peoples prefer “order.” Second, the only alternative to autocracy is considered to be an oligarchy, the power of the rich. The people, regarded by this stance, would always be subjected either to an unrestricted ruler, equally concerned

<sup>2</sup> Nikolai Karamzin, *Sochineniia v 2-kh tomakh*, vol. 1 (Leningrad: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1984), 545–548.

with the interests of the poor and the rich, or to an oligarchy, which would oppress the poor in favor of the rich. Third, an alternative to autocracy implies internal cleavages of the parties and the corruptibility of authorities, which inevitably leads to weakness against external foes and the subjection of the state to foreign rulers, while unrestricted autocracy brings the might of the state on the international stage, and provides the sense that the Russian power is one of those which define the fate of the world.

Thus, “liberty” within the state, in accordance with this position, implies dependence on exterior forces, while “autocracy” or unrestricted authority, presupposes the greatness of power and the ability to keep enemies in fear. At the same time, it keeps the dominance of order and the safety of life and property.

All this, as Karamzin brilliantly understands, is only a partial truth, as a monarch/father figure may easily turn into despot. Yet, as the excerpt above is an imaginary dialogue of historic figures, rather than objections by Karamzin himself, let us consider this position from another angle, which in the novel is expressed by Marfa-posadnitsa herself.

...кончина Рюрика... воскресила свободу новгородскую. Народ, изумленный его величием, невольно и смиренно повиновался, но скоро, не видя уже героя, пробудился от глубокого сна, и Олег, испытав многократно его упорную непреклонность, удалился от Новгорода... искать победы, данников и рабов между... менее отважными и гордыми племенами... священна и любезна память Ярослава, ибо он первый из князей русских утвердил законы и вольность великого града... Дух Ярослава оскорбился бы в небесных селениях, если бы мы не умели сохранить древних прав, освященных его именем. Он любил новгородцев, ибо они были свободны; их признательность радовала его сердце, ибо только души свободные могут быть признательными: рабы повинуются и ненавидят!..

Иоанн желает повелевать великим градом... Но все народы земные и будущие столетия не перестали бы дивиться, если бы мы

захотели ему повиноваться... Одни несчастные легковерны... но мы благоденствуем и свободны! благоденствуем оттого, что свободны!..

Где страна цветет и народ ликует, там правители мудры и добродетельны. Как! Вы торгуете благом народным? Но могут ли все сокровища мира заменить вам любовь сограждан вольных? Кто узнал ее сладость, тому чего желать в мире? Разве последнего счастья умереть за отечество!..

...если всевышний накажет нас раздорами, бедствиями, унижением, тогда – клянемся именем отечества и свободы! – тогда приидем не в столицу польскую, но в царственный город Москву... и скажем... «Владей нами! Мы уже не умеем править собою!»

Ты содрогаясь, о народ великодушный!.. Да идет мимо нас сей печальный жребий! Будь всегда достоин свободы, и будешь всегда свободным! Небеса правосудны и ввергают в рабство одни порочные народы. Не страшись угроз Иоанновых, когда сердце твое пылает любовью к отечеству и к святым уставам его, когда можешь умереть за честь предков своих и за благо потомства!..

Но... если и в самом деле гнусное корыстолюбие овладело душами новгородцев, если мы любим сокровища и негу более добродетели и славы, то скоро ударит последний час нашей вольности...

Но знай, о Новгород! что с утратою вольности иссохнет и самый источник твоего богатства: она оживляет трудолюбие... она привлекает иностранцев в наши стены с сокровищами торговли... Бедность, бедность накажет недостойных граждан, не умевших сохранить наследия отцов своих!<sup>3</sup>

Here, in Marfa's mouth, Karamzin compares the condition of people under the autocratic rule with "sleep," while "liberty" means awakening. It suggests a parallel to the opposition of "sensitive" and "cold" in Karamzin's respective text. The cold and sensible hero "sleeps," while the sensible is "inflamed," and though he appears to be a victim of his excessive rushes, he nonetheless lives a real life, while the cold, with all his sensibility, is only resting from the troubles in his "former life." So, considering this parallel, the calmness of the people under the autocracy, their wish to exchange the participation in state matters for well being in private life is only a "rest" after state turmoil. Yet, the rest cannot last forever—for then it would be sleep, signifying the death of the soul.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 550–553.



The republican position in the words of Marfa presupposes the third option between autocracy and oligarchy, that is, the possibility of a republic based on virtue and allegiance to the common good, even at the expense of private interests. This is exactly what Montesquieu describes in *The Spirit of Laws* when he speaks of republican rule. The problem of republic is that “liberty” (*volnost*) provides it with wealth, yet the latter creates temptations for citizens, such as the propensity to “aspire for treasures” and comfort. The spirit of patriotism, however, can restrain these temptations—though this does not happen in Karamzin’s novel, and Novgorod becomes subjected to Ioann.

Something similar is described in Karamzin’s other article with the title “Padenie Shveitsarii” (“The Defeat of Switzerland”).

Сия несчастная земля представляет теперь все ужасы междоусобной войны, которая есть действие личных страстей, злобного и безумного эгоизма. Так исчезают народные добродетели! Они, подобно людям, отживают свой век в государствах; а без высокой народной добродетели республика стоять не может. Вот почему монархическое правление гораздо счастливее и надежнее: оно не требует от граждан чрезвычайностей и может возвышаться на той степени нравственности, на которой республики падают... *Дух торговый*, в течение времени овладев швейцарами, наполнил сундуки их золотом, но истощил в сердцах гордую, исключительную любовь к независимости. Богатство сделало граждан эгоистами... Но древние гражданские и политические связи Швейцарии могли бы еще долго не разрушиться (ибо древность имеет удивительную силу), если бы злой дух французской революции не сорвал сей некогда счастливой республики с ее основания.<sup>4</sup>

Here, apart from the above-mentioned motif of the danger of wealth for republics, especially the wealth which creates the temptation of egoism, it is also possible to see that Karamzin’s conservatism may have republican contents as well. Regarding Switzerland with its ancient republican institutions as well as regarding

<sup>4</sup> Karamzin, *Sochineniia v 2-kh tomakh*, vol. 2, 223.

Novgorod, he speaks of “ancient rights,” which defend liberty (*volnost*) and have “a surprising might” just owing to its antiquity. Thus, internal downfall would not have taken place for long, had it not been for the catastrophic influence from the outside. However, even the latter would not appear to have been so decisive, if the internal might of the republic, the virtue of its citizens, had not been undermined by the corruptive effect of wealth.

Thus, from this analysis it is possible to infer that Karamzin’s defense of autocracy, even the one rather limited in functions (defense of security), as it was demonstrated in the previous abstract, is not in any case unconditional. He recognizes the internal truth of republicanism based on patriotic inspiration as long as this mood of the people remains dominant, although monarchy for Karamzin is “happier” and more sensible, at least for the less than virtuous people.

However, a question emerges here—whether there may exist an intermediate condition between the “calm slavery” of unrestricted autocracy and the “extreme” spiritual tension required for the existence of republic. In other words, one should ask whether Karamzin’s position admitted the possibility of a model of republican monarchy, or autocratic monarchy with the admixture of republican elements. Or even yet, is it the case that Karamzin resolves in his own way the same problem that was raised by Shcherbatov?

Let us adopt this statement as a working hypothesis and attempt to consider the arguments for and against it. Still, one additional comment must be made.

In the afterword “*Dlia potomstva*” (“For descendants”) to the *Mnenie russkogo grazhdanina* (“Opinion of the Russian citizen”) Karamzin wrote: “Душа моя

остыла...”<sup>5</sup> Is it possible to interpret this as a transition from “sensitive” to “cold” condition? Two of his close contemporaries—Pushkin and Novikov—could testify to his ability to move from one condition to another. Novikov, however, is likely to reproach Karamzin for his “coldness” and writes, that in his view, philosophy should be “hot.” Pushkin’s abstract is more vivid, yet there is naturally a certain modification of Karamzin’s image in accordance with Pushkin’s own republican views. But the evidence, nonetheless, does not lose its power:

Кстати, замечательная черта. Однажды начал он при мне излагать свои любимые парадоксы. Оспоривая его, я сказал: «Итак, вы рабство предпочитаете свободе». Карамзин вспыхнул и назвал меня своим клеветником. Я замолчал, уважая самый гнев прекрасной души. Разговор переменялся. Скоро Карамзину стало совестно и, прощаясь со мною, как обыкновенно, упрекал меня, как бы сам извиняясь в своей горячности: «Вы сегодня сказали на меня, чего ни Шихматов, ни Кутузов на меня не говорили».<sup>6</sup>

Here, the “flushing” of Karamzin has to do not only with the rather usual psychological reaction of indignation. It is important to discover what caused this indignation, and to recognize that internal feeling of Karamzin, with all his “paradoxes,” pushed him to consider himself an advocate of “liberty” rather than “slavery.”

Another important observation (in the same abstract) also belongs to Pushkin:

Молодые якобинцы негодовали; несколько отдельных размышлений в пользу самодержавия, красноречиво опровергнутые верным рассказом событий, казались им верхом варварства и унижения. Они забывали, что Карамзин печатал «Историю» свою в России; что государь, освободив

<sup>5</sup> Nikolai Karamzin, *O drevnei i novoi Rossii* (Moscow: Zhizn’ i mysl’, 2002), 439.

<sup>6</sup> Alexandr Pushkin, “Karamzin,” in *Sobranie sochinenii v 10-ti tomakh*, vol. 7 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1962), accessed 26 Dec. 2011, <http://www.rvb.ru/pushkin/01text/08history/03memoires/1148.htm>.

его от цензуры, сим знаком доверенности некоторым образом налагал на Карамзина обязанность всевозможной скромности и умеренности.<sup>7</sup>

Pushkin considers that Karamzin's arguments of the use of autocracy are refuted by his own "true narration of events," and that if this is not expressed explicitly in the text, it is only because Karamzin, trying to justify the trust of the monarch, was a censor to himself, exposing to "repression" his own republican face.

Of course, one should not rely naively on Pushkin, who followed his own political aims in this abstract, trying to resort to Karamzin's authority to substantiate his own political position. Yet, we may assume, as a hypothesis, the view that Karamzin's texts, which at first glance seemed as an apology to autocracy, contained latent "republican" meaning.

In this case, our research agenda will consist in disclosing this implied meaning—or in demonstrating, that there was no "paradox" and Karamzin was trying to find an "excluded middle" of a dilemma between "slavery" and "liberty," i.e. to substantiate a reconcilable possibility of the existence of unrestricted autocratic monarchy, where the subjects could still be citizens rather than slaves.

### **Humiliated and Defeated**

As we have found out, if one were to look for an explicit or implicit statement of republican views in Karamzin, it must be related to the role of the "sensitive," while the "cold," with sensible reasoning, would rather appear to be an advocate of

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

autocracy and order. “Sensitivity” in Karamzin’s texts is naturally connected with sentimentalist poetics and presupposes a certain kind of feeling, namely, compassion. And this compassion is directed primarily to the one who suffers or to the one who appears to be in a weak position. This type of character, well known in the literature on Sentimentalism (a classic example being *Clarissa Harlowe* in the novel by Richardson), can be described as “Virtue in distress.”<sup>8</sup> In this pattern, a physically weak but virtuous character is confronted with the ugliness and falsehood of the surrounding world, appears to be a victim of a mighty villain, and the ensuing narrative is constructed in a way that evokes the reader’s compassion for the suffering hero. This feeling presupposes a look from the top-down and a principal distance of observation. Sympathizing, the reader or viewer of the drama cannot interfere in the action and has to limit herself only to compassion. But this puts him/her exactly into a disinterested position, in the sense that he/she is not an acting person, and does not appear to be one of the parties or sides of the conflict. This allows him to perceive his/her feeling as a true (“objective”) moral evaluation of the happening. It is principal that the suffering and the weak side should stay virtuous, otherwise it would have to undergo a fair punishment for its sins. It is an innocent suffering, which actually causes not just pity or indulgence—it is possible to feel pity for a sinner or the guilty as well—but also indignation with the unfairness or condemnation of a villain who tortures his victim, and, at the same time, admiration of the moral strength of the victim.

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<sup>8</sup> R. F. Brissenden, *Virtue in Distress: Studies in the Novel of Sentiment from Richardson to Sade* (London: Macmillan, 1974). See also on Richardson’s novels: Janet Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction* (London: Methuen, 1986), 65–87.

A classic example of such a character of Karamzin's is the main personage of *Bednaia Liza* ("Poor Liza"). Of course, it is not about commonly accepted moral, regarding which Liza is guilty. But she is not guilty in her feelings—she gave herself away to Erast as an idyllic shepherdess to her shepherd. In accordance with the moral of "sensitivity" she is not guilty. It is, on the contrary, Erast who is guilty. He promised her eternal love but married someone else for convenience. While Liza perishes in the struggle with irresistible fate and unfair social relations (attitudes) whose prisoner the weak Erast appeared to be, she was justified in the end of the novel. For this Karamzin was criticized by the advocates of common morality.

In the dispute between republican and autocratic principles in *Marfa-posadnitsa* the autocracy inevitably wins, having crushed Novgorod's "liberty." However, it is not a groundless assumption, that with all the reservations of Karamzin, who had supplemented the "manuscript of a Novgorod citizen" with his ironic introduction—a typical literary device for the creation of distance—the aim of the entire literary piece was to present the republican principle as deserving compassion. The idea of liberty appears to be connected with a character, personifying a "virtue in trouble."

This role in Karamzin's novel could not be performed by Marfa—a character who is much written about in the chronicles of Moscow's origin, which expose her. Therefore Karamzin introduces an imaginary character, Marfa's daughter Ksenia, who is characterized in the novel as follows:

...юная Ксения, сидя под окном своего девического терема, с любопытством смотрела на движения народные: они казались чуждыми ее спокойному, кроткому сердцу!.. Злополучная!.. Так юный невинный

пастырь, еще озаряемый лучами солнца, с любопытством смотрит на сверкающую вдали молнию, не зная, что грозная туча на крыльях бури прямо к нему стремится, грянет и поразит его!.. Воспитанная в простоте древних славянских нравов, Ксения умела наслаждаться только одною своею ангельскою непорочною... Любить мать и свято исполнять ее волю, любить братьев и милыми ласками доказывать им свою нежность было единственною потребностью сей кроткой души. Но судьба неисповедимая, захотела ввергнуть ее в мятеж страстей человеческих; прелестная как роза, погибнет в буре, но с твердостью и великодушием: она была славянка!.. Искра едва на земле светится, сильный ветер развивает из нее пламя.<sup>9</sup>

There is also an idyllic mood of detachment from the external world, connected with the purity of soul, and an indication of the possibility of the changing of this mood—a “flash” into the flaming virtue of patriotism. A silent and suffering character, in extraordinary circumstances, turns into a hero of political virtue. Conversely, Ioann, personifying the “truth” of autocracy appears in the novel as the murderer of his son—in the text there is a hint that Miroslav, Ksenia’s bridegroom, a foundling killed on the battlefield for freedom, was Ioann’s son. There is a reversed Oedipal collision, a theme of murder (though unintended) of a blood relative. Thus, a theme of antique fate is introduced in the novel. Novgorod was doomed to be defeated, Moscow to win, but at the core of this victory was the murder of a son—a crime that broke the laws of nature.

This circumstance exposes the winning side to a certain curse. Its action is postponed—owing to a kind of “social contract.” In the novel Ioann gives Novgorod a promise:

Народ, не вольность часто гибельная, но *благоустройство, правосудие и безопасность* суть три столпа гражданского счастья: Иоанн обещал их вам перед лицом Бога всемогущего...

<sup>9</sup> Karamzin, *Sochineniia v 2-kh tomakh*, vol. 1, 560–561.

Обещает России славу и благоденствие, клянется своим и всех его преемников именем, что польза народная во веки веков будет любезна и священна самодержцам российским – или да накажет бог клятвопреступника! Да исчезнет род его, и новое, небом благословенное поколение да властвует на троне ко счастью людей [and in Karamzin's footnote to this place: «Род Иоаннов пресекася, и благословенная фамилия Романовых царствует»—V.R.].<sup>10</sup>

Here, the interruption of the dynasty of Ioann's descendants was directly connected with their breaking of his promise to Novgorod (and the whole of Russia), i.e., with the tyranny of Ioann the Terrible. Thus, autocracy appears to be restricted with “social contract,” which implies “well-being, justice, and security.” The breaking of this contract causes the prosecution by Providence, in the face of which this contract has been set. Only the threat to the dynasty here comes not from the revolution from below, which Karamzin identifies with atrocities of anarchy and regards it as another form of despotism. The prosecution comes from the aggrieved God, and the subjects, “good Russians,” need only patience to wait till that moment comes.

Let it be mentioned that the name of the imagined Marfa's daughter was not accidental. The novel on Marfa was published in Karamzin's magazine *Vestnik Evropy* (“The Herald of Europe”) in 1803, whereas in 1802 he published in the same journal “Istoricheskie vospominaniia i zamechaniia na puti k Troitse i v sem monastyre” (“Historical memoirs and notes on the way to the Trinity and in this monastery”), where, particularly, he writes on the fate of Boris Godunov and his posterity.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 583.



Ничто, по крайней мере, не мешает нам жалеть о добродетельной Борисовой супруге... о юном и прекрасном Феодоре... наконец, о любезной Ксении, столь милой доброму сердцу по самым ужасным ее бедствиям. Едва оплавав кончину достойного жениха своего... она лишилась родителя, видела убиение матери, брата и была жертвою гнусного сластолюбия убийцы их. Ее жизнь угасла в слезах под сводом монастырской келии.<sup>11</sup>

Here is another characteristic example of “virtue in trouble,” namely, suffering for others’ crimes. It might be possible that the name Ksenia was borrowed for Marfa’s imaginary daughter from Godunov’s daughter.

In any case, the power of autocracy, so highly appreciated by Karamzin in his direct expressions in the text, is rather regarded as inevitable evil, as something that carries in its very foundation a crime against nature. This is a kind of mystery of power, reason of state, an inoculation of poison in a moral world, which serves as a guarantee against moral evil, being an evil itself, though an indispensable one. But this evil nature of power may be restrained for a time—and its break up on the surface would inevitably lead to interruption of a social contract by the monarch—and to a similarly inevitable punishment of prosecutor in his descendants. The principle of autocracy stays unchanged, despite the alteration of characters.

What is left for the people, the “audience” in the theatre hall, to denounce prosecutors and to sympathize with innocent victims? But the people themselves do not act: Providence acts for them.

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<sup>11</sup> Karamzin, *O drevnei i novoi Rossii*, 355.

### **Citizenship vs. Subjecthood: Liberty and Patriotism against Despotism and Slavery**

If political participation in the usual sense, i.e., participation in representative institutions governing the state together with the ruler, is rejected by Karamzin, how then does he distinguish the condition of a citizen in a free state from the condition of a slave under tyranny? Rather than institutionally, in Karamzin's conceptual framework this difference is defined through feeling—a feeling of belonging. The affection to one's "own" and suspicion towards the "other," particularly to foreigners, exactly constitutes patriotism with a strong touch of xenophobia. Yet, there is a rational criterion as well, namely the devotion to the "common good." A notion of fatherland is introduced, its "interests," actually, constitute that common good. A monarch would be loved or hated by the "people," depending on whether he acts for the sake of the common good, i.e., whether he is a patriot. Aristotle's formula of distinguishing (the monarch acts for the polity, the despot acts for himself) is accepted in its first part. The other part (the monarch acts in accordance with the law, the tyrant on arbitrary will) is recognized only partially. According to Karamzin, the monarch stands above the law and may break it, if it is required for the common good: in a way he understands it. The problem appears only when the monarch's understanding of the good differs from that of the people, "good Russians." In this case, a monarch may be perceived as a tyrant, as the criterion remains subjective—and no one but Providence may be the judge between the monarch and his people. Logically speaking, a monarch who has lost the love of the people may be justified by the court of history—if the

following events show that he was right, while the people were wrong (for example, in their affection for old customs). Yet, Karamzin seems to regard such a situation as exceptional, and even in this case, he urges the monarch to exercise caution—with reference to Machiavelli he recommends deceiving the people, and, establishing new institutions, making them look like the old ones from the outside. The people, according to Karamzin, are mainly conservative and prefer to keep to old customs. Conversely, a monarch sometimes has to introduce novelties, and because of the conservatism of the people, he has to act disregarding the latter's opinion. This is not a tyranny in the Aristotelian sense (the monarch still acts for the sake of “common good”), but people may perceive it as tyranny. In this case the monarch, for the sake of preserving the love of his subjects, should try to deceive them.

The liberty of citizens, in this case, consists in that everything, happening in the state, takes place with their consent and approval, presumably, because in reality their esteems do not change the policy of the ruler. Here again the metaphor of theatre is at work—the approval or disapproval of the audience does not change the behavior of characters, as owing to theatrical conventions, the characters are not conscious of being watched by the audience.

Such an attitude of the citizen (in Karamzin's understanding) toward politics recalls the historian's attitude toward the past—he makes judgments and expresses his own feelings, but he cannot change it. Similarly the protagonists are unaware of the existence of the historian. At the same time the politician may take into account the supposed attitudes of future historians towards him and attempt to make them favorable. In the same way Karamzin could please himself with the thought that his

interpretation of historic events would make a certain impact on the current and future politics of the monarch, as well as on the shaping of common opinion, because, as Karamzin writes in the preface to his *Istoriia*,

История... есть священная книга народов... зеркало их бытия и деятельности... дополнение, изъяснение настоящего и пример будущего.

Правители, законодатели действуют по указаниям истории и смотрят на ее листы, как мореплаватели на чертежи морей. Мудрость человеческая имеет нужду в опытах, а жизнь кратковременна...

Но и простой гражданин должен читать историю. Она... питает нравственное чувство и праведным судом своим располагает душу к справедливости, которая утверждает наше благо и согласие общества.<sup>12</sup>

So, state rulers are similar to actors, yet not those who play learned roles, but those who react to the voices of approval and disapproval in the hall. The historian (or journalist—another profession of Karamzin) is a mediator between the people and the government—the way he would “mirror” the people’s opinion may, in principle, affect the politics of the rulers. In this sense, it is exactly this kind of spokesmen of “common opinion” that appears to be a channel due to which a simple expression of opinions and judgments would grow into a civic participation for his compatriots.

Actually, here there appears, in a rudimentary form, the idea of “fourth power” (political journalism). A writer or a poet, being a spokesman of “common opinion,” may have certain opportunities to influence the politics of officials. Similarly, a journalist or historian may influence the society, promoting its unity and understanding of common interests as opposed to private interests of individual groups.

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<sup>12</sup> Karamzin, *O drevnei i novoi Rossii*, 370.

Of course, a ruler may ignore this common opinion, and there is no law compelling him to take it into account. But in this case, he risks losing “the people’s love” and becoming a “tyrant” in the eyes of the people, that is, according to Karamzin, deliberately weakening his power.

That means that a citizen appears to be as such (and not a slave) only so far as he is able to express his opinion (through a writer) and this freedom of judgment provides him a feeling of participation in the fate of the fatherland, in spite of the fact that he does not take any political decisions. Literature (rather than parliament and constitution) thus appears to be an informal restriction of autocratic power—with all Karamzin’s declarations that this power should not be restricted by anything.

### **“Sensitive” Republicans and “Cold” Monarchists**

It is possible to juxtapose the previously mentioned extract from the article on Switzerland with the other abstract from the novel on “sensitive” and “cold” tempers.

The first quotation:

Вот почему монархическое правление гораздо счастливее и надежнее: оно не требует от граждан чрезвычайностей и может возвышаться на той степени нравственности, на которой республики падают.<sup>13</sup>

And here is the fragment from the comparison of the two characters:

Эраст еще в детстве пленялся романами, поэзией, а в истории более всего любил чрезвычайности, примеры геройства и великодушия.

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<sup>13</sup> Karamzin, *Sochineniia v 2-kh tomakh*, vol. 2, 223.

Леонид не понимал, как можно заниматься небылицами, то есть романами... Эраст превозносил до небес великодушие и храбрость Александра: Леонид называл его отважным безумцем... Эраст обожал Катона, добродетельного самоубийцу: Леонид считал его помешанным гордецом. Эраст восхищался бурными временами греческой и римской свободы: Леонид думал, что свобода есть зло, когда она не дает людям жить спокойно. Эраст верил в истории всему чрезвычайному: Леонид сомневался во всем, что не было согласно с обыкновенным порядком вещей. Один спрашивался с воображением пылким, а другой – с флегматическим своим характером.<sup>14</sup>

Here is an obvious opposition between the “extraordinary” and “ordinary state of things.” Similarly to the fragment on Switzerland, republican freedom is referred to as extraordinary. This can be understood so that the virtue of selflessness, essential for sustaining this freedom, is given only to people, who, like Erast, were gifted with a particular sensitivity and ability to become inflamed with ideas. Those who prefer monarchy, at the same time prefer calmness and rational calculation of their own profits. This argument is proved in the ending of the novel, where Leonid’s creed is characterized as:

Любимой его мыслию было, что здесь [in this world—V.R.] все для человека, а человек только для самого себя.<sup>15</sup>

Karamzin’s sympathy (or of an implied author of this novel) is, as it seems, on the side of the sensitive hero, despite his tragic end and the fact that he commits numerous mistakes and causes a lot of trouble to the surrounding people.

Равнодушные люди бывают во всем благоразумнее, живут смиреннее в свете, менее делают бед и реже расстроивают гармонию общества; но одни чувствительные приносят великие жертвы добродетели, удивляют свет великими делами... они-то блистают талантами воображения и творческого ума: поэзия и красноречие есть дарование их.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Karamzin, *Sochineniia v 2-kh tomakh*, vol. 1, 610.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 620.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 609.

Accordingly, there are two major types of people, and their fate is different in peaceful times and in the periods of extraordinary events. In peaceful times such people like Leonid succeed—in the novel he makes a successful career and becomes a famous state official owing to his special virtues, including the ability to attend upon the authorities. This is why he tries to teach his friend:

Никакие таланты не возвысят человека в государстве без угождения людям; если не хочешь служить им, то они не дадут тебе способа служить и самому отечеству.<sup>17</sup>

Erast with all his talents wanted to serve the state, rather than the grandee, who was his patron. No wonder that his career ended soon—moreover, he was not capable of assiduous and patient work from day to day.

So, “sensible” people appear, according to Karamzin, incapable of satisfying their ambitions and inevitably lose in peaceful times.

But in extraordinary circumstances, in times of “state troubles,” it is exactly they that are needed, as they are capable of great sacrifice in cases when their “calm” fellows would only try to preserve themselves and avoid suffering.

Their problem was that all their passion and ability for self-sacrifice in peaceful, calm times are spent for love adventures or searches of literary fame—but here they have to face with intrigues of envious untalented people. The latter are taken too hard due to the sensitive nature of such literary men.<sup>18</sup> So, Karamzin provides an almost ready image of a “needless man,” so popular in the following Russian literature of the nineteenth century.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 611.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 616.

The difference of Karamzin from later romantic authors was not only that he did not idealize his Erast and tried to keep a balance, arguing that these two characters mutually complement and balance each other. Thus, the “monarchic” principle of sensibility should counterbalance the “republican” ardor of imagination.

And to prevent the “sensitive” from “disturbing the harmony of society” in peaceful times<sup>19</sup> Karamzin finds an outlet for their emotions, trying to direct the energy of their feelings to “patriotism” or “people’s pride.” Here is the following logic: the emotional disturbance about internal unsettlements of one’s state is dangerous, since it may aggravate the already tense relations between different social groups (the rich and the poor, for example). Conversely, strained feelings over Russia’s place in the world, its weakness and greatness regarding other countries and peoples, are much safe, since they unite the nation, and provide a common aim to all its disconnected parts. Such a diversion of attention from internal problems to competition with foreigners develops in Karamzin’s writings into an entire program of patriotic education of the growing generation, based on the cultivation of a special “sensitivity” through rendering of the heroic past. In the article “O sluchaiakh i kharakterakh v rossiiskoi istorii, kotorye mogut byt’ predmetom khudozhestv” (“On cases and characters in Russian history, which may be a subject of arts”) suggesting putting a monument to Minin in Nizhny Novgorod, Karamzin wrote:

Мысль, что в русском отдаленном от столицы городе дети граждан будут собираться вокруг монумента славы, читать надписи и говорить о делах предков, радует мое сердце. Мне кажется, что я вижу, как народная гордость и славолюбие возрастают в России с новыми поколениями!.. А те холодные люди, которые не верят сильному

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 609.



влиянию *изящного* на образование душ и смеются (как они говорят) над *романическим патриотизмом*, достойны ли ответа? Не от них отечество ожидает великого и славного; не они рождены сделать нам имя русское еще любезнее и дороже.<sup>20</sup>

So, the “sensitive” should direct their feelings to the “love of fatherland,” which, for Karamzin, actually makes them “citizens.” Political participation, inherent to republicanism, is thus reduced to participation in common cultural work directed to glorification of one’s own country, to win for it a place in the community of civilized peoples—in peaceful competition in the sphere of fine arts.

Повторим истину несомнительную: в девятом-надесять веке один тот народ может быть великим и почтенным, который благородными искусствами, литературою и науками способствует успехам человечества в его славном течении к цели нравственного и душевного совершенства!<sup>21</sup>

As a tribute to Karamzin it must be pointed out that, unlike later nationalists, he does not think that the aim of cultural efforts of Russia’s citizens should become the creation of a special civilization, which by its values would be completely different from the European one. Russia’s task, according to Karamzin, was to make its contribution toward the common perfection of humanity. But even in this way of posing an aim, the question of the best form of government, of perfection of the political institutions inside the country, appears to be irrelevant. Any regime, including monarchy, even despotism, where the citizens do not take any part in governing, would be good, if only it facilitates the “greatness of Russia” as compared to other cultural countries.

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<sup>20</sup> Karamzin, *Sochineniia v 2-kh tomakh*, vol. 2, 162.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

The only question is, whether the autocratic rule in the form of a bureaucratic empire, which it took in the reign of Alexander I, can really promote such cultural greatness? Can the sciences and arts flourish in the country, in which “Везде грабят, и кто наказан?”<sup>22</sup>

### **A Ruler, a Poet, and “Common Opinion”: “Society” as a Rhetorical Construction**

The zealous patriotism of Karamzin’s published writings from the beginning of the 1800s is in a sharp contrast with his accusatory tone in *O drevnei i novoi Rossii v ee politicheskom i grazhdanskom otnosheniiakh* (*Memoir on Ancient and Modern Russia*) (1811), addressed personally to the tsar. Nevertheless, in this *Memoir* Karamzin expresses certain optimism. In his opinion, the follies committed by state officials cannot undermine the forces of Russia completely. In this respect Karamzin differs from Shcherbatov, who thought that the corruption of morals might lead to a complete “breakdown of the state.” Here is the conclusion of the denunciatory part of Karamzin’s pamphlet:

Мы означили главные действия нынешнего правительства и неудачу их. Если прибавим сюда частные ошибки министров в мерах государственного блага... имевшие столь много вредных следствий, – всеобщее бесстрашие, основанное на мнении о кротости государя, равнодушие местных начальников ко всяким злоупотреблениям, грабеж

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<sup>22</sup> Karamzin, *O drevnei i novoi Rossii*, 429. English translation can be found in: Richard Pipes, *Karamzin’s Memoir on Ancient and Modern Russia: A Translation and Analysis* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 196.

в судах, наглое взяточничество капитан-исправников, председателей палатских, вице-губернаторов, а всего более самих губернаторов; наконец, беспокойные виды будущего, внешние опасности, – то удивительно ли, что общее мнение столь неблагоприятствует правительству? Не будем скрывать зла, не будем обманывать себя и государя... сии жалобы разительны их согласиём и действием на расположение умов в целом государстве.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, in Russia there is a weak, corrupted state, unable to control its agents, who make their profits without fear, hence the execution of state functions suffers. Such a state is unable to provide the security of estates (possessions) and frequently the honor and life of citizens. In many respects, diagnoses coincide with Shcherbatov's criticism, with the only difference that Shcherbatov did not refer to the "common opinion," but expressed his own.

But all this, according to Karamzin, though deplorable, will not lead to a final catastrophe.

Я совсем не меланхолик и не думаю подобно тем, которые, видя слабость правительства, ждут скорого разрушения; нет, государства живущи, и в особенности Россия, движима самодержавною властью. Если не придут к нам беды извне, то еще смело можем, и долгое время, заблуждаться в нашей внутренней государственной системе; вижу еще обширное поле для всяких новых творений самолюбивого, неопытного ума, – но не печальна ли сия возможность? Надобно ли изнурять силы для того, что их еще довольно в запасе? Самым худым медикам нелегко уморить человека крепкого сложения; только всякое лекарство, данное некстати, делает вред существенный и сокращает жизнь.<sup>24</sup>

Karamzin compares governmental reformers with unskillful doctors, who bring harm to the patient instead of curing a disease. But this comparison implies that the state, incompetent and weak, appears as something exterior to society, which is healthy on its own. At this point there is an essential difference between Karamzin and

<sup>23</sup> Karamzin, *O drevnei i novoi Rossii*, 426–427; see also: Pipes, *Karamzin's Memoir*, 193–194.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 427.

Shcherbatov. The latter considered state and society as identical, and therefore the collapse of state, for him, signified the end of everything. For Karamzin, even after the destruction of state, the society is able to survive on its own. This is exactly why the question of the republican form of government appears in his political world vision to be left aside: after all, republic is also one of the forms of state. Karamzin suggests a parallel existence of state and society, each of which has its internal autonomous logic, and the weakness of the former, though a deplorable one, does not necessarily mean the destruction of the latter, yet it may be harmful to it.

What does Karamzin consider as a protection force for this social organism, tightening its connections, if the question of state structure appears nonessential?

The easiest answer is that Karamzin believed in the existence of “honest people” in Russia, who, if they only would be appointed to state positions, everything would turn out well. So, it is not a problem of wrong institutions, but of wrong people. How would one find these honest people?

The novel *Rytsar' nashego vremeni* (“The knight of our time”), mainly based on Karamzin’s childhood memories, portrays a society of provincial nobility. The image of the latter is naturally idealized, which is quite understandable for such remembrances. Below is the “contract of a society of brotherhood” introduced by Karamzin:

Мы, нижеподписавшиеся, клянемся честью благородных людей жить и умереть братьями, стоять друг за друга горою во всяком случае, не жалеть ни трудов, ни денег для услуг взаимных, поступать всегда единодушно, наблюдать общую пользу дворянства, вступаться за притесненных... не бояться ни знатных, ни сильных, а только бога и

государя; смело говорить правду губернаторам и воеводам; никогда не быть их прихлебателями и не такать против совести.<sup>25</sup>

Here is what Shcherbatov called “firmness,” yet it is supported not just by the internal stoic mood of the heroic individual, but by the mutual solidarity of the lesser nobility. And rather than against the state ruler and his confidants, this firmness is directed against the representatives of the authority in the province—the monarch is far away, which allows sustaining the belief that he is generally on the side of the offended against the strong offenders, although he cannot help immediately.

As refers to the internal motivation of such resistance to unfair actions of the people invested with power, its source, according to Karamzin, is noble pride.

Добрые люди! Мир вашему праху! Пусть другие называют вас дикарями: Леон в детстве слушал с удовольствием вашу беседу словоохотливую, от вас заимствовал русское дружелюбие, от вас набрался духу русского и благородной дворянской гордости, которой он после не находил даже и в знатных боярах: ибо спесь и высокомерие не заменяют ее; ибо гордость дворянская есть чувство своего достоинства, которое удаляет человека от подлости и дел презрительных.<sup>26</sup>

Here is the Russian version of representing the “noble savage”—these are provincial nobles of old times. They are opposed to court grandees, these arrogant men-servants. “Чувство своего достоинства” appears to be closely connected with a certain type of society, based on “brotherhood” and mutual solidarity, i.e., not just on commonality of interests, but also on a certain type of affective ties, on friendship of nationals of equal status, creating a kind of a family bond (the members of society were invited on the christening of Leon, the hero of the novel, and established their union there).

<sup>25</sup> Karamzin, *Sochineniia v 2-kh tomakh*, vol. 1, 597.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 598.

Of course, this is the next piece of idealization: the notion of what “must be” referred to old times, the time of the author’s childhood. But instead of illusion, here we rather deal with the author’s conscious strategy. In the guise of a story about the past, he suggests a plan of action.

This plan may be perceived as a peculiar answer to Shcherbatov’s lamentations on the disentanglement of social ties as a consequence of the “corruption of morals,” which is the result of a sharpened sense of “self.” A medicine for this disease, suggested by Karamzin, lies outside the sphere of politics. It is a cultivation of “sensitivity” by the patterns of behavior, suggested by belles-lettres, including patriotic sensitivity, for which Karamzin’s *Istoriia* is the best. The suggested patterns of behavior include ones such as the feat of the “common” defenders of Troitse-Sergievo monastery during the Time of Troubles:

В общем падении духа увидим доблесть некоторых, и в ней причину государственного спасения: казня Россию, Всевышний не хотел ее гибели и для того еще оставил ей таких граждан. Не устраним подробностей в описании дел славных, совершенных хотя и в пределах смиренной обители, людьми простыми, низкими званием, высокими единственно душою.<sup>27</sup>

Thus, gentleness, for Karamzin, is defined not by noble origin, but by a state of the soul. And the latter depends on “sensibility,” i.e., the ability of the soul to become enflamed and to act not only for the sake of one’s own interests, but also for the interests of one’s neighbor and other lofty ideas. To promote the cultivation of such sensitivity only literature could be helpful—hence the elevated notion on the role of the poet in the society. It is his activity that facilitates strengthening of social ties—the

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<sup>27</sup> Nikolai Karamzin, *Istoriia gosudarstva Rossiiskago*, vol. 12 (St. Petersburg, 1829), 99.

readers become like-minded. Karamzin in the article “O knizhnoi torgovle i liubvi k chteniiu v Rossii” (“On book trading and love for reading in Russia”) argues against even those who consider the reading of novels to be a source of depravity.

Напрасно думают, что романы могут быть вредны для сердца: все они представляют обыкновенно славу добродетели или нравоучительное следствие... Какие романы более всех нравятся? Обыкновенно чувствительные: слезы, проливаемые читателями, текут всегда от любви к добру и питают ее. Нет, нет! Дурные люди и романов не читают... Гнусный корыстолюбец, эгоист найдет ли себя в прелестном романическом герое? А что ему нужды до других?.. Без сомнения, не романические сердца причиною того зла в свете, на которое везде слышим жалобы, но грубые и холодные, то есть совсем им противоположные! Романическое сердце огорчает себя более, нежели других; но зато оно любит свои огорчения и не отдаст их за самые удовольствия эгоистов.

Одним словом, хорошо, что наша публика и романы читает!<sup>28</sup>

Thus, Karamzin’s program on healing Russia’s internal troubles is the reeducation of readers in a spirit of new morality through sentimental literature (sentimental not only in a habitual sense of idyllic sympathy, but also through pathos of patriotic feeling). The object of such literature is the heart, rather than reason. The latter should only keep this feeling in certain limits, beyond which it becomes destructive for society, but not more. Without feeling the reason is egoistic and deprived of living energy.

From the viewpoint of politics, such a program is, in any case, safe for the authorities. Defending the independence of a non-political public sphere, Karamzin, in the case when authorities appear to be mute to his appeals as a “citizen” (though Alexander listened to his advice, he usually did not follow it),<sup>29</sup> can only recede to the

<sup>28</sup> Karamzin, *Sochineniia v 2-kh tomakh*, vol. 2, 119–120.

<sup>29</sup> Karamzin, *O drevnei i novoi Rossii*, 440.

sphere of private life, and the enjoyment of his “clear conscience” and poetry, which is a “цветник чувствительных сердец.”<sup>30</sup> The “contempt to present liberalists”<sup>31</sup> turns into weakness at the face of despotism and its actual justification, no matter how Karamzin refuted the reproaches of Pushkin.

However, from a literary point of view, and particularly in the understanding of the psychology of characters, Karamzin makes a considerable step forward compared to Shcherbatov. He is looking for an internal connection of motives in a place where Shcherbatov suggests only a contrasting and static enumeration of positive and negative traits of a historic figure. I will expose more details in the analysis and comparison of the two *Istoriia* presently, but for now I will briefly locate the place of this literary phenomenon regarding the sentimentalist way of thinking.

In his apology of novels, and reading in general for the Russian public, Karamzin brings to the fore the opinion of moralists (the adversaries of novels), indicating their harmful influence and responds to this reproach in the following way:

Правда, что некоторые характеры в них [in novels—V.R.] бывают вместе и приманчивы и порочны; но чем же они приманчивы? некоторыми добрыми свойствами, которыми автор закрасил их черноту: следственно, добро и в самом зле торжествует. Нравственная природа наша такова, что не угодишь сердцу изображением дурных людей и не сделаешь их никогда его любимцами.<sup>32</sup>

Justifying himself in such a way, Karamzin makes an experiment in portraying the “negative hero” with his own subjective viewpoint. This makes his novel *Moia ispoved'* (“My confession”) innovative—its hero in many respects reminds us of later

<sup>30</sup> Nikolai Karamzin, “Protei ili nesoglasiiia stikhotvortsia,” in Nikolai Karamzin and Ivan Dmitriev, *Izbrannye stikhotvoreniia* (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', 1953), 219.

<sup>31</sup> Karamzin, *O drevnei i novoi Rossii*, 439.

<sup>32</sup> Karamzin, *Sochineniia v 2-kh tomakh*, vol. 2, 119–120.



heroes in Dostoevsky's works, particularly the hero of *Krotkaia* ("The meek"), Stavrogin from *Besy* ("Demons"), or Ivan Karamazov.<sup>33</sup> Here is an effect of a paradoxical device—accepted into a world of inner feelings of the hero, the reader, acting in accordance with usual literary expectations of such a genre, unintentionally filled with sympathy towards the character—and, at the same time, understands, though not from the very beginning, that this person constantly commits immoral acts. This creates a peculiar stereoscopy of vision, a reader has to refrain from plain moralization as sentimentalist compassion, a principle of "sympathy," presupposes, so that he partially sees himself in the depicted hero.

But a similar principle may be applied to the portrayal of a tyrant, or, at least, an ambivalent ruler such as Boris Godunov. Karamzin does not just praise him as a ruler, nor reproach him as a tyrant and the murderer of a child—he makes the reader come into the world of his inner motives, and though the verdict of the contemporaries is not disputed, it is at least posed as a question. The pain of conscience and deathbed remorse all makes Karamzin's image of Boris into something more interesting than a canonic depiction of a tyrant. Therefore the depiction of his death acquires dramatization, recalling the best scenes of Shakespeare.

Thus, owing to the "subjectivism" of literary devices of sentimentalism Karamzin manages to produce a deeper psychological analysis of tradition, having shown his nature from inside, from the standpoint of the tyrant. And, at the same time, the author keeps an intentional distance, his own estimation, allowing the reader to

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<sup>33</sup> The complexity of "My confession" was emphasized in: Boris Eikhenbaum, "Karamzin," in *O proze. O poezii* (Leningrad: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1986), 24–25.

understand, that the depicted person is a villain, a tyrant, rather than an ideal “good monarch.”

## ***§2.2 Karamzin's Interpretation of Tyranny and Good Rule:***

### ***The Reception of Machiavelli's Ideas and Parallels with Bolingbroke***

The depiction of the tyranny of Grozny (Ivan the Terrible) posed a theoretical challenge for Karamzin's idea of the benefit of autocracy for Russia. If the autocracy is understood as unrestricted by any laws and institutions, the only thing that can prevent the ruler from becoming a tyrant is his own good intentions. In accordance with Karamzin it is beneficial for the monarch to be virtuous. It is in his own interests, because the virtue brings him the love of subjects and posthumous glory. However, the deviation from this virtue is possible, in the case of a kind of "disturbance of reason" of the ruler, who affected by passions, does not see his benefits. What, in accordance with Karamzin, should be the reaction of society, if the legal resistance appears to be impossible because of the very nature of autocracy?

Let us consider this problem in detail. This is how Karamzin substantiates the theoretical proposition, that it is beneficial for the monarch to be benevolent for his subjects.

В самом деле, могут ли государи хотеть народного утеснения? По крайней мере, сии примеры редки в истории. Все склоняет их к правосудию и милости: собственная польза, слава и счастье. Личное благо людей, самых знатнейших в государстве, может быть противно общему, только один человек никогда не бывает в таком опасном искушении добродетели – и сей человек есть монарх самодержавный.<sup>34</sup>

Karamzin describes the monarch as a person, who is in the center of a kind of force field of private interests, in the point of equilibrium. Anyone, who is not in the

<sup>34</sup> Karamzin, "O moskovskom miatezhe v tsarstvovanie Alexeia Mikhailovicha," in *O drevnei i novoi Rossii*, 273.

center, yet even being close to it, has private interests, opposite to the common good, and it is only for the ruler that private interests coincide with the common interest, as all his private interests, due to his special position, are balanced for him. Karamzin refutes the opposite doctrine, according to which a monarch could have special private interests that contradict the interests of the state, as if it contained a logical opposition.

But here is implied such an understanding of the “private good” (of any person, including the monarch), which refers not to the satisfaction of any wishes, but only those, which are rational and contribute to the well-being of a person in a sense that they allow him to live a prosperous life. The well-being is understood here as an inalienable result of virtue. The pleasures are admitted inasmuch as they do not extend the measure of the useful. The major pleasure is to love and be loved. In other words, he asserts that the rational interest of a monarch is to act virtuously and be loved and respected by his subjects (even after his death—in this sense he speaks of glory, which is significant for further generations as well).

In other words, inasmuch the ruler is acting rationally, as an antique wise man (epicurean, rather than stoic, but the epicurean who prefers spiritual pleasures to sensual, as more useful, as the latter may lead to satiation or suffering because of the loss of health due to their excessiveness). This wise man tries to keep measure in everything, he does not deny sensual pleasures, but to them he prefers his major pleasure—to help those who are close and share their happiness and relief from troubles and sufferings, to feel happiness from their gratitude. Therefore a virtuous monarch would not only be fair, which is indispensable for the good of the state, but

also merciful in those cases, when it is possible, because the mercy to the remorseful bring moral pleasure to himself as well.

Thus, when Karamzin speaks of good and benefit for the ruler himself, he means the rational and virtuous “good of wise men,” rather than irrational “utility” and self-interest, which a passionate man considers in satisfying his unconstrained passions.

But in this case, how does Karamzin substantiate his argument that good monarchs are the regularity and vicious ones are the exclusion, a rare phenomenon, similar to a “sore,” epidemic, which, was regarded by “Russians” in the time of Grozny as God’s punishment for the sins of the people? Karamzin wrote:

Кто верит Провидению, да видит в злом Самодержце бич гнева небесного! Снесем его, как бурю, землетрясение, язву, феномены страшные, но редкие: ибо мы в течение девяти веков имели только двух тиранов [in this fragment Karamzin writes about Paul I, comparing him to Ioann the Terrible—V.R.]: ибо тиранство предполагает необыкновенное ослепление ума в государе, коего действительное счастье неразлучно с народным, с правосудием и любовью к добру.<sup>35</sup>

Indeed, it is rather easy for Karamzin, to show that the tyrant is always unhappy. Here is, for example, Paul I:

...имея, как человек, природную склонность к благотворению, питался желчию зла; ежедневно вымышлял способы устрашать людей и сам всех более страшился; думал соорудить себе неприступный дворец и соорудил гробницу!<sup>36</sup>

A tyrant wanting to rule by the universal horror inevitably loses the love of his subjects, who only wait for his death. Can he in such circumstances not be

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<sup>35</sup> Karamzin, *O drevnei i novoi Rossii*, 397.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 396.

concerned for his life? Can he not be afraid of conspiracies? Thus, in the realm of pervasive fear not only subjects are unhappy, but the tyrant is the most unhappy of all, since he is constantly afraid of the revenge for his evil deeds, and at the same time he has to commit new ones, because of the fear of his potential conspirators.

Россияне смотрели на сего монарха, как на грозный метеор, считая минуты и неизбежно ожидая последней. Она пришла, и весть о том в целом государстве была вестью искупления: в домах, на улицах люди плакали от радости... Кто был несчастливее Павла? Слезы горести лились только в недрах его августейшего семейства; тужили еще некоторые им облагодетельствованные, но какие люди? Их сожаление не менее всеобщей радости должно было оскорбить душу Павлову, если она, по разлучении с телом, озаренная, наконец, светом истины, могла воззреть на землю и на Россию!<sup>37</sup>

The tragedy of the tyrant was also that he had to surround himself by vicious people, because virtuous people did not have enough strength to serve him, as they cannot preserve their virtue being near him. Thus, there are left only those who serve for the sake of their own interest, or who find a distorted pleasure in the suffering of those who are close—the hireling, slaves—but not those, who sincerely love the monarch for the sake of his glory. Thus, Karamzin wrote in the *Mnenie russkogo grazhdanina*:

...мы остыли бы душой к отечеству, видя оно игрищем самовластного произвола; ослабели бы... духом; унизились бы перед другими и перед собою... Вы и тогда имели бы министров, генералов: но они служили бы не отечеству, а единственно своим личным выгодам, как наемники, как истинные рабы...<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 396.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 438.

The ruler cannot be happy for the love of these servants, since not only they deserve the condemnation of their moral qualities, they would betray him in any proper case, if they consider it beneficial for them.

Thus, according to Karamzin, no monarch would deliberately want such a destiny for himself, if only he is not blinded by his passions and cannot accept rational arguments.

Such theory, however, implicitly suggests that the subjects initially love their monarch and are unconditionally loyal to him, and it is only the insane tyrannical behavior of the ruler that can change their attitude toward him. Why, however in the case of Grozny, Karamzin excludes the possibility that, as the tsar assumed himself, his throne was indeed surrounded if not by “traitors,” than at least the people who did not put their personal commitment to the tsar above other interests? In this case the “tyranny” of Grozny would acquire (as in the later interpretation by Sergei Platonov<sup>39</sup>) if not justification, then an explanation of his desire to hold unconditional power. Considering this possibility, one can assume, for example, that Grozny wanted to have servants that would not deliberate whether his orders were reasonable and whether they would be “beneficial for the state,” but would demonstrate unquestionable obedience and would be personally devoted to him, disregarding their kinship ties. Thus, the tsar executed boyars, who did not demonstrate such unconditional devotion. Another explanation of Grozny’s terror was examined by Shcherbatov. He did not believe that all the grandees surrounding the monarch considered him unconditionally the legitimate heir. Kurbskii’s reasoning provided the ground for this. He criticized the

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<sup>39</sup> Sergei Platonov, *Ivan Grozny* (St. Petersburg: Brokgauz-Efron, 1923), 119–130.

second marriage of Vasiliï III, and consequently, called into question the inheritance rights of Ioann, who was an offspring of the second marriage. If Vasiliï III had died childless, the throne would have been inherited by his brothers and their descendants, of whom only an appanage prince Staritskii Vladimir Andreevich was alive. Relying on the materials of the *Tsarstvennaia kniga* (“The book of tsars”), which he published,<sup>40</sup> Shcherbatov described the “mutiny” of boyars at the deathbed of the tsar and their refusal to swear an oath to the heir. Shcherbatov, who dealt with the disordered manuscript, did not manage to comprehend the connection of these events with the forthcoming behavior of Grozny (the dismissing of the members of the “Chosen Council”), though Sergei Platonov did it later.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, he recognized certain logic in the tsar’s actions and even justified some of his executions as state necessity.

Why did Karamzin not follow the same sort of explanation? Why did he not try, as Platonov did later on, to connect the tyrannical actions of the tsar with his concerns for his own power, instead representing Grozny as an exclusive beast, insane monster, and sadist? Why did he assume that “...Иоанн IV, быв до 35-ти лет государем добрым, и по какому-то адскому вдохновению возлюбив кровь, лил оную без вины и сек головы людей, славнейших добродетелями...”<sup>42</sup> In these lines it is certainly not a question that Ioann “spilt blood” (it is proved by all sources), and that he liked evil for the sake of evil. He spilt the blood of the innocent for the

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<sup>40</sup> *Tsarstvennaia kniga, to est’ letopisets tsarstvovaniia tsaria Ioanna Vasilievicha ot 7042 godu do 7061* (St. Petersburg: Imperatorskaia Akademiia Nauk, 1769).

<sup>41</sup> Platonov, *Ivan Grozny*, 94–97.

<sup>42</sup> Karamzin, *O drevnei i novoi Rossii*, 383.



sake of his own satisfaction (“возлюбив кровь”), becoming a weapon of hell (“по какому-то адскому вдохновению”).

Instead of taking this description of the “insane” tsar separately from its context, we should consider it in light of the logic of conclusions, which Karamzin demonstrated in his *Memoir on Ancient and Modern Russia*, where this expression is taken from.

In the historical part of the *Memoir* the rise of Rus’ after the liberation from the yoke of Mongols is described, and Karamzin begins to depict a kind of apotheosis of a new statehood, which would rest on unconditional subjection to a single ruler:

Внутри самодержавие укоренилось... Народ, избавленный князьями московскими, от бедствий внутреннего междоусобия и внешнего ига, не жалел о своих древних вечах и сановниках, которые умеряли власть государеву; довольный действием, не спорил о правах. Одни бояре, столь некогда величавые в удельных господствах, роптали на строгость самодержавия; но бегство или казнь их свидетельствовали твердость оногo.<sup>43</sup>

The opposition of two social groups is important here, their sentiment, according to Karamzin, is different. The “people,” who praise mostly internal peace (“избавленный... от бедствий внутреннего междоусобия”) and safety from external enemies, are content with the autocracy as it allows them to be engage with their own matters. The people are politically passive (“не спорил о правах”), while the benevolent, although despotic power provides each with well-being (“довольный действием”). The “boyars” demonstrate quite a different sentiment. They complain, but they have to obey, as an alternative is execution or escape abroad (to Lithuania). The expression “царь сделался... земным богом” certainly refers to the people,

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 383.

rather than boyars, who could still perceive him as “Muscovite prince” (as Kurbskii refers to him in his novel). For the people, who saw the tsar seldom, such “deification” would certainly be natural, although Karamzin obviously dramatizes the situation, identifying the attitude of orthodox subjects to the Russian tsar with the attitude of faithful Muslims to their theocratic ruler, caliph. This expression could be considered as hyperbola, if it was not integrated into the logic of his following reasoning.

Тщетно Иоанн... возлюбив кровь, лил оную без вины и сек головы людей, славнейших добродетелями; бояре и народ, в глубине души своей не дерзая что-либо замыслить против венценосца, только смиренно молили Господа: да смягчит ярость цареву, сию казнь за грехи их!.. все люди, знаменитые богатством или саном, ежедневно готовились к смерти и не предпринимали ничего для спасения жизни своей. Время и расположение умов достопамятное! Нигде и никогда грозное самовластие не предлагало столь жестоких искушений для народной добродетели, для верности или повиновения; но сия добродетель даже не усумнилась в выборе между гибелью и сопротивлением.<sup>44</sup>

Here Karamzin dramatizes the situation, intentionally strengthens and hyperbolizes his main thesis, although some details, if not known to the reader, then certainly to Karamzin himself, are driven into the background. How can one write that the boyars “не предпринимали ничего для спасения жизни своей”? As we know, Kurbskii did escape. Moreover, he exposed Ioann, reminding us of his not quite legitimate origin from his father’s second marriage, while the previous wife was alive. There were other attempts to escape, which Karamzin describes in his *Istoriia*. Did not Karamzin himself mention the discontent among the boyars, stifled by fear? It could not disappear through one or two generations, especially under a tyrannical rule. It seems that for Karamzin it was important to emphasize the unconditional obedience of

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

the people and even grantees to their ruler, loyalty even in the circumstances when death seems unavoidable, when common sense seemingly pushes the search for salvation, if not in resistance, then at least in escape. In this case, the depiction of Grozny as “devil incarnate” appears more comprehensive. This is just a backside of the same dramatization of absolute righteousness. Martyrdom for the sake of loyalty to a monarch is opposed to absolute infernal malice, its senselessness is precisely that it attacks those who not only refuse to resist, but even voluntary undergo suffering. The religious parallel here becomes more obvious: the Russians, the people, and grantees are likened to Christian martyrs, whereas Grozny is equated with pagan emperors, who tormented them urging to repudiate Christ. In this case, the actions of “selfish rule” (*samovlastie*) are represented as “temptation,” which consists of renouncing the principle of autocratic power. The feat of those Russians was that they did not renounce this principle despite all excesses of the “insane tyrant.” Thus, it was important to represent Grozny as a madman in order to emphasize the greatness of this feat, its similarity to a voluntary martyrdom of ancient Christians.

The paradox here is that by taking this viewpoint, Karamzin accepts the argumentation of Grozny himself, whom he declares insane. In the first response letter to Kurbskii (the first letter of Kurbskii is quoted by Karamzin in the *Istoriia*, as well as Grozny’s first reply<sup>45</sup>, hence Karamzin was familiar with the following text), Grozny wrote:

Если же ты, по твоим словам, праведен и благочестив, то почему испугался безвинно погибнуть, ибо это не смерть, а дар благой?.. Если

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<sup>45</sup> Nikolai Karamzin, *Istoriia gosudarstva Rossiiskago*, vol. 9 (St. Petersburg, 1821), 62–67.

же ты убоялся смертного приговора по навету... то это и есть явный ваш изменнический умысел... Почему же ты презрел слова апостола Павла, который сказал: «...нет власти кроме как от бога: тот, кто противится власти – противится божьему повелению». Посмотри на это и вдумайся: кто противится власти – противится богу; а кто противится богу – тот именуется отступником, а это наихудшее из согрешений... Тот же апостол Павел сказал... «Рабы, слушайте своих господ, работая на них не только на глазах, как человекоугодники, но как слуги бога, повинуйтесь не только добрым, но и злым, не только за страх, но и за совесть». На это уж воля господня, если придется пострадать, творя добро. Если же ты праведен и благочестив, почему не пожелал от меня, строптивного владыки, пострадать и заслужить венец вечной жизни?<sup>46</sup>

Here Grozny accuses Kurbskii precisely for his refusal to suffer innocently (“от меня, строптивного владыки” as Grozny wrote with an evil irony). Kurbskii’s behavior is opposed to the behavior of loyal slaves, mentioned by the Apostle Paul. The latter had to obey with total dedication even evil rulers, because they should be perceived as instruments of God’s will.

This is reminiscent of Karamzin’s image of the “Russians” of the time of Ivan the Terrible. They allegedly perceived the tsar precisely in this way, as an instrument in the hands of God, and did not dare to resist him but chose martyrdom, exactly as Grozny recommended, ironically, to his polemical opponent. But this was the viewpoint of Grozny—while Karamzin ascribes such attitude to the “people,” and moreover he does not substantiate this attitude by religious ideas, but rather claims that the “Russians” were loyal to “autocracy” as a principle.

One of the possible explanations seemingly consists in that in this particular place Karamzin wanted to give a historical lesson to his contemporaries, to present their ancestors of the time of Ivan the Terrible as a positive example. The latter had to be portrayed as heroes of virtue: loyalty to autocracy, despite all the temptations,

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<sup>46</sup> *Perepiska Ivana Groznogo s Andreem Kurbskim* (Moscow: Nauka, 1993), 124.

created by “insanity” of the ruler. Such a historical substantiation of the political principle found its supplement in the Karamzin’s maxim regarding the conspiracy, which resulted in the death of Paul I.

К чести благоразумнейших россиян, не умолчим об их суждении. Сведав дело, они жалели, что зло вредного царствования пресечено способом вредным. Заговоры суть бедствия, колеблют основу государств и служат опасным примером для будущности. Если некоторые вельможи, генералы, телохранители присвоят себе власть тайно губить монархов или сменять их, то что будет самодержавие? Игралищем олигархии, и должно скоро обратиться в безначалие, которое ужаснее самого злейшего властителя, подвергая опасности всех граждан, а тиран казнит только некоторых. Мудрость веков и право народное утвердили сие правило для монархий, что закон должен располагать трон, а Бог одну жизнь царей! Кто верит Провидению, да видит в злом самодержце бич гнева Небесного! Снесем его как бурю, землетрясение, язву; феномены страшные, но редкие...<sup>47</sup>

Thus, Karamzin’s argumentation is confined to the idea that autocracy as a form of government requires the support of the people, a conscious loyalty, which is exactly what he calls upon in his contemporaries. By analogy with their ancestors they have to prefer this loyalty even at the expense of their own well-being and life, in the case of an evil monarch. Otherwise, in the case of an absence of such loyalty and the acceptance of such conspiracies as a way to get rid of tyrants, the throne would inevitably become a toy of oligarchs, who would overthrow and appoint monarchs by their arbitrary will. As a consequence there would emerge cleavages between oligarchs, struggle for power, and all this would lead to total anarchy and war of all against all. Thus a conditional loyalty, presupposing subjection only in the case that a monarch is not a tyrant, should give way to a unconditional loyalty; that is, such a monopoly of the ruler’s power, in which any resistance to him, even for the sake of

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<sup>47</sup> Karamzin, *O drevnei i novoi Rossii*, 396.

one's own life, should be condemned as hostile to the benefit of state, requiring an unrestricted rule.

A theoretical problem which Karamzin comes across here is that such a demand of loyalty, even under the threat of death, contradicts the doctrine of natural law, which Karamzin refers to in a preceding abstract. He says that Russians, owing to the reign of Catherine

...знали, что государь не менее подданных должен исполнять свои святые обязанности, коих нарушение уничтожает древний завет власти с повиновением и низвергает народ с степени гражданственности в хаос частного естественного права.<sup>48</sup>

In other words, if the government threatens the safety of subjects, a social contract would not stand and each person has the right to protect himself in accordance with “частное естественное право,” as in the case of war, where all are against all.

One may deny such a doctrine only on the condition that one would assume (that it is possible to attribute to the Russians of the period of Ivan the Terrible) that the benefits of this life are nothing compared to the blessing of eternal life, and therefore, for the sake of loyalty to God it would be possible to sacrifice oneself even to a tyrant, remaining faithful until death. However, Karamzin reflects upon another issue, namely a theoretical principle of the benevolence of autocracy. Is it possible to call upon someone to sacrifice one's life for the sake of this principle, and why would such an appeal be convincing for those who are aware of the principle of natural law, which allows everyone to protect themselves, if they are not protected by the law?

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 395.

It is possible to answer this question only if we would take into consideration polyphony in Karamzin's text. The opinion of "reasonable citizens" is present, but only as one of many possible voices alongside the voices of the advocates of natural law, ancient Russians, and religious martyrs of obedience. There is, however, another voice which is important. We do not see it openly in the text, as one may assume, but it is present in the hidden references, and Karamzin enters into a latent controversy with this point of view.

Let me now turn to theoretical sources of Karamzin's ideas. And let me demonstrate that the hidden voice, to which I refer above, is the voice of Machiavelli.

Karamzin repeatedly proclaims that a monarch's good, rightly understood, coincides with the good of society, as opposed to the benefit of any other person for whom it is allowed to distinguish private interests and the "common good" of everybody. The persistence in proclaiming this assertion brings us to the idea that Karamzin carries on implicit polemics with an "invisible" opponent, whose views he refuses to formulate by his own considerations. Moreover, the opponent seems to deny the validity of Karamzin's key assertion. That is why the latter has to formulate again and again his major postulate, changing its rhetorical form in order to convince the readers of the righteousness of his case and prove that his opponent is wrong.

From this perspective it is not hard to understand, which theory Karamzin wanted to refute. It is the notion, according to which, the interests of a political community and the ruler (this may be a hereditary monarch, but not necessarily) may be opposite and a constant struggle takes place between them. The essence of this struggle is that the ruler, being initially a magistrate, that is a person elected to hold a

certain social position, tries to usurp inalienable rights, belonging only to a political community as a whole (the totality of these rights is denoted by an abstract concept of sovereignty). A political community, in its turn, tries to defend its sovereignty, reminding the ruler by all possible means—from public critique to direct revolution—that he is only a person authorized for carrying out certain functions, and therefore he is responsible for those who had elected him and may be displaced in the case that the political community is not satisfied with his way of fulfilling these functions. From this rendering, it is not difficult to recognize the conception of the *Social Contract* by Rousseau, of which Karamzin—a reader and admirer of Rousseau—could not be unaware.

The polemics with this theory would not be a problem for Karamzin, if he, similarly to his contemporaries Joseph de Maistre and Louis-Gabriel-Ambroise de Bonald and their Russian adherents (for example, Mikhail Magnitskii), supported the conception of the divine right of monarchy. In this case the monarch is understood as responsible for his actions to God and no one else. He does not have any responsibility to society and, in general, speaking with Grozny's words, “А жаловать своих холопов мы всегда были вольны, вольны были и казнить.”<sup>49</sup>

But the difficulty for Karamzin was that his own political doctrine to a large degree resembled the model of Rousseau, at least in some respects. In any case, Karamzin, speaking of “holy duties of a monarch” did not mean an abstract responsibility of a monarch to God, but rather a need for a ruler to listen to the voice of public opinion (this is what he insists on in the *Mnenie russkogo grazhdanina*). His

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<sup>49</sup> *Perepiska Ivana Groznogo s Andreem Kurbskim*, 136.



assertion that “violating these holy duties” may break the “ancient covenant of power with obedience” (reminding us of the statement of that ruler’s violation of his obligations imposed on him by the political community) gives the latter the right to get rid of an improper monarch, who tries to usurp power and to regain the sovereign right of self-government.

At the same time it is possible to say that contrary to Rousseau, Karamzin, familiar with the events of the French revolution, was afraid of revolutionary “chaos” and terror and tried by all means to avoid such a development, appealing to the rulers for prudence. The latter, relying on the opinion of the “reasonable” part of society and rejecting tyranny, would have to behave as benevolent “fathers” of their peoples, that is, to perceive the good of the people as their own good. But in this case, the postulate that the “true good” of a monarch and the “common good” of his subjects are identical, is nothing more than a desire, presented in the form of a statement, ascertaining a possible (but not quite obligatory, and, in accordance with Rousseau, even unlikely) state of affairs.

One of impediments to accomplishing the “social consent” which Karamzin was longing for turned out to be the distrust of monarchs to “public opinion.” The representatives of European dynasties could be quite right, supposing that any expression of public opinion, even innocent on the surface, could lead in the long run to revolution. Therefore a ruler should do everything possible to ensure that subjects would say publicly only what is prescribed from above, or would be silent. In other words, any expression of “public opinion” should be allowed only to spokesmen authorized by the government.

In the *Zapiska o moskovskikh dostopamiatnostiakh* (“Note on Moscow points of memorability”) written for the empress Mariia Fedorovna, Karamzin explicitly tries to dispel such misgivings, representing the opinions, expressed in the Moscow English Club as “все в пользу самодержавия.”<sup>50</sup>

Describing the period of Ivan the Terrible in his *Istoriia*, Karamzin uses his image of “Russians” (*rossiian*) as martyrs of the idea of unconditional obedience to a monarch exactly for the same rhetorical purpose.

At the same time, although the disagreements of “public opinion” with the convictions of a monarch were possible, as the *Mnenie russkogo grazhdanina* demonstrates, the greatest sanction that threatened a monarch in the case of his violating the will of the “Russians,” was that he could be loved less. This threat is not very serious, at first glance, especially since Karamzin calmed down immediately after his first outburst and spoke very little, suggesting that internal freedom was more precious to him than the mercy of the monarch. Such a divergence of opinion between the monarch and his subject (although claiming to be a spokesman of the opinion of the many himself) regarding this particular question is certainly far from being a revolution.

However, there is a circumstance that changes the entire issue. As it was mentioned above, the idea that the good of a monarch and the common good may not coincide, or may even contradict each other, has been persistently rejected in the text of the *Istoriia*. There is, however, an evident objection to Karamzin’s view, namely, that one can suppose that a monarch is a usurper or, initially being a legitimate ruler,

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<sup>50</sup> Karamzin, *O drevnei i novoi Rossii*, 369.

becomes a tyrant. In this case one can assume that to stay in power is good for such a monarch, but this is evidently not good for the political community. Karamzin suggests that this assumption is not obviously true. Even such a tyrant, for him, is better than absence of any ruler, as this absence inevitably leads to public disorder.

Therefore, Karamzin's view of tyranny is at variance with that of Rousseau. The latter regards tyranny as a usurpation of power of the "sovereign," i.e., the political community. For Rousseau, therefore, the good for a tyrant contradicts the common good.

The issue is not as simple, however, as it seems to be. It is possible to assume that the monarch does not understand what is actually good for him. Thus, his tyrannical behavior is a result of such a misunderstanding. Despite this, his powerful position is still beneficial for the political community, as he keeps it together and prevents chaos. His former crimes as a usurper and repressions against particular individuals do not abolish this simple fact. At the same time, the political community also can be misled, for example, by factions. Thus, the will of the people, its wish to get rid of such a tyrant, can be a result of delusion. For example, it can be a result of agitation of a faction, which intends to put its own leader on the throne instead of a current tyrant. If one assumes that a political community is corrupted, its members are not virtuous and, therefore, republican rule is impossible, then tyranny is inevitable. Therefore, to get rid of one tyrant means only to put the political community in the condition of a civic war, which could end only when another tyrant would acquire the throne. The history of Ancient Rome after the death of Caesar gives a classic example of such a development.

Therefore, the relationship between Karamzin's and Rousseau's views is not a simple opposition. It is even possible to say, that within the general framework of Rousseau's *Social Contract* Karamzin examines tyranny as the special case wherein the monarch cannot realize his true interest. In this case the political community has a choice—to obey or to resist. The “virtuous” (not in a republican sense) Russians in the time of Grozny, for Karamzin, had enough prudence to keep obedience. The usurpation of the throne by Boris Godunov created another situation.

Let me, however, postpone this issue until we come to the chapters devoted to the analysis of the *Istoriia*, and to focus now on the theoretical sources of Karamzin's position. Rousseau and Karamzin have an interesting common reference in the works of Machiavelli.

Rousseau refers to the Italian thinker in one excerpt which asserts that the will of the people may not coincide with the common will.<sup>51</sup> The precise meaning of Rousseau's statement concerns the division of the people into factions and sects that may be an impediment for the common will to be revealed during voting, contrary to the system, where each citizen expresses his individual opinion. The quotation from the *History of Florence* by Machiavelli is used to prove the idea of the harmful nature of “sects.” It is important here, however, to outline the connection between the ideas of Rousseau and Machiavelli, particularly in regard to republican rule. It is also important to note one essential fact that in the text of the most significant of Karamzin's political works, the *Memoir on Ancient and Modern Russia*, there is only

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<sup>51</sup> J.-J. Russo (Rousseau), *Traktaty*, bk. 2, ch. 3 (Moscow: Nauka, 1969), 171. English trans.: Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract or Principles of Political Right*, trans. G. D. H. Cole (London, 1782), accessed 26 Dec. 2011, [http://www.constitution.org/jjr/socon\\_02.htm#003](http://www.constitution.org/jjr/socon_02.htm#003). Rousseau refers in the note to: Machiavelli, *History of Florence*, bk. 7.

one direct mention of Machiavelli which is not essential, though there are several hidden quotations in the main portion of the *Memoir*, where Karamzin wrote to Alexander I about the reasons of the fall of the “tyrant,” his father, Paul I.

Here is the direct reference to Machiavelli’s *The Prince* in the text of the *Memoir*. It is quoted to demonstrate the conservative outlook of Karamzin, who prefers old institutions to new ones, and where if new institutions are needed, it is better to establish them in a way that the people would not notice the difference.

Все мудрые законодатели, принуждаемые изменять уставы политические, старались как можно менее отходить от старых. «Если число и власть сановников необходимо должны быть переменены, говорит умный Макиавелль, – то удержите хотя имя их для народа». Мы поступаем совсем иначе: оставляя вещь, гоним имена, для произведения того же действия вымышляем другие способы! Зло, к которому мы привыкли, для нас чувствительно менее нового, а новому добру как-то не верится...<sup>52</sup>

Karamzin’s advice, in reference to the Italian thinker, is confined to a rather innocent deception of the people, who are conservative and do not like novelties. Let me note, that the *Memoir* is addressed to the tsar, rather than to the public. In the publication, which would be available to a wider audience, Karamzin would hardly recommend a deception.

Here we can look as well at the hidden quotations from Machiavelli. For convenience, the texts (Karamzin’s Russian text with its English translation) are put together in the following table:

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<sup>52</sup> Karamzin, *O drevnei i novoi Rossii*, 406.

The text of Machiavelli	The text of Karamzin, with translation
the prince must consider ... how to avoid those things which will make him <i>hated or contemptible</i> <sup>53</sup>	Две причины способствуют заговорам: общая <i>ненависть</i> или общее <i>неуважение</i> к властителю. (Two reasons lead to conspiracy: common <i>hatred</i> and common <i>disrespect</i> to a monarch.) <sup>54</sup>
on the side of the conspirator, there is nothing but <i>fear, jealousy</i> , prospect of punishment to terrify him; but on the side of the prince there is the majesty of the principality, the <i>laws</i> , the protection of friends and <i>the state</i> to defend him ... For this reason I consider that a prince ought to reckon conspiracies of little account when <i>his people hold him in esteem</i> ; but when it is hostile to him, and bears hatred towards him, he ought to fear everything and everybody. <sup>55</sup>	Миних, Лесток и другие <i>не рискнули бы</i> на дело, противное совести, чести и всем <i>уставам государственным</i> , если бы сверженные ими властители пользовались <i>уважением и любовью россиян</i> . (Minikh, Lestok and others would not have risked for a cause, which would contradict their conscience, honor and all <i>state regulations</i> , if the displaced rulers had been <i>respected and loved by Russians</i> .) <sup>56</sup>
a prince, so long as he keeps his subjects united and loyal, ought not to mind the reproach of cruelty; because with a few examples he will be more merciful than those who, through too much mercy, allow <i>disorders</i> to arise, from which follow murders or robberies; for these are wont to <i>injure the whole people</i> , whilst those executions which originate with a prince <i>offend the individual only</i> . <sup>57</sup>	... <i>безначалие</i> ... ужаснее самого злейшего правителя, <i>подвергая опасности всех граждан</i> , а тиран казнит <i>только некоторых</i> . ( <i>anarchy</i> ... is more terrible than a most evil monarch, <i>exposing to danger all the citizens</i> , while a tyrant executes <i>only some of them</i> .) <sup>58</sup>

There is another direct reference to Machiavelli:

<sup>53</sup> Mak'iaelli, "Gosudar'," in Mak'iaelli, *Sochineniia istoricheskie i politicheskie. Sochineniia khudozhestvennye. Pis'ma* (Moscow: Pushkinskaia biblioteka, 2004), 109. English translation is taken from: Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, ch. 19, translated by W. K. Marriott (London, 1908), accessed 26 Dec. 2011, <http://www.constitution.org/mac/prince19.htm>.

<sup>54</sup> Karamzin, *O drevnei i novoi Rossii*, 397.

<sup>55</sup> Mak'iaelli, *Sochineniia istoricheskie i politicheskie*, 110–111; Machiavelli, *The Prince*, ch. 19, accessed 26 Dec. 2011, <http://www.constitution.org/mac/prince19.htm>.

<sup>56</sup> Karamzin, *O drevnei i novoi Rossii*, 397.

<sup>57</sup> Mak'iaelli, *Sochineniia istoricheskie i politicheskie*, 105; Machiavelli, *The Prince*, ch. 17, accessed 26 Dec. 2011, <http://www.constitution.org/mac/prince17.htm>.

<sup>58</sup> Karamzin, *O drevnei i novoi Rossii*, 396.

Кто знает человеческое сердце, состав и движение гражданских обществ, тот не усумнится в истине сказанного Макиавеллем, что страх гораздо действительнее, гораздо обыкновеннее всех иных побуждений для смертных... Любить добро для его собственных прелестей есть действие высшей нравственности, явления редкого в мире... Обыкновенно же люди соблюдают правила честности, не столько в надежде приобрести тем особенные некоторые выгоды, сколько опасаясь вреда, сопряженного с явным нарушением правил.<sup>59</sup>

To compare, here is one of the excerpts from *The Prince*:

whether it be better to be loved than feared or feared than loved? It may be answered that one should wish to be both, but, because it is difficult to unite them in one person, is much safer to be feared than loved, when, of the two, either must be dispensed with. Because this is to be asserted in general of men, that they are ungrateful, fickle, false, cowardly, covetous ... men have less scruple in offending one who is beloved than one who is feared, for love is preserved by the link of obligation which, owing to the baseness of men, is broken at every opportunity for their advantage; but fear preserves you by a dread of punishment which never fails.<sup>60</sup>

Such explicit and subtle references to Machiavelli demonstrate that Karamzin, similarly to the Italian thinker, proceeds from peculiar political realism. Contrary to Shcherbatov, who admitted the possibility of the true aristocracy existing (that is, if not the entire society, the majority, then at least the elite could be virtuous), Karamzin does not suppose anything of the kind. In Shcherbatov's terms, the situation, described by Karamzin, could be characterized as follows. The society is irreversibly "corrupted," virtue can be found, but seldom, and a realistic politician cannot rely on virtuous people, organized in any aristocratic corporation. A benevolent ruler can rely only on individual subjects. Therefore, there is nothing left but to set hopes on the coercive force of the state, and this allows controlling those, who put their private benefits over the common good. Only the ruler who uses tyrannical methods, when it

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 429.

<sup>60</sup> Mak'iavelli, *Sochineniia istoricheskie i politicheskie*, 104–105; Machiavelli, *The Prince*, ch. 17, accessed 26 Dec. 2011, <http://www.constitution.org/mac/prince17.htm>.

is necessary, is capable of making the egoistic individuals act in the interest of the political community as a whole. At the same time, following Machiavelli, a monarch should mask his actions in such a way that it would seem as if he is kind and merciful and executes only offenders. In reality he may deal shortly with everyone, even innocent people, who may present any danger to his power. But on the surface, a ruler should as appear to be a model of virtue. Only such behavior, as opposed to an open tyranny, would allow him to win people's favor.

In such a case, one may suppose that the thesis of Karamzin is that the good of a monarch and common good are identical. This thesis, which was proclaimed in the pages of the *Istoriia*, is an expression of the hidden polemics that include the viewpoint of Machiavelli (and Rousseau, who, sharing the idea on tyrannical tendencies of any monarchical power, also proceeded from the idea of a possible opposition between the interests of a ruler and the people).

The polemics here appear to be paradoxical, because Karamzin agrees with Machiavelli in many respects. In particular, he shares the view of the Italian thinker regarding society in general as corrupted and where, consequently, only a strong ruler, who is above particular individuals, "sects," and estate corporations, is capable of reconciling the opposing interests of particular members of society. On these grounds, Karamzin proclaims the thesis that the good of the people and the good of a monarch are identical and, consequently, only a ruler with "an unusual blindness of reason" can oppose his own interests with the common good. In other words, the interest of his position (as a carrier of the specific political function) coincides with the interest of the political community to preserve itself from disintegration. At the same time, a



particular person, who occupies this position, can be in a state of “blindness,” with the idea in mind that his personal interests are not the same as the common good. This resembles Rousseau’s idea, that the general will of the sovereign (the people) is always right and expresses its true interest, although empirically in a particular moment the will of the people can be deluded.

By contrast, for Machiavelli, a ruler’s actual interest consists of the preservation of his power by all means. This is not his “blindness,” as it is for Karamzin, but a real problem he has to deal with. Therefore, a ruler himself appears to be not above the “sects,” he himself is one of the parties fighting for power. He is as corrupted as his subjects, and, therefore, there is nothing, but the concern of his reputation in the eyes of the people, that inspires him to take care of the “common good,” contrary to his own intention to usurp entirely (in Rousseau’s terms) the sovereign power of the people.

The key to Machiavelli’s expression in *The Prince*, supporting such notions of a ruler, concerns the justification of a monarch, who has to commit crimes for the sake of preserving his power.

For this reason a prince ought to take care ... that he may appear to him who sees and hears him altogether merciful, faithful, humane, upright, and religious. There is nothing more necessary to appear to have than this last quality, inasmuch as men judge generally more by the eye than by the hand, because it belongs to everybody to see you, too few to come in touch with you. Everyone sees what you appear to be, few really know what you are, and those few dare not oppose themselves to the opinion of the many, who have the majesty of the state to defend them; and in the actions of all men, and especially of princes, which it is not prudent to challenge, one judges by the result.

For that reason, let a prince have the credit of conquering and holding his state, the means will always be considered honest, and he will be praised by everybody because the vulgar are always taken by what a thing seems to

be and by what comes of it; and in the world there are only the vulgar, for the few find a place there only when the many have no ground to rest on.<sup>61</sup>

Thus, Machiavelli, judging from this quote, treats the people skeptically, even contemptuously. The latter tends to become attracted by apparent success, without asking, by what price it has been accomplished. Certainly, there is a minority, yet no one would listen to it, while the “vulgar” would keep their loyalty to the prince.

On the other hand, such an expression (“in the world there are only the vulgar”) looks more like an emotional exaggeration, rather than a rationally weighted judgment. Moreover, Machiavelli further speaks of “minority” as more perspicacious, than “the vulgar.” There is “no place” for it, but this is not the same as asserting the absence of this minority; it is more likely, that Machiavelli expresses sadness because of the lack of influence of this reasonable part of society in the course of events. But does it always happen exactly in this way?

An excerpt from another of Machiavelli’s treatises, the *Discourses Upon the First Ten Books of Titus Livy*, demonstrates that the Italian thinker does not always have such a misanthropic mood. The choice between the “required tyranny,” described in *The Prince*, and the more free structure of society depends on (quite predictably) a moral condition of this society. If the morals are corrupted, tyranny is inevitable; however, if several preserve virtue, a free republic or at least a kind of a mixed government is possible. However, in order to introduce such a rule after a tyranny, a support of these virtuous few from above is necessary. Is it possible to obtain such a virtuous ruler and to restore a free form of government after the period

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<sup>61</sup> Mak’iavelli, *Sochineniia istoricheskie i politicheskie*, 108; Machiavelli, *The Prince*, ch. 18, accessed 26 Dec. 2011, <http://www.constitution.org/mac/prince18.htm>.

of tyranny? Machiavelli asks a question and gives quite an uncertain answer. The question is formulated as follows:

whether a free State can be maintained in a City that is corrupted, or, if there had not been one, to be able to establish one. On this matter I say that it is very difficult to do either one or the other: and although it is almost impossible to give rules (because it will be necessary to proceed according to the degrees of corruption), none the less, as it is well to discuss everything, I do not want to omit this.<sup>62</sup>

After a chain of arguments, illustrated by the examples from Roman history, which I omit here, Machiavelli comes to the following conclusion:

From all the things written above, arises the difficulty or impossibility of maintaining a Republic in a City that has become corrupted, or to establish it there anew. And even if it should have to be created or maintained, it would be necessary to reduce it more to a Royal State (Monarchy) than to a Popular State (Republic), so that those men who because of their insolence cannot be controlled by laws, should be restrained by a Power almost Regal. And to want to make them become good by other means would be either a most cruel enterprise or entirely impossible...<sup>63</sup>

As it is possible to assume, Karamzin, who was very familiar with Machiavelli's texts and quoted them in his *Memoir* was reasoning in the same way. This can be proved by a number of Karamzin's articles, written in the period from 1802 to 1803 and devoted to the events in France. According to the analysis of Yurii Lotman, the admiration for the "first consul" Bonaparte, which later on gave way to a certain disappointment (he did not prove himself Timoleon, who had restored the order and refused from the power immediately) may clarify Karamzin's understanding

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<sup>62</sup> Mak'iavelli, "Rassuzhdeniia o pervoi decade Tita Livia," in *Sochineniia istoricheskie i politicheskie*, 185; Machiavelli, *Discourses upon the First Ten Books of Titus Livy*, bk. 1, ch. 18, accessed 26 Dec. 2011, <http://www.constitution.org/mac/disclivy1.htm#1:18>.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

of autocracy as strong, unrestricted power, yet relying on popular support.<sup>64</sup> If one would suppose that Karamzin comprehended autocracy by analogy with such a national dictatorship, then “autocracy” for Karamzin would not mean the usurpation of power, but rather an extreme case of governing, based on a “social contract” in Rousseau’s sense, when all might and “terror” of power is concentrated in one man, personifying the “general will” in his actions. Conversely, the distribution of power among a multitude of institutions, in accordance with Montesquieu’s recommendations, would lead to the struggle of these institutions with each other; and in a corrupted state it would become a prologue of revolution and the forthcoming anarchy. Such a benevolent dictatorship is required because the society is in the condition of moral corruption; therefore it is necessary to compensate this corruption somehow. Moreover, it is supposed that the degradation of the society has been not yet developed to such an extent that it would be impossible to restore it. An “autocratic” monarch, in this case, is a savior of the society from its own corruption, relying on a virtuous and reasonable minority. In a corrupted society, where the “vulgar” prevail, there is “no place” for such a virtuous minority, but in the case of “dictatorship” such a “place for virtue” can appear, due to the efforts of a virtuous monarch.

However, one should take into account, that, according to Machiavelli, it is very unlikely for such a “virtuous monarch” to appear. The Italian thinker describes the following dilemma:

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<sup>64</sup> Yuri Lotman, *Sotvorenie Karamzina* (Moscow: Kniga, 1987), 282–287.

because these institutions when they are suddenly discovered no longer to be good have to be changed either completely, or little by little as each (defect) is known, I say that both of these two courses are almost impossible. For in the case of wanting to change little by little a prudent man is required who sees this evil from a distance and at its beginning. It is easily probable that no one such as these springs up in a City: and even if one should spring up he is never able to persuade others of that which he intends; for men living in one manner, do not want to change, and the more so as they do not see the evil face to face, but being shown to them as (mere) conjecture.

As to changing these institutions all at once when everyone recognizes they are not good, I say that the defect which is easily recognized is difficult to correct, for to do this it is not enough to use ordinary means, as ordinary means are bad, but it is necessary to come to the extraordinary, such as violence and arms, and before anything else to become Prince of that City, and to be able to dispose of it as he pleases. And as the re-organization of the political life of a City presupposes a good man, and the becoming of a Prince of a Republic by violence presupposes a bad man; for because of this it will be found that *it rarely happens that a (good) man wants to become Prince through bad means, even though his objectives be good; or that a bad one, having become Prince, wants to work for good* [italics mine—V. R.] and that it should enter his mind to use for good that authority which he had acquired by evil means.<sup>65</sup>

We will see later that here one can find exactly the problem which Karamzin deals with writing on Boris Godunov, who acquired power “though bad means” and in accordance with Karamzin’s view wanted “to work for good.” For Machiavelli it happens “rarely,” but it is nevertheless possible. Once again one can see that Karamzin takes this extreme (for Machiavelli, as earlier for Rousseau) case and tries to explore it more attentively.

It is notable, that the idea of the *Discourses* quoted above provoked comments of a British thinker, Bolingbroke, who had partially followed the same path of reasoning as Karamzin. I do not have direct evidence that Karamzin was familiar with the works of the British thinker (although one cannot exclude such possibility),

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<sup>65</sup> Mak’iavelli, *Sochineniia istoricheskie i politicheskie*, 187–188; Machiavelli, *Discourses*, bk. 1, ch. 18.

therefore rather than a direct reception, one can surely speak only of a resemblance of the logic, caused by some similarity of the problems that both thinkers tried to resolve.

In his *The Idea of a Patriot King* Bolingbroke renders the essence of Machiavelli's reasoning in the following way:

Machiavelli has treated, in the discourses before cited, this question, "whether, when the people are grown corrupt, a free government can be maintained if they enjoy it; or established, if they enjoy it not?" And for the whole matter he concludes for the difficulty, or rather the impossibility, of succeeding in either case ... from thence he concludes, that a free commonwealth can neither be maintained by a corrupt people, nor be established among them. But he adds, that, "if this can possibly be done, it must be done by drawing the constitution to the monarchical form of government" ... "That a corrupt people, whom law cannot correct, may be restrained and corrected by a kingly power." ... aristocratical and democratical powers ... are made up of different parts, and are apt to be disjointed by the shocks to which they are exposed: but a free monarchical government is more compact, because there is a part the more that keeps, like the key-stone of a vault, the whole building together ... A corrupt commonwealth remains without remedy, though all the orders and forms of it subsist: a free monarchical government cannot remain absolutely so, as long as the orders and forms of the constitution subsist. These, alone, are indeed nothing more than the dead letter of freedom, or masks of liberty ... But a king can, easily to himself and without violence to his people, renew the spirit of liberty in their minds, quicken this dead letter, and pull off this mask.<sup>66</sup>

From the skeptical and quite pessimistic reasoning of Machiavelli, the British thinker draws rather optimistic conclusions. At the same time he relies on the notion of the "ancient constitution" of England, which the King-Patriot can revive, having brought into its dead forms the spirit of actual freedom.

It is doubtful, of course, that one can think about any ancient constitution in the case of Russia. Nevertheless, in Karamzin's reasoning there are also present

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<sup>66</sup> Bolingbroke, "Ideia o korole-patriote," in *Pis'ma ob izuchenii i pol'ze istorii* (Moscow: Nauka, 1978), 220–221. The original English text is taken from: *The Works of the Late Right Honourable Henry St. John, Lord Viscount Bolingbroke*, vol. 4 (London, 1809), 269–271, accessed on 26 Dec. 2011, [http://books.google.ru/books?id=M3QNAAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=editions:06t\\_ySBqx8V63M&lr=&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.ru/books?id=M3QNAAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=editions:06t_ySBqx8V63M&lr=&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false).

motives, which are close to those of Bolingbroke. The difference is, however, that while Bolingbroke writes on “free monarchical rule,” opposing it to corrupted aristocracy, on the one hand, and tyranny, on the other hand, Karamzin writes only on “virtuous monarchy.” Thus, the tyranny of Paul I is opposed to the reign of Catherine II, and Karamzin argues that a certain spirit of indignation against abuses of despotism prevailed in society in both of the capitals:

Какой-то дух искреннего братства господствовал в столицах; общее бедствие сближало сердца, и великодушное остервенение против злоупотреблений власти заглушало голос личной осторожности. Вот действие Екатеринына человеколюбивого царствования: оно не могло быть истреблено в четыре года Павлова и доказывало, что мы были достойны иметь правительство мудрое, законное, основанное на справедливости.<sup>67</sup>

In other words, instead of Bolingbroke’s idea of a possible restoration of the “free monarchy,” based on the notion of “ancient constitution,” Karamzin writes about the revival of a “philanthropic reign”—an idealized image of Catherine’s rule. Thus, he replaces Machiavelli’s “free rule,” which is difficult to restore, with a new notion of “benevolent autocracy,” which has to pursue the interests of the people and to listen to the “common opinion.” Considering such a replacement, the tyrannical rule is incompatible with the spirit of the “free,” in Karamzin’s sense, society, which is accustomed to the practice, in accordance with which its opinion has to be taken into consideration by the autocrat. Therefore a new ruler, using dictatorial methods against the corrupted surrounding of the previous monarch, may, nevertheless become a restorer of a relative “freedom” for a healthy part of society. On such a freedom (that is the right of society to express its opinion to a monarch, who should take this

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<sup>67</sup> Karamzin, *O drevnei i novoi Rossii*, 396.

opinion into account, if he does not want to lose the love of his subjects) Karamzin speaks in his *Mnenie russkogo grazhdanina*, describing the indignation of the “Russians” by the plans to assign some “West Russian” provinces to the Kingdom of Poland.

...Я слышу русских и знаю их: мы лишились бы не только прекрасных областей, но и любви к царю... Вы и тогда имели бы министров, генералов: но они служили бы не отечеству, а единственно своим личным выгодам, как наемники, как истинные рабы... А Вы, государь, гнушаетесь рабством и хотите дать нам свободу!<sup>68</sup>

Thus, Karamzin also has a notion of “free monarchy,” suggesting that a monarch governs relying on the public opinion of “Russians,” taking into account the wishes of his subjects. Owing this, the latter, do not perceive themselves as slaves, but rather as free, who serve not to a monarch, but rather a Fatherland. Tyranny destroys this feeling of freedom; a true monarchy restores it. In this sense it is possible to speak of a similarity in the logic of Karamzin and Bolingbroke. The latter begins with Machiavelli’s idea and suggests the notion of a Patriot King who is able to overcome corruption which is threatening to destroy the British monarchy.

It is obvious, that the British understanding of corruption (as first of all, bribing of the members of parliament by the Royal administration) is different from the one Karamzin writes about. But here too, one can find a certain analogy. This is how Bolingbroke describes the consequences of the reign of a “bad” king:

if the precedent reign was has been bad, we know how he will find the court composed. The men in power will be some of those adventurers, busy and bold, who thrust and crowd themselves early into the intrigue of party and the management of affairs of state, often without true ability, always without true ambition, or even the appearances of virtue: who mean nothing more than

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 438.



what is called making a fortune, the acquisition of wealth to satisfy vanity. Such as these are sure to be employed by a weak, or a wicked king: they impose on the first, and are chosen by the last. Nor is it marvelous that they are so, since every other want is supplied in them by the want of good principles and a good conscience; and since these defects become ministerial perfections, in a reign when measures are pursued and designs carried on that every honest man will disapprove.<sup>69</sup>

Here Bolingbroke writes about those grandees who serve for the sake of their own benefits, as “hirelings, as true slaves”—these are those, who Karamzin describes in the *Mnenie russkogo grazhdanina*. But even Peter, who in accordance with Karamzin was a great ruler, although he had committed important mistakes, has also left after his death a rather poor composition of grandees:

Несмотря на его чудесную деятельность, он много оставил исполнить своим преемникам, но Меньшиков думал единственно о пользе своего властолюбия; также и Долгорукие... Долгорукие и Голицыны хотели видеть на престоле слабую тень монарха... Замыслы дерзкие и малодушные! Пигмеи спорили о наследии великана.

Аристократия, олигархия губили отечество... Самодержавие сделалось необходимее прежнего для охранения порядка...<sup>70</sup>

Thus, with all the difference in the meaning of the word “corruption” regarding Britain and Russia, both authors speak of one and the same phenomenon—of the attempts of the representatives of the elite to pursue their private interests at the expense of the common good. Hence we can understand the desire to see on the throne a virtuous, and more importantly, strong ruler, who, relying on the support of the people, would banish evil grandees and bring virtuous advisers closer to himself.

Considering such parallelism in the course of reasoning of Bolingbroke and Karamzin, we may better understand the description of the first years of the reign of

<sup>69</sup> Bolingbroke, *Pis'ma ob izuchenii i pol'ze istorii*, 223; and *The Works of the Late Right Honourable Henry St. John, Lord Viscount Bolingbroke*, vol. 4, 274–275.

<sup>70</sup> Karamzin, *O drevnei i novoi Rossii*, 391.

Grozny as they are represented in the eighth volume of Karamzin's *Istoriia*. This will be the main topic of the next chapter, but at the moment, as a conclusion, I would like to underline, that the content of this volume of the *Istoriia* can be regarded as Karamzin's attempt to answer Machiavelli's doubts about the possibility of the restoration of a certain "freedom" within a corrupted society.

**CHAPTER 3: THE ACCESSION TO POWER  
OF IVAN THE TERRIBLE  
IN SHCHERBATOV'S *ISTORIIA ROSSIISKAIA* AND  
KARAMZIN'S *ISTORIIA GOSUDARSTVA ROSSIISKAGO***

***§3.1 Shcherbatov: The Reasons for the Choice of Tyranny***

***by Ivan the Terrible***

The reign of Ivan the Terrible was divided by Shcherbatov into two volumes. The landmark between the two is the annexation of Astrakhan. The idea of such a separation was caused by the necessity of dividing the narrative into approximately equal parts in accordance with the chronological principle, but, besides all that the highest point of the entire narration should be somewhere on the border between the two volumes. The existence of this highest point is connected with the idea that the history of Ivan the Terrible appears as the interaction of two opposite processes, each of which may be described by the opposition of two characteristics. The first process represents an evolution from weak to strong reign, where the weakness signifies the inability of the central power to hold the grandees' lust for power, whereas the strong reign subjects them and makes them loyal. The second process is a gradual corruption of the character of the tsar, under the influence of autocracy, from mercy to cruelty, to loss of virtue. Both extremes, the weak though merciful reign in the beginning of the

narrative and the strong yet cruel reign approaching terror in the end, are highly disadvantageous for the subjects. And on the contrary, the equilibrium of these processes, accomplished in the middle of the narrative, when the sufficiently strict and strong, but at the same time still merciful and fair reign provides the subjects favorable conditions for their existence. Thus, the entire narrative is organized as an oscillation of the pendulum from one extreme point to the other, so that the culmination is achieved in the middle at a point of equilibrium.

On the level of the interaction between the actors it is possible to single out the following major forces: Firstly, the tsar himself, whose character is changing in the course of the narrative as his major vice, cruelty, develops. Secondly, boyars and princes in the environment of the tsar, who fight for power. The boyars are power-seeking, but at the same time, they represent a foothold for the state, and in favorable conditions they display civic courage, repelling the enemy. Their loyalty depends on the strength of administration, under the weak governance they are apt to mutiny and the abuse of their position of authority at the expense of the nobility and the people. Thirdly, the actors are the nobility and the people, who play, to a large extent, a passive role. They do not as much act as independent actors, as react to the actions of the previous two. For example, they show their happiness at the occasion of military victories, or their suffering at the activity of the grandees.

The sequence of events in the first part may be divided into several stages:

- 1) The infancy of the monarch. The Elena Glinskaia's reign. The question of the legitimacy of Ivan the Terrible as an heir.
- 2) The reign of boyars. Discords.

- 3) The capture of power. First executions.
- 4) The marriage. Fire. The murder of Glinskii. The suppression of the unrest.
- 5) The beginning of war against Kazan. The annexation of Kazan. The triumph.
- 6) The disease. The revolt of boyars occasioned by the succession issue.
- 7) The pilgrimage. Maxim Grek and Toporkov.
- 8) The best period of the reign. The Code of Law. Apotheosis. The annexation of Astrakhan.

The major problem in the first volume is the establishment of a proper relationship between the tsar and the subjects. Consequently, Maxim Grek and Toporkov personify the ideas of right and wrong governance, the advice of Toporkov and Ivan's taking of this advice foreshadows future troubles. At the same time, merciful governance without strength is regarded as disadvantageous for subjects as well leading to boyar discords. Finding a point of equilibrium between mercy and fear, which would allow providing for the loyalty of subjects and directing their efforts toward the common wealth, is the main problem of the first part of the work. Ivan the Terrible manages to solve the latter, but unintentionally, due to a favorable concurrence of circumstances. On the one hand, he simply grows up, which, along with his talents for governing, enables the growth of the power of governance. On the other hand, the destructive sides of his character have not yet developed, and he has not sufficiently strengthened his authority to use executions without the concern of provoking open resistance in return. Thus, he has to restrain himself, though the

tension grows gradually, breaking through at times in reckless and poorly motivated executions. He is restrained, however, by the strength and consolidation of the grandees and the church, and has to grant mercy, though he bears anger. Thus, the point of equilibrium is reached not due to the fairness of the character of the ruler, but rather because of the structure of the political system, with an internal tension of opposing forces. But this situation is similar to a stretched spring, which would inevitably begin to shorten under favorable conditions.

Let us consider each of the stages of the narrative in a consecutive order:

The significance of Elena Glinskaia (a female reign, which makes an analogy with the reign of Catherine II) is resumed in characteristics of her “custom” in the end of the respective section (of the chapter).

...она была жена толь обширного разума, сколь неумеренного честолюбия... Искусна была обуздывать гордость и честолюбие бояр... Хотя не видно в ней духу мучительского и жаднаго к крови... однако видно, что не страшилась она преступлений, если они могли ее до желаемого ею конца довести... Во внутренние дела государские входить непристойно истории писателю, но если то правда, как многие писатели ее обвиняют в любострастии, то видно, что она в сем случае, уступая своей склонности, давала толь излишнюю власть любимцу своему... что поступок его раздражил всех бояр на него, и что наконец от самага сего претерпел несчастье; а поступок его, огорчающий других бояр, конечно не мог нетягостен и народу быть.<sup>1</sup>

It is worth comparing this characterization with the way in which Catherine II was portrayed in the treatise *On the Corruption of Morals in Russia*.

Не можно сказать, чтобы она не была качествами достойна править толь великой империей, если женщина возможет поднять сие иго, и естли

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<sup>1</sup> Mikhail Shcherbatov, *Istoriia rossiiskaia ot drevneishikh vremen*, vol. 5, pt. 1 (St. Petersburg, 1903), col. 139–140.

одних качеств довольно для сего вышнего сану... ее пороки суть:  
любострастна и совсем вверяющаяся своим любимцам...<sup>2</sup>

A general feature here is an excessive trust in favorites, which Shcherbatov is inclined to attribute as a feature of female nature.

Generally, the rulers' defiance of the norms of Christian moral in the sphere of relationships between sexes creates, in Shcherbatov's opinion, the problem of legitimacy in the beginning of many reigns, which becomes ever worse under autocratic rule because the lack of a strict law of succession to the throne. In this case, during the infancy of a ruler there inevitably emerges a situation of struggle for power, involving the grandees, who take part in it instead of being concerned with the common good. In the case of Ivan the Terrible, a negative effect was exerted by the divorce of Vasili III from his first wife and his new marriage with Elena Glinskaia, which was illegitimate according to Christian norms. Here Shcherbatov relies on the narrative by Kurbskii, whose father suffered for his opposition against this marriage. Kurbskii himself considers this to have been one of the reasons of Ivan the Terrible's moral lapse. Without accepting this version entirely, Shcherbatov assumes that it reflects the mood of boyars, who did not recognize the absolute legitimacy of Ivan IV. According to this interpretation of the events, Ivan's right of succession to the throne itself does not ensure the strength of his power. He finds himself in the position of Machiavelli's ruler, struggling for maintaining his power, and having to resort to strict measures against those who may threaten it.

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<sup>2</sup> *O povrezdenii npravov v Rossii kniazia M. Shcherbatova i puteshestvie A. Radishcheva* (Moscow: Nauka, 1985), 119; Antony Lentin, ed., *Prince M.M. Shcherbatov: On the Corruption of Morals in Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 235.

It is such a development of the events, rather than Ivan's natural cruelty, that conditions his first executions – particularly, the reprisal against Andrei Mikhailovich Shuiskii. In this case, Shcherbatov depicts the action of the tsar as forced by necessity, and the demonstrative terror, in his interpretation, appears to be inevitable. But at the same time, the way of bringing about the execution evokes the moral condemnation of the historian.

...не могу я без ужаса воззреть на сие первое оказание самодержавия великого князя Иоанна Васильевича, в котором боярин именитый без суда, без должного исследования... яко разбойническим нападением был убиен. Остаток жизни сего государя докажет нам преклонность его к жестокости, а сей поступок нам доказует, что бояре, пребывая во всегдашних враждах между собою и в происках умножить свою власть и силу, не радили о его воспитании и не внушали ему, что меч от Бога вручен самодержцам не для безразсуднаго употребления, но токмо для наказания... и что государь должен быть скор жаловать, но медлителен карать.<sup>3</sup>

Here the autocratic cruelty of Ivan the Terrible is explained by his bad upbringing, which he acquired from incautious boyars.

Besides, cruelty appears to be essential as a kind of compensatory mechanism for a weak reign. Thus, ascribing the execution of Aphanasii Buturlin to his impudent words, Shcherbatov notes:

Опасно подданному и в самой справедливости дерзко противу самодержавнаго государя говорить; но сия опасность есть еще вящшая, если такая дерзкие слова во время слабаго правления происходят, ибо тогда государь справедливо может опасаться, чтобы сии слова самым действием не учинились. Тем более отмщая свою слабость, нежели наказуя дерзость Бутурлина, повелел великий князь урезать ему язык...<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Shcherbatov, *Istoriia rossiiskaia*, vol. 5, pt. 1, col. 204.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 215.



At this stage of the development of his character Ivan still holds his anger and sometimes grants forgiveness to those guilty.<sup>5</sup> Yet, it is possible to see that there already emerged a theme of “favorites,” who, following their egoistic motives, push him to greater cruelty.

Ужасный пример самовластия показуя, мужей заслуженных, почтенных уже первыми санями государства... по единому объявлению дьяка, своего любимца, может статья, имеющего некоторую вражду, или собственно для своих прибытков желающего несчастья их, государь – государь христианский... без суда, без обличения, и более почти за прежние прощенные, нежели за настоящие, вины жизни лишил.<sup>6</sup>

The most impressive expression of Ivan the Terrible’s weakness in the first period of his reign was the Moscow unrest of 1548, which broke out due to a devastating fire. The people blamed the tsar’s relatives along his mother’s line for this fire, and as a result Yuri Glinskii was killed by a mob. Shcherbatov assumes that the people are incapable of taking the initiative, and if unrest has taken place, it was because of the intrigues of the grandees, who spread the gossip of witchcraft. Anyway, the unrest and the murder took place, but they were not punished immediately, due to the weakness of government.

...оставалась толика слабость в правлении после малолетства царя Иоанна Васильевича или, лучше сказать, дерзость в народе, что в третий день после сего убийства... народ начал собираться толпами и возмутительным образом пошел в село Воробьево, где тогда государь пребывал, требуя выдачи им сей княгини Глинской...

Весьма бы благоразумнее было сделано, если бы... дерзость и преступление убийцев было наказано; но, как сие не учинено, то не могу я приписать сие к иному, как к некоторым политическим обстоятельствам... Является по вышеписанному, что, как многие бояре были участники сего преступления, может статья, царь Иоанн Васильевич опасался какого вящего смущения или важнейшаго

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., col. 217.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., col. 228.

заговора; и тако, оставляя сему буйству народному самому собою укротиться, довольствовался взять токмо нужныя осторожности, дабы особу свою безопасну учинить. Но, когда уже народ... возмутительным образом дерзнул притти в место пребывания царскаго, тогда сей государь, с природы нрава горячаго, не мог уже удержаться, чтобы всего озлобления своего не показать... Воины... вооруженные на невооруженных бросились; гражданская кровь не по мере преступления, но по року, кто имел нещастие под оружие попасться, потекла ручьями; дерзость народная обратилась в робость... Сим образом успокоен был народ, не без довольнаго пролития крови, но без сыскания, кто был наущатель и начало таковому дерзкому поступку.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, a weak reign, according to Shcherbatov, appears to be exposed not only to conspiracies, but also the possibility of popular unrests, which appear to be dangerous not only for the ruler, but to subjects as well as they lead to numerous casualties. The reason for such unrest appears to be intrigues of grandees, who fight for power, involving the people in this struggle as well. Shcherbatov blames the attempts of the ruler's "favorites" to gain popularity among the people. Concerning Glinskis he writes the following:

...самый черный народ их ненавидел за то, что Глинские, думая, может статья, приобрести себе любовь от черного народа, неким оказывали великия милости, и как те, обнадеяся на их защиту, грабили других и делали наглости, то не чинили им наказания; не проникало ли до них все величество таких наглостей, или сим поступком мнили некоторую часть из черного народа себе доброжелательным сделать, не рассуждая, что несправосудное защищение, учиненное одному, многих, не только терпящих от того, огорчало, но и других, ожидающих себе таковыя же судьбины, так, и при сем нужном случае не нашелся ни единый, кто бы в защищение их восстал...<sup>8</sup>

Thus, the actions of boyars, attempting to achieve popularity by providing privileges to their adherents, led only to the emerging of "parties." Moreover, their

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., col. 250–251.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., col. 248.

adversaries and competitors were also capable of creating such parties and the presence of such adversaries along with the presence of “favorites” was inevitable.

Любимцы государевы всегда имеют у себя довольно врагов, которые не упускают хватать всякие случаи, дабы их погубить.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, weak rule leads to internal discord and violent action involving the people. At the same time, cruelty, being itself an expression of weakness in governing, cannot be a medicine against this disease: it may suppress unrest only temporarily, but not eliminate its causes. In order to restrain grandees, a wise ruler, according to Shcherbatov, must use another practice, combining strictness with mercy. While young Ivan the Terrible was capable of such behavior:

Царь Иоанн Васильевич, хотя от природы довольно жесток был, однако в первые годы своего царствования любил иногда снисходить на просьбы ближних ему сановников, разбирать вины, по каким побуждениям они учинены, и милости к виновным являть – политика ли то была, или еще вышний сан не повредил его сердца.<sup>10</sup>

Such proper behavior toward his close associates assures, according to Shcherbatov, solidity of power and allows the strengthening of the position of the state regarding its neighbors. In particular, the attack on Kazan was possible, according to Shcherbatov:

Время, как государю, так и совету его казалось к сему удобно: ибо... самый народ равно строгостями и милостями, оказанными государем, с покоем и в совершенном повиновении правительству был.<sup>11</sup>

Here the idea of equilibrium of strictness and mercy is emphasized.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., col. 247.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., col. 254–255.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., col. 255.

But, along with this, Ivan, according to Shcherbatov, used other devices to enforce the legitimacy of his power as well. In particular, he made an effort to look virtuous in the eyes of the people.

Правя с неусыпным попечением сам собою государством, преклонив к добру гордость боярскую, но не унизя их ни санов, ни родов; распростирая свое оружие в окружные страны, и предохраняя свои границы от всякаго вражескаго нашествия, - всем сим старался царь Иоанн Васильевич на сердцах народных власть свою утвердить. Но еще показанием своего набожия и рачения о благолепии Божиих церквей хотел показать привязанному тогда похвальным образом к Закону народу, что он не менее богобоязнен, коль трудолюбив и тщателен о пользе своего государства.<sup>12</sup>

Advice toward looking virtuous may be found in *The Prince* by Machiavelli. There are no direct references to the treatise of the Italian thinker in Shcherbatov's text, yet we might assume that he had knowledge of the text.

It is also important to note the combination of the boyars' obedience, accomplished by equilibrium of strict punishments and mercies, with the lack of "humiliation of their clans." Shcherbatov pays special attention to this combination, when he speaks of the Code of Law and the accompanying governmental measures, connected with the restriction of the order of precedence.

Упражняся тогда в разных подвигах, касающихся до общей пользы государства... заметил царь Иоанн Васильевич, что недостаток законов подал многие случаи ко многим злоупотреблениям... Сей государь, превышая мудростию леты своего возраста, тогда, как все бояре усмирены и власть его утвержденная... законно вошедший на престол и по крови обладающий, не хотел однако самовластием своим и едиными своими мыслями учредить законы и дать новый вид правлению... имея в виду более пользу народную, нежели собственную свою славу... собрав родственников своих князей Российских и всех бояр... участвуя только своим председательством, отгнанием пристрастий и направлением тех мыслей, повелел сочинить закон, который наименовал судебник...

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., col. 278–279.

...хотя не он сам сочинял сей закон... слава на него вся упадет, яко на душу, движущую всем сим великим телом, и не самовластием своим приводящему советников несоветующих принять и похвалить закон, но токмо властью своею направляючи их благие советы, побуждая к безпристрастию и к справедливости.<sup>13</sup>

It is impossible to leave unnoticed a veiled criticism of Catherine II, who composed the laws herself without consulting legislative institutions, which was mentioned in detail above (see the chapter on the political views of Shcherbatov).

There is also a remarkable comparison of the legislative council with the body and the ruler to the soul, which (according to Aristotle) brings this body into motion.

In the process of the creation of the code of law, Ivan the Terrible, for Shcherbatov, was concerned with the restriction of the order of precedence, which was rather detrimental for the state as it urged, in accordance with the seniority of clans, to appoint the younger and untalented to command over those older and talented.<sup>14</sup> However, such measures were good only to some extent, and Ivan, according to Shcherbatov, did not rush to the opposite extreme, abolishing the seniority of clans as such:

Но зло сие [stemming from the custom of the order of precedence—V.R.] не ослепило его глаза и не подвигло толико его страсти, чтобы и в самом сем не видел он добра, происходящего от приличной гордости благородному рождению. Он старался сие полезное умоначертание в лучшей части своих подданных сохранить... сего права [to be counted by seniority of clans—V.R.] совершенно лишити толь благородных людей не хотел, но токмо в такая границы хотел оное привести, чтобы оно не было предосудительно государству... И тако сим образом учредил добрый порядок, почтение к чинам и нужное повиновение к военной службе, не разрушая ни прав, ни прежнего порядка государства.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., col. 278–279.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., col. 282.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., col. 282–283.

Regarding this place in his *Istoriia* Shcherbatov argues with Tatishchev, who considered that the use of the term “*kniazhata*” (diminutive of “prince”) in the code of law was the result of Ivan’s intention to humiliate the princes’ clans. This detailed comment is interesting because it uncovers the views of Shcherbatov on the role of the aristocracy in the state.

То подлинно, что если бы сие толкование [of the diminutive meaning of the term “*kniazhata*”—V.R.] было справедливо, можно было бы сей единый поступок царя Иоанна Васильевича почтить яко наимучительский... ибо можно ли что суровее быть, как лишить имени и преимущества звания, рождением самым преложеннаго, целое общество, твердейший подпор государства. Я многими примерами, взятыми из жизни сего государя, могу доказать, что хотя он некоторую строгость и с рождения своего имел, но в сие время весьма отдален был от всяких незаконных суровостей. А сей поступок, скажу я, не только мерзостнее был, нежели самая мысль Калигулы, желающаго единым ударом всем римлянам головы отрубить, но и означало бы равно и непомерное безумие: ибо как мог царь Иоанн Васильевич, огорча лучшую часть своего государства, на тех же самых, кого огорчил, возложить вскоре сохранение своего государства и своей особы, и не знал ли он, что люди, а паче упитанные в гордости, каковы были тогда князья, мстят более за презрение себя, нежели за самое намерение лишить их жизни. И тако, показав несовместность такового поступка ни с тогдашним обычаем государя, ни с здравым разсудком, остается мне изъяснить, что наименование *княжата* ничего презрительного в себе не имеет, и что российские князья, по большей части уступя для общей пользы свои владения государям Московским, лишения титла княжеского не заслуживают.<sup>16</sup>

Here alongside with the attitude to the privileges of aristocracy, as an indispensable “buttress” of the state, it is important to pay attention to Shcherbatov’s way of reasoning appealing to “common sense.” Such an approach, in our contemporary view, is ahistorical, as the way of reasoning in the eighteenth century could differ from what was sensible in the sixteenth century. However, at another

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., col. 283–284, fn.

place Shcherbatov retains for himself the right to make such “guesses” on the following ground:

Писатели наших летописцов, быв по большей части монахи, мало вникали во внутренности обстоятельств дел военных и политических: довольствуясь токмо деяние известить, о причинах умолчали, так что днесь остается нам догадками о оных проникать и наполнять сей недостаток.<sup>17</sup>

Shcherbatov’s guesses are made on the ground of his general political teaching. Thus, he, presumably, projects his ideal representations on Russia of the period of Ivan the Terrible, ascribing to him virtue, the lack of which he criticized in contemporary rulers, in respect to senior clans and involving the aristocracy in legislation.

A substantial section of the first part of the fifth volume is devoted to the history of the annexation of Kazan. And here again, following his manner of ascribing to ancient Russia his own ideal notions of how the state should be arranged, Shcherbatov depicts how the council of grandees convened before the march on Kazan.

Обычай был весьма похвальный тогда в России, что государи никакого знатнаго дела не предпринимали без совета своих родственников и бояр: тут часто верность к отечеству и государю превозмогала подобострастие к самодержавному монарху, и сии почтенные советники дерзали противу намерений государя своего спорить. Правда, наконец, не сопротивлялись последнему изволению своего государя, но оное тогда уже происходило, когда вся истинна мыслей каждаго во всей ясности перед очи монаршия явлена была.<sup>18</sup>

One can see here, that Shcherbatov does not insist on the legal limitations of the autocrat’s power. All he wants is to suspend, by the means of preliminary

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., col. 259–260.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., col. 358.

consultations, possible arbitrary decisions of the monarch, based on caprice, temporary affect, or, for example, the insufficient understanding of the consequences of certain orders. This allows the monarch to correct his command, if it contradicts his own reasonable interest, but if the ruler comes to a constant and firm decision, no one would be able to resist his clearly stated will.

Further on Shcherbatov describes the imagined dialogue, where the advisors “with decent respect, yet with proper strictness” were convincing Ivan not to take the field himself, and the latter, wishing not to use the autocratic power, but wanting to convince them by reasonable arguments, brought various reasons, including that “касательно до своей особы, утверждаясь на вере, яко чинящий богоугодный подвиг, на Бога и надежду свою возложил.”<sup>19</sup>

Omitting the details of the siege, let us move to Shcherbatov’s description of the meeting of the victorious ruler with the people.

Не могу я удержаться, чтобы не приметить, коль долженствовало возрадоваться сердце государево, видя толикое признание его в народе. Но щастлив тот государь, кому они, яко в сем случае является, не от лести и подлаго рабства приносимы бывают; велик же тот, кто, видя толикою себе благодарность и похвалу его дел, не возгордится, но лишь будет побуждаться сим паче и паче заслуживать любовь и благодарность от своих подданных.<sup>20</sup>

It is also important to mention not only that the arrows of Shcherbatov’s exposure are directed against flatterers, but also that one can see here an indirect reference to the reasons for Ivan’s later moral downfall. Indeed, as the result of the victory over Kazan, where he took a personal part in the command of the troops, his

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., col. 359–360.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., col. 495.



authority and legitimacy significantly increased in the eyes of the people. However, it gained him a ground for pride, having ascribed all the merits to himself, which in the future could lead to hasty decisions based on the use of autocratic power without taking into consideration the opinions of sensible advisers. Eventually, it occurred exactly in this way, though we do not find in Shcherbatov's works a similar explanation of the following transformation of the politics of Ivan the Terrible.

Let us also note a certain similarity to such a conception with the antique cyclic representations of history. As, for example, the story of the Lydian king Croesus by Herodotus which shows the ruler blinded by his previous success who was apt to make mistakes, which lead to his eventual downfall. Here it is not only an inevitable influence of a predetermined fate, but also the limitations of the possibilities of a human being in the face of a course of events independent from him. In this situation, the correct behavior would be to realize one's own limitations, in the refusal to ascribe one's accomplished happiness to his outstanding abilities, and to be ready to take "strokes of the fate" in the future, without being flattered by one's success in the present.<sup>21</sup> One can see in the following volumes of the *Istoriia* that Shcherbatov, in Shuiskii's figure, idealizes exactly this kind of rulers-stoics.

Now, we are moving to the description of the decisive moment in the historical narration of Shcherbatov. This moment consists of a wrong choice committed by the tsar, which leads to further catastrophic consequences. The choice is between two alternatives, each of which is connected to the advice of wise men, yet only one of

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<sup>21</sup> Herodotus, *Istoriia*, bk. 1, Clio, sect. 29–85 in *Istoriki Gretsii* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1976), 37–58. Eng. trans.: *The History of Herodotus*, vol. 1, translated by G. C. Macaulay, accessed 28 Dec. 2011, [http://www.gutenberg.org/catalog/world/readfile?fk\\_files=1449880&pageno=11](http://www.gutenberg.org/catalog/world/readfile?fk_files=1449880&pageno=11).

them is actually wise, while the wisdom of the other appears to be deceiving and leads to evil. In this treatment of the events, Shcherbatov follows the *Istoriia o velikom kniaze Moskovskom* (“History on the grand prince of Moscow”) by Kurbskii, yet interprets it in the spirit of his political doctrine.

The choice by Ivan, in Shcherbatov’s text, has its prelude which partially explains further events. From his childhood Ivan the Terrible had a “hot temper,” intensified by quarrels of grandees and their disregard towards the young tsar. This caused the tsar’s “animosity” against boyars.

This is how, for example, Ivan, for Shcherbatov, reacts to the boyars’ disinterest in the strengthening of Russian power in Kazan.

Царь Иоанн Васильевич был с природы строг; смущения, бывшие между бояр в младых его летах, к пролитою крови его приучили, и внутренно он большую часть бояр ненавидел: но, как завоевания его еще нужной твердости не получили, имел он брата и родственников, которые могли недовольных бояр подпереть, то, великодушием прикрывая поступок боярский или, лучше сказать, жертвуя обычай свой политическим обстоятельствам, никакого наказания за сие нерачение не учинил.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, Ivan the Terrible keeps from executing the guilty not because he is merciful, but only because he needs their service and is afraid of conspiracy among his relatives. But it is already clear that someday the tension between the inner hatred and gracious behavior in outward appearance must be relieved through decisive actions.

The aggravation of this tension occurs, when the tsar, having become seriously ill, tries to make the boyars swear on his newborn heir, but they, either out of selfish ends, or being afraid of new unrests characteristic to the reign of the juvenile tsar,

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<sup>22</sup> Shcherbatov, *Istoriia rossiiskaia*, vol. 5, pt. 1, col. 499.

refused. It is noteworthy that Shcherbatov attributes the resistance of the boyars not so much to their craftiness, as to the unsettled question of succession.

Такое предложение [of composing the will—V.R.] и скорое согласие государево довольно нам доказует, что тогда ничего точного о наследстве престола учреждено не было: ибо имея хотя малолетнего сына, не казалось, чтобы нужда была такое завещание и учинять, еслибы утверждено было право наследственности престола.<sup>23</sup>

But in this case, having recovered after the disease, Ivan the Terrible had to take into consideration that resistance to his will could also be honest, stemming from the unwillingness of the boyars to go through an unstable reign and to obey the favorites from the clan of Zakhar'iny, the tsarina's relatives. But at the same time, he was personally angry with them. Besides, there would have been a death threat on his infant son, in the case that another pretender came to power. Although Ivan did not take any decisive measures, his attitude toward the boyars resistant to his will was one of aggravation, growing into hatred. Yet, hatred, as with any other passion, makes a person blind and leads to insensible decisions.

It is characteristic that here Shcherbatov diverts from Kurbskii's interpretation, who thought that Ivan the Terrible did not execute the disobedient, because he “ощущал нужду в старших воеводах и советниках.”<sup>24</sup> Shcherbatov tries to “различать истинну от того, что озлобленный князь Курбский мог противу сего государя писать.”<sup>25</sup> Therefore the historian suggests a more complicated interpretation.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., col. 512.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., col. 526.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

...взяв Казань, покорив многие прежде подвластные сему царству народы, снабдя милостями своими всех вельмож, со справедливостью надеялся, что любовь и почтение к себе и роду своему приобретет и истребит мысли о его рождении, яко от живой супруги бракосочетавшийся великий князь Василий Иоаннович [he was in the second marriage with Elena Glinskaia, being married already with Solomonia Saburova, who was still alive at the time—V. R.] его и брата его произвел. Но... предубеждение о его рождении и малая преданность к нему облагоустроенных им бояр явно оказались... Тако, с единыя стороны огорчен всеми таковыми поступками, а с другой от жестокости болезни имея нрав свой переменен, к жестокости, к нещастию России и ко вреду имени своего, начал преклоняться.<sup>26</sup>

Nevertheless, Shcherbatov notes that despite the boyars' doubts about the birth of the tsar and his right to the throne, they continued to be loyal to him and the fatherland.

Подъятые ими труды, раны и подвиги во всех войнах... суть непреоборимые свидетели любви их к отечеству и верности к царствующему государю; но, яко рожденные советники царские и блюстители безопасности престола, хотели или от слабого правления во время малолетства избежать, или возвратить престол в такое колено, в коем бы никакого сомнения о рождении не было, и то только в случае кончины царствующего государя.<sup>27</sup>

It is possible to note here that Shcherbatov clearly puts the well-being of the state over dynastic interests of a particular branch of the tsar's clan. In this sense, he rather shares the standpoint of Kurbskii, who insisted on the innocence of boyars whom Ivan executed for attempts of treachery against the tsar or the fatherland. On the other hand, the position of Ivan the Terrible, urging for perfect personal loyalty to him and to his infant heir, is understandable for Shcherbatov from the perspective of common human feelings, though not entirely shared by him. For Shcherbatov it was the interests of the state that were important, rather than the personal feelings of the ruler, though psychologically these were quite understandable too. And repressions,

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., col. 527–528.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., col. 528.

caused by the preference for these personal feelings, evoke Shcherbatov's condemnation. Yet, in this case, due to the importance of the crime, which Shcherbatov thinks was the "humiliation of his majesty," some of the punishments, in his view, could be justified. However, they had to be executed under the law—and here we see everything had been done by passion, rather than on the ground of rational considerations.

Что же выше я изъяснил, что в сем случае была великая строгость государева, то я не с тем сие сказал, чтобы охулить правосудие наказаний, но с тем, что, является, оныя были без дальнейших следствий произведены, и царь Иоанн Васильевич, не яко правосудный судья, но яко раздраженный самовластитель, оныя без жалости налагал.<sup>28</sup>

Such disturbing conditions exactly predetermined, according to Shcherbatov, Ivan's choice of state policy. Following Kurbskii, Shcherbatov describes the consequent meetings of Ivan the Terrible with Maxim Grek and Vassian (he does not know his name) Toporkov. Shcherbatov writes about Maxim Grek:

Духом кротости и мудрости растворенная его беседа преклоняла к милосердию сердце цареву и побуждала его не владыкою, но отцем народа своего быть.<sup>29</sup>

Maxim Grek recommended that Ivan did not make a pilgrimage to a distant monastery with his infant son, but Ivan did not follow his advice. Here in Scherbatov's text there emerges a characteristic for Peter's attitude toward the clergy—the theme of mercenary monks.

...другие монахи, не столь истинным законом, коль некоими предубеждениями пораженные, представляли государю святость обета

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., col. 533–534.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., col. 535.

его, а тогда же, надеясь и награждения, советовали церкви и монастыри благодарностию своею снабдить.<sup>30</sup>

And so, on the way to Kirillov monastery, the tsar met with Toporkov, and the latter gave him advice, which Shcherbatov cites from Kurbskii: “аще хочещи самодержавным быти, не держи себе ни единого мудрейшаго себе, понеже сам еси всех лучше; тако будещи тверд на царстве, и всех будещи иметь в руках своих.”<sup>31</sup>

And further Shcherbatov writes:

Толь вредный совет, отгоняющий от государя всех тех, кто бы мог нужды народныя ему представить; всех тех, которые бы, разумом своим проникновения разума его подкрепляя, могли устроить щастие государства; всех тех, которые довольно имели честолюбия, чтобы из единого сего служить, дабы советами и просвещением своим могли полезны быть отечеству и давать советы своему государю; а оставляющий токмо тех, которые, яко безсловесные скоты, ничего не знали более, как повиноваться без разбору воле государевой, или тех, которые прибитки свои и милость царскую самой чести и славе служить своим разумом отечеству предпочитали; или наконец тех, которые еще коварнее, под видом простоты отринув недоверенность царскую, во всем высоту его разума похваляли, в самом же деле тщились для пользы своей разумом монарха овладеть. Сей совет, яко льстящий его власть и являющий отвергать его самодержавие, с великою благодарностию от царя был принят...<sup>32</sup>

Here Shcherbatov writes not about particular acts of cruelty, committed under the influence of painful irritation, but of a choice between two models of government—monarchy, relying on aristocracy, and autocracy, based on single-handed decisions, with unconditionally loyal or mercenary people in attendance. It is important, that the distinction is driven not only between different types of rulers, but also between different conditions of society, surrounding them. In the one case the

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., col. 536.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., col. 537.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., col. 537–538.

grantees are firm and ambitious, they may resist the tsar, yet they can be relied upon, and their major motive is ambition and aspiration to serve the fatherland and the ruler in so far as he is driven by reason, rather than his disorderly wishes.

In the other case, the ruler may rely only on his own talents, which no matter how gifted he is, are limited, as in the case of any other man. He is surrounded by sycophants and flatterers who have no concern for the fatherland, but only their own well-being, wishing honors for themselves rather than the common good. They are, of course, ready to betray their monarch; and they are able only to express ostentatious loyalty. In reality, they facilitate such hasty decisions, which are made under the influence of the monarch's unrestricted passions, and which he further on would regret.

Thus, tyranny and true monarchy differ not only in the cruelty of the tyrant, but also in the arrangement of government. In the one case it is autocratic and tolerant of no objections, in the other it is strong, in the sense that the ruler is capable of withstanding the objections of his subjects, grounded by the considerations of the utility of the state. As a result, under tyranny the political decisions are taken rapidly, on the basis of the passions and desires of one man, while a true monarchy allows taking weighted and comprehensively considerate decisions.

Such revisiting of the narration of Kurbskii, who only spoke of reasonable advisers and evil sycophants, is conditioned, of course, by Shcherbatov's own ideas of lawful monarchy as an ideal form of government for Russia. Ivan's aberration from this model of government, conditioned by his personal indignation against the boyars, seems to Shcherbatov to be the major reason for the following catastrophic

development of the events in Russia. Such an erroneous choice, made by Ivan the Terrible, happens to be the outset for a further story, which, according to Shcherbatov, demonstrates the sad consequences of the tsar's wrong choice about the form of government.

Now, it is possible to draw some preliminary conclusions. Despite a certain schematization, and an evident projection of Shcherbatov's ideal representations of state organization into the past, one cannot deny his ability to explain logically the course of events, connecting them into a regular sequence. History in Shcherbatov's representation appears to be a kind of applied political science, a science of how a monarch should or should not govern, of how he should combine rigor and mercy, of what might happen in a case when this balance is broken. Ivan the Terrible, according to Shcherbatov, was capable of maintaining this balance in the first period of his reign, but further on, under the influence of the events, unfavorable for the tsar, and because of his irritation in respect to the boyars' behavior during his childhood, he submits to anger and chooses a tyrannical way of government instead of ruling by reliance on sensible and virtuous advisers. As a result, he appears to be surrounded by worthless or mercenary people, indulging all his low passions for the sake of their own interests. All this leads to catastrophic consequences for the state.



***§3.2 Karamzin: The Way of Ivan the Terrible from an Ideal Ruler to a Mad Tyrant***

Similarly to Shcherbatov, the part of Karamzin's *Istoriia Elena* devoted to the reign of Ivan the Terrible is separated into two volumes. However, in Karamzin's text the divide between the volumes is not the annexation of Astrakhan, but the death of the Tsarina Anastasia. Thus, the border is chronologically moved forward by several years, presumably because of Karamzin's view that with the death of Anastasia a significantly new period of history began. Generally, in Karamzin's text there are two rapid turns in the course of the narration, marked first by the Moscow fire of 1548 (which occurred soon after the tsar's marriage with Anastasia) and then her death. These turns represent rapid changes in the character of Ivan the Terrible, his acquisition and loss of "virtue." Between these two turns—the period, which Karamzin considers as "true autocracy," sharply distinguishing it from "selfish rule" (*samovlastie*). It is important that the difference between autocracy and self-rule is not institutional (say, the presence or absence of the boyar council), but, primarily, moral—the presence or absence of virtue of the ruler. The character of advisers depends on this circumstance—they would be virtuous with a virtuous ruler, and vicious with the vile one. However, contrary to Shcherbatov's scheme, Karamzin does not write about the "firmness" of advisers and their ability to oppose the ruler. The major criterion of the virtue of associates is their concern for the "common good," they persuade the tsar to be merciful and to be the father of his subjects. Vicious

advisors are sycophants. They indulge the vices of the ruler, but at the same time, under the cover of their personal loyalty, they pursue their mercenary interests.

Similarly to Shcherbatov, the display of the first period of Ivan the Terrible's reign (from the moment of his independent rule) suggests the projection of his representations of the ideal state into the past. Yet, because, for Karamzin, such an ideal state is autocracy, the accents in his narration are placed in a different manner. Unlike Shcherbatov, who traces a gradual accumulation of "indignation" on the part of the tsar against his associates, preparing to turn to tyranny, Karamzin constantly underlines his virtue. But such an emphasis on the tsar's positive character traits complicates the explanation of the eventual turn towards a vicious tyrannical rule. Karamzin himself, characterizing Ivan the Terrible in the end of the following volume, recognizes that the character of the tsar is a "mystery for the mind." As a result, according to Karamzin, Ivan undergoes an ultimately inexplicable moral turn, caused by a kind of "madness," because of the loss of a close person, which was aggravated by the presence of vicious associates, who were using the weak side of the tsar's character for their mercenary interests. Contrary to Shcherbatov, who assumes that in the long run it was exactly the "selfish rule" that appeared to be the reason for Ivan's moral downfall, gradually corrupting him, Karamzin defends the principle of autocracy, assuming that even the unrestricted autocrat can preserve his virtue. However, for him, a way to prevent the moral downfall of the tsar was the moral influence of a virtuous surrounding. But this was particularly the problem, which emerged after the death of Anastasia.

Let us consider this concept in detail.

The period “before acquiring virtue” may be divided into two parts: the reign of Elena Glinskaia and the boyars’ rule. Karamzin emphasizes the negative features of this period, seemingly to underline the contrast with the forthcoming “true autocracy.” Accordingly, the reign of Glinskaia, which Shcherbatov characterized as a combination of certain firmness with the drawbacks, peculiar, as he thinks, to a female reign (the passion of favorites), acquires a negative characteristic for Karamzin:

Жалели о несчастном Юрии [the uncle of the tsar, the brother of Vasily III, who fell victim to the struggle for power—V.R.]; боялись тиранства: как Иоанн был единственно именован государь и самая правительница действовала внушением совета, то Россия видела себя под железом возникающей олигархии, которой мучительство есть самое опасное и самое несносное. Легче укрыться от одного, нежели от двадцати гонителей. Самодержец гневный уподобляется раздраженному большинству, перед которым надобно только смиряться; но многочисленные тираны не имеют сей выгоды в глазах народа: он видит в них людей ему подобных и тем более ненавидит злоупотребление власти. Говорили, что бояре хотели погубить Юрия, в надежде своевольствовать, ко вреду отечества...<sup>33</sup>

The reign of Elena appears to be nothing but the masked governing of an oligarchy. Here the comparison with God is characteristic, according to Karamzin, the people praise the tsar as God, and therefore he suffers abuses from his side, but hates his associates when they act in the same manner. The use of verbs without an acting subject is peculiar: “жалели” or “говорили.” It is evident he spoke about the opinion of contemporaries. Karamzin, certainly, could not know their actual opinion, but he uses the chronicler’s judgment as his criterion. Yet the limits of interpretation are rather wide and it is easy to observe that the “public opinion” which Karamzin refers to is the projection of his own estimation. But at the same time, the historian seems to be hiding behind a mask, which allows him to speak of the Providence of God’s

<sup>33</sup> Nikolai Karamzin, *Istoriia gosudarstva Rossiiskago*, vol. 8 (St. Petersburg, 1819), 10.

punishment, as if he supposes its direct interference with the events. But because it is strange for a rationalistic mind, the author may always hide behind this mask and assert that it is not his opinion, but the view of the contemporaries of the events. Thus, the historian allows the reader to look at the events with the eyes of the contemporaries, yet this device opens the way for deliberate ideological manipulations. In particular, the person of the ruler is as if rising above ordinary people: as in the face of God, it is only possible to resign, even when the abuses are evident. Such an attitude is ascribed to the contemporaries of Ivan the Terrible, but this certainly contradicts the attitude to Ivan expressed by Shcherbatov. Moreover, the divine halo which Karamzin attributes to this person prevents such an attitude to the tsar.

Notably, it refers exclusively to the tsar, whereas the surrounding people, even the mother of the tsar, are subjected to severe moral criticism.

С прискорбием видя нескромную слабость Елены к князю Ивану Телепневу-Оболенскому, который, владея сердцем ее, хотел управлять и Думою и государством, Михаил [Glinskii, the uncle of the tsarina—V.R.], как пишут, смело и твердо говорил племяннице о стыде разврата, всегда гнусного, еще гнуснейшего на троне, где народ ищет добродетели, оправдывающей власть самодержавную. Его не слушали, возненавидели и погубили.<sup>34</sup>

Let us note the difference of Shcherbatov's position, refraining from interfering with the "domestic affairs" of rulers. Actually, during Catherine's reign such a phrase in a published text might cause unpleasant consequences.

Let us also note that according to Karamzin, autocratic power requires justification and virtue may serve as such justification. This means that Karamzin is

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 11–12.

aware of the vulnerability of his position as an advocate of autocracy, and tries to oppose his possible critics, yet for this he needs to find historical examples of “virtuous autocracy.” Otherwise the latter appears indistinguishable from “selfish rule.”

Karamzin, finally, passes a verdict on Elena’s reign:

Опасаясь гибельных действий слабости в малолетство государя самодержавного, Елена считала жестокость твердостью; но сколь последняя, основанная на чистом усердии к добру, необходима для государственного блага, столь первая вредна оному, возбуждая ненависть; а нет правительства, которое для своих успехов не имело бы нужды в любви народной. – Елена предавалась в одно время и нежностям беззаконной любви и свирепству кровожадной злобы.<sup>35</sup>

Thus, Karamzin portrays Elena Glinskaia as an object of the people’s hatred (certainly, it is absent in the sources, but this is Karamzin’s standard depiction of tyranny). The end of such reign is regular although Karamzin, as usual, condemns the assassination of the ruler as an illegitimate act. Here are multiple parallels with what he says about Paul and his murder in the *Memoir on Ancient and Modern Russia*.<sup>36</sup>

Но Елена ни благоразумием своей внешней политики, ни многими достохвальными делами внутри государства не могла угодить народу: тиранство и беззаконная, уже всем явная любовь ее к князю... возбуждали к ней ненависть и даже презрение, от коего ни власть, ни строгость не спасают венценосца, если святая добродетель отвращает от него лицо свое. Народ безмолвствовал на стогнах: тем более говорили в тесном, для тиранов непроницаемом кругу семейств и дружества о несчастьи видеть соблазн на троне.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>36</sup> Nikolai Karamzin, *O drevnei i novoi Rossii* (Moscow: Zhizn’ i mysl’, 2002), 395–397; Richard Pipes, *Karamzin’s Memoir on Ancient and Modern Russia: A Translation and Analysis* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 135–137.

<sup>37</sup> Karamzin, *Istoriia*, vol. 8, 45.

Let us compare here the display of “public opinion” with that in the excerpt from the *Memoir*, which refers to the reign of Paul.

...говорили, и смело... верили друг другу и не обманывались. Какой-то дух искреннего братства господствовал в столицах; общее бедствие сближало сердца, и великодушное остервенение против злоупотреблений власти заглушало голос личной осторожности.<sup>38</sup>

Thus, the lack of ways for the open expression of public opinion (“on squares”) does not imply its absence. It is just located in the private sphere, in narrow friendly and family circles, which under the circumstances of pervasive discontent are quite sufficient for creating for the tyrant an unfavorable atmosphere in which he is exposed to conspiracies. Referring to Herberstein, Karamzin writes about Elena being poisoned.

Он [Herberstein—V.R.] видит в сем случае одну *справедливую месть*; но ее нет ни для сына против отца, ни для подданного против государя: а Елена, по малолетству Иоанна, законно властвовала в России. Худых царей наказывает только бог, совесть, история: их ненавидят в жизни, клянут и по смерти. Сего довольно для блага гражданских обществ, без яда и железа; или мы должны отвергнуть необходимый устав монархии, что особа венценосцев неприкосновенна. Тайна злодеяния не уменьшает его.<sup>39</sup>

At the same time Karamzin adds: “Не сказано даже, чтобы митрополит отпевал ее тело. Бояре и народ не изъявили, кажется, ни самой притворной горести.”<sup>40</sup> This is of course not derived from the sources; here is a typical word “кажется.” There, certainly, is a projection of the present into the past. The “people’s” reaction to the death of the emperor Paul is described similarly. And exactly in this

<sup>38</sup> Karamzin, *O drevnei i novoi Rossii*, 396; Pipes, *Karamzin's Memoir*, 136.

<sup>39</sup> Karamzin, *Istoriia*, vol. 8, 44.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

way, along with the statement of the people's hatred, Karamzin condemns the murder of the monarch, because in this case autocracy turns into “игралище олигархии.”<sup>41</sup> Thus, “bad tsars” have to be tolerated; they will be punished by “history.” And it is regular, according to Karamzin, that Elena's death was not a relief for the people. An open oligarchy prevailed.

This is Karamzin's depiction of it:

Среди таких волнений и беспокойств, производимых личным властолюбием бояр, правительство могло ли иметь надлежащую твердость, единство, неусыпность для внутреннего благоустройства и внешней безопасности? Главный вельможа, князь Иван Шуйский, не оказывал в делах ни ума государственного, ни любви к добру, был единственно грубым самолюбцем... никогда не стоял перед юным Иоанном, садился у него в спальне, опирался локтем о постелю, клал ноги на кресла государевы; одним словом, изъяслял всю низкую, малодушную спесь раба-господина.<sup>42</sup>

Karamzin took the latter detail from the “Pervoe poslanie Ivana Groznogo Kurbskomu” (“The first letter of Ivan the Terrible to Kurbskii”), yet there it is written in a slightly different way:

Припомню одно: бывало мы играем в детские игры, а князь Иван Васильевич Шуйский сидит на лавке, опершись локтем о постель нашего отца и положив ногу на стул, а на нас и не взглянет – ни как родитель, ни как опекун и уж совсем ни как раб на господ. Кто же может перенести такую гордыню?<sup>43</sup>

Later, as we will see, Karamzin relies on the *Istoriia o velikom kniaze by Kurbskii*, having an entirely opposite ideological agenda. Karamzin needed the letter from Ivan in order to extract the required picturesque details. However, the anguish

<sup>41</sup> Karamzin, *O drevnei i novoi Rossii*, 396–397; Pipes, *Karamzin's Memoir*, 136–137.

<sup>42</sup> Karamzin, *Istoriia*, vol. 8, 51.

<sup>43</sup> *Perepiska Ivana Groznogo s Andreem Kurbskim* (Moscow: Nauka, 1993), 138.

Ivan had for his father (or at least for a guardian, whom he could love as a father), which is clear in the excerpt of the letter from Ivan, is not taken into consideration by Karamzin, as it was not necessary for the development of the story.

The next abstract demonstrates what exactly, apart from internal cleavages in the court, Karamzin considers the major vice of oligarchic rule:

Упрекали Шуйского и в гнусном корыстолюбии; писали, что он расхитил казну... [Karamzin does not reveal who had accused him, but actually, in a further narration there are borrowings from “The first letter of Ivan the Terrible to Kurbskii,” and even coincidences in smaller details—V.R.]

По крайней мере, его ближние, клеветы, угодники грабили без милосердия во всех областях, где давались им нажиточные места или должности государственные. Так боярин Андрей Михайлович Шуйский и князь Василий Репнин-Оболенский, будучи наместниками в Пскове... не только угнетали земледельцев, граждан беззаконными налогами, вымышляли преступления, ободряли лживых доносителей, возобновляли дела старые, требовали даров от богатых, безденежной работы от бедных; но и в самых святых обителях искали добычи с лютою монгольских хищников... К сему ужасному бедствию неправосудия и насилия присоединялись частые, опустошительные набеги внешних разбойников.<sup>44</sup>

Thus according to Karamzin the oligarchic reign encourages such predators who, using their temporal position of power, follow their private interests without restraining themselves in means. Such a disaster can be disposed of by a monarch, whose interests, according to Karamzin, consist in the well-being of his own state. In reality, as we will see, Ivan by creating the *oprichnina* was also pursuing his “private” interests, but this, according to Karamzin, was not the result of a mistake, but rather of a mental disease. We shall return to this latter.

The further part of the narration, up to Ivan the Terrible’s moral turn, was built on his gradual coming of age in the conditions of the struggle of oligarchic clans

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<sup>44</sup> Karamzin, *Istoriia*, vol. 8, 51–52.



around the young tsar. However, Karamzin does not confine himself to exposing the oligarchy and organizes his narration as a history of the struggle of vicious and decent advisers. For a time Ivan plays a passive role, undergoing various influences which shape his character. At the same time, it is possible to note, that, for Shcherbatov, this character generally stays unchanged: Ivan “с природы нраву горячего.” It is not the character that changes, but only the tactics regarding his surroundings; here occurs a transformation from a latent hatred to boyars to sporadic bursts of anger during terrorizing actions. Karamzin displays Ivan’s character as exposed to good and vile influences of virtuous and vicious boyars.

This is how he characterizes, for example, the new period of domination of princes Shuiskie:

...не имея ни великодушия, ни ума выпренного, любили только господствовать, и не думали заслуживать любви сограждан, ни признательности юного венценосца истинным усердием к отечеству. Искусство сих олигархов состояло в том, чтобы не терпеть противоречия в Думе и допускать до государя единственно преданных им людей, удаляя всех, кто мог быть для них опасен или смелостию, или разумом, или благородными качествами сердца. Но Иоанн, приходя в смысл, уже чувствовал тягость незаконной опеки и ненавидел Шуйских...<sup>45</sup>

And here is the characteristic of a virtuous adviser:

...сторона Бельских, одержав верх, начала господствовать с умеренностию и благоразумием. Не было ни опал, ни гонения. Правительство стало попечительнее, усерднее к общему благу. Злоупотребления власти уменьшились...<sup>46</sup>

However, the problem was that virtue and mercy might be connected with weakness, if the real authority of the tsar does not maintain it.

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 56.

Князь Иван Бельский, будучи душою правительства, стоял на вышней степени счастья, опираясь на личную милость державного отрока, уже зреющего душою, – на ближнее с ним родство, на успехи оружия, на дела человеколюбия и справедливости. Совесть его была спокойна, народ доволен... и втайне кипела злоба, коварствовала зависть, неусыпная в свете, особенно деятельная при дворе. Здесь история наша представляет опасность великодушия, как бы в оправдание жестоких, мстительных властолюбцев, дающих мир врагам только в могиле.<sup>47</sup>

As the result, Bel'skii was deposed, and the lesson which Karamzin takes from this story is that having virtuous advisors is not sufficient by itself. It is exactly due to their virtue that they are incapable of protecting themselves in a situation of struggle for power. Therefore, in addition to them, a strong monarch is necessary in order to overcome the inevitable evils of oligarchy. Otherwise, there emerges a Machiavellian ruler, who, if he wants to secure his power, has to commit ignoble actions, that is, to become vicious. If he fails to do so, he would inevitably fall against the pressure of unprincipled adversaries. This is exactly, according to Karamzin, what happened to Bel'skii, who did not withstand a new coup from the side of princes Shuiskie. The consequences are clear:

Все прежние насилия, несправедливости возобновились. Льгота и права, данные областным жителям в благословенное господствование князя Бельского, уничтожились происками наместников. Россия сделалась опять добычею клеветов, ближних и слуг Шуйского. Но Иоанн возрастал.<sup>48</sup>

The phrase for Ivan's growth serves as a recurrent theme in the narrative. The problem, nonetheless, is that the domination of vile advisers left a mark on his soul. As a result, the tsar's character was shaped in the wrong way.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 68–69.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 72.

Сии крайности беззаконного, грубого самовластия и необузданных страстей в правителях государства ускорили перемену, желаемую народом и неприятелями Шуйских. Иоанну исполнилось тринадцать лет. Рожденный с пылкою душою, редким умом, особенною силою воли, он имел бы все главные качества великого монарха, если бы воспитание образовало или усовершенствовало в нем дары природы... преданный в волю буйных вельмож, ослепленных безрассудным личным властолюбием... не только для себя, но и для миллионов готовил несчастье своими пороками, легко возникающими при самых лучших естественных свойствах, когда еще ум, исправитель страстей, нем в юной душе и если, вместо его, мудрый пестун не изъясняет ей законов нравственности... Шуйские, отняв достойного вельможу у государя и государства, старались привязать к себе Иоанна исполнением всех его детских желаний... питали в нем склонность к сластолюбию и даже к жестокости, не предвидя следствий... Они не думали толковать ему святых обязанностей венценосца, ибо не исполняли своих... ожесточали сердце, презирали слезы Иоанна о князе Телепневе, Бельском, Воронцов в надежде загладить свою дерзость угождением его вредным прихотям, в надежде на ветренность отрока, развлекаемого ежеминутными утешами. Сия безумная система обрушилась над главою ее виновников.<sup>49</sup>

Having come forward as a self-ruling monarch and having executed the hateful Shuiskii, Ivan by no means became an autocrat in the sense in which Karamzin understood this word. For this, both he and his advisers, princes Glinskii, lacked virtue.

...новые вельможи, пестуны и советники Иоанновы, приучали юношу-монарха к ужасному легкомыслию в делах правосудия, к жестокости и тиранству! Подобно Шуйским, они готовили себе гибель; подобно им, не удерживали, но стремили Иоанна на пути к разврату и пеклись не о том, чтобы сделать верховную власть благотворною, но чтобы утвердить ее в руках собственных.<sup>50</sup>

Instead of devoting himself to the matters of administration and curbing mercenary associates, Ivan was engaged in trips throughout the country:

...великий князь ездил по разным областям своей державы... не для наблюдений государственных, не для защиты людей от притеснений корыстолюбивых наместников... окруженный сонмом бояр и

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 76–78.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 82.

чиновников, не видал печалей народа и в шуме забав не слышал стенаний бедности; скакал на борзых ишаках и оставлял за собою слезы, жалобы, новую бедность: ибо сии путешествия государевы, не принося ни малейшей пользы государству, стоили денег народу... Одним словом, Россия еще не видала отца-монарха на престоле, утешаясь только надеждою, что лета и зрелый ум откроют Иоанну святое искусство царствовать для блага людей.<sup>51</sup>

In this latter excerpt there is an important idea which justifies autocracy, despite the underlying danger of tyranny. What is the purpose of autocracy? It is to curb the self-rule of *grandees*, who otherwise would rob and suppress the people without restraint (of course, Karamzin here means not only peasants and city dwellers, but also smaller nobility).

In contrast to Shcherbatov, Karamzin does not believe in a virtuous aristocracy. For Karamzin aristocracy is equal to oligarchy, therefore any aristocratic restriction of monarchy (which Shcherbatov insists on) would only restrict the possibility of the monarch to prevent the robbery by *grandees* and their violent actions toward other layers of society. “The father-monarch on the throne” should “protect people from the suppression of mercenary governors” and their favorites; this is their major function apart from the organization of external defense. If a ruler does not fulfill this function of the defense of people from his own servants, even being autocratic by form, that is, as an unrestricted monarch, he ceases to be such for Karamzin; he serves not the good of the people, but only the good of a narrow circle of his associates. Accordingly, the people will not love such a tsar, even though this affection is a major criterion of autocracy for Karamzin.

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 85–86.

All of Karamzin's previous narrative served as a kind of preliminary to a major history, which began at the establishment of "true autocracy," a necessary condition of which was the acquisition of "virtue" by Ivan the Terrible. Such a (say, unexpected) event appears to be a consequence of the fire in Moscow and the appearance before the tsar of the priest Silvestr, who, portraying the fire to him as God's punishment, pushes him to act virtuously for fear of further troubles. This interpretation is taken not from Ivan's "Poslanie ... Kurbskomu," which actually represents Silvestr in a negative way, as "having trapped" the tsar, making him give up his own will, but from Kurbskii's *Istoriia*, which certainly considers the role of Silvestr's as positive, even though his success was accomplished by a certain deception. Remorseful of his former behavior, Ivan delivers his new philosophy in a special speech (which, of course is taken not from the sources), representing Karamzin's views on what should be an ideal autocracy. Ivan, having confessed his earlier sins before the priesthood, is as if gathering the representatives of the people (the people of different ranks) on the Red Square and tells them:

«Рано Бог лишил меня отца и матери; а вельможи не радели о мне: хотели быть самовластными; моим именем похитили саны и чести, богатели неправдою, теснили народ – и никто не претил им. В жалком детстве своем я казался глухим и немым: не внимал стенанию бедных, и не было обличения в устах моих!..

Нельзя исправить *минувшего* зла: могу только *впредь* спасать вас от подобных притеснений и грабительств... Оставьте ненависть, вражду; соединимся все любовью христианскою. Отныне я судья ваш и защитник».<sup>52</sup>

Further on, Ivan magnanimously forgives the guilty boyars; moreover, "Россия в лице своих поверенных присутствовала на лобном месте, с

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 102–103.

благоговением внимая искреннему обету юного венценосца жить для ее счастья.”<sup>53</sup> Then the tsar entrusts Adashev to accept complaints from the poor, orphans, and offended, saying: “Не бойся ни сильных, ни славных, когда они, похитив честь, беззаконствуют. Да не обманут тебя и ложные слезы бедного, когда он в зависти клеветает на богатого!”<sup>54</sup> Adashev is generally characterized as an ideal courtier who, though not a grandee, was all the more virtuous:

...имея нежную, чистую душу, нравы благие, разум приятный, основательный и бескорыстную любовь к добру, он искал Иоанновой милости не для своих личных выгод, а для пользы отечества, и царь нашел в нем редкое сокровище, друга, необходимо нужного самодержцу, чтобы лучше знать людей, состояние государства, истинные потребности оно: ибо самодержец с высоты престола видит лица и вещи в обманчивом свете отдаления; а друг его как подданный стоит наряду со всеми, смотрит прямее в сердца и вблизи на предметы.<sup>55</sup>

It is hard to get rid of the sense that Karamzin, describing the “friend of the tsar,” here portrays his own desirable role by Alexander. As he wrote in “Novoe pribavlenie” (“The new addition”) to the note “Dlia potomstva” (“For posterity”), comprehending the results of his conversation with Alexander, depicted in the *Mnenie russkogo grazhdanina*, Karamzin had several meetings with the tsar in 1819–1824:

...мы имели с ним несколько подобных бесед о разных предметах. Я всегда был чистосердечен, он всегда терпелив, кроток... Я не безмолвствовал о налогах в мирное время, о нелепой... системе финансов, о грозных военных поселениях, о странном выборе некоторых важнейших сановников...<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>56</sup> Karamzin, *O drevnei i novoi Rossii*, 440.

In other words, Karamzin wanted to be the same “friend” of the tsar, as the one he saw in Adashev.

And there, finally, is the justification of autocracy, which, according to Karamzin, had only been established in Russia when Ivan the Terrible, appealing with a speech to the “council” on the Red Square, seems to have set up a new social contract with the people.

Certainly, according to Karamzin, the people supported this contract, moreover: “Народ плакал от умиления вместе с юным своим царем.”<sup>57</sup>

It is important that autocracy, for Karamzin, does not exclude the existence of a council of grandees, yet only consisting of the virtuous. Besides, the tsar himself controls all the council’s decisions.

Царь говорил и действовал, опираясь на чету избранных, Сильвестра и Адашева, которые приняли в священный союз свой... всех мужей добродетельных, опытных, в маститой старости еще усердных к отечеству и прежде отгоняемых от трона, где ветреная юность не терпела их угрюмого вида. Ласкатели и шуты онемели при дворе; в думе заграждались уста наветникам и кознодеям, а правда могла быть откровенною. Несмотря на доверенность, которую Иоанн имел к совету, он сам входил и в государственные и в важнейшие судные дела, чтобы исполнить обет, данный им Богу и России. Везде народ благословил усердие правительства к добру общему; везде сменяли недостойных правителей... хотели ознаменовать счастливую государственную перемену не жестокою казнию худых старых чиновников, а лучшим избранием новых, как бы объявляя тем народу, что злоупотребления частной власти бывают обыкновенным, неминуемым следствием усыпления или разврата в главном начальстве; где оно терпит грабеж, там грабители почти невинны, пользуясь дозволяемым.<sup>58</sup>

And once again it is possible to observe the parallel with the way Karamzin portrays the contemporary state of things in the *Memoir on Ancient and Modern Russia*:

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<sup>57</sup> Karamzin, *Istoriia*, vol. 8, 104.

<sup>58</sup> Karamzin, *Istoriia*, vol. 8, 104–105.

Одно из важнейших зол нашего времени есть бесстрашие. Везде грабят, и кто наказан?.. Иногда видим, что государь, вопреки своей кротости, бывает расположен и к строгим мерам... но сии малочисленные примеры ответственности нынешних мздоимцев... В России не будет правосудия, если государь, поручив оное судилищам, не будет смотреть за судьями... Сирены могут петь вокруг трона: “Александр! воцари закон в России” и проч. Я возьмусь быть толкователем сего хора: “Александр! дай нам именем закона господствовать над Россиею, а сам покойся на троне, изливая единственно милости...”<sup>59</sup>

Thus, depicting this period of Ivan the Terrible’s reign, Karamzin writes as if he wanted to give his present tsar a lesson, as if to say “look after your associates, keep them in fear, otherwise no one would keep them from using their position for their personal benefit, for the suppression of the people.”

The advantages of an autocracy based in the people’s love, accomplished by the restriction of egoistic servants, through one’s higher authority, are summed up in the following expressions:

Только в одних самодержавных государствах видим сии легкие, быстрые переходы от зла к добру: ибо все зависит от воли самодержца, который, подобно искусному механику, движением перста дает ход громадам, вращает махину неизмеримую и влечет ею миллионы ко благу или бедствию.<sup>60</sup>

Karamzin’s notions here appear quite opposite to the views of Hume, who displaying the advantages of a “free” rule, wrote in his essay *That Politics May Be Reduced to a Science*:

Were it once admitted, that all governments are alike, and that the only difference consists in the character and conduct of the governors, most political disputes would be at an end ... But, though a friend to moderation, I

<sup>59</sup> Karamzin, *O drevnei i novoi Rossii*, 429–430.

<sup>60</sup> Karamzin, *Istoriia*, vol. 8, 105.



cannot forebear condemning this sentiment, and should be sorry to think, that human affairs admit of no greater stability, than what they receive from the casual humours and characters of particular men.<sup>61</sup>

Later, Hume draws possible arguments against his viewpoint, and particularly, the comparison of the poor governing of France under Henry III and the good government of Henry IV. “Instances of this kind may be multiplied,” Hume writes. Yet, he adds: “All absolute governments must very much depend on the administration; and this is one of the great inconveniences attending that form of government.”<sup>62</sup>

Paradoxically, the further narrative of the *Istoriia*, despite Karamzin so strongly pronouncing the opposite thesis, exactly supports Hume’s standpoint. As Karamzin demonstrates, Ivan the Terrible eventually loses his miraculously acquired virtue. According to Karamzin, this is the consequence of the concurrence of a number of circumstances. In other words, this is a certain diversion from the natural order of things, while normally aristocracy is the best form of government. Hume would say to this that a “free” form of government is better, because it is protected from such “contingencies,” and does not depend to such a degree on the changes of the character of particular personalities.<sup>63</sup> While Rousseau would add (and Shcherbatov seems to agree with him) that unrestricted rule itself leads to corruption, pushing a monarch to usurp the rights of “sovereign,” i.e., the people.

The following narrative on the first period of Ivan’s reign is arranged by Karamzin as a continuous sequence of successes, from the creation of the Code of law to the annexation of Kazan. Moreover the historian does not miss the chance to point

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<sup>61</sup> David Hume, *The Philosophical Works of David Hume in 4 Volumes*, vol. 3 (Edinburgh, 1826), 14.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

to the virtue of the monarch and the people's love for him. He does not forget the "historical lessons," specially destined for the edification of Alexander. Thus, he writes of Ivan's Code of law:

...Иоанн и добрые его советники искали в труде своем не блеска, не суетной славы, а верной, явной пользы, с ревностною любовию к справедливости, к благоустройству; не действовали воображением, умом не обгоняли настоящего порядка вещей, не терялись мыслями в возможностях будущего, но смотрели вокруг себя, исправляли злоупотребления, не изменяя главной, древней основы законодательства; все оставили, как было и чем народ казался довольным: устраняли только причину известных жалоб; хотели лучшего, не думая о совершенстве – и без учености, без феории, не зная ничего, кроме России, но зная хорошо Россию, написали книгу... она есть верное зеркало нравов и понятий века.<sup>64</sup>

Let us compare this with a conservative passage from the *Memoir on Ancient and Modern Russia*:

...вместо того, чтобы отменить единственно излишнее, прибавить нужное, одним словом, исправлять по основательному рассмотрению, советники Александровы захотели новостей... оставив без внимания правило мудрых, что всякая новость в государственном порядке есть зло, к которому надобно прибегать только в необходимости...<sup>65</sup>

Мы читаем в прекрасной душе Александра сильное желание утвердить в России действия закона. Оставив прежние формы, но двигая, так сказать, оные постоянным духом ревности к общему добру, он скорее мог бы достигнуть этой цели... новости ведут к новостям и благоприятствуют необузданности произвола.<sup>66</sup>

Thus, it is possible to observe here an appeal to Alexander to act in a similar way as Ivan the Terrible and his advisers acted in old times, rather than as reformers such as Speranskii, i.e., on the basis of "theories," and allegedly without knowing Russia.

<sup>64</sup> Karamzin, *Istoriia*, vol. 8, 107–108.

<sup>65</sup> Karamzin, *O drevnei i novoi Rossii*, 402; Pipes, *Karamzin's Memoir*, 147–148.

<sup>66</sup> Karamzin, *O drevnei i novoi Rossii*, 407; Pipes, *Karamzin's Memoir*, 156.

Similarly to Shcherbatov, Karamzin approves of the restriction of the order of precedence, although he does not mention the need to support the rights of the aristocracy by birth. On the contrary, he writes of the order of precedence that “государь еще не мог искоренить сего великого зла.”<sup>67</sup> Consequently, for Karamzin, this was pure evil; there was no combination of positive and negative beginnings which Shcherbatov wrote about. In addition, Karamzin mentions the action, omitted by Shcherbatov, of the issuing of regulations concerning local self-government:

...грамоты уставные, по коим во всех городах и волостях надлежало избрать старост и целовальников, или присяжных, чтобы они судили дела вместе с наместниками... а сотские и пятидесятники, также избираемые общею доверенностию, должныствовали заниматься земскою исправою, дабы чиновники царские не могли действовать самовластно и народ не был безгласным.<sup>68</sup>

Here we see that Karamzin implies the restriction of self-rule of officials not only from above through the tsar’s supervision, but also from below through the organization of local self-government. Thus, autocracy for Karamzin does not exclude the people from participating in state administration, at least on the local level.

Finally, the annexation of Kazan and the subsequent triumphant return of the tsar to Moscow serves as an occasion for the following panegyric:

Сей монарх, озаренный славою, до восторга любимый отечеством, завоеватель враждебного царства, умиритель своего, великодушный во всех чувствах, во всех намерениях, мудрый правитель, законодатель, имел только 22 года от рождения: явление редкое в истории государств! Казалось, что Бог хотел в Иоанне удивить Россию и человечество примером какого-то совершенства, великости и счастья на троне... Но

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<sup>67</sup> Karamzin, *Istoriia*, vol. 8, 108.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

здесь восходит первое облако над лучезарною главою юного венценосца.<sup>69</sup>

As it is easy to guess, he speaks of the episode of Ivan's disease and the boyar's unrest on the issue of ascending to the throne. A certain unexpectedness of this episode (an ideal monarch suddenly begins to lose virtue) becomes clear, if one takes into consideration the construction of the plot of the narrative: Ivan's happiness on the throne seems to be brought to the highest point, there is no way further. It only remains to show how he would stand the troubles and vicissitude of fate. However, it is them that he cannot endure. In addition, if one would consider the preliminaries of the story, in the way Karamzin describes the formation of the character of the young tsar, then there is nothing strange in such a development of the plot.

The construction of the narrative here is likely to be deliberate, and resembles a sentimental novel on assaulted virtue—not *Pamela*, but rather *Clarissa* by Richardson. The image of the people, who love their monarch, in the *Istoriia* parallels the image of Anastasia, a typical sentimental heroine of virtue, weak and defenseless. It is not accidental that Anastasia dies right at the moment when Ivan is already ready to betray his obligation of monarch. *Pamela* is a story of the triumph of virtue with a happy ending: *Clarissa* contains a tragic episode of the rape of the heroine. Ivan seems to have done the same with his country, and, moreover, he went unpunished. For Karamzin the people are not even thinking of resisting the tyrant, but only powerlessly complain of its fate. Similar motives are present in Karamzin's own *Bednaia Liza*; having learned of the decision of her disloyal lover to marry someone else, Lisa does not protest, but simply commits suicide.

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 197.

The betrayal of the beloved is identified with the monarch's break of the "social contract" with his people. What prompted Ivan to commit such a crime?

It turns out, that it was personal discontent with his virtuous advisers.

Let us remember Paul I in the *Memoir on Ancient and Modern Russia*. According to Karamzin: "По жалкому заблуждению ума и вследствие многих личных претерпенных им неудовольствий, он хотел быть Иоанном IV..."<sup>70</sup>

Ivan had enough of "unpleasantries" regarding previous dishonest boyars, who kept him in tyranny during his childhood, namely princes Shuiskie. But why did he become dissatisfied with his virtuous advisers?

One of the reasons was the unrest of the boyars, in the case of Ivan's disease, their refusal to swear an oath to the juvenile heir.

Unlike Shcherbatov, Karamzin blames the boyars, having refused to swear an allegiance to an infant, in more passionate language:

Чего же хотели сии дерзкие сановники, может быть, действительно одушевленные любовью к общему делу, действительно уstraшенные мыслию о гибельных для отечества смутах боярских?.. Предполагая самое чистое, благороднейшее побуждение в сердцах бояр, летописец справедливо осуждает их замысел самовольно ниспровергнуть наследственный устав государства... Все человеческие законы имеют свои опасности, неудобства, иногда вредные следствия; но бывают душою порядка, священны для благоразумных, нравственных людей и служат оплотом, твердынею держав. Предвидение ослушных бояр могло и не исполниться: но если бы малолетство царя и произвело временные бедствия для России, то лучше было сносить оные, нежели нарушением главного устава государственного ввергнуть отечество в бездну всегдашнего мятежа неизвестностию наследственного права, столь важного в монархиях.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Karamzin, *O drevnei i novoi Rossii*, 395; Pipes, *Karamzin's Memoir*, 135.

<sup>71</sup> Karamzin, *Istoriia*, vol. 8, 204–205.

Thus, Karamzin writes from the position of the defender of the law, which should be unchangeable even in an autocratic monarchy, in this particular case, the law of succession. But it is not only the breaking of the law that was a sin of the grandees. Karamzin assumes that the position of the tsar's favorite posed a threat for the virtue of one of them, namely for Silvestr.

...чрезвычайный муж Сильвестр... указывал и вельможам и митрополиту, и судиям и воеводам; мыслил, а царь делал. Сия власть, не будучи беззаконием и происходя от справедливой доверенности государевой к мудрому советнику, могла однако ж изменить чистоту его первых намерений и побуждений; могла родить в нем любовь к господству и желание утвердить оное навсегда: искушение, опасное для добродетели! Всеми уважаемый, но не всеми любимый, Сильвестр терял с Иоанном политическое бытие свое и, соглашая личное властолюбие с пользою государственною, *может быть*, тайно доброхотствовал стороне Владимира Андреевича.<sup>72</sup>

Karamzin's expression "может быть" indicates that it is nothing more than a guess. Nevertheless, Silvestr interceded for Vladimir Andreevich, whom Zakhair'iny (the tsarina's relatives) did not allow to visit the tsar. This is, of course, not enough for the accusation of betrayal. But in the imagination of the tsar, concerned with the safety of his wife and son, along with the whispering of close associates, interested in getting rid of Silvestr, there could emerge suspicion. And even though Ivan, according to Karamzin, had visually forgiven the offence, yet, as the historian writes:

...в сердце осталась рана опасная. Иоанну внушали, что не только Сильвестр, но и юный Адашев тайно держал сторону князя Владимира. Не сомневаясь в их усердии к благу России, он начал сомневаться в их личной привязанности к нему; *уважая* того и другого, простыл к ним в *любви*; обязанный им главными успехами своего царствования, страшился быть неблагодарным и соблюдал единственно пристойность... Всего хуже было то, что супруга Иоаннова, дотоле согласно с Адашевым и Сильвестром питав в нем любовь к святой

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 207.

нравственности, отделилась от них тайной неприязнью, думая, что они имели намерение пожертвовать ею, сыном ее и братьями выгодам своего особенного честолюбия. Анастасия способствовала, вероятно, остуде Иоаннова сердца к друзьям. С сего времени он неприятным образом почувствовал свою от них зависимость и находил иногда удовольствие не соглашаться с ними, делать по-своему...<sup>73</sup>

Here Karamzin, as if unintentionally, proves with his story Hume's idea. What do the benefits of autocracy cost if they rest on such fragile ground as a monarch's virtue, depending on his emotional relationships with "friends"? Should the adversaries cast a shadow on these relationships, virtue is under threat.

Further on in Karamzin's *Istoriia*, similarly to Shcherbatov's, there follows an episode with Maxim Grek and Vassian Toporkov. Describing the benevolent reaction of the tsar to the latter's advice (here he follows the same source as Shcherbatov—Kurbskii's *Istoriia*), Karamzin exclaims:

«Нет, государь! – могли бы мы возразить ему: – нет! Совет, тебе данный, внушен духом лжи, а не истины. Царь должен не властвовать только, но властвовать благодетельно: его мудрость, как человеческая, имеет нужду в пособии других умов, и тем превосходнее в глазах народа, чем мудрее советники, им выбираемые. Монарх, опасаясь *умных*, впадает в руки *хитрых*, которые в угодность ему притворятся даже глупцами; не пленяя в нем разума, пленяют страсть и поведут его к своей цели. Цари должны опасаться не мудрых, а коварных или бессмысленных советников».<sup>74</sup>

There is only a minor difference in the way Shcherbatov cites Kurbskii. Shcherbatov writes about "отогнании от престола" those who could represent for the tsar the people's needs, and those who are ready to serve only out of ambition, whereas Karamzin writes that the ruler who is surrounded by wise, rather than obedient advisers, is "превосходнее в глазах народа." Thus, Shcherbatov speaks of

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 211–212.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 214–215.

the efficiency of governing, while Karamzin speaks rather of its durability and legitimacy in the eyes of the public opinion.

However, this is not the full list of differences. Whereas, for Shcherbatov, the rational choice in favor of Vassian Toporkov, rather than Maxim Grek, signifies that Ivan has already made in his soul the decision to become a tyrant and only waited for a favorable moment, for Karamzin, Ivan is still a virtuous monarch, which allows him to continue winning victories in Livonia. Yet, there occurs an event, in a way symmetrical to Ivan's initial acquisition of virtue, and it is also marked by catastrophic fire, as if being a symbol of the intervention of Providence into a course of earthly events.

Но в то время, как сильная рука Иоанна давила слабую Ливонию, небо готовило ужасную перемену в судьбе его и России.

Тринадцать лет он наслаждался полным счастьем семейственным, основанным на любви к супруге нежной и добродетельной. Анастасия... цвела юностию и здоровьем: но в июле 1560 года занемогла тяжкою болезнию, умноженною испугом. В сухое время, при сильном ветре, загорелся Арбат; тучи дыма с пылающими головнями неслися к Кремлю. ... Царице от страха и беспокойства сделалось хуже... к отчаянию супруга, Анастасия... преставилась... Иоанн шел за гробом... Он стенал и рвался: один митрополит, сам обливаясь слезами, дерзал напоминать ему о твердости христианина... Но еще не знали, что Анастасия унесла с собою в могилу!

Здесь конец счастливых дней Иоанна и России: ибо он лишился не только супруги, но и добродетели...<sup>75</sup>

For Karamzin Ivan lost his sanity of mind in mourning. And therefore he ceased to grasp rational arguments, gave himself away to passions, and became a tyrant. This interpretation of events allows Karamzin to argue for their exceptionality, whereas, for Shcherbatov the tyranny of an unrestricted autocrat is rather a natural

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 307–308.



consequence of his position than a peculiar coincidence. Therefore in order to explain the choice made by the tsar he does not require the interference of Providence.

Let us draw some preliminary conclusions from our comparison of the narrations of the first period of Ivan the Terrible's reign by the two historians.

A detailed comparison of the two versions of the history of the first period of the reign of Ivan the Terrible suggested by Shcherbatov and Karamzin allows us to clarify the classic opposition of these two thinkers, respectively, as an advocate of monarchy restricted by the council of aristocrats and as an adherent of unrestricted autocracy. Firstly, Shcherbatov recognizes the necessity of a strong monarch, so indispensable for autocracy, only in the worst case, that of a struggle for power among aristocratic clans, which leads to the weakening of the state. Karamzin, in his turn, similarly recognizes that nearing the environment of the monarch there should be several associates or assistants, who would not only help him with their reasonable advice, but also strengthen him in virtue, i.e., in serving the interests of the common good. Secondly, the restrictions of the power of the monarch, which Shcherbatov keeps in mind, are not mechanical, and their functioning depends on the monarch's will. Thus, it is rather possible to say that a sensible and virtuous monarch would consciously restrict himself by taking into consideration the advice of sensible and virtuous associates. Yet, no law or constitution would keep him from breaking this agreement and the abuse of his position, if he would decide to become a tyrant. For his part, Karamzin draws a contrast between autocracy and single-handed power (*samovlastie*), implying that in the first case a virtuous monarch would deliberately follow the advice of his virtuous associates, while in the second case, a tyrant, obeying

his disorderly passions only, would attract mercenary flatterers, who, demonstrating their ostentatious loyalty, would actually follow their own egoistic interests.

Thus, if considering only state organization, Shcherbatov and Karamzin write of one and the same thing—unrestricted (meaning the lack of constitution or any other legal restrictions) monarchy, or autocracy. Whether such monarchy is a proper monarchy, where the ruler acts in the interests of common good, or a tyranny, where the ruler exercises arbitrary actions under the influence of his disorderly wishes, depends exclusively on the virtue of the monarch. In the first case he would surround himself with virtuous advisers, in the second by vile ones. What is exactly the difference between Shcherbatov's and Karamzin's political concepts?

First of all, let us look at what is conspicuous is Shcherbatov's and Karamzin's different attitudes toward aristocracy. Shcherbatov recognizes that in the case of a weak reign, i.e., in the absence of a sufficiently legitimate monarch who would be able to hold the centrifugal tendencies, the grandees would be involved in a fight for power with each other, which would lead to disorder in the administration of the state. Nonetheless, these grandees are ready to serve the fatherland and sacrifice their property and even their life for the sake of its good. Therefore, they may be virtuous, and the state as a system would work well if the ambitions of the boyars would be directed in the right way. A monarch should also learn to find a golden mean between promotion based on the service of talented people and a preference given to his descendants from aristocratic clans; the virtue of the latter is accomplished by a correct upbringing (see the above chapters devoted to the political views of Shcherbatov). Thus, he speaks of some quasi-monarchical system of checks and

balances, where it is important to find an optimal balance of the opposite principles. Yet, it is not the balance or mutual confinement of different powers, as in a traditional mixed monarchy or constitutional system with a division of authorities, but rather a balance of various motivations, guiding the behavior of the representatives of the aristocratic elite. The major motive for such aristocrats is ambition—it is necessary to direct them in the way that it would work for the good of the state, rather than for its collapse. And it is the ruler who must do it. Not only should he be virtuous himself, though this is an indispensable condition: the ruler must also be a talented administrator of the state, who could be compared with a captain of a ship, able to set a course for the ship, to use navigation instruments, and knowing when and which sails should be set in order not to sink the ship, but on the contrary, lead it to a safe harbor. The ideal state organization, portrayed in this way by Shcherbatov would not work without a virtuous and wise monarch, even if there were a sufficient number of virtuous aristocrats.

Shcherbatov in his narration of the history focuses on the topic, which may be described as a search for correct and, most effective devices of administering of the state with the help of virtuous grandees, loving their fatherland. In the examined fragment of the *Istoriia* Shcherbatov exactly depicts the evolution from a weak and unskilled to a more effective state administration.

On the other hand, Shcherbatov demonstrates that the virtue of the ruler depends significantly on how far he comprehends the limits of his own human abilities and realizes the necessity of relying not only on his own abilities, but also on the reason and the loyalty to the fatherland of aristocratic elite. Without their help,

according to Shcherbatov, even the most virtuous and wisest ruler is unable to succeed. Thus, the fostering of virtuous and educated elite, for Shcherbatov, is an indispensable condition of existence of a well-organized state.

In opposition to this, Karamzin does not believe in the possibility of the existence of a virtuous aristocracy, nor is it needed in his construction of an ideal monarchy. A virtuous monarch does not need the aristocracy; he only needs several virtuous “friends” capable of delivering to him the needs of the people. The origin of these friends may be different, however, as the example of Adashev demonstrates, Karamzin usually implies their noble origin. Aristocracy is identified by Karamzin with oligarchy and invested exclusively with the propensity to follow personal egoistic interests. Then what, according to Karamzin, does the power of monarchy rest on in this case? If for Shcherbatov a monarch is the same as other people, his legitimacy is conditional and depends on the recognition of his power by the grandees, for Karamzin the legitimacy of a monarch relies on the “people’s love” in the first place. The power of a crowned monarch is as if he is sparkling in the halo of his people’s love, filled with energy by which he rises above the level of the ordinary people, where the grandees stay with their private interests. It is exactly why a monarch, according to Karamzin, is capable of restraining the grandees, and directs their efforts, whether they want it or not, to the common good. He is covered with the people’s love and from it he may draw his might.

What conditions this phenomenal love that endows the monarch’s power with such energy?

It depends on the monarch's ability to protect the weak and poor against those strong and mighty representatives of oligarchy, who seek to suppress them. If a monarch demonstrates such an ability, and succeeds in his foreign policy, protects the fatherland from exterior enemies, which, certainly, enforces the people's love, he does not need to be afraid of aristocratic conspirators. If the monarch closes his ears to the howls of the offended, if he allows his servants and associates to rob and fleece the dependents unpunished, the people's love would be lost. In this case a ruler becomes a simple mortal, an ordinary ruler in the spirit of Machiavelli's *The Prince*, who has only one way of maintaining his power, i.e., acting with no investigation or trial and getting rid of potential enemies in advance, before they have time to arrange an overturn or even think of it. Such a ruler would inevitably turn into a tyrant, surrounded by sycophantic associates, each of whom is only concerned with how to survive and be a winner in the competition for being close to the tsar, pushing other favorites aside, and, in the meantime, multiplying one's personal wealth.

The history of Ivan the Terrible, grounded in such a doctrine, demonstrates how an accidental circumstance (a fire) pushes the ruler toward virtue, having a wholesome effect on his sensitive soul. Having become virtuous, he finds virtuous friends who help him in his governing, and, more importantly, to learn the people's needs. The reaction to such a transformation of a formerly weak and egoistic monarch appears to be the people's love. What was the reason for Ivan's final rejection of this love and his embarking on the road of tyranny for Karamzin? It turns out, apart from a defective upbringing, which the boyars were guilty of, it was because of personal displeasure in the camp of the tsar's virtuous accomplices, his frustration in their

personal allegiance to him, though nothing gave him ground for doubting their loyalty to the fatherland. Besides, the very position of a favorite may make even the most virtuous grandee extremely proud, so that he forgets his position and serves his ambitions rather than the people's needs. Thus, the ideal monarchy becomes destroyed as the result of contingencies and personal reasons, and the autocracy, based on the people's love, turns into single-handed governing, resting on terror and following the disorderly wishes of the ruler.

Thus, Karamzin shows the instability of the form of government, which he himself several times declared to be best. As Alexander Pushkin put it, arguing against the Jacobins who were indignant at Karamzin's political position, his *Istoriia* was reproached of “несколько отдельных размышлений в пользу самодержавия,” but these arguments “красноречиво опровергнутые верным рассказом событий,”<sup>76</sup> in Pushkin's opinion, did not deserve such reproaches.

If one pays attention to Karamzin's general liking of “paradoxes,” noted by Pushkin,<sup>77</sup> it is possible to assume that the author of the *Istoriia* consciously sought to enable the interpretation of his narrative, unfavorable for autocracy, which was intended to satisfy his freedom-loving readers. At the same time, this narrative did not put him into an open conflict with the defenders of autocracy (the role of the censor was performed by the tsar and conservative “public opinion”).

Karamzin's idea that autocracy allows for the turning of the “the giant of the state” towards good as well as evil by a single autocrat's gesture is an expression of a

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<sup>76</sup> Alexandr Pushkin, “Karamzin,” in vol. 7 of *Sobranie sochinenii v 10-ti tomakh* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1962), accessed 29 Dec. 2011, <http://www.rvb.ru/pushkin/01text/08history/03memoires/1148.htm>.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

paradox. Here the form (praise, as it looks) contradicts the content (a statement on the instability of such a system, and its dependence on accidental factors). In this regard, analyzing the political views of Karamzin, it is necessary to take into account that his various reasoning on advantages of autocratic form of government may contain a hidden irony.

## CHAPTER 4: SHCHERBATOV AND KARAMZIN

### ON THE REIGN OF BORIS GODUNOV

#### *§4.1 Shcherbatov on Tsar Boris*

The history of tsar Boris is built by Shcherbatov as a narrative which unites it with the history of tsar Feodor, and is structured as a story of the “rise and fall” of the excessively ambitious favorite. However, besides this, the part of the story devoted to Boris as a tsar has its own logic which is based on the attempt of Shcherbatov to answer the question: Is it possible for a person who came to power by unlawful means to pursue, nevertheless, a policy for the sake of the common good? This question was all the more important for Shcherbatov because, in accordance with his treatise *On the Corruption of Morals in Russia*, Catherine II came to power by usurpation. Therefore, this was a contemporary question which could be formulated as follows: Is it true that regardless of the means of accession to the throne the ruler could be excused by his or her policy for the sake of the common good? Could such policy give him or her sufficient legitimacy in the eyes of the people?

Taking into account that Godunov in the end was not able (at least for his heir) to retain power, the answer has to be negative. But what was the reason for the fall of Godunov’s dynasty? Was it his initial viciousness, or simply a historical chance, the fact that he was not lucky? In other words, could he have retained power under certain favorable circumstances? Generally, Shcherbatov’s answer was that the fall of



Godunov was inevitable because, according to the historian, “Fortune’s blows” were unavoidable. Some rulers could withstand them and some could not. Fortune is variable by definition, but a proper state structure can withstand misfortune just as a good ship can resist a storm. But if something is wrong with its construction, it will inevitably sink.

Godunov, being a usurper, with all his good intentions in respect to the people, had to act as a tyrant toward his potential competitors in the struggle for power. However, apparently strengthening his personal power, he destroyed the state, which was based, for Shcherbatov, on a union between the monarch and the aristocracy. Without this pillar, with attempts to rely only on the people and excluding the aristocracy, the construction of the state inevitably turns out to be unstable. The people are, so to speak, too fluid a medium, their sentiments vary too quickly. Therefore the people cannot be a basis unless they are organized by a reasonable force, which for Shcherbatov can be only the representatives of noble families. However, this force happened to be hostile to Godunov as a result of the origin of his power. While fortune was on his side, Boris was able to contain the aristocracy, and he had popularity among the people. But as hard times had come (in particular, because of the famine), popularity changed to hatred. With all of Boris’ attempts to make something good for the people, it did not contribute to his popularity despite the fact that Boris was not guilty in respect to these misfortunes. He was condemned for the lack of “fortune” for the country, and this was connected with his former crimes. As a result, deprived of all support, Boris happened to be powerless against the

impostor. The machine of state became paralyzed because nobody wanted to save the universally hated tsar.

Boris perished together with his weak heir, but for all that the state was also destroyed, governed by a notorious deceiver. Thus, Boris was condemned to the ruin not only of his family but also his state though he sincerely wanted to strengthen it.

Such is the moral lesson which Shcherbatov has built in his story about tsar Boris. But how exactly was the viciousness of the tsar-usurper connected with defects of the construction of the state, with insufficient legitimacy of the monarch? To answer this question, let us analyze Shcherbatov's story in detail.

Describing the accession of Godunov to power and the first years of his rule, Shcherbatov constructs an image of the monarch who used a double strategy: on the one hand, deception and corruption in regard to the lowest strata (the common people and ordinary nobility), among whom he looked for support, and, on the other hand, terror and repression in regard to the highest nobility (boyars), who could be his competitors in the struggle for power. For the time being while fortune was on his side, this strategy was successful for Godunov, at least for the preservation of power, although it was destructive for the society.

A separate chapter of the first part of the seventh volume (book 15) is devoted to the actions of Godunov from the moment of the death of tsar Feodor to the enthronement of Boris. Shcherbatov refers here, as in other places, to the *Letopis' o mnogikh miatezhakh* ("Chronicle on Many Mutinies"). Let us quote the text of this *Letopis'* in order to clarify Shcherbatov's additions to this source.

Царствующего же града Москвы Бояре и все воинство, и всего государства Московскаго всякие люди ото всех градов и весей сбирахуся людие, и посылаху к Москве на избрание Царское... Патриарх же и все власти со всею землею советовав, и положи совет меж собою, чтоб посадити на Московское государство... Бориса Феодоровича Годунова, видяще его при Царе Феодоре Иоанновиче праведное и крепкое правление к земли, и показавшаго к людям ласку великую. Ониж чаяху от него и впредь милости, а не чаяху людие к себе от него гонения, и моляху его многие люди, чтобы сел на Московское государство. Он же им отказываше усты своими, и яко не хотяше; сердце же его и мысль на то давно желаше. Князи же Шуйские единые его не хотяху на царство, узнав его, что быти от него людям и к себе гонению. Ониж от него по том многия беды и скорби и тесноты прияша.<sup>1</sup>

The *Letopis'* emphasizes here Godunov's guile. He feigningly refused the throne, although in his heart he wanted the supreme power, and he pretended to be merciful and generous, although he prepared repressions. Princes Shuiskie suspected this, but could not do anything.

This *Letopis'* was not, however, the only source for Shcherbatov. He referred to the election charter of Godunov, to the *Razriadnye knigi* ("Books of registration of appointments"), but all these were only sources of specific details. The main source for possible adoption, not of particular facts, but rather interpretations, are stories which were based mainly on the memoirs of foreigners who visited Muscovy during the reign of Godunov and later on, in the Time of Troubles. Shcherbatov refers particularly to the *Historia sui temporis* by Jacques de Thou,<sup>2</sup> on the *Universal*

<sup>1</sup> Mikhail Shcherbatov, ed., *Letopis' o mnogikh miatezhakh i o razorenii moskovskago gosudarstva ot vnutrennikh i vneshnikh nepriiatelei...*, izdanie vtoroie (Moscow, 1788), 48.

<sup>2</sup> Shcherbatov does not refer to a particular edition. In Godunov's volume he mentions *Historia* in the following way: De Thou, *Istoriia Obshchaia (General History)*, bk. 120. The title "General History" points to a French translation. There was available, for example, the following edition: Jacques-Auguste de Thou, *Histoire Universelle*, ed. Desfontaines ("London"—in reality Paris, 1734). See bibliographical information in: Samuel Kinser, *The Works of Jacques-Auguste de Thou* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966).

*History* published in London,<sup>3</sup> and on the work on the Time of Troubles written by Gerard Friedrich Müller,<sup>4</sup> Shcherbatov's predecessor and teacher. All these authors based their compilations on several sources; a detailed analysis of those would occupy too much space. Let us note only two of the most important among them: memoirs by Jacques Margeret, who was a captain of foreign mercenaries in the court of Godunov (this source is important for the French tradition, particularly for de Thou, with whom Margeret had personal conversations), and the work by Petrus Petrejus, the representative of the Swedish court, who was an informant about Russia. In particular, Margeret wrote the following about the circumstances of Godunov's election on the throne:

Наконец... сказанный Федор скончался (некоторые говорят, что сказанный Борис был виновником его смерти). С этих пор он начал более, чем прежде, домогаться власти, но так скрытно, что никто, кроме самых дальновидных, которые, однако ж, не осмелились ему противиться... Итак, он заставил просить себя принять титул императора и, возражая, увещевал их, что они напрасно так спешат, что дело заслуживает более зрелого решения... Истина была, однако же, в том, что при нем страна не несла урона, что он увеличил казну, не считая городов, замков и крепостей, построенных по его повелению, а также заключил мир со всеми соседями.<sup>5</sup>

I will note the borrowings from Margeret in the course of further narration, when it is important. Yet it is essential to mention here, that Margeret recognizes

<sup>3</sup> *The universal history, from the earliest account of time to the present. Compiled from original authors*, ed. G. Sale and others, vols. 1–7 (London, 1730–1739). French translation: *Histoire universelle ... traduit de l'anglais par une société de gens de lettres* (Amsterdam, 1742–1792).

<sup>4</sup> Gerard Friedrich Müller, "Opyt noveishei istorii o Rossii," in *Starosvetskoie chteniie. Almanach*, ed. P. I. Khoteev (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo Politekhnicheskogo universiteta, 2009), 113–139, originally published in Müller's magazine: *Sochineniia i perevody, k pol'ze i uveseleniiu sluzhashchie* (St. Petersburg: Academy of Sciences, 1761).

<sup>5</sup> Jacques Margeret, "Sostoianie Rossiiskoi imperii i velikogo kniazhestva Moskovii," in *Rossii XV-XVII vv. glazami inostrantsev* (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1986), 234. See also the French edition: *De L'empire de Russie, et Grande Duché de Moscovie*, par le Capitaine Margeret (Paris, 1669).

actual merits of Godunov in the preceding period, although he regards his initial rejection of power as a cunning policy, designed to deceive his potential rivals.

Another important source which describes in detail the circumstances of Boris' election is the *Regin Muschowitici Sciographia* ("The history of the great duchy of Moscow") by Petrus Petrejus (Peer Persson de Erlesunda). The following are excerpts from his narration:

Когда Федор Иванович был похоронен... другие большие бояре и русские князья сильно досадовали на правителя... говорили с укоризною об его низком происхождении, о том, что ему не следует носить венец и скипетр и царствовать, а другому, из древнего великокняжеского рода. Но это нисколько не помогло им: вдова великого князя, сестра Бориса, Ирина Федоровна, была очень хитра... Большими обещаниями и подарками она тайно склонила полковников и капитанов, чтобы они уговорили подчиненных себе воинов подавать голоса в пользу ее брата... Точно так же она вела тайные происки со многими знатными монахами и попами во всей стране, даже со вдовами и сиротами, которым Борис, во время своего управления, пособил выиграть... долговременные их тяжбы, со многими боярами, дворянами и купцами, которые, благодаря большим обещаниям и подаркам, должны были уговаривать своих подчиненных...

...князья и бояре стали рассуждать между собою, кто всех достойнее и способнее быть великим князем: один указывал на другого, третий на четвертого... все сословия... собрались вместе, духовные и светские: они шумели и кричали в один голос, так что раздавалось в воздухе, говоря: «Много знатных князей и бояр в стране, а мудрого и рассудительного великого князя нет между ними. Борис Федорович будет добродетельным и благоразумным государем: он долго и верно служил отечеству и правил им так, что всякому оказывалась справедливость, богатому и бедному, всем управлял, распоряжался... А потому они все и придумали выбрать и иметь великим князем только его, и никого другого». Этот крик не совсем-то приятно отозвался в ушах многих князей и бояр, но надо было поневоле слушать и сдерживать себя.<sup>6</sup>

It is further narrated about requests, which were addressed to Boris, about his feigned refusals, but I omit these details. Let me note only that in accordance with Petrejus the

<sup>6</sup> Petrus Petrejus [Peer Persson de Erlesunda], "Istoriia o velikom kniazhestve Moskovskom," in *O nachale vojn i smut v Moskovii* (Moscow: Fond Sergeia Dubova, 1997), 275, accessed 30 Dec. 2011, <http://www.vostlit.info/Texts/rus9/Petrej2/text23.phtml?id=1094>.

“common consent” at the election of Boris, despite the objections of more noble boyars, is ascribed here to intrigues and bribing of Boris’ supporters, first of all his sister.

Let me turn now to the narrative of Shcherbatov. The historian emphasizes, first of all, the cunning policy that Godunov directed towards winning the people’s trust and neutralization of possible rivals. In Shcherbatov’s words, while Godunov hoped for the “преклонность народа,” other boyars counted that on the elective council “кровь их предков, свойство, и отцов их, равно и собственные их заслуги, уважены будут.”<sup>7</sup> But, because nobody among the possible pretenders after the extinction of the previous dynasty had, in Shcherbatov’s words, “основательных прав,” the election took place “более взирая на достоинство особы, и по любви народной.”<sup>8</sup>

The gossips were spread against Boris by his rivals that he allegedly “приметя к себе отвращение государево ядом его окормил.”<sup>9</sup> Artful Boris hid himself in a monastery, where his sister (a widow of a dead tsar) lived, and pretended that he did not aspire for power. This act attracted the people to his side, as it was supposed that Boris did not want the power as such, but rather wanted the welfare of the people. In the narration of facts Shcherbatov here follows, first of all, the detailed story of Petrejus, but the interpretation of the motives and aspirations of the people belongs to Shcherbatov himself.

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<sup>7</sup> Mikhail Shcherbatov, *Istoriia rossiiskaia ot drevneishikh vremen*, vol. 7, pt. 1 (St. Petersburg, 1904), col. 3.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 4.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 6.

In accordance with the further narrative, the supporters of Boris (which are not named by Shcherbatov) secretly agitated for his election, persuading the people that:

...сей вельможа с толиким искусством управлял государство во время жизни царя Федора Иоанновича, наблюдая во всем строгое правосудие, не давая слабого быть сильным погублену или обижену, что народ им в податях был облегчен, и многия милости из царской казны по предстательству его содеяны были, и государство после разорительной Польской войны приведено в цветущее состояние. А посему народ, зная уже его искусство, имеет причину надеяться, что, быв возведен сам на престол, усугубит свои попечения о ошастливении народа.<sup>10</sup>

Here Shcherbatov emphasizes, in particular, the idea that the monarch protects the weak against the strong. This could please the common people, while for the nobility double tactics of bribing and frightening were used.

...таковые речения не над всяким могли действие иметь, то обещания и дары не жалея были раздаваны, а других также и устрашали мщением, что, как уже общее желание народное о возведении его есть, противники справедливо должны опасаться мщения его; а наконец устрашивали тех властью бояр...<sup>11</sup>

The last phrase means that the supporters of Boris presented the possibility of the boyars' oligarchy as the only alternative to his election. Because among the competing boyar clans there was no clear leader, the same clashes and disorders would emerge, as during Grozny's childhood. Shcherbatov adds here something, which is not present in his sources. In accordance with the latter Godunov's supporters mentioned only his skilful rule, generosity, and justice, but did not mention the danger of oligarchy.

Thus, the argument of the supporters of Godunov appeared to be convincing for the majority of the delegates of the elective council. “И тако единогласно все возопияли, что они хотят на престол Российской Бориса Феодоровича

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., col. 7.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., col. 7–8.

Годунова.”<sup>12</sup> Shcherbatov emphasized that the procedure of the election was not ordered, and the people “не дал и время боярам предлагать свои мнения, но воплями своими их мысли заглушил.”<sup>13</sup> Thus, Godunov was the winner of the competition, because he managed to acquire popularity among the people due to his successful previous rule. “И тако происки и вопли наименее просвещенных решили судьбу государства.”<sup>14</sup> Godunov managed to oppose the nobility and the common people and to restrain nobility by appealing to the people. Therefore, he acted not simply as a usurper, but as a popular usurper.

It is notable that Shcherbatov while describing supporters and competitors of Godunov related the former to “непросвещенный народ” and the latter to the representatives of aristocracy. This partially diverges from the narration of Petrejus who mentioned among the supporters of Godunov not only commanders of the army (nobles) and the clergy, but also boyars. Godunov’s competitors were, for Petrejus, only those who pretended to the throne. By contrast, Shcherbatov describes a conscious policy, in accordance with which Godunov tried to rely on representatives of the lower strata against their superiors, using the lack of enlightenment among the former.

The contradictory nature of sources leaves open the question of whether Godunov had actual deserts in respect to the people, or whether the support of the people was only a result of a successful deception. In accordance with the sources of Russian origin (*Letopis’ o mnogikh miatezhakh*), the governing of Godunov

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., col. 11.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., col. 11.



(disregarding his way of obtaining power) was indeed happy. For Petrejus, such was the opinion of Godunov's supporters, who were influenced by bribery, while the actual opinion of the people was not really taken into account.

Shcherbatov, who based his opinion on a certain manuscript, *Khronograf* ("A chronographer"), which was in his private library, seems to doubt that the love of the people towards Boris could be sincere. Describing the "game" of triple call to Boris for the throne, when the crowd entreated him with tears and he refused twice, Shcherbatov mentioned the evidence, in accordance with which the adherents of Boris kicked others to make them cry; others in the crowd smeared their eyes with saliva to pretend that they were crying. In this case Shcherbatov remarks:

Таковое с изумлением оказываемое усердие народное ясно показывает, что оно не искреннее было; ибо прямое усердие таковыя запальчивости не имеет; а обыкновенно, где есть принуждение и страх, тут, дабы сокрыть и самое свое отвращение, люди силятся излишние являть знаки.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, the alleged popularity of Boris among the people could easily be only the back side of fear of the mighty ruler. The very exaggeration of popular enthusiasm in respect to the person of Boris was, for Shcherbatov, the evidence of that. And all this "посмеятельное игрище" was necessary only in order to shut the mouth of the discontented boyars.

Сановитейшие же бояре, видя весьма усилившуюся сторону Годунова желанием народным... пришли в некое онемение, и иные или желали скорейшим согласием возводимого на царство милость приобрести, или по крайней мере молчанием своим ни чему не препятствовать.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., col. 14.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., col. 15.

Another way that Godunov won popularity consisted in ostentatious piety, in the alleged wish to stay in a monastery or to agree to the throne as if under coercion, as if taking power as a burden, by the command of God. In this respect Boris was essentially assisted by the clergy, led by patriarch Iov (Job), who was obliged to Boris for his promotion.<sup>17</sup> In this case Boris used the sincere faith of the people, who seriously believed in what Boris treated as a hypocritical game. Shcherbatov portrays the behavior of Boris as “поступок богопротивный, в коем священнейшия вещи игрищем честолюбию учинились.”<sup>18</sup> When Godunov finally agreed, “якобы по невозможности более отречься,” Shcherbatov condemns the entire game in the following expressions:

...согласился на то, чего давно желал, чего ради пролился кровь безвинного младенца, изгнал и умертвил многих вельмож, и наконец, яко глас народный его обвинял и неким образом лицемерие его утверждает, отравил зятя, царя и благодетеля своего.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, condemning the villainy of Godunov, Shcherbatov was ready even to acknowledge him as a murderer of the tsar Feodor, although earlier he doubted the credibility of this accusation and mentioned this as gossip, spread by Godunov's enemies.

Thus, one can see that Shcherbatov took here the position of moral condemnation, describing Godunov's actions not in terms of effectiveness of such methods of acquiring power, but rather in terms of vice and virtue.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., col. 16.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., col. 17.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., col. 17–18.

The further narrative links both these aspects. Shcherbatov tries to demonstrate that immoral actions, even if they allow a monarch to keep the power, cannot be beneficial for the state, but, on the contrary, cause its destruction. Actually, he challenges the idea that immorality is inevitable and therefore it is acceptable in politics. In other words, Godunov's methods of deception and secret repressions appeared to be effective only temporarily, allowing him to keep the power, yet subjecting the society and the state to an imminent threat. Let me now turn to the detailed account of the way Shcherbatov substantiates this idea in the course of his historical narration.

It is also important to take into account that Shcherbatov, constructing his story, did not deal with raw facts, but rather with ready-made narratives, each of which had its own logic. As mentioned before, Shcherbatov's main sources were the *Letopis' o mnogikh miatezhakh* and the narrative by Petrus Petrejus, which was used by other stories of foreign authors, and which was itself based on other memoirs of foreigners. Most important are not the historical details, wherever Shcherbatov borrowed them, but the explanations, which are laid in the foreground of each of these stories. For the *Khronograf* (which was written from a pro-Romanov perspective) Godunov's central actions, defining his role as a villain, were the repressions against Romanovs' clan. Accordingly, the fall of Godunov's dynasty is interpreted as a kind of God's retribution for the committed misdeed. On the other hand, Petrejus portrays Godunov as a successful adventurer, who managed to cease the throne appealing to lower strata (including the majority of rank-and-file nobility) and managing to isolate grandees, who could also pretend to the throne. Consequently, repressions do not have

here any decisive significance, they are perceived as a natural side of the struggle for power, of attempts to keep power by the ruler, who had not yet consolidated his position on the throne. Besides, Petrejus emphasizes Godunov's attempts to enforce his state, borrowing the benefits of European civilization, and this is certainly approved of by Petrejus. Thus, Boris' dissimulation as a means of struggle for power, as well as his repressions against the rivals, does not exclude a positive attitude toward Godunov's state activity. As for the reasons of Godunov's gloomy end, Petrejus finds them in inner disagreements among Russians, who could not defeat the Impostor. This discord partially has a contingent nature; in other words, Boris was simply unlucky. Here is no idea of predetermination of the unhappy end of Godunov's dynasty. For example, Petrejus describes the condition of the army, which besieged Kromy, as a fortress held by the supporters of the Impostor.

Борис Годунов пришел в ужас, услышав эту весть и молву о воскресшем Димитрии на границах и о том, что он завоевал и занял столько городов без всякого сопротивления и не обнажая меча. Борис дивился, жаловался на неверность и предательство больших бояр...<sup>20</sup>

Вожди и двинулись с войском к городу Рыльску: но как у русских не было никакого усердия, то они и отступили от города, не сделав ничего...<sup>21</sup>

Потому что неверности, притворства, несогласия и предательства было что дальше, то больше между русскими...

Вожди дали знать великому князю в Москву об этой великой неверности и измене, что они находятся в большой опасности, силы их с каждым днем убывают, а у Лжедимитрия увеличиваются военными изменниками, которые перебегают к нему...

Это привело Бориса в ужас, уныние и отчаяние: 13 апреля 1605 года, с раннего утра до полуден свежий и здоровый, в сумерки он скоростижно умер и на другой день был похоронен в Кремле, возле других великих князей, с большим рыданием и плачем всех его друзей, после достойного 8-летнего царствования с пользой для простого

<sup>20</sup> Petrus Petrejus, "Istoriia o velikom kniazhestve Moskovskom," 291, accessed 30 Dec. 2011, <http://www.vostlit.info/Texts/rus9/Petrej2/text23.phtml?id=1095>.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 293.

народа и ко благу всей страны. Некоторые полагают, что он в таком сомнении и неудовольствии сам принял яд или отравлен был другими.<sup>22</sup>

There is another peculiarity of Petrejus's story to be noted—speaking of the disloyalty of the Russians to Boris, he emphasizes the loyalty of foreign mercenary troops, whose evidence seems to have been among his sources.<sup>23</sup> Thus, Petrejus generally states a certain discontent of Russians with their government, which kept them from fighting against the Impostor, but he does not try to explain the reasons for that.

Among foreign sources there can be mentioned the narrative of Isaac Massa (Shcherbatov does not refer to him directly, but he could observe similar ideas in those secondary foreign narratives, which he used). Massa has the following reflections on the reasons for Boris' defeat:

Борис, во всем встречая неудачу и видя... что бог не посылает ему никакого счастья но, напротив, опрокидывает (omstiet) все его намерения, проникся страхом и впал в отчаяние и потерял надежду, что сбудется что-нибудь по его желанию...<sup>24</sup>

В другой раз Борис, послав грамоты из Москвы, повелел, чтобы в Северной земле никого не щадили... что и было исполнено, но столь бесчеловечно, что всякий, слышавший о том, содрогался, так много должно было погибнуть невинных людей. ... Димитрий ни у кого ничего не отнимал, а оставлял каждому свое, того ради народ так предался к нему; и когда московиты начали чинить жестокою расправу (groote tirannie begon), то к Димитрию стало предаваться еще больше [людей], не желавших и слышать о своем царе Борисе в Москве, и оставались верны до самой смерти и претерпевали все мучения и пытки, всечасно утверждая, что он истинный Димитрий...<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 294.

<sup>23</sup> See, for example: Ibid., 292.

<sup>24</sup> Isaac Massa, *Kratkoe izvestie o Moskovii v nachale XVII v.* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe sotsialno-ekonomicheskoe izdatel'stvo, 1936), 73, accessed 30 Dec. 2011, <http://www.vostlit.info/Texts/rus11/Massa/frametext2.htm>. An edition of the original text: *Histoire des Geurres de la Moscovie (1601—1610) par Isaac Massa de Haarlem* (Brussels, 1866).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 86–87, accessed 30 Dec. 2011, <http://www.vostlit.info/Texts/rus11/Massa/frametext3.htm>.

Царь Борис, видя, что в Москве ему во всем неудача и что войско его ни в чем не успевает и что сверх того со всех краев стекаются к Димитрию и предаются на его сторону, и видя и слыша каждодневно также от своих соглядатаев, которые были повсюду, что народ начинает верить, что это истинный Димитрий, и что все города заколебались и стали непокорными и медлят посылать ратников на войну, ибо не видят, когда будет тому конец...

С того времени он почти совсем не выходил из дому и на свое место посылал сына, и он [Борис], почти лишился рассудка и не знал, верить ли ему, что Димитрий жив или что он умер, так был расстроен его ум...<sup>26</sup>

Меж тем в Москву каждодневно один за другим прибывали гонцы и каждый с дурными известиями: один говорил, что тот или тот предался Димитрию; другой говорил, что большое войско идет из Польши; третий говорил, что все московские воеводы изменники; сверх того народ в Москве с каждым днем все больше и больше роптал, невзирая на то, что его казнили смертью, жгли [каленным железом] и пытали, но ожесточался так, что Борис решился лучше лишиться себя жизни, чем попасть в руки Димитрия...

13 апреля по старому стилю Борис был весьма весел, или представлялся таким, весьма много ел за обедом и был радостнее, чем привыкли видеть его приближенные. Отобедав он отправился в высокий терем (boog partael), откуда мог видеть всю Москву с ее окрестностями, и полагают, что там он принял яд...<sup>27</sup>

Thus, the defeat of Boris is related to his tyranny and cruelty. Providence, similarly as in Russian sources, is essential, although it only sustains a kind of equilibrium of justice, on the principle that “with the measure you use you will be measured yourself.” Speaking about the execution of Boris’s relative Simeon Godunov after the death of the tsar and overthrow of his dynasty, Massa expressed this principle in a more explicit way:

Симеона Никитича Годунова, который во время Бориса был великим тираном по отношению к народу, сослали в Переяславль и посадили в [темничный] погреб и, когда он просил есть, ему приносили камень; так постигла его жалкая смерть от голоду; из той же темницы освободили человека, которого он [Симеон Годунов] держал неповинно в заточении шесть лет; ему [этому узнику] привелось увидеть на своем месте первого после царя человека, который навлек на него это заточение. Так всякий

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 97–98.

находит возмездие, как говорит следующий стих: *Sine caede ac sanguine pauci Descendunt reges et sicca morte tyranny* (Немногие цари уходят в тот мир без убийства и крови; сухой смертью умирают тираны...).<sup>28</sup>

A common point between Russian sources and Massa's narrative is that they proceed from the idea that Godunov's death was a certain punishment for his evils, especially for repressions against the Romanovs. In such an interpretation there is no problem for the authors of the Russian text: everything is explained by God's punishment. Massa proceeds rather from the general notion of tyranny, which ends with the death of the tyrant, because his cruel tyrannical behavior alienates the people from such a ruler. In a hard moment the tyrant finds himself in isolation, so that desperate, he is ready to commit a suicide. Finally, Petrejus is close to the assumption that Boris simply had "bad luck," and that under a certain concurrence of circumstances (if the subjects would be a bit more loyal) he could win.

Shcherbatov in his narrative tries to synthesize all these explanations, supplies it (by himself) with a missing causal connection. At the same time he refers directly to the "will of Providence" as a basic explanatory argument. Besides, he recognizes Godunov as having certain positive features as a ruler. Thus, the central moment, which was necessary to explain—why Godunov, being a capable ruler and thus enjoying popularity among people, has finally lost his popularity and become an outright tyrant, in the classical meaning of the word. In other words, he became such a ruler, who retained his power only by means of fear and was despised by his subjects. If Godunov became such a person, his sad fate could be explained by a common fate of all tyrants. But the question is why did he decide to turn from monarch who was

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 111.

loved by the majority and executed only very few, to a monarch who was feared of and hated by the people, but was not loved?

In general, Shcherbatov's answer to this question is confined to the idea of the violation of equilibrium. In order to preserve power, a not quite legitimate ruler, as it was demonstrated by Machiavelli, may combine the politics of seduction towards people and repressions towards competitors. Yet it is important here to keep a balance of positive and negative means, otherwise the deception would be revealed, and such a policy would cease to be effective. Moreover, in accordance with Machiavelli, one would need good luck and the benevolence of Fortune. If one would assume that Shcherbatov has in mind the theory of Machiavelli and argues against it, the refutation of this theory may be that, as a rule, it is impossible to keep such a balance because of the passionate nature of a man who would try to do that. Namely, the repressions would not be conditioned by rational causes, but rather by the fear of enemies, hence they would overstep a reasonable measure and the balance would be broken. And then no positive actions, no bargain would be capable of concealing the repressive character of power from the people. And besides, it is important, how repressions affect the people. The key word here is mistrust. In other words, in being mistrustful and preoccupied with a search for enemies, a monarch provides the people with a bad model; the trust is lost in the society and, finally, weakens the union between the society and its power, which guarantees the loyalty of the people towards government. The population does not become disloyal, but instead indifferent and easily allows the government to fall, deprived of popular support.



Such is my initial hypothesis about the explanatory model that Shcherbatov had in mind. Yet, it is necessary to check whether this hypothesis is valid in Shcherbatov's own reasoning.

Here are Shcherbatov's ideas about Godunov's politics towards the people:

Первый споспешник ему был для восшествия на Российский престол народ, котораго он имел искусство обольстить; от него он ожидал и подкрепления своей власти. Обыкновенно есть мучителям стараться унижать знатных и просвещенных, дабы от простоты и невежества подпору себе получить: а сего ради Борис, хотя и не от расположения сердца своего, но по политическим видам, старался разными облегчения народу делать.<sup>29</sup>

Here is the same idea of opposition of the nobility and the common people, which is present in Petrejus's text, yet, while the author is likely to be astonished by the prudence of Boris, Shcherbatov depicts it with a clear condemnation. It is not only that he is obviously on the side of those whom he regards as "enlightened," but also because such a policy has a side-effect, namely the opposition of various layers of society to each other.

Even more clearly this idea is expressed in Shcherbatov's comments to a chronicle's note that Boris openly encouraged information.<sup>30</sup> Speaking of the title of nobility, acquired by one of the servants of prince Shestunov (Romanovs' relative) as a reward for information on his master, Shcherbatov exclaims: "Тако при похитителе престола преступление учинилось способом к достижению до благородства."<sup>31</sup> That is, such a practice worsened the composition of nobility and brought into it

<sup>29</sup> Shcherbatov, *Istoriia*, vol. 7, pt. 1, col. 80.

<sup>30</sup> Shcherbatov, ed., *Letopis' o mnogikh miatezhakh*, 54–56.

<sup>31</sup> Shcherbatov, *Istoriia*, vol. 7, pt. 1, col. 83.

“ignoble” (here it is spoken literally, in a moral sense) elements. And further on,

Shcherbatov continues:

Такое всенародное объявление благоволения царского за доносы вложило дух возмущения в сердца народа: недовольные своими господами сим способом получили надежду оным мщение учинить; корыстолюбивые стали надеяться состояние свое улучшить; честолюбивые до некоторой степени достигнуть; и одним словом, порок и преступление почти во все сердца вселяли разврат...

Зло сие не токмо в сердца людей господских проникло, и доводы учинились повсеместные; каждый друг на друга доводил: попы, старцы, пономари, просвирни и даже жены на мужей, и дети на отцов. Следствия, пытки и наказания умножались, и все государство было приведено в такое смятение, что никто не уверен был в своем состоянии; пропала уверенность между ближних, и разрушился союз общества.<sup>32</sup>

Here is the respective excerpt from the *Letopis'* to compare:

С городов людие Боярские всех дворов видеша такое его жалование к тому Воннику [informer], начаша умышляти всяк над своим Боярином... и от такого де доводу в царстве бысть велия смута, яко друг на друга доводяху, и попы, и чернецы, и пономари, и проскурницы; да не токмо сии прежде реченные люди, но и жены на мужей своих доводиша, а дети на отцов своих, яко же от такие ужаси мужие от жен своих таяхуся, и в тех окаянных доводех многия крови пролишася неповинныя... якоже ни при котором Государе таких бед никто не видел.<sup>33</sup>

Comparing the text of Shcherbatov and his source, it is possible to notice several phrases, which the historian inserts as a comment. The most salient are “вложило дух возмущения в сердца народа,” “государство было приведено в смятение,” and “разрушился союз общества.”

In accordance with Shcherbatov it appears that the repressions instead of touching a few were extended over the entire society. That is, instead of a “surgery” directed against boyar clans competing with Godunovs for power, these actions brought “disturbance” into the society as a whole, causing distrust between the estates

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., col. 83–84.

<sup>33</sup> Shcherbatov, ed., *Letopis' o mnogikh miatezhakh*, 54–56.

and even within families. What did provoke Boris Godunov for such excessive actions, despite his former policy of attracting people? Shcherbatov explains it in the following way:

Поныне мы не зрили в царствовании царя Бориса, как только разумные дела и благодеяния. Казалось: он старался правлением своим заглаждать все прежния свои злодеяния и ошастливить Россию. Но трудно есть тому, который привыкши из юности к преступлениям, который оными достиг до престола, долго в таких благих намерениях пребывать. Внутреннее чувство, что бы он соделал, если бы зрил над собою такого начальника как он сам, влагало в сердце его смущение и подозрение первых мучителей преступных человек. Он, побуждаем оными, желал все таинства народныя, а паче знатных особ знать.<sup>34</sup>

Thus, there was an ungrounded suspicion, a kind of projection of the internal feeling of Godunov over all other people. Knowing of his own viciousness, he assumes the same for other people, and consequently, supposed that he could be dethroned by similarly criminal methods, as he used to eradicate the impediments on his way to the throne. Accordingly, it was necessary to know about the plots of his adversaries in advance in order to prevent them. This pushed Godunov to encourage information; there were many false ones among them, and thus the “разврат,” as Shcherbatov calls it, was spread over the entire society. Supposing that other people were as criminal as he was, Godunov encouraged the crime of informing, involving more and more of the suspected into a circle of repressions. Thus, the vicious past did not let Godunov out of its chains, despite him trying to be a good ruler, or at least pretending for the majority of the people that he was such. Moreover, the side effect of this was the destruction of social ties in the society and distrust among the estates. This allowed keeping the power by the principle “divide and rule,” but this actually

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<sup>34</sup> Shcherbatov, *Istoriia*, vol. 7, pt. 1, col. 81.

deprived Godunov of grounding in a moment of danger, making his subjects, including ordinary soldiers (rank and file nobles), distrustful towards those who gave them orders (boyars).

At the same time, Godunov, in accordance with Shcherbatov, was not a classical tyrant, in the sense that the rule by means of fear was not at all his aim. On the contrary, he wanted to reign, attaching the people to himself by love, rather than fear. And if it happened otherwise, it was because of excessive fear, rather than as a result of conscious intention. Shcherbatov had an especially positive opinion about Godunov's politics, directed on adoption of accomplishments of Western civilization in Russia. This part of the narration, particularly, relies on the following excerpt from Petrejus:

...в свое царствование он давал заметить, что хочет из Германии, Англии и Франции выписать сведущих и ученых людей, которые должны будут учить и наставлять его юношество во всех языках, добрых нравах и свободных искусствах. Но духовные лица никак не хотели согласиться и дозволить того: они представляли, что земля их велика и обширна, согласна в вере, нравах и языке; если же москвитяне научатся другим языкам, от того выйдут большие раздоры и несогласия между ними; тогда отпадут они от своей греческой веры, и затем последует погибель стране...

Так это и осталось, однако ж он все же послал 18 молоденьких мальчиков из низшего дворянства учиться языкам и искусствам...<sup>35</sup>

This note caused the following approving comment from Shcherbatov (moreover, he directly refers to Petrejus, saying that the evidence was accepted by Müller, from whom Shcherbatov seems to take it). In the beginning of quotation

<sup>35</sup> Petrejus, "Istoriia o velikom kniazhestve Moskovskom," 278–279, accessed 30 Dec. 2011, <http://www.vostlit.info/Texts/rus9/Petrej2/text23.phtml?id=1095>.

repressions against Romanovs are mentioned, regarding which the silence of the people was accomplished by the signs of Godunov's piety.<sup>36</sup>

...Такое молчание народа о жестоком поступке с Романовыми ободрило его на некоторые предприятия, которые, хотя могли конечно полезны быть, но, как они противны были тогдашним обычаям, требовалась некоторая твердость, дабы их в действие произвести...

Проницательный и быстрый разум, доведший царя Бориса из частных людей в российские государи, чрез обращение с чужестранными легко мог заметить, чего недостает Российскому народу. Он был хищен, непримирим и кровожаждущ тогда, когда его пользы того требовали; но был пышен, благоразумен, и искренно желал не словами, но самым действием, чтобы народ его благополучен был, и государство бы наиболее в силу приходило. К сему и не зрил он удобнейшаго способа, как просветить науками подвластный ему народ. Колико препон вдруг ему представало! Предубеждение веры, ненависть к другим народам и привязанность к древним обычаям... духовный чин, а паче патриарх великую имел власть над народом и конечно бы таковым новостям противиться стал. Конечно, надлежит иметь много крепости духу, чтобы, предвидя все сие, дерзнуть и помыслить сию действительную, но ненавидимую всеми пользу соделывать...

...сии полезные намерения... конечно означают его разум и оправдывают Российский народ в его избрании.<sup>37</sup>

For Shcherbatov, Godunov was even ready in this case to risk his popularity among the people in order to accomplish the common good—to enlighten people, despite their will and adherence to ancient customs. And despite the fact that he “он был не по роду, но по избранию государь; имел внутренних многих неприятелей; власть его, хотя являлась утверждена, но так, можно сказать, глубоко не окоренилась...”<sup>38</sup> All this proves that it would not be quite correct to ascribe Godunov's aspiration for power as his only motive, and explain his good actions exclusively by the desire to attract the people. Accordingly, Godunov's tyranny also acquires another meaning: unlike Grozny, he was not a tyrant by nature,

<sup>36</sup> Shcherbatov, *Istoriia*, vol. 7, pt. 1, col. 126–127.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 131–133.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 131.

but rather because he was compelled. For Boris, whose power was not “deeply rooted in a custom,” the encouragement of information was a kind of self-defense, although excessive and leading to quite unpleasant unintended consequences.

If one would consider that Shcherbatov was hesitating between two positions—on the one hand, exposing the tyrant and usurper and, on the other hand, praising his wisdom as a ruler—to a certain extent the historian suspends his final judgment. It turns out that the people were ready to forgive Godunov his villainy until his rule was generally successful. And Shcherbatov partially justifies the people in this respect. In general, Shcherbatov describes Boris’ situation as an unstable balance. We should be reminded here of Shcherbatov’s comparison, which was mentioned in the chapter about his political views. The despotic state is compared to a ship, which sails somehow in good weather, yet under the first serious challenge a catastrophe takes place. A foreboding of a certain catastrophe is present in Shcherbatov’s later works devoted to the contemporary Catherine’s Russia. The same, according to his description, takes place in the period of Godunov. Until a certain moment this tsar was successful. But the period of challenges would soon begin and the ship of the Russian statehood would not stand it.

In this respect Shcherbatov’s interpretation of the Russian history is partially connected with the classical idea of the “wheel of Fortune.” There cannot be continual success, sooner or later the “Fortune’s blows” are inevitable, and the criterion of the strength of the system of statehood is the ability to withstand these strikes. The construction of the state, which was built by Godunov, has on the contrary

demonstrated its weakness. The following narrative of Shcherbatov can be interpreted in a similar way.

Serious misfortunes for Godunov began from the great famine of 1600 and the following years. The reason for such famine appeared to be climatic transformations (the so called small ice age), which in no way depended on the tsar. Moreover, on his side he did everything possible to ease the consequences of the famine. From the viewpoint of morality, his attempts to help the starving are treated by Shcherbatov rather positively, despite the general characterization of tsar Boris as a villain:

Естьли мы царя Бориса, по убиении от его царевича Димитрия, похитителем считаем; но ежели благодеяние к народу и сострадание к несчастью подданных возможет загладить преступления, то конечно в сем случае сей государь показал все то, что достойно в подражание историю сей быть предано памяти: он открыл царския сокровища, повелел давать милостыню всем бедным...<sup>39</sup>

Moreover, here Shcherbatov rejects allegations, made by the author of the *Yadro Rossiiskoi istorii* (“The core of Russian history”),<sup>40</sup> that the servants of Boris robbed the houses of the rich where large amounts of bread were hidden. Rejecting this accusation, he wrote: “Но все ли они [accusations] справедливы? Не вмешалась ли тут иногда и личная ненависть на царя Бориса?”<sup>41</sup>

Further on the measures taken by the tsar surrounding the struggle with starvation are discussed, where Shcherbatov remarks that Boris, despite his good intentions, probably made a serious mistake for the first time.

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., col. 162.

<sup>40</sup> Andrei Khilkov [Alexei Il'ich Mankiev], *Yadro Rossiiskoi istorii* (Moscow, 1770).

<sup>41</sup> Shcherbatov, *Istoriia*, vol. 7, pt. 1, col. 167.

Видно, что самое стремление голода, а к тому же желание угодить низкому народу, побудило царя Бориса учинить в сем году важное узаконение. Сие состояло: паки дать свободу крестьянам переходить от одного к другому из помещиков.<sup>42</sup>

In other words, this was a partial abolishment of serfdom. Later Shcherbatov tells his version of the history of the introduction of the ban for transitions of peasants. Grozny “не осмеливался вдруг огорчить толь многочисленное сословие,” that is peasants, and therefore he had only restricted the transitions, but did not abolish them. Under Feodor Ioannovich the transitions were banned, but with a search period of five years (that is, it was possible to return peasants to the previous place only within a period of five years from the time they left). Shcherbatov, as it is easy to understand, holds the position of an advocate of serfdom, substantiating the correctness of emancipation of peasants by the following arguments:

Не видно, чтобы таковыя перемены в состоянии крестьян произвели какия жалобы: ибо своеволие их было судебником несколько обуздано, а указом царя Феодора Иоанновича переход их был и совсем запрещен. Бояре и знатные люди не могли подговаривать крестьян у бедных; самые крестьяне нашли в помещиках своих горячих защитников, не надеясь перейти в другое место, поля свои не токмо для себя, но и для детей своих стали удобрять, и хлебопашество получило приращение.<sup>43</sup>

I will not continue criticizing Shcherbatov’s arguments; there is another issue, which is important for the logic of my reasoning. The set back from the adopted politics of establishing serfdom, although caused by Godunov’s desire to win popularity among the people or to alleviate its condition, lead to serious consequences:

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., col. 168.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., col. 169.



Унятое узаконением царя Феодора Иоанновича зло немедленно возобновилось, и чаятельно отчасти от сего и бывшие великие разбои произошли, так что повсеместный ропот принудил сего хитрого государя закон сей вскоре переменить, и не токмо крестьян, но и холопей невольными сделал. А самым сим навлек на себя от всех знатных чинов и имеющих великие земли людей тайное негодование, которые, во зло употребляя узаконение о вольности, пользовались; навлек на себя ненависти и холопей, которые при господах своих служили на войне.<sup>44</sup>

And further on Shcherbatov quotes the opinion of Tatishchev, which the latter had written in his publication of *Sudebnik* (“Book of laws”) that this was actually the reason for the fall of Godunov’s dynasty.<sup>45</sup>

Shcherbatov’s interpretation is more complicated than Tatishchev’s. For Shcherbatov, it was not the very fact of complete enactment of serfdom, but rather inconsequence and hesitation in the politics of Godunov. Initially, in the search for popularity, he made a step in one direction, and having realized his mistake, made another step in the opposite direction, and thus even to a greater degree alienated not only nobles (he was already on bad terms with them), but also a special group of “military servants.” Eventually, this group formed a core band of robbers, whom the government of Boris had to struggle against later on, and a portion of them joined the side of the Impostor.

One has to note that complete abolishment of transitions was beneficial in the first place for smaller landholders, whom Shcherbatov calls “poor” (larger landholders won the peasants over to their side and even took them forcefully). Godunov, from Shcherbatov’s standpoint, acted on the side of the “common good,” as he eliminated abuses and the possibility for noble and rich landholders to rob the poor (Shcherbatov

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., col. 169–170.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., col. 170.

somehow forgets about the interests of the peasants themselves, although he thinks that their fixations contributed to the success of the household, fertilization of fields, etc.) That is, it was not Godunov's final measure that was mistaken (yet an excessive one—converting servants into slaves), but the very fact of hesitations in the policy, although caused by initially positive impetus—the intention to alleviate the condition of starving peasants.

As a result it goes as follows. The initial intention of Godunov was to enforce his position and to become popular. But a different result came from his actions: he alienated himself from important social groups, in whose interests he was acting, failing to obtain their essential support.

Further on, Shcherbatov included in his narration a story about the so-called “uprising of Khlopko.” Unlike later historians, who regarded these events as first signs of the Time of Troubles, Shcherbatov does not make any special conclusions. The uprising was suppressed and the famine came to an end in any event. And all these events do not seem to be united with each other or with the following ones by a certain causal connection, but only with the idea of “Fortune's blows.” The state still manages to tolerate them, although with certain unfavorable consequences.

The appearance of the Impostor makes the initiation process of the destruction of the state more explicit.

Shcherbatov describes the rumors, which the Impostor (Otrep'ev), who decided to declare himself a miraculously saved prince Dimitrii, could hear among the people:

...мог он приметить ненависть народную на царя Бориса: ибо подлинно изгнанием и умерщвлением рода Романовых и ближних их родственников вельможи были приведены в страх того же себе ожидать. Колико царь Борис не старался облагодетельствовать простой народ, но претерпевшие несчастье купцы к нему недоброхотны были. Может статься, что и великая данная свобода торгу чужестранным их огорчала, которые, быв искуснее в торге, подрывали их.<sup>46</sup>

One should note that Shcherbatov still writes of the “people,” consisting of nobles and merchants. The nobles, who were subjected to repressions, were angry with Boris from the very beginning. His policy of granting privileges for foreign merchants could bring damage to the Russian ones. But these were narrow privileged groups, which could be referred to as “common people” only in so far as merchants did not belong to the nobility.

What is more important is the question of why the common people, whom Godunov wanted to please, suddenly turn against him? Shcherbatov gives the following answer to this question:

В бывшее перед сим нещастие Росии великаго голоду и во многих местах мору, колико царь Борис не старался тогда показывать благоденний, не толико привлекли к нему благодарности, колико оставили в сердцах суеверное предубеждение, что рука Божия мстит народу за избрание его в цари, что кровь царевича Димитрия, им пролиянная, пред Господом вопиет, и что безвинно убиенные Романовы и многие другие пред престолом Вышняго отмщения просят.<sup>47</sup>

In other words, according with Shcherbatov, the story developed as follows. So far as it was a favorable time, Godunov could “buy” the loyalty of the subjects, especially that of common people, by means of generous gifts, and alleviating the duties and taxation etc. And in these circumstances no one remembered former and present Godunov’s guilt, and all the intrigues of his noble enemies were fruitless. But soon

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., col. 253.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

after hard times, famine, and epidemics began. Godunov was not to blame in this, but he ceased to be a “lucky” tsar. That is, he was regarded as responsible for both happiness and troubles. And as soon as the latter happened, all his popularity among people disappeared. At this point he was reminded of his former guilt, and all the troubles that overtook Russia were regarded as God’s punishment for the sins committed by the tsar. In other words, popularity as well as happiness is fugacious. In happy times a ruler is popular, in unhappy times he is not, and this does not depend on his good or bad intentions, or whatever else he tries to do.

For a legitimate tsar such as Grozny, the loss of popularity was not so painful, because everyone was afraid of him. However, Godunov, who based his popularity on the support of the people, lost his “military campaign” against his rivals in the struggle for power, and although this was not his fault, it was fatal for him.

The very phenomenon of Impostor, as Shcherbatov guessed (this version is present in sources, particularly in the memoirs of Massa), was arranged by one of Godunov’s noble competitors.<sup>48</sup> But the Impostor did not acquire power by himself, but rather due to the universal disguise regarding Godunov, for the reason discussed earlier.

In the conditions, which Godunov found himself after the appearance of the Impostor, he, in accordance with Shcherbatov, could not help committing more and more new mistakes. And it was not so much because of the situation itself (as a disguise to a ruler did not presuppose disloyalty towards the state), as because of tsar Boris’s distorted perception of the situation.

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., col. 253–254.

Колико ни хитр, колико не предусмотрителен был царь Борис Федорович Годунов, однако... не можно его не обвинить в великой ошибке, что он поздно уже войска послал и тем дал время самозванцу... разсеять яд своего обмана и усилиться. Правда, что были сильныя причины, удерживающия царя Бориса всякое о сем обнаружение учинить и дать оружие своим подданным: се есть подозрение на бояр и на народ... ибо в прочем не видим мы, чтобы с начала от бояр и от войск была измена, но, напротиву того, они со всем усердием за отечество сражались. Но такая есть судьба похитителей: в беспрестанном мучении совести своей подозрение объемлет сердце их, и они наконец самага сего подозрения жертвами бывают.<sup>49</sup>

Thus, similarly to the case of preventive repressions against aristocracy, Boris alienated himself from his potential adherents. As a result, the fall of his power and, at the same time, the ruining of the state (since the candidate for the throne was, for Shcherbatov, a notorious liar) appeared to be an inevitable consequence of the bankruptcy of Godunov's politics, who did not want to rely on nobility, but gain his popularity among the people. The next excerpt, condemning such a policy as a mistake, reflects the political credo of Shcherbatov in a more clear way:

Тщетно владыки света возлагают надежду на низкой народ: се есть море ветром колеблемое; каждое впечатление сердца его колебает; несть ни заслуги, ни милостей, которыя бы не могли быть затушены; любитель новости и упрям в своих предубеждениях, соделав на лживом основании свою мысль, не токмо не может увещаниями склонен быть, но паче в них утверждается.<sup>50</sup>

Godunov's trouble was not that the people became alienated from him (sooner or later, for Shcherbatov, it had to happen, since popularity, like happiness, is transient by definition). But Godunov lost the support of those virtuous subjects, who could protect him and the fatherland. It was a result of the mutual distrust between the ruler and the boyars, where the next mistake appeared to be an impetus for it. The army

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., col. 287.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., col. 317.

fought against the Impostor, although unwillingly, and at a certain moment Boris decided to use his power and threatened military commanders with severe punishment. In accordance with Shcherbatov, the following was the consequence:

...государь весьма оскорбился на воевод, что, имея многочисленное войско, не преследовали самозванца и, пользуясь своею победою, не учинили всех возможных подвигов, дабы его истребить... Сего ради немедленно послал он с некоим числом войск окольного Петра Никитича Шереметева и думнаго дьяка Афанасья Власьева с жестоким выговором бояр... взирая на следующие приключения, на благосклонность, которую показывал потом к дьяку Власьеву Разстрига, подозреваю я, что сей умножил воеводам озлобление царево, устрашил их грозящею им местью так, что, со всех стран видя себе погибель и страшая более царя Бориса, коего мстительный обычай им известен был, сердца их стали колебаться, и не столь по уверению, чтобы называющий себя Дмитрием царевичем подлинно ли он был, коль по страху от царя Бориса, к самозванцу стали преклоняться.<sup>51</sup>

Thus it appears that the reputation of the vindictive and severe ruler caused Boris a bad turn. Therefore, subordinates wanted to get rid of him, even at the price of recognizing the Impostor. It is exactly the mutual distrust of the tsar and military commanders whose service he needed that ruined Boris.

Shcherbatov describes the death of the tsar:

Приходящие... известия к царю Борису Федоровичу, грозящая ему и силою самозванца, и наводящие сумнение на верность бояр, а при том умножающаяся молва народная в такое его отчаяние привела, что ниспала вся бодрость его духа, вся хитрость его ослабела, и он, не ожидая себе никакого спасения, за столом выпил яд, от действия котораго в два часа преставился.<sup>52</sup>

The fate of the dynasty and young heir Feodor, although he was declared a tsar immediately, thus, was predetermined. However, for Shcherbatov, it would yet be

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., col. 313–314.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., col. 321.

possible to save the state, if there had been established a respectable regency council, composed of boyars of the highest birth:

...поступок избрания матери царской в его опекуны, кажется мне, много поспешил к погибели сего царя: ибо, еслиб избраны были для сего некоторые знатнейшие бояре, то бы стремление их сохранить собственную свою власть много могло помочь к спасению сего царя.<sup>53</sup>

However, this had not been done, and the tsarina, lacking of any abilities of statehood activity, tried to rule as a dictator, as previously her husband had done. In the conditions of pervasive treachery and the joining of the major part of the army to the side of the Impostor, this led only to a complete paralysis of power. Shcherbatov assumes however that even this situation would not be so hopeless, if there would have been loyal supporters that could be relied upon, but a sense of doom took hold of their hearts and they seemed to “яко в некоем онемении ожидали последняго удара, долженствующаго прекратить их жизнь.”<sup>54</sup>

Let me draw some conclusions.

As it was demonstrated, Shcherbatov’s conception to a certain degree synthesizes ideas from foreign sources, combining into a unitary whole both Petrejus’s interpretation—who saw the shakiness of the support for the government among Russians, saw the mistakes of the government, yet did not comprehend the reasons for them—and Massa’s conception—who tried to find in these events an idea of moral retribution for the usurper’s previously committed evils. Russian historical sources suggest a similar reasoning, except that God punished Boris for particular crimes, especially for repressions against the Romanovs. Shcherbatov describes the

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., col. 328.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., col. 340.

mechanism of “retribution,” so that this description turns into an analysis of the functioning and final collapse of the state mechanism, as incorrectly constructed from the very beginning. This incorrectness emerges already on the stage of construction, as a consequence of usurping the power, which inevitably caused envy and disloyalty among noble clans. The ruler, while he was successful, manages to restrain these clans by bribery and repressions, relying on his popularity among the people. But “Fortune’s blows,” which the ruler was not guilty of, but which appear to be inevitable, destroy this fragile construction. The popularity is lost together with “happiness,” nobility despises the tsar, and as a result he cannot deal with an Impostor, who was weak by his own account, simply because the tsar caused more disgust and fear than the new and unknown threat. The tsar could rely on those, who, although they did not love him, were loyal to the fatherland. However, his own suspicion pushed him into desperation, after which the fall of the dynasty became inevitable. Thus, Shcherbatov manages to substantiate the weakness of despotism, based for Machiavelli on cruelty and deception, without reference to the idea of Providence’s punishment, but only showing that such despotism is an unstable construction and it is not able to withstand “Fortune’s blows,” which inevitably have to happen.



### ***§4.2 Karamzin: Godunov and the “Public Opinion”***

Starting from the third chapter of the tenth volume of the *Istoriia*, with the events following the death of the only child of tsar Feodor, the character of narration changed. Until this moment the character of the governor Boris Godunov had been clarified enough, there were no serious obstacles on his road to the throne, and the development of the plot can be reduced to a basic scheme that is the conclusion and the breaking of the “social contract.” This informal contract existed in the form of “love” between the ruler and the people. It can be compared to marriage, based on love, where the essence of the relationship cannot be reduced to a formal moment (the wedding ceremony is an analogy for a coronation), as a marriage without love is inevitably unstable.

Thus, the narrated story is the story of the “seducing” of the people by the governor and the future tsar, the arrangement of a formal marriage, and further it is the story of the disappointment of the people in the tsar (the reasons for which are explored by Karamzin). As a result, the “social contract” has been weakened; the tsar loses support and appears to be overturned by a very weak threat—the “shadow” of a murdered prince. The reason for the fall of Boris, for Karamzin, is not the strength of the “Impostor,” but the loss of the trust and love of the people for the tsar. There is no one who has the desire to defend him, although many keep a passive loyalty toward him.

Therefore, the main question which Karamzin is concerned with, and his narration should answer, is why did the people lose the trust and love for the tsar?

The seemingly evident answer that the people finally understood that Boris was the murderer of the prince cannot be accepted. For people who refused to support Boris, the prince was alive, although this certainly meant that Boris had no legitimate right to rule. The argument that the loss of trust was connected with Godunov's repression of the Romanovs was also unsatisfactory, because the Romanovs were far from being the first among the victims of Godunov's struggle with the boyar clans, which could potentially deprive him (or his son) of power.

The explanation which was based on the idea that Providence punishes vices is present in the text of Karamzin, but it is clear that this is rather an enveloping frame for the plot. The mediaeval authors could proceed from the assumption that any vicious act was punished by God before the death of a villain. For Karamzin, in the Age of Enlightenment, such way of reasoning, though he tended to stylize his story as "naïve" narrative of a chronicler, was hardly possible as a serious explanation of the events.

The possible explanation can be reduced to the idea that the people had gradually understood that Boris, who pretended to be a virtuous tsar, was actually a tyrant. Therefore as any tyrant, suspicious because of fear for his safety, Godunov eventually found himself in isolation. But here a logical difficulty appears, because it is hard to distinguish between the cause and the effect. Is it true that Godunov became a tyrant because he had lost his trust in the people, who in turn he felt had lost their trust in him? This could happen due to the people's discontent with certain political mistakes of Godunov. Or, on the contrary, Godunov suffered fear towards imaginary threats, did not trust the people, and therefore he began to encourage the interrogation

of his subjects and tried to control popular opinion. And this caused a response—the people reacted to the tsar’s distrust with their own distrust for the tsar. Thus a vicious circle of mutual distrust emerged, and step by step overreaction gradually caused the destruction of the love between the two sides.

Actually, these two possibilities do not exclude each other, and as we will demonstrate this further, Karamzin uses both explanatory models. In advance, we may note the following. On the one hand, for Karamzin, Boris did not trust the people, as he knew that he was a criminal, a murderer of the prince, and anticipated the similar unprincipled aspiration for power from others. He expected that his secret enemies would incite further agitation among the people, spreading the rumors of his actual and alleged crimes. Trying to prevent the spreading of such rumors he persecuted all who could potentially become disloyal. Therefore the reaction of Boris to the potential threats happened to be exaggerated, which led to preventive tyrannical measures, to the system of “forced like-mindedness,” supported by the encouragement of spies, which affected the entire population and alienated it from the tsar. This situation can be compared to a jealous husband torturing his wife for his own suspicions provoked by her fear, and pushing her, if not to adultery, then at least to the loss of sincere love.

On the other hand, there were erroneous actions of power, or simply disasters, which did not depend on the ruler (such as hunger), but could lead to the loss of trust. The exaggerated and unrealistic expectations of the people, after several favorable years, and being unjustified in the unfavorable years, caused them to be disappointed. While Boris was successful, he was credited with more than he was actually responsible for. However, when Fortune had deceived him, he was accused of things

he was not guilty of. This was connected with a magical and archaic perception of power, which was regarded as responsible for everything, including the weather and the harvest. In the case of the failure of crops the ruler was perceived as the guilty party, but because he could not be directly accused of this, his former crimes were remembered. In Godunov's case his guilt for the murder of the prince was remembered, and the poor harvest and the forthcoming hunger were perceived as the punishment of God for the sin of this murder. Here the loss of trust, connected with such a magic understanding of power, appears to be a primary cause, whereas the attempt of the ruler to compensate this loss by tyrannical methods happens to be a medicine which is worse than the disease itself, only aggravating the situation, causing a chain reaction of distrust.

Karamzin's narration structurally reminds us of interpretational schemes, constructed by Shcherbatov (both strengthening and further weakening Godunov's power). However, if Shcherbatov's concern is mostly with the work of the state mechanism, then Karamzin is more focused on the psychological side of things. But in this case his attention is directed to the psychology of the tsar-usurper, which was already clarified in the first part of the story. The main interest for Karamzin is in the second part, in the change in the mood of the people, which he traces attentively, beginning with Godunov's preparation for the seizure of the throne and ending with the loss of the throne by his unfortunate heir.

To analyze the narration it is most important to take into account the opposition of two periods: the situation of trust and love of people to the new tsar (whatever were the inner motives of Boris Godunov) and the situation of mistrust and

negative attitude towards even those measures which were directed toward the people's good (as, for example, helping the hungry). Karamzin uses this method of contrast, ignoring intentionally evidence from sources which contradict the desired coloring of a given period (dark as opposed to light).

With this opposition in mind, let us try to define the ideological message of such a construction of the narrative. Godunov is characterized as a ruler, motivated by "non-virtuous incentives to the good." By this he deceived the people, who at first sincerely trusted him, perceiving his benevolent deeds as if he really was a virtuous tsar.

In the final stage of the tsar's rule the viciousness of Godunov's motives came to the surface. Therefore, the inner incentives and external actions were similarly evaluated from a moral point of view, although Karamzin sometimes hesitates in his judgment of the character of Boris. For example, his love for his son and his desire to help the starving are evaluated as positive features. That is, Godunov, though a criminal, was not entirely vicious, he also had virtuous motives, but the situation often forced him to demonstrate exactly the dark side of his personality. The paradox was that these positive features were not appreciated by the people, who did not notice them; this is similar to the people not noticing the negative side of his moral outlook.

The major question was not only why and how the transition from the first stage (quasi-virtuous) to the second (tyrannical) took place, but also whether such a transition was inevitable. The construction of the story about Boris as a moral tale about punishment of vices, points out that the answer to the second question must be positive.

Therefore, the general message inculcated in such a construction of narrative can be interpreted as follows: the monarchy, where the ruler acts for the common good, but at the same time is deprived of virtue (motivated by self-interest) is not stable and inevitably degenerates into a tyranny, contrary even to the intentions of the monarch himself. The latter is interested in delaying such degeneration (and, for example, to refrain from excessively cruel punishments of his potential enemies, limiting himself only by necessary measures). In other words, his “interest” coincides with the interests of the state and, therefore, disregarding the purity of his motives, out of pragmatic reasons he would act for the “common good.” This is the key idea of the *Memoir on Ancient and Modern Russia*. The problem Karamzin deals with in the volume of the *Istoriia* devoted to the reign of Godunov is that without the virtue of the monarch the monarchy cannot stand (similarly, the republic cannot stand without the virtue of its citizens). And this virtue of a monarch cannot be reduced to the actions directed toward the “common good,” but rather implies the “purity of heart,” that is the authenticity of a moral feeling, love for the people, rather than a pragmatic and rational direction of policy, based on a coincidence of the interests of the ruler and his state.

The narrative adopted by Karamzin, based on the opposition of good and bad periods of the reign of tsar Boris Godunov, relies on two contrasting evidences of one source—the *Skazanie Avraamiia Palitsina* (“The tale of Avraamii Palitsyn”). This corresponds to the notes of the eleventh volume of the *Istoriia* (numbers 134–136 and 163). Karamzin quotes Avraamii selectively, but we will look here at a fuller quotation, putting in italics the words quoted by Karamzin.

The first excerpt from Palitsyn related to the “good” period of the reign of Boris is as follows:

*Двоелетнему же времени прешедшу, и всеми благими Росия цветяше. Царь же Борис о всяком благочестии и о исправлении всех нужных царству вещей зело печашеся, по словеси же своему, о бедных и нищих крепце промышляше и милость к таковым велика от него бываше, злых же людей лютее изгубляше. И таковых ради строений всенародных всем любезен бысть.<sup>55</sup>*

Let us quote an excerpt from Karamzin’s text, which corresponds to this text:

Первые два года сего царствования казались лучшим временем России с XV века... [134]: она была на вышней степени своего нового могущества, безопасная собственными силами и счастьем внешних обстоятельств, а внутри управляемая с мудрой твердостью и с кротостью необыкновенною. Борис исполнял обет царского венчания и справедливо хотел именоваться отцом народа, уменьшив его тягости; отцом сырых и бедных, изливая на них щедроты беспримерные; другом человечества, не касаясь жизни людей, не обагрывая земли Русской ни каплею крови и наказывая преступников только ссылкой [135]. Купечество, менее стесняемое в торговле; войско, в мирной тишине осыпаемое наградами; дворяне, приказные люди, знаками милости отличающиеся за ревностную службу; синклит, уважаемый царем деятельным и советолобивым; духовенство, честимое царем набожным – одним словом, все государственные состояния могли быть довольны за себя и еще довольнее за отечество, видя, как Борис... радеет о благе общем, правосудии, устройстве. И так не удивительно, что Россия, по сказанию современников [136], *любила* [italics in the original] своего венценосца, желая забыть убиение Димитрия или сомневаясь в оном!<sup>56</sup>

One can note that Karamzin essentially extends the characteristic, given by Palitsyn, supplementing it with the “concern of common good” and “justice,” as well as respect toward the opinion of the boyar council. In general, Boris more closely

<sup>55</sup> Avraamii Palitsyn, “Skazanie,” in *O, Russkaia zemlia* (Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossia, 1982), 179.

<sup>56</sup> Nikolai Karamzin, *Istoriia gosudarstva Rossiiskago*, vol. 11 (St. Petersburg, 1824), 94–95. In square brackets there are references to the notes by Karamzin. In the notes 134 and 135 the positive characteristics of Boris are used, taken from Margeret and the English book *The Russian Impostor* by Robert Manley (London, 1674). See: Leo Loewenson, “Sir Roger Manley’s History of Muskovy,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 31, no. 76 (Dec. 1952), 232–240. The assertion about the lack of death penalties (in the original source—public death penalties, as secret murders by Boris’ orders were not taken into account), which is confirmed by Karamzin’s note 135, is based on Margeret’s evidence.

resembles the ideal ruler in accordance with the ideas of Karamzin, rather than “pious” and “beggar-loving” Boris from the excerpt by Avraamii. The emphasis in the source of the religious virtues of the tsar is pushed to the background, whereas his qualities as secular ruler are promoted.

Let us provide now the second contrasting characteristic of the “bad” period, as it was formulated by Palitsyn (emphasized by excerpts that correspond to note 163 of Karamzin’s *Istoriia*).

Оскверни же злосмрадным прибытком вся дани своя: корчемницы бо, пианству и душегубству и блуду желателие, во всех градах в прекуп высок воздвигшие цену кабаков, и инех откупов чрез меру много бысть; наипаче же грабя дома и села бояр и велмож и много людей. И собирая того ради да тем милостию творит и церкви строит, и смешав клятву з благословением, и одоле злоба благочестию. *И таковых ради всех дел, их же сотвори, Борис в ненависть бывает всему миру, но отай уже и вси поношаху его ради крови неповинных и разграблений имений и нововводимых дел.*

*Ереси же арментстей и латынстей последствующим добр потокавник бысть; и в женкоподобных образех любящей бровити, зело таковых любими от него быша, и стари мужи в юноши пременяхуся...*<sup>57</sup>

Besides the “robbery” of the boyars and encouragement of tavern rents, here Avraamii emphasizes the religious sins of Boris, probably connected with the affection of the tsar and his court toward foreigners, as, for example, going beardless or the use of European clothes (“женоподобный образ”), and also the accusation that under the influence of foreigners Boris deviated from religious orthodoxy. “Robbery” and rents, as one can assume, were the result of the lack of finances in the treasury, in particular, for wide charity towards the poor, which was carried out by Boris.

Let us consider the corresponding text by Karamzin. He describes the period after the repressions directed against the Romanovs.

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<sup>57</sup> Palitsyn, “Skazanie,” 184–185.



Одним словом, сие печальное время Борисова царствования, уступая Иоаннову в кровопийстве, не уступало ему в беззаконии и разврате: наследство гибельное для будущего! Но великодушные еще действовало в россиянах... жалели о невинных страдальцах и мерзили постыдными милостями венценосца к доносителям; другие боялись за себя, за ближних – и скоро неудовольствие сделалось общим. Еще многие славил Бориса: приверженники, льстецы, изветники, утучняемые стяжанием опальных... но глас отечества уже не слышался в хвале частной, корыстолюбивой, и молчание народа, служба для царя явною укоризною, возвестило важную перемену в сердцах россиян: *они уже не любили Бориса* [163]! [italics in the original].

Так говорит летописец современный... келарь Палицын. Народы всегда благодарны: оставляя Небу судить тайну Борисова сердца, россияне искренне славил царя, когда он под личиною добродетели казался им отцом народа; но признав в нем тирана, естественно возненавидели его и за настоящее и за минувшее: в чем, может быть, хотели сомневаться, в том снова удостоверились, и кровь Димитриева явнее означилась для них на порфире губителя невинных... ненависть чернила Бориса, упрекая его не только душегубством, гонением людей знаменитых, грабежом их достояния, алчностью к прибытку беззаконному, корыстолюбивым введением откупов, размножением казенных домов питейных, порчею нравов, но и пристрастием к иноземным, новым обычаям (из коих брадобритие особенно соблазняло усердных староверов), даже наклонностию к армянской и к латинской ереси! Как любовь, так и ненависть редко бывают довольны истиною: первая в хвале, последняя в осуждении. Годунову ставили в вину и самую ревность его к просвещению!<sup>58</sup>

Let us note that Karamzin, quoting Palitsyn's accusations, keeps a distance in respect to them, especially in regard to religious biases. The adherence of Boris towards foreigners is identified with the "love of education" and is evaluated positively, whereas for Avraamii it is nearly the main sin of Boris. The "hatred" to him appears to be connected with xenophobia (the same in a clearer form took place regarding the Impostor). The accusations of the spread of taverns are pushed to the background by Karamzin, while for Avraamii this is more important because it led to debauchery and the corruption of morals. Karamzin puts repression in the foreground. Because of various repressions the people began to "hate" Boris, because they were

<sup>58</sup> Karamzin, *Istoriia*, vol. 11, 108–110.

“magnanimous” regarding his victims and were afraid of becoming victimized. Here the “people” evidently comprised the layer that was afraid of repressions, wealthy people or those of higher standing, rather than common people.

Thus, the primary explanation here is that the hatred towards Boris emerged because he had turned into a tyrant, whereas all other accusations appear to be of secondary importance. Let us note that Karamzin writes about the time before the great hunger, therefore natural disaster did not yet influence the popularity of Boris.

Meanwhile, Avraamii presents another sequence of events. Immediately after the excerpt quoted earlier, which reported that Boris “всем любезен бысть,” follows the evidence about the repressions against the Romanovs:

И оставшееся же племя царя блаженного Феодора начат нелюбити ради смущения своих си ближних и мало помалу начат и к смерти на сих поучатися... По сих же убо изгнании и инех многих их ради погуби, се же мысляше, да утвердит на престоле по себе семя свое. Рабом же господий толико попусти клеветати, яко и зрети не смеющее на холопий; и многим рабом имения государьская отдая, и великие дары доводцом от него бываху... И ради исправления земли вокруг в странах славен и почитаем беяше, тако же и Росия благодарствоваше о нем за непощежение к зло деюшем, но о сем зело вси скорбяше, иже неповинно от полаты его разумнии истребляхуся и силнии в разсужении далече отгоними бываху.<sup>59</sup>

Here we see the evidence for the atmosphere of common informing, which we had already been observed in the chronicle, which was quoted in the section on Shcherbatov. Karamzin, as we will see, puts this phenomenon in the focus of his story as the main reason of a change of attitude towards Boris. But further on Avraamii’s text goes as follows:

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<sup>59</sup> Palitsyn, “Skazanie,” 170–180.

Того же лета... и за всего мира безумное молчание, еже о истине к царю не смеющее глаголати о неповинных погибели, омрачи господь небо облаки, и толико дождь пролился, яко вси человецы во ужась впадоша. И преста всяко дело земли, и всяко семя сеянное, возрастши, разседеся от безмерных вод...<sup>60</sup>

That is, for Avraamii, the direct interference of God into the course of earthly events took place, which was the punishment of the people for its silence about the repressions against the Romanovs and other “sensible” and “strong in reasoning.” Boris tried to soften the consequences of hunger, by distributing alms. But for Avraamii, this had only aggravated his guilt:

...иже убо от лихоимания и от неправды творяй милостыню и подобится сей зарезавшему сына у отца и кровь его принося в златой чаши, да пиет от нея к здравию си... Дома бо великих бояр сосланных вся истощив, и принесе в царския полаты, и древняя царская сокровища неправедным восхищением вся оскверни...<sup>61</sup>

And further on Avraamii condemns Boris, in particular for his disrespect towards the church (he sent rye instead of wheat for making Host), for his adherence to foreign customs—and here follows the already quoted excerpt about common hatred towards Boris. Later in the text, quite similar to Shcherbatov, common luxury is condemned, which was spread because of the imitation of the morals of the court, while churches were left in poverty. This reasoning is concluded by the following excerpt, mentioning the appearance of the Impostor:

И егда рекохом «мир и утвержение» о управлении Бориса, и по апостолу гласу, внезапно «приде на нас всегубительство»: не попусти убо содержи вся словом никого же от тех, их же стрегийся Борис царь, и не воста на него ни от вельмож его, их же роды погуби, ни от царей странских, но кого Бог попусти смеху достойно сказание, плача же велико дело.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 180.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 180–181.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 180.

In other words, for all the sins of the rule of Boris, for which his subjects are also responsible, for his disrespect to the church, for luxury and adherence to foreigners, God sends as a punishment not what Boris was afraid of (that is, conspiracy of aristocracy or foreign invasion), but a danger “смеху достойно сказание,” terrifying, however, exactly because it is a punishment by God.

Karamzin, actively borrowing material from Avraamii, could not allow himself such simple explanations, presuming direct divine interference. Besides, for Avraamii, Boris and the people together play a role on one side, and God, punishing them, is the other side of the conflict. According to Karamzin, the conflict takes place between the tsar and the people, and Providence, mentioned in the context of the opinion of the contemporaries of events, does not play an independent role, but reflects the attitude of the people towards the tsar. Whereas for Avraamii, the main sin of Boris is disrespect towards the church, for Karamzin, on the foreground is the change of the attitude of the people toward Boris because of their disappointment in him, and even hatred towards him, caused by repressions. It is important here to distinguish, whether the focus is on the repressions against the Romanovs or on the repressive nature of the rule of Boris in general. In the latter case, it is necessary to explain, why particular repressions against individual clans, similar to those that Boris plasticized earlier, had suddenly caused a universal negative reaction. This directly contradicts the evidence of Avraamii, who on the contrary, wrote of common “silence” on this issue, although with hidden sympathy towards the victims of repressions. In the former case, that is in the case of general atmosphere of repressions, which became evident for all, it is

necessary to explain, why Boris would afford himself such behavior, while earlier he was much more cautious, and if he persecuted anyone, he did it secretly.

The idea on the special importance of the Romanovs can be traced to chronicles (as, for example, *Novyi letopisets* [“The new chronicler”]), which were created in the first decades of the rule of the Romanovs, as a new dynasty. They emphasized the connection of the new dynasty with the old one. Here is the excerpt from *Novyi letopisets*, explaining why Godunov decided to ruin the Romanovs.

Царь же Борис, помышляя себе, что извел царский корень, повелев убить царевича Дмитрия, а потом и государь царь Федор Иванович преставился, желая царских последних родственников извести: братьев царя Федора Ивановича Федора Никитича с братьями [here the unknown author implies the cousins of tsar Feodor], а родство их ближнее – царица Анастасия да Никита Романович от единых отца и матери... Царь же Борис не мог их видеть, желая оставшийся царский корень извести...<sup>63</sup>

One can add to this the words of Авраамii, quoted above, that tsar Boris wanted “утвердить на престоле семя свое.”<sup>64</sup> Thus, the motive of Boris was that the Romanovs represented a danger not for him personally, but for his heir, as closer relatives of the extinct dynasty. Boris himself could hope to preserve his power, due to his outstanding political abilities and merits, but his weak heir did not have such resources, and the relatives of the old dynasty could have an advantage. Therefore, he tried to destroy potential competitors, who in contrast with the princes Shuiskie did not attempt any conspiracy. It was possible to assume that the special “love” of the

<sup>63</sup> “Kniga nazyvaemaia novyi letopisets,” in *Khroniki smutnogo vremeni* (Moscow: Fond Sergeia Dubova, 1998), 289, accessed 31 Dec. 2011, [http://www.vostlit.info/Texts/rus13/Nov\\_letopisec/text1.phtml?id=1005](http://www.vostlit.info/Texts/rus13/Nov_letopisec/text1.phtml?id=1005).

<sup>64</sup> This phrase was already quoted, see fn. 59.

people for the relatives of the old dynasty, and accordingly repressions towards them, could be understood as especially embarrassing for the public opinion.

Karamzin, however, avoided such an explanation, though he mentioned that

Память добродетельной Анастасии и свойство Романовых-Юрьевых с царским домом Мономаховой крови были для них правом на общее уважение и самую любовь народа.<sup>65</sup>

But in this instance probably the bias towards the Romanovs would be too evident in the foreground, as well as the aspiration to connect them with the old dynasty by the ties of continuity. Instead, Karamzin by contrast, emphasizes that the repressions were directed not only against the Romanovs and their relatives, but also against many other grandees. In particular, Karamzin renders in detail the episode involving the elimination of Belskii.<sup>66</sup> Having described the story about the suffering of the Romanovs, he adds:

Не одни Романовы были страшилищем для Борисова воображения. Он запретил князьям Мстиславскому и Василию Шуйскому жениться, думая, что их дети, по древней знатности своего рода, могли бы также состязаться с его сыном о престоле.<sup>67</sup>

The key word here is probably “воображение.” Boris not only struggles with real and potential dangers, he also “imagines” the dangers that did not exist.

But why would a cautious and pragmatic Boris began to behave in such a way, with the risk of causing general discontent? This is the explanation of Karamzin, which follows immediately after his statement that “Россия... любила своего венценосца”:

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<sup>65</sup> Karamzin, *Istoriia*, vol. 11, 99.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 98–99.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

...Но венценосец знал свою тайну и не имел утешения верить любви народной; благотворя России, скоро начал удаляться от россиян...

...Годунов, как бы не страхась Бога, тем более страшился людей, и еще до ударов Судьбы, до измен счастья и подданных, еще спокойный на престоле, искренно славимый, искренно любимый, уже не знал мира душевного; уже чувствовал, что если путем беззакония можно достигнуть величия, то величие и блаженство, самое земное, не одно знаменуют.

Сие внутреннее беспокойство души, неизбежное для преступника, обнаружилось в царя несчастными действиями подозрения, которое, тревожа его, скоро встревожило всю Россию... он... мечтал о тайных ковах против себя... ибо естественно думал, что и другие, подобно ему, могли иметь жажду к верховной власти, лицемерие и дерзость... Борис... хотел быть на страже неусыпной, все видеть и слышать, чтобы предупредить злые умыслы; восстановил для того бедственную Иоаннову систему доносов и вверил судьбу граждан, дворянства, вельмож сонму гнустных изветников.<sup>68</sup>

The logic of Karamzin is partially similar to that which is used by Shcherbatov: Godunov knew how he had come to power and was afraid that somebody would do the same to him. Hence, suspicion and mistrust, which lead to tyrannical behavior in the system of informing—and the medicine was such that, for Karamzin, it fed the disease. In other words, the people lost their trust in the tsar ultimately because the tsar from the very beginning did not have trust in the people.

Yet Shcherbatov makes an important distinction. The suspicion of Boris, in accordance with his explanation, is directed against grantees, whereas he tries to bribe the “people” and even to set them against the boyars. Karamzin, by contrast, writes about the “people” in general, which, for him, consist of “граждан, дворянства, вельмож.” The spies penetrated all layers, doing harm to all. Accordingly, the result is the “common” mistrust and hatred towards Boris, and Karamzin supports this

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 96–97.

conclusion with a quotation from Avraamii (whose explanation of hatred was as we saw entirely different).

Let us note that the murder of the prince or elimination of the Romanovs does not have in this scheme of explanation a special significance. What is important is the atmosphere of fear and struggle against imagined or potential dangers, which destroys the unity between the ruler and the people, and in the long run undermines the legitimacy of the tsar, who was initially loved for his deeds, beneficial for the common good of Russians. Thus, the Machiavellian ruler for Karamzin collapses because he appears to be overwhelmed by his own fear of potential dangers. Even knowing that by such policy he creates a perspective of the threat to his power, he cannot refrain from the reaction to potential dangers raised by his insane imagination. Moreover, the encouragement of informing presupposes the encouragement of false informing, and thus, the range of potential suspects infinitely widens, involving gradually the entire people and causing them to be frightened for their future destiny.

However, the main problem of such an explanation was that Karamzin always referred to “common opinion,” whether he mentioned “love” or “hatred” towards Boris, instead of writing, as Shcherbatov did, about the point of view of a particular social group. Avraamii also wrote that “all” hated Boris, but, looking attentively at his specific reproaches, one can easily recognize that Avraamii reasoned mainly as a church moralist. Therefore, the “all” he wrote about was a particular group of people, concerned with the purity of the religious customs, the scope of which was rhetorically exaggerated. Karamzin, by contrast, states seriously, as it seems that the “common opinion” towards Boris changed from “general love” to “general hatred.”



Let us see how this “common opinion” is constructed in the episode of Boris’ election to the throne. Karamzin describes the behavior of Boris as follows:

Никогда сей лукавый честолюбец не был столь деятелен, явно и скрыто... явно, чтобы народ не имел и мысли о возможности государственного устройства без радения Борисова; скрытно, чтобы дать вид свободы и любви действию силы, обольщения и коварства. Как бы невидимую рукою обняв Москву, он управлял ее движениями чрез своих слуг бесчисленных; от церкви до синклита, до войска и народа, все внимало и следовало его внушениям, благоприятствуемым с одной стороны робостию, а с другой истинной признательностию к заслугам и милостям Борисовым.<sup>69</sup>

One can see that the number of primary sources (which were certainly known for Karamzin) pointed to the resistance of the boyars to the election of Boris. In Karamzin’s presentation it looks as if these boyars did not exist at all. But Karamzin nevertheless mentions the suggestion that Russia be governed by the boyars’ council. This is how it is presented in the text:

...духовенство, чиновники и граждане собралися в Кремле, где государственный дьяк и печатник, Василий Щелкалов... требовал, чтобы они целовали крест на имя Думы боярской. Никто не хотел слушать о том; все кричали: «не знаем ни князей, ни бояр; знаем только царицу... Печатник советовался с вельможами, снова вышел к гражданам и сказал, что царица, оставив свет, уже не занимается делами царства и что народ должен присягнуть боярам, если не хочет видеть государственного разрушения. Единогласным ответом было: «итак да царствует брат ее!». Никто не дерзнул противоречить, ни безмолвствовать; все восклицали: «да здравствует отец наш, Борис Феодорович! он будет преемником матери нашей царицы!».<sup>70</sup>

Who were the “all” who exclaimed in Karamzin’s presentation? These were “духовенство, чиновники и граждане,” who gathered somewhere in the Kremlin, probably, on a square. There were also boyars, who, as one can guess, were in session

<sup>69</sup> Nikolai Karamzin, *Istoriia gosudarstva Rossiiskago*, vol. 10 (St. Petersburg, 1824), 222–223.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 224–225.

somewhere inside the palace, and Vasiliï Shchelkalov played the role of mediator between the boyars and the people. Boyars, evidently, wanted the citizens to swear an oath to the *Duma*, whereas people who gathered on the square did not want to do this and demanded to elect Boris to the throne. This is evidently the depiction of the same process, which was described by Shcherbatov, who wrote that grandees wanted to elect somebody among themselves, but their voices were muffled by the voice of the crowd. Thus, the “all” of Karamzin does not include the representatives of well-born families, for which the candidature of Boris was undesirable. “All” for Karamzin is the same as the unenlightened multitude, the crowd, and the common people are for Shcherbatov. In other words, Karamzin perceives “the people” as a whole, from which he indirectly excludes the grandees.

Later, however, Karamzin includes grandees among “the people,” taking into account the assumption that these grandees did not have a specific opinion, or simply did not dare to express it.

Here is the depiction of the situation, in which the decision of the electoral council was taken.

...открылась в Кремле Дума земская... где присутствовало, кроме всего знатнейшего духовенства, синклита, двора, не менее пятисот чиновников и людей выборных из всех областей, для дела великого... для назначения венценосца России, где дотолле властвовал непрерывно, уставом наследия, род князей варяжских... Час опасный: кто избирает, тот дает власть, и следственно имеет оную... сейм Кремлевский мог уподобиться варшавским: бурному морю страстей... Но долговременный навык повиновения и хитрость Борисова представили зрелище удивительное: тишину, единомыслие... Казалось, что все желали одного: как сироты, найти скорее отца – и знали, в ком искать его. Граждане смотрели на дворян, дворяне на вельмож, вельможи на патриарха...<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 228–229.

Thus, the *grandees* were present, but were, for Karamzin, passive or influenced by the common mood. After the speech of the patriarch (who was a protégé of Godunov, as Karamzin mentioned before), who naturally proposed to elect Boris, the reaction of gathered people was described as follows:

Усердие обратилось в восторг, и долго нельзя было ничего слышать, кроме имени Борисова, громогласно повторяемого всем многочисленным собранием. Тут находились князья Рюрикова племени: Шуйские, Сицкие, Воротынский, Ростовские, Телятевские и столь многие иные; но давно лишённые достоинства князей владетельных, давно слуги московских государей наравне с детьми боярскими, они не дерзали мыслить о своем наследственном праве и спорить о короне с тем, кто без имени царского уже тринадцать лет единовластвовал в России...<sup>72</sup>

Such interpretation contradicts to the evidence of the chronicles. For example, in *Novyi letopisets* Karamzin could find the following:

...и молили его многие люди, чтобы он сел на Московское государство [“many people”—but not “all,” as for Karamzin]... Князья же Шуйские одни его не хотели избрать на царство...<sup>73</sup>

To be sure, it is not stated in the source that Shuiskie “дерзали мыслить” about their “наследственном праве,” but they were certainly against the election of Boris, as the chronicle explains, “познав его, что быть от него людям и себе гонению.”<sup>74</sup>

Thus, “like-mindedness,” which Karamzin writes about, is evidently an expression of wishful thinking. “The common opinion” which supposedly was entirely for Godunov, is knowingly constructed in order to present “the people” as a united entity, which concludes the “social contract” with the tsar. At the same time

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 229–230.

<sup>73</sup> “Книга называемая новыи летописети,” 286, accessed 31 Dec. 2011, [http://www.vostlit.info/Texts/rus13/Nov\\_letopisec/text1.phtml?id=1005](http://www.vostlit.info/Texts/rus13/Nov_letopisec/text1.phtml?id=1005).

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

Karamzin clearly demonstrates that Godunov was a deceiver and that “like-mindedness” was a result of his intrigues. Nevertheless, it is for some reason necessary for the historian to demonstrate that “the people” were naïve to the extent that they sincerely believed in the new tsar.

The following is the description of the scene, when the crowds of Muscovites gathering near the *Novodevichii* convent, where Boris was in hiding, urged Boris to accept the crown, whereas he falsely repudiated this:

...все бесчисленное множество людей, в келиях, в ограде, вне монастыря, упало на колена, с воплем *неслышанным*: все требовали царя, отца, Бориса! Матери кинули на землю своих грудных младенцев и не слышали их крика. Искренность побеждала притворство; вдохновение действовало и на равнодушных, и на самых лицемеров!<sup>75</sup>

Therefore, indifferent people were present! In other words, it is not the like-mindedness of the people, in the full sense of the word, that is depicted here, but the enthusiasm of the crowd. It was mentioned above that Shcherbatov described rubbing the eyes by the spittle to imitate weeping, in accordance with the foreign evidences. Here mothers threw their babies down and were so captivated by enthusiasm that they did not react to their screaming.

This is a peculiar reinterpretation of the evidence of *Inoe skazanie* (“Another tale”) of 1606, where it was stated that people were forced to cry.<sup>76</sup>

Evgenii Shmurlo considers that Karamzin puts the evidence of the sources in another light only for the sake of a literary ornament.<sup>77</sup> Besides, as Shmurlo points

<sup>75</sup> Karamzin, *Istoriia*, vol. 10, 234–235.

<sup>76</sup> “Inoe skazanie,” in *Russkoe istoricheskoe povestvovanie XVI-XVII vekov* (Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1984), 38.

out, Karamzin himself cites in a note the evidence of a chronicle about the resistance of Shuiskie. However, it is clear that emphasizing the one-mindedness of the people in his text, Karamzin not only colors the events as an artist, but also realizes an ideological move and constructs the “common opinion” in a way, which is necessary for him. But in this case it is necessary to answer the question of why he needs to do this.

Let us compare what happens in this part of the text of Karamzin’s *Istoriia* with the way by which Karamzin depicts the conclusion of the “social contract” between Ivan the Terrible and the people after the “moral improvement” of Grozny as a result of perception of terrible fires of 1548 as a divine punishment for his neglecting of the tsar’s duties. In this description the common ecstasy of the people is also depicted. In the case of Godunov the reader knows, from Karamzin’s remarks that Godunov was not sincere. However, the people did not know this or did not want to know this, because they were in need of the care of a “father.” Therefore, from the side of the people, the incentive was sincere, although, evidently, naïve. Insidious Godunov seduced the people, and the latter behaved as a heroine of a sentimental novel; by her naïveté she gave in to the deception of the villain. One can compare this with the seduction of Clarissa Harlowe by Lovelace in the famous Richardson’s novel. The girl is innocent but naïve, and allows herself to be lured into the house where villains overtook her. It seems that Karamzin knowingly depicts “the people” as so sincerely and naively believing in autocracy that even an unscrupulous usurper can easily make use of this.

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<sup>77</sup> Evgenii Shmurlo, “Rol’ Karamzina v sozdaniii pushkinskogo ‘Borisa Godunova,’” in *Podvig chestnogo cheloveka: iz naslediiia russkoi emigratsii* (Moscow: Zhizn’ i mysl’, 2010), 75–77.

It is also possible to propose another interpretation, in which the position of Karamzin looks more complex. The narration of the main text of the *Istoriia* can be perceived as conducted on behalf of a “naïve” narrator, who represents “the people” as one of its members. A reader sees the events as if by the eyes of this narrator, who perceives only the picture of common unanimity and does not know about the hidden resistance of grandees and inner vicious incentives of Boris. Dissimulation of the crowd under the action of force he takes in all good faith. This is one of the levels of narration, created, probably, for a naïve reader with customary monarchist views. Another reader, who takes the trouble to look at the notes, can see the quotation from the chronicle and realizes that Karamzin is aware of the resistance of the grandees and, therefore, that the “unanimity” is only an illusion. Such a multiplicity of points of view, embedded in the narrative, can be seen more clearly in the final section of this chapter of the *Istoriia*, where one can find the following excerpt:

Что по-видимому могло быть торжественнее, единодушнее, законнее сего наречения? и что благоразумнее? Пременилось только имя царя: власть державная оставалась в руках того, кто уже давно имел оную и властвовал счастливо для целости государства, для внутреннего устройства, для внешней чести и безопасности России. Так казалось; но сей человеческою мудростию наделенный правитель достиг престола злодейством... Казнь Небесная угрожала царю-преступнику и царству несчастному.<sup>78</sup>

Here the point of view of the naïve “people” is present, to which Boris seemed to be a good tsar. The point of view of the religious chronicler is also present, who knew about the villainy of Boris. This chronicler’s view supposed a direct interference of God into historical events for punishing sin, hence the words about “divine

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<sup>78</sup> Karamzin, *Istoriia*, vol. 10, 236–237.

punishment.” Finally, one can suppose that such a simple explanation of a cause of the collapse of Godunov’s reign is not accepted by Karamzin himself, who looks for earthy causes of failure of this tsar (as, for example, the loss of people’s love; later we will see an additional confirmation of this).

Let us remark that the technique of multiple points of view was developed in sentimental literature, in particular, it was used by Richardson in *Clarissa*. In early novels the form was used in the exchange of letters, with a clear separation of the different characters, which were different in their style and had a limited scope of knowledge about events (in contrast with the author and the readers, who knew the full picture). Further on this technical device was abandoned, but the multiplicity of points of view were preserved, thus a text, combined in a coherent narration, allows separation into different excerpts, written as if from different points of view. Accepting this interpretation, one can conclude that the unanimity of the people during the election of Godunov is only one among a number of possible points of view within the text, and therefore the downplaying of the resistance of grandees means only that this point of view is not represented in the main narration. Instead, it is represented in the notes, through the direct quotation of the chronicle.

The complexity of Karamzin’s position, and the impossibility of the reduction of his worldview to a naïve monarchist position (which is on the foreground in the main text, but can be taken for its face value only by a naïve reader) is confirmed by the ability of the historian, in other cases, to distinguish clearly different social groups and their specific positions, without their confluence into an artificial “common opinion.”

Karamzin writes, for example, the following about the introduction of serfdom during the governing of Boris (not yet a tsar):

...без сомнения желая добра не только владельцам, но и работникам сельским... законом уничтожил свободный переход крестьян... и навеки укрепил их за господами. Что ж было следствием? Негодование знатной части народа и многих владельцев богатых. Крестьяне жалели о древней свободе... хотя и не спасались ее правом от насилия господ временных, безжалостных к людям, для них непрочным; а богатые владельцы, имея немало земель пустых, лишались выгоды населять оные хлебопашцами вольными, которых они сманивали от других вотчинников и помещиков. Тем усерднее могли благодарить Годунова владельцы менее избыточные, ибо уже не страшились запустения ни деревень, ни полей своих от ухода жителей и работников.<sup>79</sup>

The interesting point here is not the apology of serfdom (quite natural for Karamzin), but rather the indication of who won and who lost as a result of the ban on the transfer of peasants. Peasants, even if they actually benefited from this law, as Karamzin asserted, perceived it otherwise and were discontented. Rich landlords were also dissatisfied. Who were the advantaged? They were ordinary nobles, petty landlords, who constituted the basis of the army. They were these people who had to support Boris later, as he conducted the policy in accordance with their interests (and in the interests of the state, as it was in need of the strong army). So, it is natural that Karamzin, who originated from the milieu of such ordinary nobility, expressed sympathy to this layer, not to the rich landlords, who were interested in the continuation of the peasants' transfers. Thus, in regard to this issue, "unanimity" did not exist, while interests of aristocracy and ordinary nobility were clearly different, and, accordingly, their attitude towards Godunov was different as well. In such a way the introduction of serfdom is outlined in the tenth volume of the *Istoriia*.

<sup>79</sup> Karamzin, *Istoriia*, vol. 10, 209–210.



In the eleventh volume (Boris was already elected as a tsar) Karamzin adds that the ban on peasants' transfers also had "harmful" consequences:

Закон об укреплении сельских работников, целию своею благоприятный для владельцев средних или избыточных... имел однако ж и для них вредное следствие, частыми побегам крестьян, особенно из селений мелкого дворянства: владельцы искали беглецов, жаловались друг на друга в их укрывательстве, судились, разорялись. Зло было столь велико, что Борис... в 1601 году снова дозволил земледельцам господ малочиновных, детей боярских и других... переходить в известный срок от владельца к владельцу *того же состояния* [italics in the original]... а крестьянам бояр, дворян, знатных дьяков и казенным, святительским, монастырским велел остаться без перехода... Уверяют, что изменения устава древнего и нетвердость нового, возбуждав негодование многих людей, имели вредное влияние и на бедственную судьбу Годунова; но сие любопытное сказание историков XVIII века не основано на известиях современников, которые единогласно хвалят мудрость Бориса в делах государственных.<sup>80</sup>

In the note 121 Karamzin argues with Tatishchev (see above his point of view in the section on Shcherbatov), quoting his comment to the respective article of the *Sudebnik* and demonstrating, on the base of its text published by Tatishchev himself that they were not wavering in the policy of Godunov, because transfers from petty and medium to rich landlords were not allowed. Shcherbatov (as nearly always in Karamzin) was not mentioned, but Karamzin argues not with "a historian" of the eighteenth century, but with "historians." Thus, probably, he also had in mind Shcherbatov, but did not want to mention him. As for the lack of evidence among "contemporaries," to which Karamzin refers, this is quite natural that they did not point out the connection between the introduction of serfdom and the following Time of Troubles. The investigation of such causal connections was a natural task for historians of the eighteenth century, who tried to explain pragmatically connections

<sup>80</sup> Karamzin, *Istoriia*, vol. 11, 87–88.

between events. For chroniclers, who regarded the Time of Troubles as a divine punishment, not as a result of any governmental measures, such explanations were excessive, as all could be explained by a direct intervention of divine or infernal forces. Besides, the “state wisdom” of Boris was not always praised by contemporaries. For example, Avraamii Palitsyn founded many occasions for criticism (for example, the spread of taverns). In general, Karamzin on this issue expresses the clear partiality for Boris, and this probably can be explained by the historian’s sympathy towards the measure, advantageous for the petty landlords.

Let us turn now to Karamzin’s description of the reasons for the final “fall of the tsardom” in the hands of the Impostor, as a result of the tragic death of Boris and further elimination of his unfortunate heir.

In the description of this chain of events, in spite of Karamzin’s understanding of Boris as a villain, indications of sympathy began to appear in respect to this ruler, and in some respects he was benevolent towards his subjects.

It is worth mentioning that in one of the early publicist works of Karamzin he even expressed doubt about Boris’ guilt in the murder of Dimitrii, and in this case the entire theory of “guilt” could be destroyed, which apparently led Boris to tyrannical behavior.

In this work the narrator, a traveler into the *Troitsa* (Trinity) monastery, renders his thoughts, which emerged while he looked at Godunov’s grave:

...Кто не остановится тут подумать о чудных действиях властолюбия, которое делает людей великими благодетелями и великими преступниками? Если бы Годунов не убийством очистил себе путь к престолу, то история назвала бы его славным государем; и царские его заслуги столь важны, что русскому патриоту хотелось бы сомневаться в

сем злодеянии... Но что принято, утверждено общим мнением, то делается некоторого рода святынею; и робкий историк, боясь заслужить имя дерзкого, без критики повторяет летописи. Таким образом история делается иногда эхом злословия... Мысль горестная! Холодный пепел мертвых не имеет заступника, кроме нашей совести... Что, если мы клеветаем на сей пепел; если несправедливо терзаем память человека, веря ложным мнениям, принятым в летопись бессмыслием и враждою?.. Но я пишу теперь не историю, следственно, не имею нужды решить дела и, признавая Годунова убийцею святого Димитрия, удивляюсь Небесному правосудию, которое наказало сие злодейство столь ужасным и даже чудесным образом.<sup>81</sup>

Here one can see a rhetorical device quite characteristic for Karamzin. He starts and finishes with the orthodox approach, but in the middle allows himself some doubts (which later on he prudently rejects). It is possible, however that this is a trick, created in order to demonstrate to the reader that the case is actually not as simple as it seems to be, and that the pious church tale can be only a calumny. It is as if Karamzin peeped out from behind his mask of a prudent historian, characterizing himself as a “робкий” one, who is afraid to be in contradiction with the “common opinion.” One can find here a hint, which was later simply used by Mikhail Pogodin, who advanced the version that Godunov was innocent in regard to the murder of the prince.

At the same time, it is true that Godunov certainly was guilty of calumny and the physical elimination of his competitors, such as the hero of Pskov’ defense, Ivan Petrovich Shuiskii, the Romanovs, etc. But all this can be justified by the savage customs of the time, while the murder of the prince was a crime, directly connected with the usurpation of the throne.

However, what all Karamzin’s reasoning about the transformation of Godunov into a tyrant is worth, if the key fact on which all his understanding is grounded that

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<sup>81</sup> Nikolai Karamzin, “Istoricheskie vospominaniia i zamechaniia na puti k Troitse i v sem monastyre,” in *O drevnei i novoi Rossii* (Moscow: Zhizn’ i mysl’, 2002), 349–350.

is, Godunov's feeling of guilt for the murder of the child, could be entirely wrong. Could one interpret this in such a way that this understanding as a whole was only one of the masks of Karamzin, the mask of a "робкий историк," whereas he suspected that the actual causes of the fall of Godunov's dynasty were entirely different?

Let us look more attentively at Karamzin's interpretation of Boris' destiny and the destiny of his state in the period when repressions against the Romanovs and others demonstrated the real character of Boris to all "Russians."

Boris is now transformed into an unmasked deceiver. But nevertheless he is a legitimate tsar, altogether legally elected, therefore, though being a tyrant, he, for Karamzin, deserves obedience. At the same time, his good deeds, although they are praiseworthy from the point of view of the historian, cannot increase his popularity among his subjects.

This is how, for example, Karamzin writes about the reaction of Russians to Godunov's help of the starving people:

В сие время общей нелюбви к Борису, он имел случай доказать свою чувствительность к народному бедствию, заботливость, щедрость необыкновенную; но и тем уже не мог тронуть сердец, к нему остылых.<sup>82</sup>

Karamzin relates the cessation of the hunger not to a natural order of things (good harvest), but to the care of the government, which managed to deliver grain from the regions untouched by the failure of crops.

Наконец, деятельность верховной власти устранила все препятствия, и в 1603 году мало-помалу исчезли все знамения ужаснейшего из зол.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Karamzin, *Istoriia*, vol. 11, 110.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

The description of the hunger and the activity of the government creates, it seems, an impression that Karamzin regards this not only as one of Godunov's usual frauds in order to increase his popularity (as his good deeds were usually described before), but a sincere concern for the people. For example, refuting the evidence of foreigners (in particular, Petrejus) about Boris' rejection of purchasing rye from German merchants in order to hide the fact that the people were hungry, Karamzin characterizes the behavior of the tsar as follows:

Борис, оказав в сем несчастьи столько деятельности и столько щедрости, чтобы удостоверить Россию в любви истинно отеческой царя к подданным, не мог явно жертвовать их спасением тщеславию безумному.<sup>84</sup>

However, irrespectively of Boris' intentions, his actions could not change his subjects' opinion in respect to him, as the very fact of the hunger was perceived as a divine punishment of the country for the sins of its tsar.

Но Борис не обольстил россиян своими благодеяниями, ибо мысль, для него страшная, господствовала в душах – мысль, что Небо за беззакония царя казнит царство.<sup>85</sup>

Karamzin refers here to note 180, where the historian quotes Avraamii Palitsyn as follows: “Сих ради Никитичев (Романовых)... излияние гневобыстрое бысть от Бога (голод)...”<sup>86</sup> I have already mentioned above this excerpt from Avraamii, but in a different edition. Let us now look at the same excerpt in the version used by Karamzin, for a more exact comparison:

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 59, fn. 180.

И яко *сих ради Никитичев*, паче же всего мира за премногия и тмочисленья грехи наша и безакония и неправды вскоре того же лета 7109-го (1601 г.) *излиание гневобыстрое бысть от Бога*. Омрачи Господь небо облаки...<sup>87</sup>

In the edition quoted earlier it was expressed in a more clear way: "...за всего мира безумное молчание, еже о истине к царю не смеющее глаголати о неповинных погибели, омрачи господь небо облаки..."<sup>88</sup>

Thus, Palitsyn meant the punishment of Russians by God for *their* sins, including their silence about the reprisals against the Romanovs, whereas Karamzin puts emphasis differently, thus one can read this as if this is all about the divine punishment of the people for the sins of the tsar. In other words, for Palitsyn relationships between God and the people are in the foreground, whereas for Karamzin relationships between the tsar and the people are more important; besides he makes the impression that Providence is apparently perceived by the people as a force, condemning Boris by the punishment of Russia.

This is similar to the idea of Shcherbatov that the loss of the tsar's popularity was connected to disasters which were beyond his control that is with a change of fortune. At the same time, Karamzin emphasizes additionally that this change was understood by Boris' contemporaries as the loss of the divine sanction to power, as the punishment for his earlier real and even imaginary crimes. The tsar, therefore, became guilty for everything, including the bad weather, and if earlier, in favorite circumstances, he was praised and loved, then in a new, opposite situation, he was hated and damned, irrespectively of his actual guilt. This simple idea became more

<sup>87</sup> Avraamii Palitsyn, *Skazanie Avraamiia Palitsyna*, chap. 2 (St. Petersburg; Imperatorskaia Arkheograficheskaia kommissiia, 1909), accessed 31 Dec. 2011, <http://www.stsl.ru/lib/palitsyn/ch2.php>.

<sup>88</sup> Already quoted, see above fn. 60.

complex as a result of Karamzin accepting the understanding that Boris had actually committed the crime ascribed to him, the murder of the prince. This allows Karamzin to claim that the initiator of the following Time of Troubles was Boris and his ambition. However, besides this evident level of meaning, which is put by Karamzin in the foreground, one can find a deeper level; the idea that, being an elected tsar, Boris became a hostage of his own popularity. Once it had been lost, he lost legitimacy, a common opinion that he had a right to supreme power.

So then, as a result of divine punishment, the Russian tsardom faced the threat of a “fall”:

Так готовилась Россия к ужаснейшему из явлений в своей истории; готовилась долго: неистовым тиранством двадцати четырех лет Иоанновых, адскою игрою Борисова властолюбия, бедствиями свирепого голода и всеместных разбоев, ожесточением сердец, развратом народа – всем, что предшествует ниспровержению государств, осужденных Провидением на гибель или на мучительное возрождение.<sup>89</sup>

Let us note that Karamzin condemns not only Godunov. He also writes about the consequences of Ioann’s tyranny, and about the depravity of the people (partially, because of this tyranny).

The mechanism of the destruction of the state was, for Karamzin as well as for Shcherbatov, such that subjects started obeying reluctantly, or entirely ceased to obey the tsar. This is how Karamzin describes the behavior of the army assembled by Boris against the Impostor.

Многие и самые благороднейшие из россиян, не любя Бориса, но гнушаясь изменою, хотели соблюсти данную ему присягу; другие, следуя единственно внушению страстей, только желали или не желали

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<sup>89</sup> Karamzin, *Istoriia*, vol. 11, 120.

перемены царя и не заботились об истине, о долге верноподданного; а многие не имели точного образа мыслей, готовясь думать, как велит случай... расположение умов было отчасти несогласно, отчасти неясно и нерешительно! Войско шло, повинуюсь царской власти; но колебалось сомнением, толками, взаимным недоверием.<sup>90</sup>

Karamzin, in contrast with Shcherbatov, does not describe the situation as a hopeless one for Boris. In general, the loyalty to the tsar and the state prevailed over dislike for the particular person who occupied the throne. Karamzin describes the mood of the Impostor after one of the battles in such a way:

Сия битва странная доказала не то, чего хотелось Самозванцу: россияне сражались с ним худо, без усердия, но сражались; бежали, но от него, а не к нему. Он знал, что без их общего предательства ни ляхи, ни козаки не свергнут Бориса...<sup>91</sup>

The description of the situation is in accordance with Karamzin's theory about the attitude towards a tyrant, as it is presented in the *Memoir on Ancient and Modern Russia* in respect to the tyranny of Paul I. Boris' subjects behave with loyalty, although not too zealous, expecting that God will solve the problem. The situation, therefore, is suspended until a direct divine intervention, or, from a less religious position, until an occasion will shake the scales, on which the power of the vicious tsar is weighed. Thus, in the manner of an ancient play, the plot is finished by an unexpected turn of fortune, which can be interpreted as an expression of divine justice, but also chance.

This is how the circumstances of the death of Godunov are described.

Душа сего властолюбца жила тогда ужасом и притворством... Годунов страшился жестокостью ускорить общую измену: еще был самодержцем, но чувствовал оцепенение власти в руке своей и с

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 161–162.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 164–165.



престола, еще окруженного льстивыми рабами, видел открытую для себя бездну!.. Он не имел утешения чистейшего: не мог предаться в волю Святого Провидения, служа только идолу властолюбия: хотел еще наслаждаться плодом Димитриева убиения и дерзнул бы, конечно, решиться на злодеяние новое, чтобы не лишиться приобретенного злодейством... Годунов молился – Богу неумолимому для тех, которые не знают ни добродетели, ни раскаяния! Но есть предел мукам – в бренности нашего естества земного!<sup>92</sup>

Karamzin describes further the unexpected death of Boris, without mentioning its reasons, but making a guess that Boris could “истощить свои телесные силы душевным страданием.”<sup>93</sup> It is characteristic that Karamzin, in contrast with Shcherbatov, rejects the story of the tsar’s suicide on the ground that he hardly could voluntarily give his wife and heir the will of his enemies (it was evident, for Karamzin that they were unable to keep power in their hands).

И торжество Самозванца было ли верно, когда войско еще не изменяло царю делом, еще стояло, хотя и без усердия, под его знаменами. Только смерть Борисова решила успех обмана [deception by the Impostor]... всего вероятнее, что удар, а не яд прекратил бурные дни Борисовы... он умер, по крайней мере на троне, не в узах перед беглым диаконом, как бы еще в воздаяние за государственные его благотворения; Россия же, лишенная в нем царя умного и попечительного, сделалась добычею злодейства на многие лета.<sup>94</sup>

Therefore, the last word of Karamzin about Godunov can be summed up as a contrast between his evil motives and good deeds for Russia. Evil motives created the torments of the conscience, despair, the desire of new crimes. All this accelerated the death of Boris. But this death in such an improper moment was not predestined and, in accordance with Karamzin’s logic, would it have happened later, Boris still could win over the Impostor. Thus, the idea of divine punishment for a tyrant’s sins is asserted,

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 178–179.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 179.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 181.

but at the same time it is questioned. Karamzin apparently reserves the possibility of supposing that if Boris was actually innocent in respect to the death of the prince, then his own death could be understood not as a divine punishment for this sin, but as simple chance.

Let me draw some conclusions. Karamzin depicts Boris as a tyrant, more exactly as a ruler, who “не был, но бывал тираном.”<sup>95</sup> In contrast with Grozny, who in accordance with Karamzin, liked cruelty as such, Boris destroyed potential competitors by necessity, in order to acquire power or to keep it. Therefore he appears to be a tyrant of the Machiavellian type, combining the qualities of a lion and a fox. Karamzin tries to demonstrate that the sad end of such a ruler depends on fortune, which can be understood as a “will of Providence.” But such an end is not predetermined; it is not necessary that the villain has to be punished in this world, and the fall of Godunov’s power was not an automatic consequence of his subjects’ disloyalty. Moreover, the most “noble” among them, for Karamzin, kept their loyalty to the tyrant although they disliked him. Thus, the tyranny appears to be an unstable type of regime, but at the same time, the aversion of the subjects towards tyranny does not mean that they are ready to rebel against the ruler. All in all, the task of preserving the state, for Karamzin, happens to be more important for “reasonable” Russians, especially in the situation, when the ruler keeps the ability, though out of non-virtuous motives, to promote the accomplishment of the “common good.”

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 182.

### **Godunov—Comparison and Conclusions**

Shcherbatov and Karamzin inscribe the story of the accession of Boris Godunov to power and the steady weakening of his power up until the destruction of his dynasty in a classical scheme, which explains the reasons for the fall of the states. A similar reasoning can be found in Montesquieu and d'Holbach. Besides, both Shcherbatov and Karamzin had access to a number of sources, Russian and foreign, in which this story was already inscribed in the scheme of crime (usurpation of power) and inevitable retribution for it, stemming from God or Fortune. One particular crime, for which Boris was mainly punished, was different in the various sources. Part of it put into the foreground the murder of the prince, while for the other part the main guilt was the repression against the Romanovs. But in any case Boris was portrayed everywhere as a villain who was ready to do anything to take and keep his power. Accordingly, his downfall was linked with the idea of the punishment of the ruler as a result of his lack of virtue.

Along with such moralistic narrative, which both Shcherbatov and Karamzin partially preserved, they have extended their interpretation of events by introducing the society as an important actor in this story. Shcherbatov more straightforwardly depicts Godunov as usurper and tyrant. He was not deprived of positive qualities as a statesman, but the main feature of his character was an unlimited lust for power. As a consequence, and because of the unforgivable weakness of tsar Feodor, Godunov initially acquired a monopoly of power, pushing back other grandees. This caused irreconcilable struggles against him, which did not stop in spite of retaliatory

measures by Boris. Finally, Boris, having occupied the throne, inevitably became a tyrant. He tried to rely on the support of the common people, but his popularity, for Shcherbatov, appeared to be on shaky ground. In the case of “Fortune’s blows” which sooner or later appeared to be unavoidable, the people turned away from the tsar, whereas the hatred of grandees surrounded him from the very beginning. As a result he did not have any support at all, and he was easily dethroned by an even more impudent cheater, a lucky usurper, who presented himself as a miraculously saved prince.

Thus, in Shcherbatov’s scheme the main actors are the ruler, grandees, and the people, and the latter can be a constructive force only under the guidance of natural leaders from the aristocratic layer. The monopoly of the governor for power during the reign of Feodor destroys this link, alienates the people and aristocracy from each other. As a result, after the elimination of Boris, the people dared to have an open uprising without any leadership from above, which led, for Shcherbatov, to a general madness, and essentially the ruining of legitimate state power. This is how the Time of Troubles began.

The personal government of Boris in the reign of Feodor was, for Karamzin, more good than evil because it relieved Russia from disasters of oligarchic rule. Boris was described as almost an ideal ruler, and Karamzin found almost no mistakes in his policy, except the elimination of some virtuous aristocrats, such as Ivan Petrovich Shuiskii. However, having found himself at the height of power, Godunov appeared to be so bold (pride was combined in his soul with malice) that he invented an evil act of the murder of the prince in order to occupy the throne himself. Despite the villainy,

Boris managed for some time to charm the people, and in the first years of his own reign he appeared to be a tsar who enjoyed the general support. However, he was restrained by his own willingness to commit crimes, which he suspected also in others, and therefore he let himself commit tyrannical actions, and to encourage a system of spying which spread over the entire society and led to the alienation of the people from the tsar. This was aggravated by external factors like hunger, and as a result Godunov lost popularity to such an extent that any other good actions he committed could not improve the situation. Nevertheless, the reasonable part of the Russians still kept their loyalty to the tsar, though they did not like him. Godunov's death appeared to be partially a result of an accident, partially a result of his own psychological frustration. Without his leadership under a weak heir, the state inevitably collapsed and fell into the hands of the Impostor.

Most importantly, what attracts Karamzin in this story is the relationship between the ruler and the people. The ruler is described as a person whose soul is torn by the struggle between reason (which is not virtuous but urges one to commit the actions for the sake of the common good) and passions (caused by a guilty conscience and fear, which create excessive measures of repressions, alienating the people). Thus, Godunov himself destroys his support, is deprived of popularity among the people through his own fault. Aristocracy in this scheme almost does not act, but seems to be paralyzed and only passively follows the common motion, whereas the main actor, aside from the ruler is the society, which is understood as a unitary whole, possessing "common opinion." The main focus for Karamzin is on the evolution of this opinion, on the issue of how and why the people steadily deprived the ruler of its "love."

Thus, using the material of the same history on tsar Boris, Shcherbatov and Karamzin were concerned with different theoretical questions. Shcherbatov is interested first of all in the mechanism of proper functioning or, on the contrary, dysfunction and destruction of the state. He connects all events mainly with the destiny of the aristocratic layer. In the first case, its honor can be directed towards achieving the common good, in the second case, the destruction of the proper functioning of society takes place and grandees struggle with the ruler who tries to withstand this challenge using the support of the common people. As a result the situation goes out of control, similarly to the destruction of a wrongly constructed water-wheel under the force of water flow, which normally performs a useful task. For Karamzin, in the foreground is a complex psychological conflict, which tears apart the soul of the vicious tsar. The people react to this conflict by initial trust in the tsar, but later they deprive the monarch of their support. In both cases the story told by Shcherbatov and Karamzin cannot be reduced to the history of the tsar, his vices, and the divine punishment for it, but it also describes the reaction of the society. However, the society is described differently. In one case the layers of aristocracy and the common people are sharply separated, and the former is understood as carrier of statehood or a political machine, whereas the latter is understood as a source of energy, which can be chaotic and destructive in the case that it is not organized by the state machine. Karamzin, by contrast, emphasized the people's acts as a united political organism with the common opinion. However, interests of different layers are differentiated in the narrative (for example, poor nobility and rich landlords) while the sympathy of the author belongs to the petty and middle nobility. "Common opinion"

is understood not as a combination of rational interests, which are different for different groups, but rather as feeling, as enthusiasm of love or hatred and, depending on the coloring and direction of these feelings, the political support of the ruler is either present or not.

From the point of view of the construction of the narrative, the story of Shcherbatov appears often more schematic, yet he cares to separate his guesses from the material, borrowed from the sources. Karamzin's narrative appears to be much more consistent, more logical. On the surface one can see an intentionally "naïve" point of view, which seemingly masks itself as the voice of the chronicler, explaining events by divine punishment for the sins of the tsar Boris. However, on a more subtle level, which is available only for an attentive reader, Karamzin hints at Boris's guilt, implying that it could be exaggerated. In this case autocracy, as it is represented by him, appears to be nearly an ideal form of government. The problem for Boris was that he did not manage to behave in accordance with his high position and allowed himself to become too afraid and to commit crimes, which he could have avoided. As a result, the support of the people was lost, Boris' dynasty fell, and the Time of Troubles began.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this dissertation was not just to compare the interpretation of the events in Russia in the second half of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth centuries as represented in the narratives of Shcherbatov and Karamzin, but rather to arrive at some general conclusions on the character of the change of the mode of historical writing at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. To what extent is it possible to draw such conclusions on the ground of a comparison of the works of the two historians? In order to answer this question, it is necessary to rise above the personal differences between these two historians and try to emphasize the change of historical paradigms in the context of the transformation of the political, social, and cultural environment in the period of transition from the Age of Enlightenment to Pre-Romanticism.

To begin with, it is striking how differently Shcherbatov and Karamzin each perceive the purpose of the comprehension of Russia through its history. Shcherbatov is mostly interested in how the state must be organized in order to be more effective and useful for its citizens. Generally, Karamzin was also concerned with this question, but he was more focused on how the authorities should behave in order to be supported by the public opinion.

Such a difference of perspective was partially connected with the diverging positions of Shcherbatov and Karamzin regarding power. Shcherbatov belonged to the aristocratic elite, though to that part of it which had essentially lost its influence by the



middle of the eighteenth century, despite its claims for participation in governing. The main discontent of Shcherbatov therefore targeted the practice of favoritism, which, for him, led to relegating from power those who by their birth had a claim to participation in the state administration. As a consequence, Shcherbatov also condemned the supreme power, which allowed this process and generally carried out a fallacious policy as it listened to flatterers instead of lending an ear to sensible and “firm” grandees. Shcherbatov saw the solution to the problems of Russia in the cultivation of a layer of “virtuous” aristocrats who were to govern the state together with the monarch. He did not suggest any formal institutions, similar to the British or Swedish parliament, but rather the idea that aristocrats ought to occupy administrative and judicial positions, though sometimes Shcherbatov argued for the division of administrative and legislative powers. For the creation of laws he suggested a special commission of a bureaucratic type, but with the participation of representatives of those social layers, which were affected by the consequences of proposed laws.

Thus, Shcherbatov argued primarily as a statesman; referring to historical examples he tried to demonstrate that the state machine worked properly when aristocrats were taking part in its operation, and worked improperly when for some reasons “virtuous” aristocrats were pushed back from participation in policy-making. In the time of Ivan the Terrible this was connected with his policy of repressions, which was conditioned by his personal offences on boyars and general mistrust towards his entire surrounding. In the time of Godunov tensions between the aristocracy and the monarchy were caused by the hostile attitude of aristocrats towards the governor, and later to the tsar Boris, as a consequence of his usurpation of the

throne, to which he had no legal right by his former status in the hierarchy of grandeur.

Karamzin, on the other hand, regards the activity of the state as an observer, rather than participant, and he is interested in its results, rather than a mechanism of their accomplishment. Literally speaking, Karamzin considers the power from a much greater distance than Shcherbatov, but rather as a spectator observing the play of actors than a participant acting on the stage. Nevertheless, the actions of authorities certainly affect the life of society, changing the living conditions of its members. But society, according to the model of society constructed by Karamzin, behaves as a spectator in an auditorium; it does not interfere directly in the action on the stage, but only expresses its approval or disapproval to protagonists of the play. At the same time Karamzin advocates the idea that there must be a feedback between the people and authorities, and the government generally has to try to deserve the people's approval. Karamzin regards himself as a spokesman of the public opinion; he plays the role of the "tsar's friend," whose mission is to bring to the throne the opinion of the "people" about the actions of the government. By people he means here certainly neither mob, nor crowd, but rather "reasonable Russians," that is, the part of society (nobility, in the first hand) which is capable of expressing sensible, enlightened judgments.

Partially, because of this kind of position in regard to authorities, the discussion of the relationship between power and the people is carried out by Karamzin in terms of "feelings" rather than in terms of any rational evaluations based on understandable pragmatic criteria. Feeling, contrary to rational judgment, could be

unfair in particularities, but in general Karamzin proceeds from the thesis “vox populi, vox Dei,” and the society as a whole intuitively judges correctly the actions of the government.

The histories of the reign of Grozny and Godunov are constructed in accordance with this idea about the unity of power and people. Grozny during the initial period of his rule is depicted as an ideal ruler, who justly enjoys the love of the people. In the period of tyranny he seems to “go mad” and chooses the path of evil. The people are terrified, but stay loyal, as it is better to endure the tyranny of a legitimate ruler than to plunge into anarchy. As it was demonstrated in the third chapter, there is a paradox in Karamzin’s position. On the one hand, he advocates the idea of unconditional obedience, even to a tyrant. On the other hand, Karamzin himself demonstrates that autocracy, which he seemingly defends, is a highly unstable political regime, depending on the whims of one man. As a result the volumes of Karamzin’s *Istoriia* devoted to the reign of Grozny make an ambivalent impression. As Alexander Pushkin asserted, who in his youthful years was close to Karamzin, the claims of the latter in defense of autocracy are refuted by his own true narration of events. Yet, this is only one of possible interpretations. It is likely that Karamzin intentionally took a definite position in order to keep the trust of authorities, on the one hand, and to refute the opinion held about him in the liberal circles of noble society as a defender of tyranny, on the other. In this way, by paradoxes, he tried to keep the balance necessary for playing the role of “mediator” between society and government.

In respect to Godunov, Karamzin was freer in his judgments, because, on the one hand, the story was about a usurper who was regarded by the Church as the murderer of a saint, and, on the other hand, Godunov was still a legitimate monarch. Karamzin transforms the story of the rise and fall of Godunov into a moral lesson with the conclusion that it was necessary for a monarch to be virtuous. This narration can be regarded as a dispute with Machiavelli, who assumed that it was enough to pretend to be virtuous in order to maintain power, while in practice it was allowed and sometimes necessary to transgress the limits of common morality. Karamzin puts such a Machiavellian ruler in the situation when his actions are judged by public opinion. He demonstrates that, despite the fact that Godunov managed to deceive the people for a while and to win their sincere love by his benevolent actions, such popularity obtained by deception appeared to be shaky. As a usurper, Godunov had to continue his fight for power, encouraging denunciations, and his suspicions in the long run undermined the people's love towards him. The main reason for the loss of this love was Godunov's character features, which were the effects of his secret crimes. Hardships which Godunov could not have prevented (for example, famine) caused general disappointment and just as he had been loved without merit, now he became undeservingly hated. The loss of power appeared in these circumstances as a matter of time, though Karamzin does not consider it as determined, but rather a matter of contingency or fortune.

Generally, this is quite a complex judgment, more complex than Shcherbatov's, who did not idealize Godunov at all, even for his "benevolent actions." What mattered for Shcherbatov was that Godunov occupied the throne unlawfully.

Karamzin would have been satisfied by Godunov's policy, disregarding his way of the acquisition of power, yet (as shown by his way of assuming power) Godunov was vicious and as a result he lost the people's love. Thus, the people intuitively felt what God knew in advance: the viciousness of the ruler. It simply took some time for this feeling to surface.

The difference in the interpretation of this plot was connected with different attitudes toward power. Karamzin was ready to idealize any power, provided that it acted in the interest of people, disregarding inner conflicts within the government. The supreme power was surrounded by a shining halo obscuring the details of the behavior of its bearer. It is the result of action that is important, rather than the means of accomplishing the aim. But if the supreme power itself does not trust the society, if it is fearful, it loses the halo which provides its bearer the immunity from criticism. And in this case everyone can see that a monarch is not so virtuous, and makes mistakes, that his power will not last for long. Shcherbatov in this sense has a more rational attitude toward the supreme power and its bearers. From the outset he assumes that the bearers of power are people similar to all others, therefore he wants to create a state mechanism, based on the participation of an aristocratic elite, which would not be dependent from the whims and vices of one person.

All this has already been formulated above; here I only generalize the ideas which were exposed in detail in the previous chapters of my work. But let me draw some conclusions regarding the transformation of the mode of historical writing.

The main conclusion is that the construction of a particular interpretation of history gradually became a tool for an intentional ideological manipulation.

This can be connected, first of all, with the fact that Shcherbatov wrote his *Istoriia* for a small circle of readers, mainly for those whom he regarded as worthy of participating in the management of the affairs of the state. And, on the other hand, the *Istoriia* by Karamzin was deliberately written with the expectation that it would acquire a wide circulation in the society. In other words, the intended audiences of the histories were different social layers, and, accordingly, each of the historians tried to meet the expectations of his readers. Moreover, Shcherbatov wrote his *Istoriia* partly for himself and partly for future generations of aristocrats (for those who prepared themselves to occupy the highest positions in state service). Therefore, his primary agenda was scholarly, rather than ideological. Certainly, he expressed his own ideological preferences, but he did not consider his aim to be to manipulate the opinion of others or impose on their minds a particular ideology. This is connected with the presumed isolation of a social group, the aristocracy by birth, whose opinion he took into consideration.

By contrast, Karamzin, as a playwright, expected to exert by his play a certain influence on the audience, to inspire it with a certain mood. The “people” he addresses are an open “imagined community” and generally anyone who possesses a sufficient level of education and can accept on an emotional level the ideas advocated by the author can be included. Therefore, though Karamzin addresses primarily the nobility as the most enlightened layer, he does not exclude from his intended audience the representatives of other social strata, i.e., *raznochinzy* (people of different ranks), merchants, city dwellers, and even literate peasants.

We can see therefore that the transformation of the mode of historical writing reflects a certain social shift, which took place in the Russian educated society at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is possible to assert the “democratization” of this society and its transformation from a “closed” to an “open” one. But at the same time, because of the inclusion in this society of wide layers of nobility, the educated society became more pro-autocratic, more loyal towards the supreme authority. And this is partly connected with the distrust of the wider layers of nobility towards the grandees, with the attempt to appeal to the monarch for protection from the “mighty” who oppressed the ordinary nobles. Hence Karamzin’s propagation of the idea of “popular monarchy” as opposed to the idea of “monarchy, restricted by the participation of aristocracy in governing the state.”

In accordance with the change of purpose, which the historian puts himself, his means of expression have also been changed. From rational judgments about the proper and improper organization of power, the historian shifts to emotional judgments, which are expressed on the pages of the *Istoriia* by the people, playing the role of the ancient choir, conveying the moral judgment of heroes. In this way, the historian prompts the reader toward those ideas, which, in his opinion, should be shared by “sensible Russians” in regard to certain historical events, perceived as an example (positive or negative) for contemporaries.

With all the differences of the historical narratives of Shcherbatov and Karamzin, they have much in common, and this allows us to formulate a number of observations on the specificity of the Russian Enlightenment. According to the traditional Marxist view, the difference between Russia and Europe was that in Russia

the leading role in the cultural sphere was played by the nobility in this period. In most of Europe, first of all in France, the major figures of the Enlightenment belonged to the rising third estate and were distinguished by historical optimism and adherence to the theory of progress. In historiography this was expressed by the idea of the gradual development of society, and this partially influenced Russian historiography as well, in the form of special digressions about the “condition of society” in different epochs, which were included in the histories of Shcherbatov and Karamzin. In this work, however, we put aside these digressions, because it was not these that expressed the specificity of the Russian historiography in that period, but rather the main text, rendering the historical events as such. As we demonstrated, this main text fits into the framework of another historical paradigm, linked to the classical historiography not of the Enlightenment, but rather the Renaissance or even classical Antiquity. This paradigm was especially convenient for the rendering and interpretation of the events of the reigns of Ivan the Terrible and Boris Godunov, because it was already present as a ready-made interpretational scheme, suggested in the narrations of foreigners, contemporaries, and participants of the described events (in particular, Petrei et al). The major scheme which could be used for the organization of the events in the framework of this paradigm was the idea of cyclical movement, the wheel of Fortune, the rise and fall of monarchs and monarchies. The same idea was common for certain European historians of the Age of Enlightenment, especially in respect to the Roman Empire (Montesquieu, Gibbon). In a more complicated way this idea could be used as a cycle within a cycle, where the greater circle represented the historical evolution of the Russian monarchy, while minor circles referred to the development of events



within the reign of a particular tsar. Such a scheme was conveniently applied to the reign of Ivan the Terrible, which could be perceived as rising and falling, whereas the period of foreign successes of Russia, the annexation of Kazan', and the initial period of the war in Livonia were related to the first phase, while the period of defeats in the Livonian war was related to the second one. Accordingly, the transition from "true monarchy" to tyrannical rule, deliberately accomplished by Grozny, could be perceived as a turning point, as a culmination, after which the fall began. On the larger scale, within the framework of the greater cycle, the rise of the Russian tsardom from the victory of Dmitrii Donskoi on the field of Kulikovo up to the reign of Ivan the Terrible (including the first part of his rule) could be understood as the "rise," while the forthcoming events, with the fall into the abyss of turmoil in the Time of Troubles, were a partial destruction of a social organism. After that there should have followed a new rebirth ("as after a hard disease," in Karamzin's words), but neither Shcherbatov nor Karamzin managed to reach this part of their narrations, limiting themselves to the descending phase of the "crisis" of the Muscovite tsardom.

The historiography of this period was distinguished by the lack of "historicism" in the later Romantic sense, i.e., the contemplation of the uniqueness of each epoch and the impossibility to draw analogies between the epochs. On the contrary, such analogies were customarily drawn and the events of the present could be comprehended as a repetition of the events of the past, yet in another form. Therefore, for the historians of this period the question was quite appropriate: Could the "fall" of tsardom, preceded by the reigns of Grozny and Godunov, be repeated again? Such a perception of the contemporary period cannot be characterized as

“pessimism,” as the tragic end of Imperial Russia was not predetermined either for Shcherbatov or Karamzin. Nevertheless, the possibility of such an outcome, in the case that the monarchs engaged in “wrong” policies, caused anxiety on their part. And this partially reflected a feeling of the inner fragility of a noble civilization in Russia. This feeling was connected with the fear that, contrary the theories of Montesquieu, the Russian monarchs were inclined to rely in their policy not on the traditional nobility, but rather on other social layers. In particular, Peter I already in the beginning of the eighteenth century started to create the new nobility, the nobility of service, which entirely depended on the generosity of the crown.

On the other hand, from the beginning of the reign of Catherine II, due to the Manifest on the Freedom of Nobility, there emerged the layer of country gentlemen in Russia. After several years of service the representatives of this layer retired to their estates and engaged in running their household, thus becoming economically independent from the crown. This imbued the nobility as an estate with the feeling of independence, but at the same time, gave rise to the concern that the government would conduct its policy in contradiction to the interests of nobility. The social group which was perceived as an alternative to the nobility as the social base for the monarchy in these conditions was not the bourgeoisie in a European sense (it was too weak in Russia until the late nineteenth century), but the officialdom. Indeed, already in the reign of Nicholas I (1825–1855) Russia was transformed into a bureaucratic, rather than noble monarchy. Although formally and often by origin the officials of the higher ranks belonged to the noble estate, this was neither an aristocratic layer, relying on landed property independent from the crown, which Shcherbatov dreamed of, nor

the noble society united with other petty landlords whose “common opinion” Karamzin pretended to express. Even being formally noblemen, Russian officials perceived themselves as a special corporation. Its members had more in common with their fellows, who had not yet been promoted to the rank of hereditary nobility, than with country gentlemen or heirs of aristocratic families, who spent the fortunes gained from revenues of their Russian households.

Thus, the Russian noble historians of this period, first of all Shcherbatov and Karamzin, who wrote about the epoch preceding the Time of Troubles, pondered their own age, trying to direct the policy of the monarchy toward what they thought the way of alliance with the nobility of birth was, or, conversely, criticized the evil policy of “despotism.” The latter was understood first of all as reliance not on the nobility of birth, but rather on the will of the monarch, surrounded by “flattering” courtiers, who, as Shcherbatov put it, were deprived of “firmness.” In practice the anxiety was about the intentions of those who occupied the throne, to rule without consulting the nobility of birth, ignoring its basic interests. Such concerns Shcherbatov expressed in his criticism of the institute of favoritism, whereas Karamzin criticized mainly what he thought was “inappropriate” reform (which was conducted relying on the favoritism of those promoted from lower ranks, like Speranskii, rather than considering the advice of the conservative noble “public opinion”).

The reference to the categories borrowed from ancient or Renaissance political theories allowed for the comprehension of this situation, where trying to find the means, if not to prevent then at least to slow down the direction of events, which the nobility did not approve of. In this respect one can say that Shcherbatov and Karamzin

aspired for the same aim to prevent “despotism,” but they evaluated the condition of Russia differently and, therefore, suggested different ways to reach this aim.

The relationship between the monarch and society was regarded, in accordance with classical theory, as a relationship between a political body, consisting of “citizens,” “sons of fatherland,” and the ruler, who was considered as a magistrate, as an official (in accordance with, for example, a Roman model), who bears (at least, moral) responsibility regarding the political body authorizing him, even if his power is formally unlimited. It is not limited by the power of any other political institution but that which originates from the political body (and not, for example, by God). In this sense one can recognize the influence on both Shcherbatov and Karamzin of an understanding of the theory of social contract which was characteristic for Rousseau. In other words “sovereignty,” for both historians belongs not to the monarch, but to the “political body.”

However, one can object in accordance with the traditional view that Shcherbatov was an advocate of a limited monarchy, while Karamzin advocated unlimited autocracy. To this we can respond that this distinction is rather formal and depends on another more essential difference, though in the framework of the same paradigm. Both for Shcherbatov and Karamzin, Russia was in a condition similar to the situation of the transition of ancient Rome from the republic to the empire. This transition was connected with the moral condition of society, with its growing corruption. Corruption is understood as a loss of virtue, i.e., the ability of citizens to prefer the “common good” to their individual vested interests. The more virtuous citizens are, the easier it is to preserve the republican form of government. But if

luxury, the aspiration for riches and individual pleasures has spread to such an extent that everyone cares only of himself, ignoring the needs of others, the republic cannot exist and, therefore, only a despotic form of government is possible. Despotism allows citizens to engage themselves quietly in their private affairs disregarding the common good, though the price for this could be the loss of personal security, because the despot can easily resort to terror as a means of retaining his power. This way of thought reminds one of the division of forms of government by Montesquieu (republic requires virtue, monarchy does not), but actually it is more ancient and can be traced back to the *Republic* of Plato.

By a certain modification of this scheme one can assume that there is no need for all the inhabitants of a particular country to be virtuous (or to be citizens or sons of the fatherland). It is enough to preserve virtue in the governing minority, while the rest can be kept by fear and the habit of obeying the laws. But still, there is a need to be virtuous for those who have to execute the judicial power and to enact the law. It is also necessary for a monarch to be virtuous, as he plays the role of the chief magistrate who provides a model for all subjected powers. If we add to this model the idea of the preservation of virtue by family upbringing on the examples of the virtuous behavior of ancestors, which is maintained by the concern for preserving family honor, we approach Shcherbatov's understanding. According to Shcherbatov, corruption in Russia, starting in the time of Peter I, became widely spread, leading to the destruction of social ties, the loss of virtue, and lost concern for the common good. But noble families still remained, which could become the basis for future moral restoration. Therefore, a certain virtuous aristocracy is possible, which can provide a

basis for a peculiar republican monarchy. This monarchy does not presuppose any constitutional limitation of the power of the autocrat. Its republican component would consist only in that the major positions in the administrative and judicial branches of power would be occupied by the representatives of a virtuous aristocracy. The laws would be adopted by a special commission, which would also consist of aristocrats, but with the participation of representatives of other social layers. The law would be obeyed without exceptions, and the monarch would provide an example of such obedience.

Such a construction of a political ideal was rejected by Karamzin as an unfeasible dream. He rejected the republican form of government for Russia not because he did not appreciate it as such, but because he did not believe that the political system in Russia could be based on virtue. In other words, Karamzin proceeds from the same model of transition from republic to monarchy as Shcherbatov, but understands this transition as having already occurred long ago (in particular, in the time of the fall of Novgorod), and therefore in Russia's present condition, only an unlimited monarchy is possible and beneficial. This form of government (with the idea in mind that a monarch is a magistrate who bears responsibility to the political community) can be stable only in the case that the monarch is virtuous. In other words, the requirement of virtue remains, but it does not refer to any social group, but only to one person. Yet, later Karamzin's reasoning goes as follows: because the monarch should not have private interests (he already possesses all possible goods), his (reasonable) interests coincide with the interests of society. Consequently, it is advantageous for him to be virtuous. He can lose virtue

and become a tyrant, but only in an exceptional case, if he were to lose his reason and cease to understand where his true interests lie. The same virtuous behavior should be prompted by feelings, as it is better to be loved than hated.

Karamzin believes least of all in the virtue of the aristocracy. For him, the “mighty” always tend to suppress the weaker; the grandees encroach upon the rights of ordinary nobles. The only person who can protect the weaker from violation is the monarch, provided that he is just and equally loves all his subjects. In other words, Karamzin is in the position of a man, who having realized the irreversible corruption of society openly rejected the idea of republic and advocated empire with a strong central power, which is only capable of maintaining the corrupted subjects from doing harm to each other through fear.

Yet, Karamzin does not stop there. His description of the destiny of Boris Godunov can be regarded as an example which disproves the idea that the usurper, who shamelessly uses terror and intrigue against his political adversaries while pretending to be virtuous in the eyes of the people, is capable of keeping the people in deception and staying in power as long as he wants. Karamzin demonstrates that this is possible only while favorable circumstances assist such a ruler. But in case of unfavorable circumstances (and their rise is inevitable sooner or later, no ruler can prevent them), the deception would inevitably be revealed and the vicious ruler would be condemned even for those crimes that he did not commit. Such a ruler would certainly lose legitimacy and would be easily overthrown by a more successful pretender.

Thus, Karamzin “provides a lesson” to the monarch. For him, being autocratic, one is restricted by moral obligations toward society and enjoys the love of the “people” as long as these obligations are fulfilled. In case these obligations are violated, love can be turned into hatred, and the ruler can lose the support of his society, easily losing his power (though Karamzin does not approve of conspiracies). Let us note that according to Karamzin, “the people” play an ambivalent role. On the one hand, each member of the society is self-interested and corrupted to some extent, which provides the justification for the unlimited power of the monarch. On the other hand, taken as a whole, as a carrier of “public opinion,” the “people” are regarded as the legitimate source of moral judgment, which can evaluate a ruler as virtuous or vicious. In the *Istoriia gosudarstva rossiiskago* the people are represented as an indiscernible whole, as a crowd on a square. But when Karamzin writes about contemporary times, he clearly separates the opinion of the mob from the opinion of “sensible Russians,” that is, the conservative circles of noble society.

In general, one can say that both Shcherbatov and Karamzin, in opposition to the bureaucratizing absolutist state, proposed a kind of conservative utopia, based on the participation of noble society in governing the state, either through delegating their representatives for the occupation of positions on the state service (as for Shcherbatov) or through directing the policy of the monarch by the approval or disapproval of his actions through “public opinion.” The absolutist state’s encroaching upon the political rights of the nobility, pushing back the power of the representatives of this estate by more obedient people coming from the lower strata, is perceived as a consequence of the “corruption of morals,” that is, the growing spirit of self-interest



and individualism, which is evaluated not as progress, but as moral regress, and potentially as a way to the final destruction of the state and the complete disintegration of all social ties. Karamzin, however adds to this dramatic picture the idea that even such a society could be preserved from destruction for a long time, but only in the case that it was fastened together from outside by a strong and virtuous supreme power, acting in alliance with a conservative “public opinion.”

On the basis of these reflections one may infer that the social ideal of the Russian nobility, expressed in different ways by Shcherbatov and Karamzin, is a “reactionary” one—a criticism of enlightened absolutism “from the right,” as argued by the Marxist historiographer Rubinshtein. But such inference would be one-sided. Regarding the ideas of Shcherbatov and Karamzin in the perspective of the further evolution of the relationship between society and state in Russia, it is possible to say that both historians, though they thought in the framework of another paradigm, anticipated the contemporary ideal of society, consisting of citizens who take responsibility for the future of their country. Here one can observe a number of paradoxes stemming from the circumstance that proceeded from our network of concepts, while we try to reconstruct the image of the mental world of the people whose concepts were different from ours. In particular, they sought the realization of their ideals in the past, rather than in future, and regarded the possible evolution in the desired direction as the restoration of the past, rather than the creation of a future which had never existed before.

Political freedom, the participation of citizens in the affairs of the state, was regarded as the heritage of the past, as something which is under threat in modern

times, while the vested interests of grantees and the unconditional obedience of officials had become a widespread phenomenon. We find opposed to these “new” phenomena the ideal of a nobility independent in its judgments, which is loyal but at the same time has its own opinion that does not obviously coincide with that of the government. This is similar to the opposition of the protagonists of the play by Griboedov *Gore ot uma* (“The disaster from wit”). On the one hand there is Molchalin, who declared that “в мои лета не должно сметь // свое суждение иметь” and, on the other hand Chatskii, who advocated his personal ideal of an “honest man” in a society, who is plunged into the rush for individual success at any price and is accustomed to regard any ideal as a kind of mental disease.

Referring to the past, describing the surrounding reality in terms borrowed from the ancient republicans, Russian nobles created a new worldview, which saw the gradual emergence of the idea of the responsibility of the holders of power towards society, an idea which had never occupied the minds of any significant number of people in Russia before. Moreover, under the influence of the ideas of the European Enlightenment this new civic worldview acquired the idea that power could be just only if its actions are based on the firm observation of the law, including the law which prevents the arbitrary actions of authorities. Hence, some liberals of the beginning of the twentieth century, in particular, Kizevetter, noted the “liberal” features of Shcherbatov’s worldview. Certainly, this is not liberalism in its modern meaning; it is not an aspiration for political freedom for everyone, disregarding his or her social standing. Shcherbatov is rather concerned with the rights and privileges of the hereditary aristocracy. But at the same time, he remarked that in “well-ordered

states” nobody would be punished without trial—not the well-born and privileged, nor the ordinary citizens.

Karamzin, being an advocate of unlimited autocracy, reasoned in terms not of political but rather inner spiritual liberty, which was possible even under despotism. But at the same time, he was one of those who considered it scandalous to have an independent judgment. As he was in a certain sense a court historian, he did not regard it as proper to express directly freedom-loving ideas on the pages of his *Istoriia*. However, advocating unconditional obedience even to a tyrant he, at the same time, defended the ideal of an independent public opinion, which would not be afraid of a despot and would be opposed to him, though not by action but by the power of common hatred and contempt.

Considering the evolution of the political outlook of the nobility from the aristocratic “monarchical republicanism” of Shcherbatov to the “popular autocracy” of Karamzin, one can note that Russian society during several decades, which separate the times of the writing of their two histories, acquires a certain maturity. On the one hand, the hopes that it would be possible to “reeducate grandees” in order to make them virtuous were rejected. On the other hand, the public opinion was now supported by wider social circles, in contrast to the relatively isolated group of hereditary aristocracy to which Shcherbatov appealed. In the latter’s worldview one can easily recognize tragic overtones, partly because he could hardly expect to find like-minded people. Karamzin’s official position was widely supported by the conservative provincial nobility. However, he had to make excuses to his young friends, the future

Decembrists, who regarded him as too subservient to authorities, almost justifying the lack of (at least political) freedom.

During the years of writing of the *Istoriia gosudarstva rossiiskago*, public opinion had strengthened so much in its independence from the opinion of authorities, that even Karamzin's political ideal now looked backward and obsolete. And, at the same time, one can assert, that in Russian society the very possibility of the emergence of different ideological positions, especially conservatism, in opposition to superficial "liberalism" (a simple disagreement with the official policy, whatever it was) also reflected the growing maturity of Russian society. In this sense the "paradoxical" conservatism of Karamzin, which was in opposition to power in certain issues, while also opposing the despotism of an "advanced" public opinion, appeared to be more "modern" than the already outdated (for the beginning of the nineteenth century) political ideal of, in Pushkin's words, "young Jacobians," which was based on the emulation of the republicanism of classical Antiquity. Karamzin, who regarded skeptically the expediency of the direct participation of citizens in the execution of state power, was closer to the idea of "negative liberty," that is, the liberty from the interference of the state into the peculiar public-private sphere, where the creative activity of the human spirit is exercised. The state should provide internal and external security, without intervention in the private life of the citizens, and thus leaving space for the free expression of individual initiative. This feature of Karamzin's worldview brings him closer to modern liberalism, advocating respect for the personal choice of everyone, irrespective of his origin or social surrounding, rather than to the "liberalism" of Shcherbatov, who insisted primarily on the idea of "positive liberty,"

that is, political participation, as a privilege which should belong to the then hereditary nobility.

The transformation of the character of the public space in which Karamzin had to act corresponds to the transformation of the technique of historical writing. It was already mentioned above that Karamzin's text was used as an instrument of ideological manipulation. But in order to accomplish it, Karamzin to a larger extent in comparison to Shcherbatov, had to "master his material." The verb "master" here means not only to "know," but also to be able to subject this material to the aim of constructing his own narrative. The emergence of the public space, which enabled ideological discussion, the involving of readers into the range of adherents of a certain ideological position, led to a peculiar "subjectivization" of historical narration. And, at the same time, it led to attempts to mask the subjectivity of the historian through a special "naïve" style, which seemed only to reproduce the "unsophisticated" narration of a chronicler. In this sense, Karamzin managed to mislead many of his contemporaries. He was even called the "last chronicler."

At this point the comparison with Shcherbatov becomes especially illustrative. The latter tries, as precisely as possible, to reproduce the meaning of his source, although he uses paraphrase, rendering the content of the source by his hard style. And only after such rendering in the text of the *Istoriia* does he put in to the text an excerpt of his own criticism. This excerpt includes his reflections on whether one has to trust a given source (for example, Kurbskii's story). It may also be Shcherbatov's reasoning about the suggested evidence, relating it to his ideas of the right or wrong policy, or to his ideal model of the stable organization of the state. Therefore, Shcherbatov's

narration acquires a peculiar “ragged” character, a smooth sequence of events is always interrupted by breaks and different parts of the narrative contradict each other as they are based on contradictory sources. Only in the end of the chapter, characterizing the main protagonist of his story, does Shcherbatov try to put together all his features dispersed in the text. But such characteristics inevitably become contradictory, composed by the principle of combining sharply contrasting features, in which Shcherbatov tries to find, not always successfully, an inner psychological coherence. Besides, as Boltin already noted, Shcherbatov’s text is overloaded with facts of secondary importance, the historian is seemingly trying to preserve trivial details for the reader. It gives the impression that he is not able to sort out what to include or exclude, he does not understand what is important and what is not. But it is exactly this that makes Shcherbatov’s text more interesting for a professional historian. Shcherbatov does not smooth over contradictions in his sources. When he comes across something incomprehensible, he directly confesses it. Certainly, for a reader who read the history for moral instruction or easy entertainment, it was torturous to struggle through such a text, as if through a primeval forest.

Karamzin’s narration is constructed in an entirely different way. Pleasant, roundish periods lend themselves to easy reading. Those wishing to learn about minor details or contradicting evidence could resort to the notes. This is, however, intended mainly for specialists, whereas the unsophisticated reader could easily follow the course of narration, without digression to minor facts or contradictions. Unclear issues are blurred over, and many may skip them unnoticed. The textual prompts on how the “people” reacted to a certain action of the hero provide the reader with a hint as to the

kind of sentiment he or she should feel: excitement, anger, or melancholy. It is similar to a music which accompanies the action of the play, prompting to the reader a necessary emotion. The smooth flow of events (which are connected, as Miliukov remarked, sometimes occasionally) engages the reader and involves him/her in the dramatic development of the situation and Karamzin sometimes intentionally strengthens the dramatic tension of the plot, eliminating some features which prevent a contrasting perception. Thus, Grozny, the “hero of virtue” of the first act of the “drama,” becomes an “insane villain” as the dramatic action develops; although he committed ferocities in the first period of his reign and retained the features of a wise monarch during the second period. Karamzin sometimes incidentally hints at this, but puts in the foreground precisely what he needs for the development of dramatic action. In this respect he indeed has “mastered” his material, as a conductor of an orchestra “masters” it, emphasizing the nuances of sounds which he needs, while downplaying the others. Such a narration, certainly, does not put aim at an “objective” rendering of events. A story, constructed on the ground of specially chosen and purposefully edited sources becomes distinctly ideological; in the very structure of its plot, a political message is implied, swallowed by the reader who, without a distinct analysis, cannot realize that somebody is manipulating his thoughts in a quite sophisticated way.

Generally, this dissertation is far from being a comprehensive comparative analysis of the histories by Shcherbatov and Karamzin. I have tried to take only the first step on a path which could be further pursued, opening deeper semantic layers in the texts of the Russian historians of the Age of Enlightenment and its aftermath. The most important finding of this dissertation is the demonstration that a semantic unity is

present in both histories: the structure of the narrative is well-considered and corresponds to a particular theoretical and, sometimes, ideological task. Therefore, despite the opinion of the historians of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, the explanation of events by their predecessors cannot be reduced to a simple psychological pragmatism, either rational or sentimental. On the contrary, in order to disclose it one must cease to believe in a “course of history,” in the teleological character of the historical process, and, ultimately, in the idea of inevitable historical progress. Only having understood, following Hayden White and other contemporary theorists, that historical narration is not a reconstruction of “objective historical process,” but a result of creative construction, accomplished by a historian, is it possible to begin a detailed analysis of this creative activity, and to understand, however imperfectly, its purpose and the means of attaining it. At the same time, contrary to Hayden White, we have demonstrated that a historian constructs his plots not from separate historical events, but from already created “stories” written by others (even the immediate witnesses of events, creating original sources, had also been based on telling stories). Therefore, the work of the historian is similar not to the mechanical assembling of a whole out of separate parts, but rather in weaving a cloth out of separate threads from separate stories, which a historian subjects to the general direction of his own plot. In this process the meaning and ideological message of these separate stories could be fundamentally changed. For example, the Renaissance idea of the “wheel of Fortune,” contained in the narrations of the Europeans about Godunov which were created soon after his death, is transformed by Karamzin into a simple enveloping frame for his own story. The



narrative of Russian chroniclers, who explained the fall of Godunov as divine punishment for his sins, is also used by Karamzin, but with the supplement that this was so “in the opinion of contemporaries.” The story for Karamzin seems like a braiding together of all these plots, but it is more complex in its meaning. It is about a vicious ruler who is at the same time wise and benevolent to the majority of his subjects: a ruler, who behaves as the Machiavellian prince. For Karamzin, Godunov (though he fell under fortune’s blows) deserved a better destiny due to many of his qualities, and his rule was interrupted not by “Divine interference,” but rather by a tragic accident.

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