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ELENA N. MARASINOVA

The Russian Monarch's Imperial Title

(The Formation of Official Russian Imperial
Doctrine in the Early Eighteenth Century)

The formation of the Russian doctrine of statehood culminated in the first quarter of the eighteenth century. From then on, it may be deemed a specifically imperial doctrine. The main priorities of the official political mindset were set during the reign of Peter the Great [1682/89–1725] and remained current throughout the “Petersburg period” of Russian history [1703–1917—Trans.].

The imperial doctrine was a unique type of manifesto issued by a country whose victories and far-reaching reforms gave it grounds for declaring itself a European power. St. Petersburg's foreign policy ambitions focused on the courts of Europe and international public

English translation © 2007 M.E. Sharpe, Inc. “Imperatorskii titul rossiiskogo monarkha (formirovanie gosudarstvennoi doktriny Rossiiskoi imperii v nachale XVIII veka).” Translated by Liv Bliss.

Elena Nigmatova Marasinoва, Candidate of History, is senior research fellow at the Institute of Russian History, Russian Academy of Sciences, and the author of more than thirty articles on the history of the culture, consciousness, and mindset of the Russian gentry in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Her *Psikhologiia elity rossiiskogo dvorianstva poslednei treti XVIII veka (Po materialam perepiski)* [The Psychology of the Russian Gentry Elite in the Last Third of the Eighteenth Century (Based on Correspondence)] was published by ROSSPEN in 1999.

opinion, whose influence was palpably growing in the eighteenth century. Russia still faced the task of constructing its dialogue with Europe and backing up that dialogue with more than force of arms, although force remained the most cogent argument.

In his "Discourse on the Peace Concluded Between the Russian Empire and the Swedish Crown" [Slovo o sostoiavshemsia mezhdou Imperiiu Rossiiskoiu i Koronoiu Shvedskoiu mire], Feofan Prokopovich announced with great solemnity that Russia had, at last, "inspired fear in all of Europe and glory in all the world."¹ At the same time [Baron Petr Shafirov's] *Dissertation on the Causes of the Swedish War* [Rassuzhdenie o prichinakh Shvedskoi voiny] was asserting that "no one is as feared as we are, for which the Lord of Hosts be praised for ever and ever."² "Power and glory" or "might and recognition": the words not only resounded with the roar of a victory salute fired across the Neva but also adumbrated the basic principles of a foreign policy engendered by actual circumstances and articulated by a power reveling in its triumph. In eighteenth-century Europe, Russia could not count on maintaining a stable "neutrality" that was in no way complicated by the encroachments of other countries pursuing interests of their own. The predicament was a straightforward one: either victory by force of arms and shrewd diplomacy or the loss of "glory, freedom," and perhaps even "faith," since "unless we . . . forestall them, they will grow strong in those places, and ruin and destruction" would ensue.³ The victories and defeats in the Swedish war had brought the realization that Russia had to ensure itself a position of "utter security" "for all divine, secular, and natural as well as military considerations."⁴

That doctrine influenced the conceptualization of the political ideal to which Peter and his cohorts believed the country and its "autocrat" should adhere. The time-honored image of Russia's coreligionist, Byzantium, loomed large in a letter of instruction written by the monarch to his son, as an example of the destruction that the Greco-Roman empire had suffered as a result of refusing to pursue an assertive strategy. "Were they not lost because they abandoned their arms and were they not vanquished only by [their] love of peace and, wishing to live in tranquillity, always ceded to

the foe, who rendered up their tranquillity to the endless labor of tyrants?" The same document lavished praise on the "gatherer" of the Russian lands, "the blessed and eternally fresh in memory Grand Prince Ivan Vasil'evich, who was in very truth Great, not in word but in deed; for he gathered and consolidated Our Fatherland, which had been dispersed by the division wrought by the children of Vladimir . . . [and discerned] a worthy heir, who would not allow Our Fatherland, once gathered and consolidated, to be again disbanded."⁵

The monarch was declared to be more than a ruler endowed with unlimited power that was bolstered by the unquestioning obedience of his subjects. He was also charged with the heavy burden of sole responsibility for the "integrity" and "expansion" of the state. The emperor was, if you will, the "guarantor" who secured "the spatial and geographical conditions for the country's economic development," which for Russia meant not simply preserving its integrity but also widening its frontiers and fortifying the Baltic and the Black Sea coasts. As Leonid Milov has pointed out, "the extensive nature of agricultural production and the objective impossibility of working the land more intensively created a situation in which the core historical territory of the Russian state could not support any increase in population density. Hence came the need, constant and persistent throughout the centuries, for an outflow of population to new territories."⁶ The lack of warm-water ports was at one time an obstacle that virtually blocked the development of the Russian economy. "By the end of the eighteenth century, fur stocks were for the most part depleted. . . . An agricultural power such as Russia would sooner or later need to develop a high-volume foreign trade in agricultural output—that is, in bulk merchandise that could only be sold wholesale. Such goods had to be transported by water."⁷ Thus, the struggle to preserve the Russian polity and conditions conducive to economic growth were objectively transformed into a struggle for new and vitally important territories.

But Russia required more than armed force if it was to win the right to exist. It also faced the task of defining its place in Europe as a European power. It had to go beyond instilling "fear" in its neighbors and gain their recognition and the "glory" that came with

it, especially since "given the growth of learning in the world," only a "well-ordered people" could expect to emerge victorious against a "correctly disposed state."

An "educated and well-ordered" Russia did not care to be forever a "Persian people" having "no dealings" with Europe and "held in scant regard among the European peoples."⁸ In the early eighteenth century, as Petr Pekarskii notes, European journalists and sociopolitical commentators spoke of Russia sardonically in discussing the country's intellectual capacity and with apprehension comparable to the fear felt by a Roman hearing rumors of the barbarians on news of the tsar's military successes.⁹ So Peter made what now seems a somewhat naive attempt to win over European public opinion, engaging a certain Baron von Huyssen and making him responsible for recruiting engineers and officers into the service of Russia, translating and disseminating royal decrees, prevailing on major European scholars and scientists to dedicate publications to the Russian monarch, and writing pamphlets in praise of Russia. Huyssen's chief commission, though, was to create in Europe the notion of Russia as a civilized state. As Peter saw it, that message would best be confirmed by tidings of his ongoing reforms, by an image-making campaign that presented Russia's envoys as enlightened men, by laudatory reports of Russia's powerful standing army, which had proven itself in Livonia, and by colorful descriptions of the victorious tsar's grand entrances into his capital.¹⁰

The Peace of Nystadt [in 1721—Trans.] was grandiloquently dubbed "the crown of the tsar's majestic might."¹¹ That victory over the Swedish crown was offered as the justification for the colossal exertions to which Peter had for a quarter-century subjected the entire country and for the enormous sacrifices that had paved Russia's way to warm-water ports on the Baltic. The power structure had exultantly demonstrated its mighty will to victory and raised its claims as a new maritime power to a qualitatively new level. Terminology, too, was being brought to bear in bolstering Russia's right to a position of respect in Europe. A fabulous public spectacle in the capital that had been constructed not far from the frontiers of the defeated foe was synchronized with the proclamation of Peter as emperor, which rendered him equal in status to Europe's supreme

"potentate," the Holy Roman Emperor. The groundwork for this had been laid by two delegations from the Senate, "in concert with the Holy Synod," which had been sent to prevail on the monarch to "look well on" the new title.

On 20 October 1721 Aleksandr Men'shikov handed Peter a missive in which the Senate, in the name of "the realm of the estates and the whole people of all Russia," sought permission to confer on the monarch during a celebratory service in the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, "as exemplified by others," the title of "father of the fatherland, emperor of all Russia, Peter the Great."¹² Urged in support of this most humble petition was the passionate desire of the sovereign's subjects to thank him for the "strong and good condition" of Russia and "its fame in all the world" that had been achieved during his reign. But the letter delivered by Men'shikov went unanswered. Instead, Peter summoned certain senators and two archbishops, Feofan Prokopovich and Feodosii Ianovskii, for an audience that the monarch began by withholding his agreement to the reiterated petition and "with many manifest arguments was pleased to decline it."¹³

All indications are that we will never know the nature of the "arguments" that were dispensed from on high to a narrow circle of individuals. Ol'ga Ageeva has suggested that Peter was troubled by the idea of degrading the status of his enthroned ancestors and of eroding, to whatever extent, the unimpeachable authority of the title of tsar, which had been consecrated by the legacy of Orthodox Byzantium.¹⁴ The traditional mummery of Russian monarchs—whereby they publicly refused to accept the power they so desired, then graciously condescended to accept it or resumed the throne with the people's entreaties as mood music—may also have played a role. It is, furthermore, not impossible that, after having assumed the functions of demiurge, "the Lord's anointed" may have found any title lacking when applied to his exalted self.¹⁵ All Peter's misgivings, though, surely related, in one way or another, to the advisability of changing the official title of the crowned head of state, insofar as that affected the relationship between the monarch and his loyal subjects. As regards international public opinion, though, it had become completely clear to Peter and his

cohorts after the victory at Poltava that Russia now had every basis for making its entrance into the European world as a powerful state, and logic dictated that such a state should bear the name of empire. Such considerations probably motivated Peter "to incline himself toward the honorable senators' lengthy supplication and the important representations they put forth."

Russia's banner day of 22 October 1721 began with a liturgy in the Trinity Cathedral. After thanks had been given to the Most High for the glorious victory, the text of the treaty of "eternal" peace with "His Majesty the King of Sweden and the Swedish crown" was read. Then the archbishop of Pskov took his place on the cathedral throne. In his sermon, Prokopovich enumerated the monarch's greatest services to his country, which were to be rewarded "with the name of father of the fatherland, emperor, and the Great." "The archbishop of Pskov," wrote Gentleman of the Bedchamber Friedrich Wilhelm von Bergholz of Holstein, who attended the ceremony, "delivered a splendid sermon, whose text was the entire first psalm, wherewith he portrayed all His Majesty's labors, wise dispensations, and benefactions effected to the benefit of his subjects throughout his whole rule and especially in the late war."¹⁶

No sooner had the chief ideologist of Peter's rule completed his sermon than the senators encircled the monarch and Chancellor Gavriil Ivanovich Golovkin, also on behalf of "all the estates of the realm," gave a speech requesting the tsar to accept the new title. Golovkin's address was couched in terms of the same value system invoked by the incipient doctrine of the autocratic state. The main event of Peter's reign was acknowledged to be the Northern War and its main outcome the victory that had led Russia "out of obscurity into the arena of glory and of all the world and into the society of the political peoples."¹⁷ That same "power and glory" (i.e., might and recognition) had transformed the tsar, in the eyes of his jubilant subjects, into "the father of the fatherland, Peter the Great, emperor of all Russia."

To define the significance of this juncture, the chancellor elaborated the meaning of "title" and "designation" thus: "[Y]our Majesty's imperial title was applied to his praiseworthy predecessors by the

most renowned Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian, already these several hundred years ago, and is even now bestowed by many potentates."¹⁸ What Golovkin was referring to here was a letter sent by Maximilian I to Vasili III in 1514, in which the grand prince of Muscovy was styled "lord caesar and proprietor of all Russia" [*gosudar' tesar' i obladatael' vserossiiskii*].¹⁹ That early sixteenth-century document,²⁰ with its confirmation of the Holy Roman Emperor's acknowledgment that the Russian monarch should bear the title of Caesar,²¹ had been discovered among papers held in the Ambassadorial Chancellery. Nothing could have better suited the official logical underpinning of Peter's reign. Once found, the manuscript was translated from "old German" into Russian and was published in Russian and in the original, "for the information of all," in 1718. The foreword read, "[T]his [letter is] an ancient and curious thing and by unassailable assertion right long ago bestowed upon him the sublime dignity of a monarch of the first order."²²

The Russian monarch's right to bear the imperial title—which, in Golovkin's words, "is even now bestowed by many potentates"—was corroborated not only by historical tradition but also by contemporary diplomatic reality. As early as 1713, when a single set of conditions were being hammered out for an agreement between the "Northern Alliance" and Sweden, Golovkin wrote to Prince Boris Ivanovich Kurakin on the subject of the draft "General Plan": "[C]ertain powers are suspicious of His Tsarist Majesty's great strength, believing him to have great designs, those being that (1) he desires the title of Caesar; (2) he desires to establish himself on the Baltic Sea with fearsome strength; and (3) he has designs to subjugate Poland . . . to himself."²³ On the same day, 3 March 1713, Golovkin informed Prince Vasili Lukich Dolgorukov at his post in Copenhagen of the disquiet felt by certain European monarchs with respect to "the ostentatious and far-reaching designs" of a Russian tsar who "desires to assume the imperial title."²⁴

The "three united European powers"—Denmark, Poland, and Russia—pledged to authorize their plenipotentiaries to direct their efforts toward dispelling such suspicions. At the same time, the Petersburg court was wasting no time foisting on the queen of England the responsibility for the ambitions that Russia's neighbors

found so alarming: "Her Royal and Britannic Majesty bestowed the title upon His Tsarist Majesty in a letter that she wrote and bade Mr. Whitworth, who was at that time the ambassador to the court of His Tsarist Majesty, to bestow that title by word of mouth."²⁵ Charles Whitworth had indeed styled Peter "Caesar" or "emperor" in 1710, when conveying to the tsar Queen Anne's apologies for the apprehension of Ambassador Andrei Artamonovich Matveev of Russia by bailiffs in London. During an audience granted to the Danish envoy Just Juel, however, Baron Shafirov also gave Juel to understand that it would be no shame to other "crowned heads" if they were to follow an example so worthy of emulation.²⁶

Although St. Petersburg affirmed that no document issued by His Majesty's Chancellery had been signed with the imperial title, the terms "Russian empire" [*Rossiiskaia imperiia*] and "emperor of all Russia" [*Vserossiiskii imperator*] did appear sporadically in official papers. So, for instance, an instruction given to Kurakin and dated 6 October 1712 spoke specifically of "free trade in grain in the Russian empire."²⁷ After the capture of Helsingfors on 18 May 1713, an official circular from Count Fedor Matveevich Apraksin distributed to the people of Finland began with the words, "We the below-named, designated by His Most Holy Tsarist Majesty, emperor of all Russia, my most gracious tsar and sovereign, as commander of the troops quartered in Finland."²⁸ Thus, when the tsar of Russia was declared emperor in October 1721, the announcement was, technically speaking, a *de jure* and *ex post facto* declaration that was primarily directed toward Europe as a whole, while Europe was left with no alternative but to stand by and watch as a new empire was born amid the smoke and din of the last volleys of the Northern War.²⁹

As for the two other names that had been "most humbly" proffered, they were intended less as a sally directed at the West than as a terminological documentation of "most devoted gratitude," even though both were invested with the glory befitting a world power and implied a pointed dialogue with the traditions of antiquity. "[T]he appellation of Great, for your great deeds, many have already fittingly applied to you in their published writings. And the name

of father of the fatherland we . . . make bold to apply to you on the pattern of the ancient Greek and Roman *syncretoi*, which they did apply to their monarchs, renowned for both glorious deeds and for mercy." Those words are manifestly designed to approximate Russia's monarch to the image of Emperor Augustus, who, after defeating Mark Anthony and Cleopatra in the sea battle of Actium [sic], was saluted by the Senate, in its role of mouthpiece for the people of Rome, as father of his country.³⁰ Then, in an idiosyncratic transposition of the investitures of Roman and Byzantine emperors and of the coronations of West European monarchs, a threefold cry, raised by a multitude of voices in chorus, shook the vaults of the Trinity Cathedral and was taken up by the crowds outside: "*Vivat, vivat, vivat* Peter the Great, father of the fatherland, emperor of all Russia!"³¹

The response of the newly proclaimed "Caesar" also corresponded to a ceremonial that harked back to the early Roman Empire.³² When the ritual was staged in other societies, however, it was always interwoven most unpredictably with the content of the local culture, which stylized it into an alien symbolism. The Russian monarch was extremely succinct, limiting himself to a mere three sentences. He entirely ignored the proffering of the titles, which, incidentally, signified his tacit agreement to accept them.

The entire thrust of his words focused on the prospects opened up for Russia by "the late war and the conclusion of peace." The monarch intimated that the victory being celebrated was only the first step for an ascendant country that could not permit itself to "weaken in the matter of war," "lest it be with us as it was with the monarchy of Greece." The "unburdening of the people" was postponed pending the arrival of better times, while grueling labor "for the profit and benefit of all"—in other words, for the benefit of the state—was given center stage.

Peter's words could not have resembled less the "thanksgiving" that was traditional in the investitures of the emperors of ancient Rome. All in attendance in the cathedral unanimously perceived his response as a "paternal exhortation," and bowed deeply as a token of their appreciation for that "sovereign indulgence." There

followed a hymn of thanksgiving, "We Praise Thee, O God," and a prayer of thanks intoned by the metropolitan of Pskov "while all the people kneeled."

The logic of that celebration, needless to say, excluded an element that had been mandatory since the ninth century in ceremonies involving the installation of a Byzantine emperor—namely, the repeated acclamation "Worthy! Worthy!" which was first pronounced by the patriarch and then thrice by the hierarchs of the church, and finally thrice by "the people."³³ But, in contrast to the Roman custom that had been preserved until the fifth century, no one had actually elected Peter emperor and no one was about to evaluate, as they had in ninth-century Constantinople, whether the autocrat was worthy of the title. The point, rather, was whether the people deserved such a ruler: all three "appellations" were proffered by awestruck subjects who, as we gather from Golovkin's speech, had confessed "their impotence to contrive words of sufficient gratitude." The grandiose descriptions of the monarch's "unsleeping labors" and benefactions served less to confirm Peter's right to the title of emperor than to justify the impertinent "petitioning" of a people unworthy "of such a Great Father who has been granted us by the grace of God."³⁴

Peter was proclaimed emperor in an exclusively secular investiture that omitted the sacraments of coronation and consecration. The new title did not bring him more power and added no sanctity to his image. In absolutist Russia, the sovereign had already been often enough called "God's minister" and was able to rule autocratically with or without additional titles. The monarch would henceforth be called "emperor" not to boost the authority of the throne nor to concentrate all the might of the state around him. Rather, the new title was primarily intended to "serve" Russia's growing foreign policy ambitions, which needed to derive their credibility not only from armaments but also from ideology.

But the imperial doctrine had in reality been no more than a thesis prior to the celebrations surrounding the Peace of Nystadt. The broader purpose of the victory celebration was to highlight the prospects it had opened up, Russia's new-wrought "power," its first glimmers of "glory," and the intractable intent of the new

"well-ordered" state to strengthen and develop under the aegis of its newly proclaimed emperor. The power of the argument behind the idea of "power and glory," though, paled in comparison with that in *The Saga of the Princes of Vladimir* [Skazanie o kniaziakh Vladimirskikh], which declared kinship between Russia's first tsar and Emperor Augustus and discussed the tokens of royal dignity received from Emperor Constantine Monomachus of Byzantium. Prokopovich's encomium, Golovkin's brief address, and the monarch's even more laconic "exhortation" seemed to need reinforcement of some kind. That powerful emphasis was supplied by the din under which St. Petersburg was meanwhile reeling.

Throughout the ceremony, trumpets sounded, kettledrums and side drums were beaten. Cannons were fired from the Sts. Peter and Paul Fortress, from the Admiralty, and even on the square in front of the cathedral. Twenty-three regiments brought for the occasion from Finland let off musket volleys "in unison" from 125 galleys.³⁵ The thunderous sounds of victory merged with the cries of "Vivat, vivat, imperator!" that concluded Golovkin's speech.

The deafening sounds of the great celebration were amplified by its dazzling sumptuousness. After the service in the Trinity Cathedral, the first Russian emperor, his suite, and numerous invited guests departed for the Senate building, where a feast was served in the audience chamber. In all, more than a thousand people were lavishly fed there. Wine flowed like water, and there was no shortage of Tokay, or, as Bergholz called it "Hungary's best."^{*}

This glittering event had been arranged to glorify an enormously costly peace, and it seems logical to say that all the attendees, including the guest of honor—the victorious emperor—were there less to have fun than to cater to the symbolism of Russia's glory. A long line formed in the Senate, made up of foreign ministers and Russian dignitaries who felt themselves duty-bound to congratulate His Majesty in person and kiss his hand. The sharp-eyed Bergholz could not help but notice that the emperor was very hungry, but the parade of those wishing to prove how obsequious they could be

* Bergholz's account of the celebration, in Ammon's translation, is at www.vostlit.info/Texts/rus13/Bergholz/text15.phtml?id=144/.—Trans.

seemed never-ending. At last Peter was able to sit down and drink some wine, to a kettledrum-and-trumpet accompaniment, but soon thereafter he jumped up "from the table, ran across the room (there is no other name for his gait, as his attendants have constantly to follow him at a run) and repaired to his yacht, which was moored by the bridge in front of the Senate building, to rest after dinner, as was his wont. Leaving, he ordered all to keep their places pending his future dispensation."

The guests stayed at table a long time. Some, worn down by exhaustion and too much Tokay, fell asleep where they sat, while others—"irked" by all the drinking, eating, and talking—regretted not having brought any cards with them, since then they could have played a hand or two to while away the wearisome hours. The congested rooms were "terribly crowded and intolerably hot." Only toward evening was the atmosphere lightened a little by the announcement of a polonaise, followed by a minuet. The emperor looked in on the dancers once in a while but spent most of the time outside, because "the steward in charge of the firework display was in his cups, and the sovereign had to attend to it all himself."

That apart, the *mise-en-scène* of the newly proclaimed empire's grandeur was going according to plan and approaching its apogee. At 9 P.M., the grand firework display began. The sounds and sights merged into one powerful chord, culminating this celebration of the Peace of Nystadt and riveting its audience's imagination. To achieve the maximum effect, the stupefied people watching their capital being wreathed in fire and thunder were given a roasted steer with gilded horns that was dismembered in an instant by soldiers. To wash the meat down, red and white wine began pouring simultaneously from two fountains into catchment basins. Everyone was, of course, in a great hurry to get to this largesse, and some came away with bloodied faces. Then, back in the Senate building, there was more Tokay and other wines, with toasts, until 3 A.M. The following day, 23 October, was a "general day of rest," on which the sovereign, the firework-display organizer, having "much strong drink under his belt," and the guests slept until midday.³⁶ The country, though, was waking up an empire, a fact of which only a handful

of the subjects who had witnessed the previous day's ceremonies was as yet aware.

Three weeks after the celebration of the Peace of Nystadt in St. Petersburg, the formulary of imperial titles for use in decrees, petitions, and court findings was made public.³⁷ In "letters sent to foreign states" and "letters for circulation within the state," the monarch was now to be styled "Peter I, emperor and autocrat of All Russia." Furthermore, diplomatic documents were to open with his full title and an exceedingly unwieldy listing of all the lands under his sway, while instructions intended for internal consumption would confine themselves to the shorter version of his title. In correspondence directed to the emperor by his subjects, a different formula was required: "Most illustrious, most sovereign emperor and autocrat of all Russia, Peter the Great, father of the fatherland, most merciful lord." The wording for the transition from the recitation of the facts and the actual request in petitions and appeals, was to be, "Most Merciful Lord, I entreat Your Imperial Majesty." Any document addressed to the supreme instance in the land had to end with the words "Your Imperial Majesty's most humble slave, So-and So."

Following the decree on the use of titles in official documents and petitions came a decree from the Synod dated 18 January 1722 "On Offering up in the Course of Church Services the Supreme Names in the Proper Form" [*O voznoshenii Vysochaishikh Imen pri tserkovnoslužheniakh po dannym formam*].³⁸ The invocation during the first daily litany was now: "For our Most Pious Sovereign Lord, Peter the Great, emperor and autocrat of All Russia, and the Most Pious and Great Lady, our Empress Ekaterina Alekseevna, and the most Orthodox ladies of the royal family . . . for all the chamber and for Them all we pray Thee, O Lord."

Thus, the hard-and-fast formulae exactingly rehearsed on a daily basis across the country, from diplomatic delegations to churches, absorbed, as it were, some of the cachet of Russia's autocrat: to Europe he became—or, more accurately, he was to become—an emperor. To his own state he was, "is, and ever shall be" autocrat of all Russia, and to the people he was "Father of the Fatherland" and "Most Merciful Lord."³⁹ In the vernacular of his subjects,

though, the monarch—whose official name was “His (Your) Imperial Majesty”—remained throughout the imperial period “tsar” and “sovereign,” the Russian empire remained “Russia” when the subject was the country itself and the “fatherland” if blood was to be spilled for that country.

Russia still faced the task not only of persuading Europe but also of recognizing itself as an empire, a status that was bestowed on the grounds of the autocrat being proclaimed emperor. While in classical Rome, the word *imperium* signified “power” and the individual in whom that power was vested was sanctioned to rule (*imperare*) and therefore became emperor (*imperator*), in Russia the monarch, by graciously accepting the title of emperor, thereby raised the country to the rank of empire.⁴⁰ In an eighteenth-century Russian dictionary, logically enough, *imperiiia* [empire] was defined as a state ruled by an *imperator* [emperor].⁴¹ Beginning in Peter’s reign, that term rooted itself firmly in the Russian language and gathered a sizable accretion of other words with the same root: *imperatorskii*, *imperial’nyi* and *imperial’skii* [imperial], *imperatorstvo* [imperial rule], *imperatorstvovat’* [to rule as an emperor], and *imperatritsa* and *imperatriks* [empress].

The first word in this group to appear in Russian was *imperator*, which was derived, as indicated above, from Latin.⁴² “But the path they [the words *imperator* and *imperiiia*] took,” N.A. Smirnov writes, “was an indirect one. On the path . . . stood Poland, which transferred [those words] to us in their Polish form, as may be judged from their etymology. Thus, nouns ending in *-iia* (*-ja* in Polish) are undoubtedly derived from Polish.”⁴³ The lexicographer Max Fasmer also noted the Polish mediation of the Russian “imperial” lexicon (“Polish: *imperator*, *imperja*, *imperatorski*”).⁴⁴

It is no coincidence that the first occurrence in Russian of the term *imperator*, according to the documents used by the Institute of the Russian Language to compile its dictionary of medieval Russian, is found in the writings of Prince Andrei Kurbskii during his “Lithuanian period.”⁴⁵ In a letter to Prince Konstantin (Vasilii) Konstantinovich Ostrozhskii, Kurbskii wrote, “It is unbecoming for a person of no breeding and unlearned and with a blemished mind

to be an *imperator* and to lead troops, and to draw up regiments in due order to contend with the enemy.”⁴⁶ Kurbskii’s wrath was actually directed against a “self-styled sage” and “barbarian” who had “defamed” his translation into Slavonic of a homily of St. John Chrysostom.⁴⁷ Astonished that Konstantin Ostrozhskii, who had published sacred texts expressly for the Orthodox in western Russia, could allow a “heretic” “to assay” “words newly framed” he began his letter of accusation with what he saw as a most cogent analogy, that being that, just as “a person of no breeding and unlearned” must not be an *imperator*, so “an ignoramus” must not be allowed access to spiritual texts. Whether intentionally or not, Kurbskii was linking the title of *imperator* with the dignity appropriate to the mighty “master” of a victorious state, so as to reinforce the contrast between that paramount status and the trifling person (an unlearned individual with a blemished mind) who wielded that power—an image that the prince most likely intended to embody the traits of his foe, Ivan the Terrible.

Kurbskii was also the one who, to all appearances, first called Russia “the empire of Holy Russia” [*imperiiia Sviatorusskaia*], in his *History of the Grand Prince of Moscow* [*Istoriia o velikom kniaze Moskovskom*]. Listing Ivan’s victims by name in a chapter on “the massacre of boyar and noble families,” the prince mentions one Stepan Sidorov, “a man renowned in virtue and adept in matters pertaining to the boyars, having served for many years, yea unto the age of ninety, faithfully and most assiduously the empire of Holy Russia.”⁴⁸ In that context, Kurbskii again separates the person of the tsar who had delivered people up to “the most harrowing executions,” not from his high title but from the image of the great country under his rule, thereby raising, as it were, the prestige of service to the fatherland over service to the sovereign, which ran counter to Russian medieval tradition.⁴⁹ Thus, as early as the sixteenth century, the terms *imperiiia* and *imperator* had taken on a semantic nuance of predominance, power, and majesty in the Russian language. It is no coincidence that in the seventeenth-century *Book Called the Greek Alphabet* [*Kniga glagolemaia grecheski alfavit*], the word “autocrat” [*samoderzhets*] is given as a synonym for “emperor” [*imperator*].⁵⁰

In the eighteenth century, primarily in connection with the change in Russia's official status, the term "emperor" underwent a rapid increase in usage frequency, while the semantic field surrounding the concept and the words that shared its root also grew more complex. According to an eighteenth-century dictionary of the Russian language, several monarchs bore the title "emperor," whereas from 1721 it was the title of the tsar of Russia and the sovereign's unofficial designation, signifying "lord," "proprietor," "master," and "autocrat." In its turn, the concept of "empire" [*imperiia, imperii, imperium*] was related to a state headed by an emperor (the Roman Empire, the Holy Roman Empire, the Ottoman empire, and, finally, the Russian empire).⁵¹ But in eighteenth-century Russian, "empire" simultaneously denoted "power," "might," and "dominion," in both the literal (political) and the figurative sense. At the turn of the eighteenth century, soigné literature was also generating such pithy metaphors as "empire of beauty" and "empire of taste."⁵²

By these means, the concepts of "emperor" and "empire," which entered Russia in the sixteenth century from ancient Latin by way of Polish and German, were not mere synonyms of the neutral Russian words "ruler" [*pravitel'*], "master" [*povelitel'*], and "country" [*strana*].⁵³ The term "empire" initially absorbed the meaning of power and sovereignty, which must necessarily influence the direction taken by Russia's developing consciousness of statehood. Notions of the fatherland's dignity and the autocrat's might did not, to be sure, emerge on the day the Peace of Nystadt was concluded. Rather, they had taken shape over centuries, along with the consolidation of the power structure and the increasingly critical need to confront harsh geopolitical conditions that threatened the country's economic survival. From Peter's reign on, however, the semantic fields of the doctrine of state were informed by the concept of "empire." The country's new status constructed a singular associative link between the erstwhile grandeur of Rome and the imminent grandeur of Russia—which had entered the European world as a victorious power that, unlike Byzantium, had no intention of letting its glory slip away. On the plane of mundane consciousness, however, what was being realized here was less a set of capriciously adopted historical traditions than a

general sense of buoyancy associated with new prospects and a new threshold of claims that could be made.

George P. Fedotov wrote that the Russian empire was created and maintained for over two hundred years by two forces. One—the inexhaustible patience and fidelity of the people at large—was passive. The other—the nobility's martial valor and consciousness of statehood—was active.⁵⁴ Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Russia represents a superlatively sui generis and arguably unique formation that also determined the inimitable and specific manner in which its populace's national consciousness developed. "Though he [Peter—E.M.] proudly called his prime achievement an empire," Milov writes:

it was, rather, something of a symbiosis of empire and despotism, a sociopolitical organism in which the central link—Great Russia and its peasantry—enjoyed virtually no privileges. In such a state, whose resemblance to an empire is purely formal but which represents in essence a kind of synergy between a whole array of societies (and ethnic groups) that jointly generate a minimal amount of surplus product, the main source from which that surplus product was extracted was also the vehicle of that state system. It was the Russian people. . . . The reverse situation, that being the confirmation of the privileged position of ethnic Russians as an "imperial nation" within the Russian social unit, . . . was, amid the circumstances that governed the maintenance of a multinational state, historically unrealistic.⁵⁵

Although empires have existed throughout history, since distant antiquity, no meaningful typology of countries bearing that status has ever been developed.⁵⁶ This has permitted experts to create their own classifications that often lack any points of contact and to consign Russia to the most diverse subgroups within the category of countries called empires. So, for instance, the American sociologist Shmuel Eisenstadt classes eighteenth-century Russia as a "historical bureaucratic empire"—a country transitioning from a traditional to a modernized society.⁵⁷ Fernand Braudel and Immanuel Wallerstein see Russia as a "world empire"—a superstate that single-handedly covers an entire "world economy" (see the German *Weltwirtschaft*) or an economically independent "portion

of the planet," basically capable of self-sufficiency, whose internal "links and exchanges" accord it a certain organic unity.⁵⁸ Be it a "historical bureaucratic empire" or a "world empire" or a "totalitarian empire," the Russian empire was the ineluctable response to the challenge posed by natural and geographical conditions and became key to the country's very existence. The doctrine of state further worked to secure that existence.

In the first quarter of the eighteenth century, the imperial idea was in its infancy and was borne by the limited circle of Peter's cohorts, who were working toward the diplomatic recognition of Russia's revised status. It is a complex matter to determine which feeling dominated the consciousness of statehood—confidence in the ruling circle's own standpoints or admiration for how "well-ordered" the "politicized" Swedes were. In succeeding decades, the social base of the imperial idea would expand until finally, under Catherine II, it gained a firm purchase in the minds of the entire nobility, the privileged estate that was both the most open-minded and the most receptive to the official conception of absolutism. Even though it attained its apogee in the last thirty years of the eighteenth century, however, the great-power doctrine retained as its most important reference points the values stipulated during Peter's reign: victory by force of arms, an enlightened Russia's cultural identification with Europe, and the glory of an empire personified by its autocrat.

The fanciful interweaving of these three symbols made the paradoxical nature of official Russia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries a foregone conclusion. The arrogance of a powerful state would combine with a marginal mindset, Eurocentrism, and an inclination toward intellectual plagiarism. In the final analysis, the sense of civic loyalty that seemed to have swallowed patriotism at a gulp would mutate into its opposite, diametrically separating service to the sovereign from service to the fatherland and thereby giving rise to dramatic confrontations between varieties of social consciousness.

Notes

1. Feofan Prokopovich, "Slovo o sostoiavshemsia mezhdou Imperiiu Rossiiskoiu i Koronoiu Shvedskoiu mire," in *Feofan Prokopovich. Sochineniia* (Moscow and Leningrad, 1961), p. 115.

2. P.P. Shafirov, "Rassuzhdenie o prichinakh Shvedskoi voiny," in *Rossiia podnial na dyby . . .* (Moscow, 1987), vol. 1, p. 549.

3. See Prokopovich, "Slovo," p. 129; "Gramota Petra I imperatoru Karlu VI, 11 fevralia 1713," in *Pis'ma i bumagi imperatora Petra Velikogo* (Moscow, 1992), vol. 13, no. 1 (January–June 1713), pp. 67–68.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

5. *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi imperii s 1649 goda* (henceforth *PSZ*) (St. Petersburg, 1830), vol. 6: 1720–1722, p. 496. The reference is to Grand Prince Ivan III.

6. L.V. Milov, *Velikorusskii pakhar' i osobennosti rossiiskogo istoricheskogo protsessa* (Moscow, 1998), p. 566.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 567.

8. Shafirov, "Rassuzhdenie o prichinakh Shvedskoi voiny," p. 467.

9. P.P. Pekarskii, *Nauka i literatura pri Petre Velikom. Vvedenie v istoriiu prosveshcheniia v Rossii XVIII stoletii* (St. Petersburg, 1862), vol. 1, p. 90.

10. Huyssen's chief print mouthpiece was the journal *Europäische Fama*, which for several years published articles that were sympathetic toward Russia.

11. See "Zapiski grafa Bassevicha, sluzhashchie k poiasneniiu nekotorykh sobytii iz vremeni tsarstvovaniia Petra Velikogo (1713–1725)," in *Russkii arkhiv*, bk. 3, 1865, p. 200.

12. "Akt podneseniia Gosudariu tsariu Petru I titula Imperatora Vserossiiskogo i naimenovaniia Velikogo i Ottsa Otechestva," in *PSZ*, vol. 6, p. 444.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 445.

14. O.G. Ageeva, "Imperskii status Rossii: k istorii politicheskogo mentaliteta russkogo obshchestva nachala XVIII veka," in *Tsar' i tsarstvo v russkom obshchestvennom soznanii* (Moscow, 1999), vol. 2: *Mirovospriiatie i samosoznanie russkogo obshchestva*, pp. 122–23, 135–36.

15. On this, see A.M. Panchenko and B.A. Uspenskii, "Ivan Groznyi i Petr Velikii: kontseptsii pervogo monarkha," in *Trudy otdela drevnerusskoi literatury* (Leningrad, 1983), vol. 37, pp. 54–78.

16. F.V. Berkhgol'ts [Friedrich Wilhelm von Bergholz], *Dnevnik kameriunkera F.V. Berkhgol'tsa, 1721–1725* (Moscow, 1902), pp. 133–34. Though Prokopovich's lecture has not been preserved, it was, to all appearances, similar to his "Discourse on the Peace Concluded Between the Russian Empire and the Swedish Crown on the Thirtieth Day of August 1721, and on the Gratitude Due from Us for God's Surpassing Grace, Delivered by the Right Reverend Feofan, Archbishop of Pskov and Narva, in the Cathedral Church of the Assumption of the Most Holy Mother of God in the Regnant City of Moscow on 28 January 1722" [referenced above as "Slovo o sostoiavshemsia mezhdou Imperiiu Rossiiskoiu i Koronoiu Shvedskoiu mire"—Trans.].

17. "Akt podneseniia Gosudariu tsariu Petru I titula Imperatora," p. 445.

18. *Ibid.*

19. See *Gramota Maksimiliana I k velikomu kniazii Vasiliuu III 1514 goda* (St. Petersburg, 1718); Pekarskii, *Nauka i literatura pri Petre Velikom*, vol. 2; and T.A. Bykova and M.M. Gurevich, *Opisanie izdaniia napechatannykh pri Petre I. Opisanie izdaniia grazhdanskoi pečati, 1708–ianv. 1725* (Moscow and Leningrad, 1955).

20. "The chief achievement of Russian diplomacy," writes Anna Khoroshkevich, "was not that agreement was reached on specific actions to take but that Maximilian acknowledged Russia's claims to Russian lands and supported Vasilii III's bearing the title of tsar" (*Russkoe gosudarstvo v sisteme mezhdunarodnykh otnoshenii kontsa XV-nachale XVI v.* [Moscow, 1980], p. 125).

21. The reference to the grand prince as "Caesar" [*tsesar'*] was not a diplomatic concession on the part of the Holy Roman emperor but represented a strategic direction in his policy relative to Muscovy. According to records kept by Maximilian I's ambassador to Russia, Ivan III and later Vasilii III were both styled "tsar of all Russia" [*tsar' vseia Rusi*] (*Pamiatniki diplomaticheskikh snoshenii drevnei Rusi s derzhavami inostrannymi* [St. Petersburg, 1851], vol. 1, pt. 1, pp. 73, 77, 124, 131, 141). On this, see also W. Vodoff, "Le regne d'Ivan III: une étape dans l'histoire du titre 'tsar,'" in *Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte* (Berlin, 1996), vol. 52, pp. 15-20.

22. Pekarskii, *Nauka i literatura pri Petre Velikom*, vol. 2, p. 429.

23. *Pis'ma i bumagi imperatora Petra Velikogo*, vol. 13, pt. 1, p. 276.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 279.

25. See "Pis'mo G. I. Golovkina B. I. Kurakinu. 3 marta, 1713. Berlin," in *ibid.*, p. 276. In his letter to Baron Schack, Golovkin stated additionally that in writing to Peter, Queen Anne addressed him only as emperor [*imperator*] ("Pis'mo G. I. Golovkina baronu Shaku. 3 marta, 1713. Berlin," in *ibid.*, p. 274).

26. Iu. Iul' [Just Juel], *Zapiski Iusta Iulia, datskogo poslannika pri Petre Velikom, 1709-1711* (Moscow, 1889), p. 155.

27. *Pis'ma i bumagi imperatora Petra Velikogo* (Moscow, 1997), vol. 12, pt. 2, p. 171.

28. *Ibid.*, vol. 13, pt. 1, p. 424.

29. Prussia and Holland were prompt in recognizing the Russian monarch's new title. In 1723 the defeated Sweden came to terms with the fact that it had been beaten by none other than the emperor of Russia. Then, in a deal struck over the disputed territories of Schleswig, Denmark recognized the Russian Empire in 1732. Turkey followed suit in 1739, England and Austria in 1742, France and Spain in 1745, and Poland in 1764. (On this, see S.M. Solov'ev, *Istoriia Rossii s drevneishikh vremen* [Moscow, 1963], bk. 9, vol. 18, p. 322; and Iul', *Zapiski Iusta Iulia*, p. 155.)

30. See Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus, *The Twelve Caesars*, trans. Robert Graves, rev. Michael Grant (London: Penguin Books, 1989), p. 87; and E.V. Fedorova, *Liudi imperatorskogo Rima* (Moscow, 1990), p. 83.

31. On this, see, for example, Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*, p. 87; G.A. Ostrogorskii, "Evoliutsiia vizantiiskogo obriada koronovaniia," in *Vizantiia. Iuzhnye slaviane i Drevniaia Rus'. Zapadnaia Evropa. Iskusstvo i kul'tura* (Moscow, 1973); and O.G. Ageeva, "Imperskii status Rossii," in *Tsar' i tsarstvo v russkom obshchestvennom soznanii*, ed. A.A. Gorskii (Moscow, 1999), pp. 125-26.

32. As Suetonius writes, "With tears in his eyes, Augustus answered . . . 'Fathers of the Senate, I have at last achieved my highest ambition. What more can I ask of the immortal gods than that they may permit me to enjoy your approval until my dying day?'" (*The Twelve Caesars*, p. 87).

33. On this, see, for instance, Ageeva, "Imperskii status Rossii," pp. 125-26; and Ostrogorskii, "Evoliutsiia vizantiiskogo obriada koronovaniia," pp. 34-38.

34. It would, of course, be tempting to imagine that "the will of the people was the acknowledged source of the imperial title" (Ageeva, "Imperskii status Rossii," p. 124). The universal supplication to take the title of emperor, however, speaks less to the influence of the European theory of natural law than to the most humble gratitude toward and exaltation of the autocrat "by all the populus."

35. Friedrich Wilhelm von Bergholz writes of twenty-seven regiments of twenty-seven thousand men (*Dnevnik*, p. 134).

36. See *ibid.*, pp. 135, 139-40; and "Akt podneseniia Gosudariu tsariu Petru I titula Imperatora," pp. 446-48.

37. *PSZ*, vol. 6, pp. 446-48.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 481.

39. Only from the Napoleonic wars onward was the term "empire" applied to Russia, infrequently, in private correspondence (which was, as a rule, conducted in French), and then only in contexts relating directly to foreign policy (see, for example, the letters of A.I. Viazemskii to A.P. Vorontsov in *Arkhiv kniazia Vorontsova* [Moscow, 1879], esp. bk. 14, pp. 379-80, 414, 424-25).

40. See T. Mommzen (Theodor Mommsen), *Istoriia Rima*, vol. 4: *Ot smerti Sully do bitvy pri Tapse* (Moscow, 1941), p. 397.

41. *Slovar' russkogo iazyka XVIII veka* (St. Petersburg, 1997), pt. 9: *Iz-Kasta* p. 85.

42. P.Ia. Chernykh, *Istoriko-etimologicheskii slovar' sovremennogo russkogo iazyka* (Moscow, 1993), vol. 1: *A-Pantomima*, p. 344.

43. N.A. Smirnov, "Zapadnoe vliianie na russkii iazyk v Petrovskuiu epokhu," in *Sbornik otdeleniia russkogo iazyka i slovesnosti Imperatorskoi akademii nauk* (St. Petersburg, 1910), vol. 88, p. 5.

44. Max Vasmer, *Russisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg, 1953), pt. 1, p. 480.

45. *Etimologicheskii slovar' russkogo iazyka*, ed. N.M. Shanskii (Moscow, 1980), vol. 2, pt. 7, p. 57.

46. "Sochineniia kniazia Kurbskogo," *Russkaia istoricheskaia biblioteka, izdavaemaia Imperatorskoi arkheograficheskoi kommissiei* (St. Petersburg, 1914), vol. 31, p. 411.

47. On this, see A.N. Iasinskii, *Sochineniia kniazia Kurbskogo kak istoricheskii material* (Kiev, 1889), pp. 105-6.

48. "Sochineniia kniazia Kurbskogo," p. 305.

49. *Perepiska Ivana Groznogo s Andreem Kurbskim* (Leningrad, 1979), p. 120.

50. *Slovar' russkogo iazyka XI-XVII vv.* (Moscow, 1979), pt. 6: *Zipun - Iianuarii*, p. 231.

51. The term "empire" was most frequently applied to the state of Rome. More rarely, in official documents and correspondence, the same status was accorded to the Sublime Porte. See, for instance, "Gramota Petra I imperatoru Karlu VI," pp. 65-68.

52. *Moskovskii Merkurii* (Moscow, 1803), pt. 1, p. 137.

53. See *Etimologicheskii slovar' russkogo iazyka*, vol. 2, pt. 7, p. 59; and A.I. Sobolevskii, "Retsenziia na rabotu S. Mladentsova 'Starite germanski elementi v slavianskote ezitsi.' Sofiia. 1910," *Zhurnal Ministerstva narodnogo prosveshcheniia*, pt. 33 (May 1911), p. 159.

54. *Sud'ba i grekhi Rossii. Izbrannye stat'i po filosofii russkoi istorii i kul'tura* (St. Petersburg, 1991), vol. 1, p. 128. Fedotov, incidentally, added to the many definitions of empire one that Russian historians have often cited in recent years: "[I]t cannot be said that an empire is a state that extends beyond national frontiers, because the nation-state (if nationality is associated with language) is a relatively rare historical phenomenon. Perhaps the correct definition would be that an empire is the expansion beyond the bounds of durable frontiers, the outgrowth of a fully formed, historically mature organism" (ibid., vol. 2, p. 305).

55. Milov, *Velikorusskii pakhar'*, pp. 563–64.

56. See, for example, the discussion in *Rodina* under the rubric "We Are in the Empire, the Empire Is in Us" [My v imperii, Imperiia v nas], where another definition of empire is found: "Empire is the term used to designate a state that is large in size and (as a rule) complex in structure—often, but not necessarily, ruled by an emperor. This state can be a federation, as was the German Empire from 1870 through 1918; a unitary state, like the Russian Empire until its collapse; or, like Great Britain, a hierarchically organized commonwealth (Encyclopedia Britannica)" (*Rodina*, 1995, no. 1, p. 36).

57. Eisenstadt's general understanding of empire is that of a political system surrounded by an expansive centralized territory. Its center is personified by an emperor or represented by particular political institutions, and it constitutes a relatively autonomous formation. In Roman times, the image of empire was identified with concentrated power and a strong center that extended its prerogatives over a fairly broad territorial range. In "premodern" times, empire was seen as power wielded over various territorial units, which had accepted certain symbols of political identity that could not be absolutely equated with notions of national sovereignty. The point at issue was, rather, the existence of power that is acknowledged within a certain space. In modern times, the concept of empire has approximated that of a political system through which power is extended over communities that sometimes are not even territorially juxtaposed or rigidly inscribed into a single structure with common symbols and a common identification. (On this, see Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, *The Political Systems of Empires* [New York: Free Press, 1963]; Eisenstadt, *European Civilization in a Comparative Perspective: A Study in the Relations Between Culture and Social Structure* [Oslo: Norwegian University Press, 1987]; Eisenstadt, *Modernization: Protest and Change* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1966); Eisenstadt, *Tradition, Change and Modernity* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1973); Eisenstadt, *Revolution and the Transformation of Societies: A Comparative Study of Civilizations* (New York: Free Press, 1978); and Eisenstadt, "Introduction: Historical Traditions, Modernization and Development," in *Patterns of Modernity*, ed. Eisenstadt (London: Frances Pinter, 1987), vol. 2: *Beyond the West*.

58. See F. Brodel' [Fernand Braudel], *Vremia mira. Material'naia tsivilizatsiia, ekonomika i kapitalizm, XV–XVIII vv.* (Moscow, 1992), vol. 3, p. 14, pp. 48–49; and Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Academic Press, 1974).