The economic relations between Western Europe and Russia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries consisted mainly of trade, and in this contribution the present author will limit himself to the discussion of that trade. In the seventeenth century the bulk of the Russian trade with Western Europe went via the port of Arkhangelsk. The reason for this was that Russia did not have any Baltic ports. Poland and Sweden controlled the Baltic coasts and obstructed Russian foreign trade by this route. This state of affairs changed during the Great Northern War, which lasted from 1700 to 1721. During that war Peter I conquered a strip of the Baltic coast and founded St. Petersburg. Subsequently, in the 1720s, he replaced Arkhangelsk by St. Petersburg as Russia’s main outlet. The glory days of Arkhangelsk were then over. Dependable figures are hard to come by, but it seems that throughout the rest of the eighteenth century approximately half of Russia’s trade with Western Europe went via St. Petersburg, about 40% via other Russian Baltic ports—mainly Riga, Reval, and Narva—and perhaps 10% via Arkhangelsk.

Thus, Arkhangelsk was Russia’s main port in the seventeenth century, a position St. Petersburg was to occupy in the eighteenth. This is one way to divide the history of Russia’s foreign trade in periods. Another way to do that is to define the respective periods by the volume and types of commodities traded, and the countries with which Russia conducted trade. When we combine these three criteria, the history of Russia’s trade with Western Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth

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centuries may be divided into three quite different periods: the first half of the seventeenth century, the second half of the seventeenth century, and the eighteenth century.

Changing markets in Western Europe and Russia’s export

In the first half of the seventeenth century almost half of Russia’s export consisted of furs from the forests of Siberia and the Russian North, mainly sable. The rest of the export was predominantly made up of Russia leather (juft’) and tallow—cow-fat—, animal products from the Jaroslavl area. Trade with the Dutch Republic, Amsterdam in practice, accounted for perhaps 75% of Russia’s commerce. The remaining business was conducted mainly with England, and, in addition, with the North Sea ports of Germany and to a much lesser extent with Italy. The German and Italian connections were largely an extension of the Dutch trade. Direct trade between Arkhangelsk and Italy was conducted