**PEERING INTO A MUSCOVITE TURF-WAR**

**(HOW DO WE EVEN KNOW IT’S THERE?):**

**BOYAR MILOSLAVSKII AND THE AUDITING CHANCELLERY**

**Introduction**

In his fulminations against the two superpowers of the early 1970s, the late PRC Premier Zhou Enlai tirelessly proclaimed “There is no peace under the Heavens.” His slogan aptly characterizes the puzzling impasse amongst scholars of seventeenth-century Russian elite interaction and central governmental organs, who have yet to fine-tune how the two touched one another.

How shall we fathom this putatively Manichaean universe? Can we satisfactorily demonstrate how the existences of magnates and bureaucracy embraced one another? Let us begin by boldly polarizing the debate. (1) Did the thinking of the Muscovite magnateria—boyars and okol’nichie, the two uppermost members of the Boyar Duma—operate independently of complex organizational norms? (2) Was the central bureaucracy encapsulated in a Weberian straitjacket that admitted to no prebendal dysfunctionalism?

First, in no sense did period Russian magnates stay isolated from the powerful current of bureaucratic norm acculturation, observable since at least the mid-1550s. This process shaped these grandees’ career and status expectations and political behavior—in short their social psychology. There is no shortage of examples to prove this assertion, but in passing I will mention just one. Contrast the restraint and quasi-enlightened perspectives of the late 1670s Miloslavskis and Dolgorukiis in promoting fiscal and administrative reform to the blatant rapacity of the 1630s and 1640s Sheremetevs and Morozovs.

Second, to accept statism as an omnipotent force molding equally all who encountered it is crass overstatement. The indisputable presence of the Muscovite service state ethos cannot be hypostatized to invoke an unwavering apolitical stance of the bureaucracy’s top officials. Wrong it would be to aver that they admitted to no personal calculations directed towards other officiating peers and harbored no thought processes geared to anything other than totally depersonalized casting of administrative policy and the most efficient handling of paperwork. This article will tease these last two sentences’ assertions, and will redeploy Ockham’s razor to Muscovy’s terminal century.
Does the fact of the elite's burgeoning conformity to administrative mentality entitle us to think that the elite's deepening bureaucratic sophistication prevented bureau heads from crookedly wielding their departmental clout to hold perceived, turf-encroaching peers at bay? Must the growing organizational complexity of that era preclude our recognition that Muscovite administrative behavior could be at variance with our understandings of depersonalized bureaucratic policy-making? Whether the findings in this essay will conform to Parsonian or Collinsian interpretation is probably actuarial. But we shall see.

The Unhappy 1650s and 1660s

So let us turn now to the 1650s and 1660s, the cockpit of our debate — money, power, ambition, spite, influence-peddling, revenge-taking, principle, and academic abstraction — and see where they lead us. The assorted policy disasters in financing the Thirteen Years' War (1654-67) is where we will begin. The witless copper-money inflationary scheme, skyrocketing taxation, and the lack of a central bank confronted Muscovy's quasi-monetarized and pre-mercantilist economy with sheer (and seemingly remediless) desperation by the early 1660s. No Colbert waited in the wings, only Aleksei's venal father-in-law, I. D. Miloslavskii, of whom didactic journal writer George Kotsishkin informs us that he committed egregious larceny and protected counterfeiting rings in the Mint, which he, Miloslavskii ran.

Muscovite administration, despite its vibrant, resilient meritocratic core, was a far cry from Marc Raiff's catchy expression "The well-ordered police state," putatively incarnated in late seventeenth-century France, Prussia, and the Holy Roman — later Habsburg — Empire. Notions of the law stimulating officials to reflect upon a code of restraint and obligation were significantly, but not universally, accepted; it was in this environment that the first notable auditing bureau was created in Russian history.

Thanks to the centralization of military financing and the sheer increase in military spending by the 1650s, some kind of accountancy of military funds was probably inevitable. The Muscovites came to realize this would entail some sort of cross-institutional monitoring, albeit only limited.

1. Talcott Parsons's works remain classic studies of integrational behaviors within complex organizations ("why things come together"). Randall Collins's investigation is a noteworthy effort on the role discordant behaviors can acquire within organizations ("why things fly apart") (see Randall Collins, Conflict Sociology; Toward an Explanatory Science [New York: Academic Press, 1975]).