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## European Ideological Meanings in the Context of Peter the Great's Royal Will

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**Abstract:** The article analyzes the peculiarities of Russia's ideology during the reign of Peter I. The author raises the question of Peter's revolutionary nature and examines the relationship between the "old" and "new" in the field of ideological prerequisites for the turn of Peter's Russia towards Europe. There is also considered the role of Tsar Peter I in the selection, interpretation and propaganda of borrowings from the Western European socio-political thought. Particular attention is paid to the image of Peter I as a symbol of the "new Russia" in the perception of compatriots and Western Europeans. As vivid examples of the era, there are analyzed the history of Peter's relationship with prominent scientist G.W. Leibniz, mental overtones in the decrees on barbering and wearing European clothes. The author agrees with the opinion of S.F. Platonov that Peter's reforms were "a modification of the old order," rather than a revolutionary change. However, it is noted that by allowing the development of scientific knowledge in Russia, Peter laid the foundation for the beginning of an intellectual revolution in the future in the minds of the educated Russian society.

**Keywords:** Europeanization of Russia, patrimonial monarchy, petrine modernization, westernization, sociocultural split

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## Европейские идейные смыслы в контексте царской воли Петра I

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**Аннотация:** Дан анализ особенностей идейной европеизации России в контексте спора историков об итогах и значении преобразовательной деятельности Петра I. Автор анализирует соотношение «старого» и «нового» в области идейных предпосылок поворота Петровской России к Европе, а также роль царя Петра в отборе, трактовке и пропаганде заимствований из багажа западноевропейской общественно-политической мысли. Особое внимание уделено образу Петра как символа «новой России» в восприятии соотечественников и западноевропейцев. В качестве ярких примеров эпохи рассмотрена история взаимоотношений Петра с видным ученым Г.В. Лейбницем, ментальные подтексты в указах о бритье и ношении европейского платья, представления о «государстве», «государе» и «общем благе» в одном из важнейших законодательных актов эпохи – «Уставе Воинском» 1716 г. Автор солидаризуется с мнением С.Ф. Платонова, что петровские реформы являлись не революционным переворотом, а «видоиз-

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менением старого порядка», но, отмечает, что допустив развитие научного знания в России, Петр заложил предпосылку для начала в будущем интеллектуальной революции в сознании образованного русского общества.

**Ключевые слова:** европеизация России, патримониальная монархия, петровская модернизация, вестернизация, социокультурный раскол

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## Introduction

In domestic and foreign historiography, the reign of Peter the Great (1682–1725) is rightly perceived as the first page of the Russian history of the Modern Age. Therefore, both scientists and publicists sought to primarily focus their attention on the innovations of the time. Without delving into the nuances of journalism, it should be noted that the Russian socio-political thought of the XVIII–XXI centuries with regard to Peter the Great was characterized by some kind of Manichaeism: either glorifying Peter the Great as the first modernizer of Russia, or scolding him for his contempt for Russian identity.

The only thing where all publicists as well all historians agreed was recognizing the successes of Peter the Great's foreign policy, as a result of which Russia was gradually recognized by everyone as a great European power.

The results of the internal reforms caused a great variety of opinions among historians, which can be divided into three groups: 1) apologetics; 2) the view of the transformations as a very complex interweaving of “old” and “new”; 3) and, finally, a critical attitude towards the internal transformations of the 1690s – 1725.

Working on the “History of Peter,” A.S. Pushkin repeatedly called the tsar a revolutionary comparing him both with Robespierre and Napoleon as symbols of the French Revolution for him. But M.M. Speranskii, a contemporary of the great poet, believed:

In the external forms of reign Peter the Great did not establish anything decisive in favor of political freedom, but at the same time he found a positive strategic perspective: “but he closed the doors to it by admitting science and trade.”<sup>1</sup>

In the context of the revolutionary upheavals of the early XX century, philosopher N.A. Berdyaev called Peter the Great “a Bolshevik on the throne” and poet M.A. Voloshin agreed with this:

Peter the Great was the first Bolshevik,  
That planned to transfer Russia  
To its future distances  
Hundreds of years before,  
Despite dispositions and mores.  
He, like us, did not know other ways,  
Except decree, execution and dungeon.

(“Russia,” 1924)

In his analysis of the results of Peter the Great's reforms, S.F. Platonov, one of the outstanding historians of the first third of the XX century came to the conclusion that the illusion of the “revolutionary nature” of the Peter the Great's reforms stemmed from the fact that

<sup>1</sup> M.M. Speranskii, *Proekty i zamysly* (Moscow; Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR Publ., 1961), 157.

society did not have that consciousness of historical tradition, which brilliant Peter had. The short-sighted people of Moscow explained to themselves both the external undertakings and the internal innovations of the sovereign by his personal whims, views and habits. They contrasted private innovations to the private customs of antiquity and were convinced that Peter ruthlessly destroyed their antiquity <...> it seemed that Peter turned the whole old life upside down, tearing the old order to tatters. They considered the modification of the old order to be its destruction.<sup>2</sup>

Probably, the “modification of the old order” is the most accurate definition of the essence of Peter the Great's transformations. In the article, we consider the new things that modified the old order and what was originally associated with the old order in the ideological policy of Peter the Great.

### **Original sources and Westernization in ideology of Petrine Russia**

Peter the Great became the first Russian monarch who adopted the idea of the “public good” and a number of other ideas that were fundamentally important for the European Enlightenment. However, the logic of the official Petrine propaganda cannot be correctly understood if its “original” sources dating back to the XV–XVII centuries are not touched upon.

From the “old Moscow times,” there was preserved the idea of the greatness of the Russian state formulated in the political mythology of the doctrine “Moscow – the Third Rome.” But the Image of Rome, rather than of Byzantium, revealed the linkage of Muscovy of late XV–XVI centuries to Europe, where Rome was the symbol of an ideal universal empire. At the same time, the Moscow patrimonial monarchy created a tradition of responding to the challenges of the West by assimilating various innovations of the West including ideological and cultural ones which had already entered the process of modernization.

The theoretical discovery of the Time of Troubles was a vague conjecture that “sovereign” and “state” are not the same thing. The “state” is probably more important than the “sovereign” that can be not only “natural” (hereditary), but also chosen with the consent of “the whole state.” The “state” began to be understood broadly: both in the old Moscow way as the “patrimony” of the monarch, and as the “Russian state” – the union of all Russian lands, and as the “Fatherland” of all Russians. This ideological experience was supplemented in the first half of the XVII century with the practice of Zemsky Sobors and the return to the principle of autocracy from the middle of the XVII century.

In the ideology of Peter the Great, the idea of the state greatness of Russia, its imperia complex, similar to that of Rome, would be further developed, but one of the main tasks would be to achieve recognition of Russia as one of the leading European powers, both in Russia itself and abroad.

In particular, it was Peter the Great's voyage to Europe, together with the Grand Embassy and volunteers who went for new knowledge, that was to serve this goal. The tsar's voyage to Europe shocked the Russians as the violation of the “old times,” whereas in the West it made a contradictory impression, but rather a positive one, because Peter the Great declared the recognition of such European values as sciences and the “common good.” The tsar's manifesto “On calling foreigners to Russia” in 1702 stated that from the moment Peter ascended the Russian throne, by God's will, all his

efforts and intentions <...> tended to ruling the state in such a way that all our subjects, with our care for the common good, would prosper.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> S.F. Platonov, *Lektsii po russkoi istorii* (St. Petersburg: S.V. Dorofeev Publ., 2011), 450.

<sup>3</sup> *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi imperii*, vol. 4. № 1910 (St. Petersburg: Tip. II otdeleniia Ego Imp. Velichestva Kantselyarii Publ., 1830), 192.

An urgent task for Russian diplomacy was to create the image of Peter as an enlightened monarch, rather than an exotic monarch originally presented in a number of Western European notes and pictures, where Peter, looking unlike himself, works as a carpenter or poses in a suit of a ship's carpenter. The efforts on the "Europeanization" of the tsar's image began already during the Grand Embassy. The means of art were used. An order was given for several ceremonial portraits of Peter the Great in the garment typical of Western European monarchs. There were painted portraits by the leading artists. Among them, for example, were Dutch artist P. van der Werff and German artist G. Kneller. The latter was the court painter of English King William III. He was extremely popular in England, painted portraits of I. Newton and D. Locke, as well as many British aristocrats. Earlier (in 1682) Kneller and Spanish artist J.C. de Miranda painted portraits of Moscow ambassador P.I. Potemkin in Russian clothes "exotic" for the Western audience. The first ceremonial portraits of Peter the Great formed a different image of a Russian person – the European one. This image was also presented on the later numerous paintings by famous European artists – Saxon J.G. Tannauer, the official court painter of Peter the Great, Czech Ján Kupecký, Netherlander J. Houbraken, Frenchman B. le Kofre, the court painter of the Danish king, Frenchmen J.M. Nattier and L. Caravaque. In Europe and in Russia engravings were replicated from these paintings.

Following the tsar's images, there appeared European baroque images of other Russian statesmen. The Russian audience was getting accustomed to a new kind of images.

Besides, personal communication with Western Europeans was encouraged in the service and at leisure, which, unlike previous monarchs, was encouraged in every possible way by the tsar, in particular, through such innovations as assemblies mandatory for those invited.

The number of foreigners from various Western European countries was constantly increasing. In St. Petersburg there appeared the German Quarter. However, foreigners could settle wherever they wanted, both in the capitals and in any Russian town. In 1698 Peter the Great brought to Russia 700 military men, artisans and other specialists. Ferganson, Gwynn and Grice, the graduates of the University of Aberdeen hired in England by the tsar, came to Russia in 1699, and in 1701 they took part in the foundation of the Moscow School of Mathematics and Navigation.<sup>4</sup> Dutch engraver Adrian Schoonebeck worked in Russia from 1698 until his death in 1705; he was a painter of portraits and battle scenes, as well as a good cartographer.

The main result of the foreign specialists' service in Russia was their Russian students' entry into the service; the latter ones had not only professional skills, but also the mindset inherent in the people of the New Age. Among the artists there should be noted engravers – brothers Alexei Fyodorovich Zubov and Ivan Fyodorovich Zubov and Pyotr Leontich Bunin, as well as portrait painter Ivan Nikitovich Nikitin. All of them were students of the above-mentioned Adrian Schoonebeck.

By 1716–1717, when the famous miniature on enamel by Russian master Grigory Musikisky appeared, which depicted the entire royal family in European garments, hardly any of the Russians or foreigners could have thought that Peter the Great and his family members might look in a different way. The Russian elite were the first to get accustomed to these images.

Through Peter the Great's personal diplomacy and his associates' personal familiarity with prominent Western European intellectuals, Russia was increasingly perceived in Europe in a positive way. At the beginning of the XVIII century, there emerged the idea of having German "PR people" in the Russian service. The first such agent was Baron

<sup>4</sup> N.I. Pavlenko, *Pyotr Velikii* (Moscow: Mysl' Publ., 1990), 108.

Heinrich Freiherr von Hüysen, a graduate of the University of Strasbourg. His duties included inviting military men to the Russian service, translating the tsar's manifestos into Western European languages, giving orders for European scientists' essays with good reviews about Russia, its monarch and ministers. In the West there appeared many admirers of Russia who tried to convey to the Russians the achievements of Western thought.

It was burgomaster of Amsterdam and versatile scientist Nicolaes Witsen that was, so to speak, a “voluntary fan” of Russia. His fondness for Russia was based on the objective experience of mutually beneficial trade, which from the second half of the XVI century was conducted by the Republic of the Seven United Netherlands with Muscovy, as well as on the successful history of the Netherlands embassies to Russia. Witsen himself participated in the mission of 1664–1665. In 1692, Witsen published the first serious scientific study in Europe on the Siberian lands “Noord en Oost Tartarye” (“Northern and Eastern Tartary”). The book contained maps and sketches of the views of Siberian towns and the image of their native inhabitants. This work became known in Europe and in Russia. One copy is stored in the National Library of St. Petersburg, which is illustrative, as almost the entire first print run was lost during the shipwreck of the vessel that transported it. But Peter the Great got interested in Witsen not due to his work on Tartary, but because he was an expert in shipbuilding. In 1692, Peter the Great sent a friendly message to Witsen through Lefort's son. When Peter arrived in Holland in 1697, Witsen began to help him in mastering the basics of shipbuilding, taught him the Dutch language, accompanied him in the trips to The Hague and Utrecht, introduced him to famous collector of antiquities J. De Wilde and professor of medicine Ruysch. On behalf of Amsterdam, Witsen presented a ship to Russia; Peter named it “Amsterdam.” As the head of the “pro-Russian Amsterdam party” opposing the “pro-Swedish party” in The Hague, Witsen kept the Netherlands from supporting Sweden in the Great Northern War. Russian Ambassador to Holland A.A. Matveev, with the tacit support of Witsen, even managed to arrange a secret supply of Dutch weapons to Russia and refused to accept money for this service.

It is the history of the development of personal relationships between the Russian tsar and great German scientist and thinker Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz studied at the end of the XIX century by V.I. Guerrier<sup>5</sup> which is also indicative of the formation of the Petrine era ideological background.

Leibniz served as a diplomat, librarian and historiographer of the first prince-elector of Brunswick Ernest August, and from 1698 his son and successor George Ludwig (from 1714 the first English king of the Hanoverian dynasty George I). Leibniz first saw Peter the Great in Hanover at Koppenbrück Castle in 1697. Peter made a controversial, but rather favorable impression, as Leibniz's view of Russia had become positive. Earlier, when in 1669 they started talking about the candidacy of Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich or his son for the throne of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Leibniz stated:

On the Polish throne Moscow will be the second Turkey, by electing the Moscow tsar, Poland will open the way to barbarism, which will crush the European civilization.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> V.I. Ger'e, 1) *Leibniz i ego vek* (St. Petersburg: Pechatnia V. Golovina Press, 1868–1871); 2) *Otnosheniya Leibnitsa k Rossii i Petru Velikomu po neizdannym bumagam Leibnitsa v Gannoverskoi biblioteke*, vol. 2 of *Leibniz i ego vek* (St. Petersburg: Pechatnia V. Golovina Press, 1871); 3) *Leibniz i ego vek* (St. Petersburg: Nauka Publ., 2008); 4) *Sbornik pisem i memorialov Leibnitsa otnosiashchikhsia k Rossii i Petru Velikomu* (St. Petersburg: Tip. Imp. Akad. Nauk Publ., 1873).

<sup>6</sup> M.M. Filippov, *Gotrid Leibniz. Ego zhizn' i deyatel'nost': nauchnaya, obshchestvennaya, filosofskaya* (Moscow: F.F. Pavlenkov Publ., 1893), 85.

In 1697, Leibniz wrote to learned numismatist Morel:

You cannot even imagine how furious I am that they do not take advantage of the Moscow Tsar's stay and the good intentions that he expresses. To conquer the mind of ... a person, such as a Tsar or a Chinese monarch, and turn it to the true good ... is more important than a hundred battles won, because millions of lives depend on the will of such people.<sup>7</sup>

However, the cruelty of the execution of the Streltsy in 1698 and the defeat of the Russians near Narva in 1700 forced Leibniz to give preference to enlightened sovereign Charles XII. In a verse dedicated to him, Leibniz wished that the borders of Sweden would expand from Moscow to the Amur.

But Charles XII preoccupied only with the war quickly lost his appeal to Leibniz. His correspondent Baron Johann Christof von Urbich that in 1691–1703 was minister of the Vienna court, and in 1707–1712 was the Russian ambassador to Vienna, contributed to the restoration of Leibniz's sympathy for Peter the Great. In 1708, through von Urbich he sent a note to Peter the Great about the need to spread science and education in Russia.<sup>8</sup> Peter was impressed that the scientist considered the autocrat the only force capable of formulating the “common good” for the Russians. Many educators noted the benefits of the monarch's dictates, when it came to the “common good.” For instance, H. Wolf wrote:

what makes a monarch a tyrant is not the exclusion of estates from participating in solving political issues, but the fact that the ruler acts contrary to the common good and considers personal interests as his main goal.<sup>9</sup>

After the Battle of Poltava, in Europe they began to consider that Russia's increasing power makes it dangerous no less than Turks. Leibniz objected: God entrusted Peter the Great with the mission to bring his vast kingdom to civilization, which makes him glad. He met Peter the Great in 1711 in Torgau at the wedding of Tsarevich Alexei and Princess Sophia-Christina of Wolfenbüttel, the sister of the wife of Emperor Charles VI. In 1712 Leibniz accompanied Peter to Teplitz and Dresden. In absentia, Leibniz entered the Russian service with the rank of Privy Councilor and a salary of 2,000 guilders (1,000 thalers). Judging by Leibniz's archive, he made 12 projects for Russia. The tsar definitely got 5 of them, as they got into the Russian archives. Another one was sent to Russia.<sup>10</sup>

Leibniz advised Peter the Great to organize scientific expeditions to Siberia and a naval expedition to seek a strait, which, according to Leibniz, could separate America from North Asia. At that time, in Europe they did not know about the expedition of Semyon Dezhnev, and in Russia it was apparently forgotten.

In 1716 Leibniz advised Peter the Great to establish colleges instead of prikazes. In 1717 Peter began such a reform, but without creating a scientific board, which Leibniz wrote about. V.I. Guerrier insisted that even before Leibniz's advice, Peter had got interested in scientific boards and studied the Swedish experience.

Many of Leibniz's projects remained neglected, in particular, the project for the construction of a canal between the Volga and the Don and the plan for a church union. In his

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<sup>7</sup> Cited in: G.B. Kornetov, “Proekty G.V. Leibniza po rasprostraneniyu v Rossii obrazovaniia,” *Istoriko-pedagogicheskii zhurnal*, no. 4 (2016): 113.

<sup>8</sup> The content of the note can be judged from its surviving draft, published by V.I. Guerrier in the original language (German): 1) *Sbornik pisem i memorialov*, 95–99; and translated into Russian: 2) *Leibniz i ego vek*, 648–650; Guerrier's translation into Russian is also given in the article: G.B. Kornetov, “Proekty G.V. Leibniza po rasprostraneniyu v Rossii obrazovaniia,” *Istoriko-pedagogicheskii zhurnal*, no. 4 (2016): 116–119.

<sup>9</sup> Cited in: M.O. Akishin, “‘Obshchee blago’ i gosudarev ukaz v epokhu Petra Velikogo,” *Leningradskii yuridicheskii zhurnal* 21, no. 3 (2010): 97.

<sup>10</sup> *Sborniki pisem i memorialov Leibniza*, 21.

work “Reflections on Enlightened Persons and Good Intentions,” Protestant Leibniz wrote that a society ruled by reason can only arise only in the World Universal Christian Monarchy,<sup>11</sup> and in the first stages in the unification of all Europe into a Christian “Republic”, for which it is necessary to overcome Schism. Leibniz developed a theory of relative sovereignty, different from Bodin, Pufendorf and Hobbes. He demanded that the monarchs of Europe make a compromise mutual limitation of their sovereignties.

#### Laws

within one state are not adopted by the arbitrariness of an absolute ruler. Every law should be consistent with a principle common to all people, and natural law contains this principle<sup>12</sup>.

According to V.I. Guerrier, Leibniz looked at Russia and the East

through the eyes of a man who would like to transfer the blessings of civilization there, to free the peoples perishing under the yoke of barbarian despotism, to call them to political life and introduce them into the common family of peoples working for civilization<sup>13</sup>.

The main project for the spread of civilization in Russia, according to Leibniz, was the project handed over to the tsar through Vice-Chancellor P.P. Shafirov in 1716; its implementation would start after the death of both Leibniz (5 (16) November or 3 (14) December 1716), and Peter the Great (January 28 (February 8) 1725). This refers to the opening of the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences and Arts. However, the structure of this Academy was far from Leibniz's plans. On January 22, 1724, Peter the Great signed his decree on the founding of the Academy; on January 28 the decree was announced in the Senate with the appendix “Project for the establishment of the Academy with allocation of funds for its maintenance.” The budget was much less than Leibniz had proposed in his project. In fact, the Academy headed by physician in ordinary L. Blumentrost was opened by the decree of Catherine I of February 23, 1725. Its first prominent staff that had or subsequently gained worldwide scientific fame, were Leibniz's “protégés.”<sup>14</sup> The St. Petersburg Academy was the second of the implemented academic projects (after the Berlin Academy) for which Leibniz advocated.

A great contribution to the formation in the mentality of Russians of the myth of the “new Russia” created through the genius of Peter the Great was made by students of the academic university. In the 1730s among them there would be M.V. Lomonosov, world-class Russian scientist and admirer of Peter the Great. A significant contribution to the formation of the “new Russia” image would be made by graduates of the Moscow School of Mathematics and Navigation, the Gluck Gymnasium (opened in 1703), the Medical School (opened in 1707), the Engineering School (opened in 1712), the Naval Academy (opened in 1715) and 42 arithmetic schools.

<sup>11</sup> L.V. Klepikova, “Vzaimodeistvie gosudarstvennoi vlasti i uchenykh obshchestv v nauchno-obrazovatel'nykh proektakh G.V. Leibniza,” *Uchenye zapiski Orlovskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta. Seriya: Gumanitarnye i sotsial'nye nauki*, no. 2 (2012): 54.

<sup>12</sup> O. Bashkina, “G.V. Leibniz o razdelenii suvereniteta,” *Russian Sociological Review* 14, no. 3 (2015): 101.

<sup>13</sup> Ger'e, V.I. *Leibniz i ego vek* (2008), 134.

<sup>14</sup> For example, Leibniz's friend, the Swiss man Johann Bernoulli, the head of European mathematicians after Newton's death, taught at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands; he was also a foreign member of the Paris Academy from 1699, the Berlin Academy from 1701, the Royal Society from 1712. In 1725 he was elected an honorary member of the St. Petersburg Academy. On the recommendation of Leibniz and Wolff, his sons Nikolai and Daniil Bernoulli worked at the St. Petersburg Academy. In 1727, thanks to D. Bernoulli, his friend and student of his father, Leonhard Euler, also a prominent scientist of the XVIII century, came to the Russian Academy. Mathematician Christian Goldbach, physicist Georg Bülfinger, astronomer and geographer Joseph De L'Isle and others worked at the Academy.

The mythology of the “new Russia” that emerged through Peter the Great was created at Triumphs, the public celebrations of military “victories”. In addition to soldiers and military commanders, the participants in the Triumphs were the students of the Slavic-Greek-Latin Theological Academy that made allegorical performances with references to ancient and biblical images. These images were used in eulogies for Peter the Great; they were written by Feofan Prokopovich, Stefan Yavorsky and other hierarchs – “Latin-philosophes” (graduates of the Kiev-Mohyla Academy) that pushed the “Grecophiles” into the background. The Triumphs as an imitation of Roman holidays were revived in Western Europe as early as the Renaissance. Peter started this custom in Russia after the capture of Azov in 1696. From that time on, each Russian military victory was celebrated with a Triumph. It contributed to preparing the population for adopting by the tsar titles typical of ancient Roman triumphers – Emperor, Father of the Fatherland, Great.

Friedrich Christian Weber, the Hanover Resident at the Russian Court in 1714–1719, cited the inspirational speech by Peter the Great on the occasion of the ship launch, which touched even the “boyars” who were nostalgic for the old Russian times.

In his speech Peter the Great said:

Which of you dreamed about 30 years ago, that you and I here, by the Ostsee Sea, would carpenter, and in the clothes of the Germans, in the country conquered by our labors and courage, would construct the city in which you live; that we would live to see such brave and victorious Russian soldiers and sailors that were in foreign countries and returned home so smart; that we would see so many foreign artists and craftsmen among us, that we would be respected so much by foreign sovereigns? Now it is our turn, if you will only support me in my important undertakings, obey without any excuses, and get accustomed to freely recognize and study good and evil. For the time being, I advise you to remember the Latin proverb: ora et labora (pray and work) and firmly hope that maybe in our lifetime you will surpass other educated countries and elevate the glory of Russia to the highest degree.<sup>15</sup>

### **Europeanization of the image of Russians in the context of the tsar's will**

In Russia, the primary sources of many important new legislative provisions were compilations from foreign documents, from which their ideological background penetrated into the Russian minds. However, Peter the Great personally reviewed the most important acts and refused what he considered inappropriate. For example, the tsar could talk for hours with Leibniz about the importance of the “common good,” but when he expressed the idea that reforms should be consistent with the “spirit of the people,” Leibniz did not share his view.

Peter the Great argued,

“with other European peoples it is possible to achieve the goal by philanthropic methods, but with the Russians it is different: if I were not strict, I would not have ruled the Russian state for a long time and would not have made it what it is now. I deal with brutes, rather than people, and I want to transform them into people.”<sup>16</sup>

In the spirit of the old Moscow patrimonial monarchs, Peter the Great chose not only forms and methods of reforms, but also the “spirit of the people,” believing that it was formed by the sovereign's decree and its implementation. In none of the most significant legislative acts of the reign of Peter the Great (the Military Regulations, the General

<sup>15</sup> F.-H. Veber, “Preobrazhennaya Rossiya. Zapiski Vebera.” *Russkii arhiv*, no. 6 (1872), [http://history.scps.ru/lib/rus\\_archive\\_1872-06.htm](http://history.scps.ru/lib/rus_archive_1872-06.htm) 1074–1076.

<sup>16</sup> A.A. Volkov, and B.I. Minnibaev, “Sotsial'nye preobrazovaniya Petra I,” *Voprosy istoricheskoi nauki: materialy II Mezhdunar. nauch. konf. (g. Chelyabinsk, maj 2013 g.)* (Chelyabinsk: Dva komsomol'tsa Publ., 2013), 41.



Regulations, the Table of Ranks, the decree on the poll tax), one will find a single mention of the “common good” and even the primacy of the “state,” whose “first servant” Peter the Great liked very much to position himself. In the ideological preambles, an obligatory component of all significant state acts of the first quarter of the XVIII century, there was only justified the divine nature of the tsar’s power and the necessity to obey it.

His Majesty is an autocratic monarch who should not account to anyone about his actions; but he has power and authority to rule his own states and lands, like a Christian sovereign, according to his will (“Military Regulations,” Ch. 3, art. 20).<sup>17</sup>

It is paradoxical at first glance, but all the regulations and charters that we know from the school years, which were creatively copied from Swedish, Dutch, German models, changed the form of state institutions, made them more efficient and outwardly similar to the administrative bodies of Western European absolutism, but they did not change the essence of Russian patrimonial autocracy. All the actions of Peter the Great and especially his social policy demonstrate that the tsar remained the supreme owner of all land and resources and could freely “enslave estates” for the “good of the state.”

“The enslavement of the nobility” was expressed in the transformation of their indefinite service into a permanent presence in the regular army or state institutions. At the same time, the allotment of estates to gentry novices was canceled, and the decree on “Primogeniture” of 1714 abolished the former right of holders of patrimonial estate to dispose of their land ownership. By the will of the tsar, it was impossible to sell, mortgage, exchange, or even divide the estates between the heirs. The new system of private land ownership approved by the decree of 1714 was far from the right of private property in the Western European sense. Most of the young nobles lost the hope of getting an estate; they had to serve for payment.

Remaining a taxable class, merchants began to be regarded by the tsar as a service class as well. By the words of the tsar, before “the Russian merchants went bankrupt” by the mid-1710s, the merchants had managed, according to the first urban reform, for almost 10 years to fulfill the duties of free responsible tax collectors for the Treasury, at the same time to build ships for the state at their own expense and acted throughout the first quarter of the XVIII century as commercial agents of the state in order to sell abroad the “reserved” goods declared by the tsar, among which almost all profitable export goods were listed.

The introduction of the per capita salary in 1724 plunged the entire peasantry into serfdom. Until 1724, the category of free peasantry residing on state land was reduced in the framework of the old Moscow practice of the XV–XVII centuries, when with one stroke of the pen of the patrimonial sovereign, the peasants of state lands were turned into serfs. This practice was also preserved under Peter the Great, but from 1724, in addition to the poll tax of 73 kopecks, the former peasants residing on state lands began to pay quitrent of 40 kopecks to the state; it was equated to the quitrent received by landlords from their serfs. It testified to the serfdom of these villagers, which was also recorded in their renaming into state peasants. By the will of the tsar, serfdom also affected the field of industry, creating a phenomenon of serf manufactory unprecedented in the world.

There is the old Moscow spirit even in the prohibition of the tsar, who returned from Europe in 1698, to call the subjects “serfs” and write names in an insulting manner (“Ivashka,” “Fedka,” etc.). Then how should they be called? The tsar decided that they should be called “slaves!” It was almost a calque of the religious term “God’s servant” emphasizing the sovereign’s status as a divine institution. However, Peter the Great’s con-

<sup>17</sup> *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiyskoi imperii*, vol. 5. № 3006.

temporaries continued to sign their names in a humbled form. For example, Russian German and Protestant Weide signed his letter to the Tsar in 1698 as follows:

The most obedient slave of Your Serene Highness, Adamko Veide.<sup>18</sup>

Subsequently, Catherine II replaced “slave” with “loyal subject.” It was during her reign that there was the “golden age of the Russian nobility,” the essence of which would be the curtailment of the patrimonial way of life in favor of the “blending of enlightenment and slavery.”

The “blending of enlightenment and slavery” was launched by the patrimonial monarchy of Peter the Great. In the spirit of the methods of the patrimonial way of life, there should also be considered Peter the Great's first “manifesto of the Europeanism of Russia.” This refers to making service people and townspeople wear “German” clothes and shave beards. The first decree “On wearing German clothes, on shaving beards and mustaches, on schismatics’ wearing proper attire” dates back to August 1698. This decree was not included by M.M. Speransky in the “Complete collection of laws of the Russian empire” and we know about it from the “Diary” of I.G. Korb, the Secretary of the Austrian Embassy. Korb writes that on August 16 (26), 1698, in Preobrazhenskoe, during a meeting with the boyars, Peter the Great himself cut off the beards of everyone except M.A. Cherkassky and T.N. Streshnev; on September 1, in the house of Generalissimo A.S. Shein, beards were cut by the royal jester encouraged by Peter the Great.<sup>19</sup>

From 1698 to 1705, there were many cases when the sovereign personally cut off beards or ordered to torture bearded men or those who wore inappropriate clothes. Thus, according to Korb, on February 22, 1699,<sup>20</sup> the tsar cut the sleeves of some officers’ clothes with scissors, as he thought that they were too wide for a “European” garment.

The second decree on wearing the new types of clothing was adopted on January 4, 1700. Under the Decrees of December 30, 1701 and December 22, 1704, people were to pay fines for ignoring European clothes. The new decree “On shaving beards and mustaches of people of all ranks, except for priests and deacons, on charging a fee from those who do not want to fulfill this” issued on January 16, 1705, set huge payments (from 50 up to 300 rubles) for the right to wear beards. In 1713 and 1714, the decrees on dresses and beards were issued again. On April 6, 1722, a new decree was issued replacing the previous “beard” fee with a single 50-ruble one. At the same time, the Old Believers were not subject to these decrees. The “schismatics” were ordered to wear only old Russian clothes of a type determined by the tsar: men were to wear a homespun coat with an upstanding red collar, feryaz (loose tunic) and a single-breasted caftan; women were to have a two-horned headdress. Up to 1725, there were issued 5 more decrees on shaving beards and wearing European clothes, although there were no “dissidents” left among the gentry due to their mandatory wearing a regular uniform.

It should be noted that Peter the Great's “war” with beards and old Russian clothes also seemed to the best minds of Western Europe of the XVIII century to be a struggle for civilization. In his “History of Peter” written at the request of Catherine II Voltaire expressed full approval, however, with a very playful and specifically French remark about the role of Russian ladies freed by Peter the Great from their confinement in tower houses, who liked to kiss shaved and noble faces.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> A.Yu. Gusarov, *Pamiatniki voinskoi slavy Peterburga* (St. Petersburg: Paritet Publ., 2010), 95.

<sup>19</sup> I.G. Korb, *Dnevnik puteshestviya v Moskoviyu (1698 i 1699 gg.)* (St. Petersburg: A.S. Suvorin Press, 1906), 79, 81.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

<sup>21</sup> Volter, “Anekdoty o care Petre Velikom,” *Istoriograficheskii sbornik*, no. 19 (2001): 150.

What was the reason for Peter the Great's amazing perseverance? It is clear that beards and clothes could not dramatically hinder either the military or state undertakings of the tsar. Moreover, there was a painless experience of Tsar Fyodor Alekseevich in making the courtiers and the nobility of the capital wear Polish clothes, and making the officers and soldiers wear regular uniforms.

The repeated issuing of decrees at the end of Peter the Great's reign was clearly not so much a reflection of real violations of the instructions concerning clothes and beards. It was a kind of ritual reflecting the external sign of the new Russian identity, and it was fundamentally important for the tsar to approve it in such an insulting way. What was the second implication of regular and excessive violence?

It is important to remember that the “war” with beards and Russian clothes began against the background of weeks-long unprecedented mass execution of participants in the Streltsy uprising of 1698 accompanied by the expulsion of the families of Streltsy from Moscow with a ban to provide them with shelter. Foreign admirers of Peter the Great, like Witsen and Leibniz, judging by their correspondence, considered all this as a sign of “barbarism.” Why did Peter the Great that respected the opinion of the foreigners ignore their opinion?

“I reign over dogs and foolish cattle rather than over men,”<sup>22</sup> Peter the Great said to imperial ambassador Gvarient. Patriarch Adrian who appeared in the dungeons with an icon and a request for mercy was sent away by Peter the Great. There was no testimony against disgraced Tsarevna Sophia, but anyway she was tonsured on October 21, 1698. From September to October 1698, about a thousand Streltsy at the age of over 20 were executed in Preobrazhenskoye and in various other places in Moscow.<sup>23</sup> Danish resident G. Grund wrote that those executions

terrified his subjects, who from then on had to bow before him and obey his orders with the greatest humility.<sup>24</sup>

Prussian ambassador J.G. Vockerodt put it similarly:

From this execution ... Peter the Great enjoyed the most complete autocratic power in spiritual and secular affairs ... and made his nobles feel the yoke of slavery: ... he forced all the nobles without exception to military service under pain of severe punishment<sup>25</sup>.

It is impossible to understand the psychological change in the public sentiment, which took place so quickly, without remembering such Russian mental category as “will”. “Will” is the opposite of the Western understanding of “freedom.”

<sup>22</sup> Cited in: P. Bushkovich, *Petr Velikii. Bor'ba za vlast'* (St. Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin Publ., 2008), 209.

<sup>23</sup> Unlike Ustryalov, S.M. Solovyov trusted the reports of Austrian diplomats Gvarient and Korb that the tsar had personally beheaded 5 people in Preobrazhenskoye; he also ordered Menshikov, Sheremetev, Romodanovsky and Golitsyn to act as executioners. 600 young archers were beaten with a whip; after being branded they were sent into exile. The archers' wives and children were actually doomed to death. It is noted in P. Gordon's “Diary” that it was forbidden for anyone to give them shelter and food. Several hundred archers were executed in February 1699. As Soloviev and Ustryalov found out in archival sources, investigations and executions continued until 1707, when there was executed archer Artemy Maslov who had read a letter to the archers allegedly written by Tsarevna Sophia. Although there rebelled 4 of 13 Moscow archery regiments, the archers from all 9 other Moscow regiments, as well as other 7 provincial regiments were soon disbanded and sent to different towns. Archery garrisons remained only in the border towns until 1700.

<sup>24</sup> G. Grund, *Doklad o Rossii v 1705–1710 godakh* (Moscow: Institut rossiiskoi istorii Publ., 1992), 126.

<sup>25</sup> I.G. Fokkerodt, “Rossiia pri Petre Velikom,” in *Neistovyi reformator* (Moscow: Fond Sergeia Dubova Publ., 2000), 33–34.

Montesquieu wrote that freedom does not consist at all in doing what you want. In a state, that is, in a society where there are laws, <...> freedom is the right to do everything that is permitted by laws.<sup>26</sup>

The Russian will opposed law, tradition, pressure from the authorities, community, family, and even “mother nature.” “Will” demanded to act in one’s own way. “Will” prevailed in the robber movement and the life of the Cossacks of Zaporozhye and the Don. “Will” manifested itself in a popular revolt, and among the service class – in arbitrariness. “Will” denied the teachings of priests. It was the subconscious secret of everyone and was revered in Russia unconsciously, but everywhere. Hence, even A.S. Pushkin’s Stenka Razin is “the most poetic figure of Russian history.”

People’s mentality revered the sovereign, who could demonstrate his “will” and broke all other “wills;” hence the phenomenon of admiration for Ivan the Terrible in Russian historical memory. In 1722, Peter the Great told the fiancé of his eldest daughter Anna, Duke of Holstein Karl Friedrich, the following:

This sovereign is my predecessor and model; I have always imagined him as a model of my reign in civil and military affairs, but I have not yet succeeded as he did. Fools who do not know the circumstances of his time, the features of his people and his great merits, call him a tormentor.<sup>27</sup>

The cruel reprisals against Streltsy, their wives and children in 1698, as well as he “war” with beards, old clothes and Old Believers that lasted the entire reign of Peter the Great – all this was nothing but a desire for the triumph of the royal will. Judging by the folklore, not only past, but also modern, Peter the Great got into the historical memory of his people as “the First in everything” and the Great. Even in the legends of the Old Believers who hated him, his image became the antipode of God – the Antichrist. However, it was not the recognition of the revolutionary nature of Peter the Great, but only a tribute to the subconscious mental tradition.

## Conclusions

The pursuit of European innovations, the awareness of the need for sciences and education built on their basis, on the one hand, and the conservation of internal ideas arising from patrimonial foundations (patrimonial way of life) and the mental characteristics of the people, on the other hand, made up the contradictory constant of the ideology of Petrine Russia. Due to the scale of the first Russian emperor’s personality, the figure of Peter the Great played the role of a central axis, which later turned into a symbol of the growing internal chronic socio-cultural split in Russia. It did not allow completing the process of its modernization, up to the beginning of the XX century.

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<sup>26</sup> G. Montesk’ye, *O dukhe zakonov*, bk., 11, chapter 3, [https://ru.wikisource.org/wiki/O\\_dukhe\\_zakonov\\_\(Montesk'ye;\\_Gornfel'd\)](https://ru.wikisource.org/wiki/O_dukhe_zakonov_(Montesk'ye;_Gornfel'd)).

<sup>27</sup> Shtelin, Ya.Ya. *Lyubopytnyia i dostopamyatnyia skazaniia o imperatore Petre Velikom: Izobrazhayushchiia istinnoe svoistvo sego premudrago gosudaria i ottsa otechestva, Sobrannyya v techenie soroka let deystvitel'nyim statskim sovetnikom Yakovom Shtelinom* (St. Petersburg: Tip. B.L. Geka, 1786), 232.

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