Chapter 6

The Trial of the Staritskiis

Ivan IV decided to share what he had with his sons long before the eldest, Tsarevich Ivan Ivanovich, came of age. According to the official chronicle, construction of a separate (особный) court for Ivan’s heirs began on the day before Tsarina Anastasiia died. Soon a cathedral was established within that court and the office of a protopope was instituted together with the cathedral clergy. The tsar gave orders “to make the churches and chambers quickly, so that my children might be installed in that court all the sooner.”1 Boyars and a retinue of servitors were attached to the tsarevichi. Vasilii Yakovlev-Zakhar’in became the heir to the throne’s chief boyar and dvoretskii, while Vasilii Sitskii, a very close relative of the Zakhar’ins, was appointed second boyar to the tsarevichi. Sytnyi, Kormovoi, and Khlebnyi dvortsy, each with their own steward (ключник) and other officials, were set up to meet the needs of young Ivan and Fedor.2

On the occasion of his second marriage, the tsar compiled a new will fixing the order of succession to the throne and the status of the new tsarina and any children he might have by her. The will named a group of executors who, it was intended, would form a council of guardians for the heir to the throne, who was then seven years old. The boyar-regents took an oath of loyalty to the tsarevichi and to Tsarina Mariia. They swore not to seek any other sovereign besides Ivan’s heir and to administer the country in accordance with the royal testament, following “that which our tsar and grand prince has written in his will.” “And we are to be ruled,” the wording of the oath reads, “by your son, our lord tsarevich Ivan ... in accordance with your last will ...”3 The actual text of the will has been lost, but a special written record, which was once appended to the will has survived. The signatures included in this document (Danilo Romanovich, Vasilii Mikhailovich, and others) enable us to establish the composition of the regency council. The signature “Ivan Petrov[ich]” is ambiguous. Two boyars bore this combination of names – Yakovlev(-Zakhar’in) and Fedorov(-Cheliadnin). The former was in Moscow in 1561–62, while the latter was serving in Dorpat. A.A. Zimin compared the signature on the present document with those Yakovlev and Fedorov made on the final resolution (приговор)

1 PSRL, vol. 13, pp. 328f.
2 Al’shits 1949, pp. 54, 57, 61; Razriady, folio 388v; Poslanie Taube i Kruze, p. 54.
3 SGGD, Part 1, No. 174, p. 474.
of the Zemskii Sobor in 1566 and established beyond all dispute that the signatory on the first occasion was Yakovlev.\footnote{Zimin 1964, p. 88, n. 3.}

To judge by the *Tale of the Mutiny* written into the chronicle, alongside the Zakhar’ins, a leading role was played in the regency council of 1553 by the appanage prince Vladimir Vorotynskii and by the d’iak Ivan Viskovatiy. It had been those two figures who conducted the ceremony of taking the oath to Tsarevich Dmitrii. Soon afterwards Vladimir Vorotynskii died and his place in the Duma was taken by his brother, Mikhail, who was awarded the title *sluga i boiarin* (servant and boyar) – one of the highest in the state. A sluga had every cause to lay claim to a place on the regency council. But neither Mikhail Vorotynskii nor the d’iak Viskovatiy were named by the tsar as executors in 1561.

The regency council of 1553 was not as representative as the well-known group of seven boyars set up by Vasilii III. The 1561 council was still less representative and less authoritative. It comprised five boyars, two deti boiarshchik who belonged to the Duma, and a d’iak. The highest rung of the feudal hierarchy was then occupied by three appanage princes – Vladimir Staritskii, Ivan Bel’skii, and Ivan Mstislavskii. The first two were not included among the guardians. Mstislavskii was a politically colourless figure and exceptionally young for a boyar. He was only nominally the senior regent. Vasilii III’s council of guardians included the Shuiskii brothers from the princely Suzdal nobility and the Zakhar’ins, Morozovs, and Vorontzovs from the old Muscovite untitled boyars. The characteristic feature of the new council was the dominance of the Zakhar’ins, who had elbowed aside all their rivals for power. Those appointed the main guardians of Tsarevich Ivan were Daniil Yur’ev, Vasilii Yur’ev, Ivan Yakovlev and Fedor Umnogo-Kolychev. Of the five boyar members of the regency council, three belonged to the Zakhar’in clan; a fourth, Kolychev, was from the same part of the country. The Kolychev family had not played a noticeable role of any kind among the boyars during Sil’vestr’s rule. Fedor Umnogo-Kolychev, now included as a member of the regency council, had been made an okol’nichii before the downfall of the Chosen Council in 1560, and became a boyar later still. As a consequence he was a complete newcomer to the Boyar Duma.

The titled nobility – Prince Andrei Teliatevskii and the royal kravchii Prince Petr Goreskii-Obolenskii – occupied a subsidiary position in the council. Teliatevskii came from a noble, but impoverished branch of the princely Tverskoi-Mikulinskii family. At court, the Teliatevskii were recorded in the lists of “landowners (*pomeshchniki*) from Yaroslavl.” Both Teliatevskii and Goreskii were young men and neither had occupied a prominent position under Adamshev, a factor which prompted the tsar’s choice. It was Teliatevskii whom Ivan