

ANNALES
UNIVERSITATIS MARIAE CURIE-SKŁODOWSKA
LUBLIN — POLONIA

VOL. XI, 6

SECTIO G

1964

Z Katedry Teorii Państwa i Prawa UMCS
Kierownik: prof. dr Grzegorz Leopold Seidler

Grzegorz Leopold SEIDLER i Ryszard MITASZKO

The Muscovite Autocracy

Московское самодержавие

Autokracja moskiewska

Absolute rulers usually seek justification for their authority, as if they wanted to find grounds for their rule in some ideological argumentation. Referring to the supernatural as the source of their power did not always suffice and so attempts were made to find arguments for the absolute rule now in the need for a new and better social order, now in the necessity of defending the State against threats from without. However, apart from the form and the content of the arguments for absolutism, and apart from its ideological justification, there always existed certain political practice not necessarily reflected in the doctrine. The edge of the absolute rule was directed either against the reactionary or against the progressive elements, hence this rule must be measured by its political function.

Yet neither the doctrine nor the practice can wholly explain the essence of the absolute rule, since the growth of unlimited power must be preceded by a proper atmosphere made up of objective factors which provide an enterprising individual with an opportunity for seizing power.

Such objective conditions for development of a strong centralized power appeared sufficiently clear by the second half of the fifteenth century in the Grand Principality of Moscow which had, until then, been a cluster of independent duchies ruled by hereditary aristocracy — the boyars. The consolidation of the State had been precipitated by the constant threat to its boundaries from the Tatars and by the struggle to throw off their control. Centralized power was also strengthening

the sense of security of the feudal nobility which at that time increased its income by imposing additional burdens on the serfs. Further, a strong rule was an important factor in the protection of a unified market which was emerging just then.

These tendencies towards the consolidation of the Russian provinces round Moscow were opposed by the separatism of the great feudal lords — the boyars, and the brothers of the grand prince, who wanted to see in the ruler merely first feudal lord reigning together with them. They derived inspiration and something like confirmation of their notions from the political organization of the neighbouring Poland where the nobiliary democracy effectively circumscribed the authority of their ruler. In these circumstances only conscious rulers, consistent and firm in their conduct of political affairs, could make use of the tendencies to unity and achieve the formation of a strong and consolidated State by limiting the importance of the feudal lords even by abolishing the class altogether. Those who distinguished themselves in this respect were the rulers of the Grand Principality of Moscow, later called the State of Muscovy. Their rule covered in succession the reign of a grandfather, father and son: Ivan III (1462—1505), his son Vasily III (1505—1553) and finally Ivan IV called the Terrible (1547—1584).

Throughout a period of over a hundred and twenty years there was going on a process of gradual formation of autocratic rule, a process which was accompanied by a steady territorial expansion.

Ivan II succeeded in uniting all the Russian lands within one State which he raised to sovereignty by throwing off the yoke of the Golden Horde. After a number of well-conducted military campaigns his grandson, Ivan the Terrible, created a multinational, centralized empire. If Ivan III laid the foundations of an autocratic rule limiting the rights and privileges of the boyars, Ivan the Terrible was already able to develop a refined system of terror which practically put an end to the influence of the hereditary aristocracy.¹

¹ The forming of the foundations of autocracy and with it the modern State organization in Russia has been one of the most controversial problems in the Russian historiography since the time of Karamzin. There are two opposite ways of viewing the problem: one justifying everything done by the tsars — even the most cruel murders — on account of the political successes thus achieved; the other — evaluating the conduct of the ruler on ethical grounds and from the point of view of social interest. For the former view see e. g. Р. И. Виппер: *Иван Грозный*, Moscow 1944; for the latter see e. g. Н. М. Карамзин, С. М. Соловьев, С. В. Весоловский, А. А. Зимин.

The different evaluations of the policy of Ivan the Terrible depend largely on a specific political situation. It seems that, to some extent, these factors underlie the discussion and diametrically opposed evaluations of the reign of Ivan

Ivan III set out, first of all, to control the boyars' right of departure (*ot'ezd*) which allowed them to choose the prince whom they served and in practice meant transference to the service of the grand prince of Lithuania. While put under the obligation to remain loyal to their ruler, the feudal lords also suffered restriction of the arbitrary privileges that they had as governors of provinces and towns, since the grand prince introduced in 1497 a uniform judicature, admitted representatives of local people to provincial courts, issued for many territories statutes regularising the amount of taxes, revenues and legal dues. What is more, towards the end of the fifteenth century, on the prince's initiative, the first organs of central administration (*prikazy*) were formed, which developed during the next century into a competent and efficient instrument of government. Lastly, Ivan III diminished the importance of the boyars in the State by relying on the service gentry whom he often granted '*pomestya*' — conditionally-held estates to which was attached the duty of serving at the court or in the army. The land thus granted remained in the ownership of the ruler and its holder could not dispose of it freely. For these grants Ivan III used the newly conquered lands of Novgorod and Vyatka, from which he deported large numbers of feudal lords and rich merchants.

Ivan III felt that he was an absolute ruler in a united State; he controlled the boyars, restricted the freedom of his brothers and nephews and was even convinced that the choice of a successor was a matter to be decided freely by the grand prince himself.² He regarded his eldest son Vasily as holding a special right to the grand principality and left to him two thirds of the country dividing the remainder among his four other male descendants. To Vasily he also granted the right of minting coins.

In his policy Ivan III relied on the clergy, giving in turn his support to the Church hierarchy, as the latter recognized his superiority over them and preached the doctrine of the divine origin of the power of grand prince.³

The Orthodox Church even originated the idea of treating Ivan III as the successor of the Byzantine Emperor and the defender of Eastern Church. The view found its partial justification in the marriage of Ivan III to Sofia Palaeologa. The marriage marks the adoption of the

the Terrible which are found in the contemporary historiography in the Soviet Union.

² J. L. I. Fennel: *Ivan the Great of Moscow*, London 1961, p. 287 et sqq.

³ А. А. Зимин: О политической доктрине Иосифа Волоцкого, „Труды ОДРЛ“, vol. IX, Moscow 1953, p. 174 et sqq.

Byzantine ceremonial at the court of Moscow as well as the placing of the two-headed imperial eagle beside the figure of St. George on the prince's coat-of-arms. So convinced was Ivan III of his divine right to the throne that he refused to accept the title of king offered him by the German Emperor. About fifteen years later his son Vasily was to act similarly when the Pope, Leo X, offered him the royal crown through his special legate.

Towards the close of the fifteenth century Moscow became an important partner in international politics. As Marx wrote: "Europe, which at the beginning of the reign of Ivan III barely noticed the existence of Moscow, sandwiched between the Tatars and the Lithuanians, was amazed at the unexpected emergence of a vast state on its eastern borders."

In international relations the Muscovite rulers revealed great prudence and caution. They used their friendly contacts with the West chiefly to draw to Russia scholars, architects, engineers, miners and physicians. At the same time they did not neglect good relations with Turkey. On the occasion of Sultan Selim's succession to the throne Vasily III sent to Turkey a special messenger with his greetings. His courtesy was returned and the Muscovite court was visited by the first Turkish envoy who caused great sensation.

At the time of Vasily's death his son and successor, Ivan, was three years old.⁴ The process of unification of the territories of Great Russia had been completed but the boyars still constituted an important political force which hindered the consolidation of the central rule.

The minority of the successor provided the feudal lords with an opportunity for seizing the power. Russia came to be ruled by changing coteries of the boyars. Intrigues, plots and political murders gave rise to anarchy and insecurity in the country. In view of the ever-deepening chaos the Orthodox Church saw that the State could be saved by a strong central power. On the sixteenth of January in 1547 the metropolitan of Moscow, Makary, crowned the seventeen-year-old Ivan as the tsar of Russia. The government of the State was *de facto* taken over by the 'Chosen Council' which included many men who truly desired to improve the internal relations and to strengthen the central power through reform and compromise.⁵

⁴ С. Ф. Платонов: Иван Грозный, Petrograd 1923; А. Е. Пресняков: Эпоха Грозного в общем историческом освещении, „Анналы”, St. Petersburg 1922; И. И. Смирнов: Иван Грозный, Leningrad 1944.

⁵ С. В. Вахрушин: „Избранная Рада” Ивана Грозного, „Исторические записки”, vol. 15, 1945, p. 49 et sqq.

The main figures in the 'Chosen Council' were Silvester and Alexiey Adashev; the former, a priest of high moral standing who regarded the education of people as the principal condition of the restoration of State, exercised a considerable influence on the sensitive personality of the young tsar; the latter, a statesman of high stature, had in his hands the main strings of internal and external policy of the country.

The way in which the young monarch thought and reacted can be gathered from his letter to Adashev. „You are neither rich nor of high descent, Alexiey, wrote Ivan, ”but you are virtuous. I am entrusting to you this high position not at your request but out of the need of my soul, which is drawn to such as yourself, who can satisfy my anxiety about those miserable ones whose fate God has left in my care. Fear not the rich or the mighty when they disdain honour and break the law. Be not deceived by the false tears of the poor, when they slander the rich out of envy. Examine all things fully and tell me the truth fearing only God's judgment.”⁶

The 'Chosen Council' succeeded in carrying through a number of essential reforms. The boyars were removed from territorial administration and were replaced by locally elected officials; criminal justice and the collection of taxes passed into the hands of elected 'distinct elders'. The codification started under Ivan III was enlarged and grew into a collection of ordinances of material law. Military service was reformed and came to be defined according to the size of the '*pomestye*', i. e. land held by a man. At the same time the lands of the boyars were used to enlarge the holdings of those who had too little to have the obligation of military service. An important improvement came when army commanders began to be nominated. The Church, on its side, on the initiative of metropolitan Makary, introduced uniform rites and listed the saints for worship in the whole State.

After several years differences arose between the 'Chosen Council' and the tsar; they became apparent first when the members of the Council were unwilling to swear allegiance to the minor son of Ivan the Terrible during the latter's illness. The conflict deepened when the tsar — against the advice of the 'Chosen Council' — conducted a war against Livonia in the hope of binding Russia to Europe through the Baltic Sea. The defeats suffered in this war, the criticism of the tsar's policy expressed by the boyars and the Church, lastly — the desertion to Lithuania of Prince Andrey Kurbsky filled the cup of the tsar's bitterness. In 1565, in highly dramatic circumstances, after a threat

⁶ Quoted after Н. М. Карамзин: История государства российского, vol. 8, St. Petersburg 1834, p. 99.

of abdication the tsar received unlimited power and the rule of terror started.⁷ He introduced truly revolutionary measures to create an efficient and blindly obedient instrument of government in the country. He marked out a number of districts (*oprichnina*) from which to deport the boyars and the princes together with their families and servants. In their place he settled a thousand men (*oprichniki*) unreservedly loyal to him and representing different strata of society. The *oprichnina* became a camp ruled by military methods, while the remaining parts of the country retained the traditional administration. The number of the *oprichniki* soon grew to six thousand and the territory covered by the *oprichnina* included rich industrial and commercial towns, important routes and, above all, roads leading to the shores of the Baltic Sea. Riders clad in black, with bundles of twigs and dogs' heads fastened to the saddles as symbols of loyalty and zeal in the struggle against internal enemies, rode across the lands of the *oprichnina* bringing terror and destruction. With the aid of terror they broke down the political power of the boyars but at the same time they brought about depopulation and economic ruin of Russia's richest lands.⁸ However, two different systems of administration could not exist side by side within one state for long. Russia needed a single system of government and a single administration. In 1572 the tsar abolished the *oprichnina* and the *oprichniki*. Even the use of these names came to be forbidden and they became only expressions of contempt.

Yet the *oprichnina* played an important role in transforming the Russian state organization. The English ambassador who visited Moscow in 1558, i. e. already after the death of Ivan the Terrible, called the *oprichnina* — for all the evil that it had caused — a truly political enterprise, undertaken to end the social leadership of the nobility and to create the foundations of a new State organization.

⁷ A review of the Russian literature on the reign of Ivan the Terrible can be found in the work by G. H. Bolsover: *Ivan the Terrible in Russian Historiography*, included in a collected work: *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 7, London 1957, pp. 71—89.

⁸ П. А. Сади́ков: Царь и опричник, „Исторический сборник“, I, Petrograd 1924; П. А. Сади́ков: Очерки по истории опричнины, publication of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, series of History and Philosophy, vol. VII, No. 5, p. 448 et sqq. Г. Штаден: О Москве Ивана Грозного. Записки немца-опричника, Moscow 1925; С. Б. Весоловский: Синодик опальных царя Ивана как исторический источник, „Проблемы источниковедения“, Сборник третий, publication of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, Moscow—Leningrad 1940; С. Б. Весоловский: Очерки по истории опричины, Moscow 1963; А. А. Зимин: Опричина Ивана Грозного, Изд. „Мысль“, Moskwa 1964.

While during the reign of Ivan III and his son Vasily III the official political doctrine was formulated by ecclesiastical circles, which coloured it strongly with religion, under Ivan the Terrible the ideology of absolute power and of struggle against the boyars was developed by the tsar and by the enterprising condottiere Ivan Peresvetov.

Thus uniform, centralized power was being formed on the basis of two sets of political views: ecclesiastic and secular.⁹ The former originated in the controversy which went on at the end of the fifteenth century on the subject of the moral regeneration of the clergy through the secularization of Church estates. Nil Sorsky, who was more a philosopher and thinker than a saint and miracle-maker for which his contemporaries took him, began to criticise the external splendour of the eastern rite. He wanted to understand while believing and to believe while thinking. He taught that the most ecstatic worship, prayers, fast and asceticism cannot change a man unless they are accompanied by inner perfection of human personality. Tolerant towards outward piety he yet asserted ironically that 'it is better to drink wine reasonably than water unreasonably'. His strongest attack, however, was directed against the enormous ecclesiastic estates which, in his opinion, were the source of the Church's weakness because they were depraving the clergy. For the clergy, he taught, direct all their effort towards the acquisition, maintenance and administration of the estates while, if they were to live the life of poverty and were to support themselves by the work of their hands, they would regain moral strength and would win back the authority of the Church.

The criticism of Nil Sorsky brought a response from Joseph of Volokolamsk, the founder and abbot of a rich monastery near the place which gave him his name. He expressed the views of the Church hierarchy demanding that ecclesiastic estates be retained, but at the same time he was aware that without help from the State the Church could not stop the drive towards reform. In exchange for a strong support of the power of the grand prince Ivan III took the side of ecclesiastic hierarchy. In this situation Joseph of Volokolamsk became a spokesman of the theocratic absolutism of Muscovite rulers. In his monumental work '*Prosvetitel*' (*Illuminator*), directed against the heretics, he presented the tsar as a God who resembles people only in his appearance while in essence he has the authority of God and thus his conduct must remain outside earthly categories. According to

⁹ М. В. Довнар-Запольский: Политические партии первой половины XVI века и власть Московского царя [in:] Русская история в очерках и статьях, vol. II, Moscow 1910, p. 152 et sqq.

him obeying the tsar was a religious duty of every person not excluding the priests. Joseph of Volokolamsk also argued that the tsar ought to be the protector and defender of the Eastern Church.

Already in the lifetime of Ivan III and even more so during the reign of Vasily III Moscow was styled in ecclesiastic circles 'the third Rome' and its monarch — the new Emperor Constantine.¹⁰ The view was also spread that the Union of Florence had been a betrayal of the Orthodox Church and the fall of the Byzantine Empire came as a punishment, while the Byzantine heritage passed to Moscow and its ruler.

Lastly, in the group of Church doctrines belongs the conception of State organization worked out by Silvester Adashev, the main figure of the 'Church Council'. He undoubtedly drew inspiration for his views from the ideas of Nil Sorsky. Silvester advocated a single State with centralized power rooted not in force or terror but in a high moral standard of the citizens. He postulated absolute ethical puritanism achieved through the perfection of human personality, through inner discipline and self-control, which were, above all, to develop in the fathers of families respect for human dignity, decency, honesty and sober judgment. He started with an assumption that morality cannot be divided into private and public. The State was in his view a collection of families governed by exemplary fathers.

Silvester composed for his son an everyday guidebook for a good householder and father of family — *Domostroy*. We learn from it that he himself freed all his serfs and gave them land. He also bought serfs from other men and gave them freedom. In accordance with his own conduct he bid his son be modest, absolutely faithful to his wife and restrain the passions generating evil. Silvester believed that personal example is the best educational method; he himself had among his contemporaries the reputation of a highly moral man and for a number of years exercised a strong influence on the mind of the young tsar.

However, it was not Silvester's conception of State that was significant for the reign of Ivan the Terrible, but the secular doctrine developed outside Church circles. This second group of doctrines reveals the main conflict of the period — the struggle between the boyars and the service gentry, which, unlike the same class in Poland, depended directly on the favour of the tsar on whose decision hung the ownership of their estates and their careers.

¹⁰ „Moscow is the third Rome and there will not be another”. See A. A. Зимин: И. С. Пересветов и его современники, publication of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, Moscow 1958, p. 409 et sqq.

While the boyars aimed at limiting the tsar's authority through their delegates to the Duma and at preserving their feudal privileges, those representing the ideology of the gentry called for abolishing the power of the magnates and for strengthening the government of the State which would be left in the hands of an autocratic tsar.

The camp of the boyars found its leader and theorist in the person of Prince Andrey Kurbsky who polemized with Ivan the Terrible in his letters to the tsar written after his desertion to Lithuania.¹¹

Kurbsky did not try to turn history back, he did not demand the re-establishment of the former division of State into province, nor did he advocate feudal partition; he simply wanted the aristocracy to share power with the tsar, realizing that under the pressure of reality the boyars could at best achieve a compromise between the old order and the new.

The tsar, on the other hand, firmly rejected in his writings the doctrine of the political compromise. He appears in those writings not only as a man re-organizing his State by means of terror, but also as a talented publicist. For Ivan the Terrible his pen was one of the means of reforming the organization of the Russian State. He expounded his views on the limitless nature of the tsar's power in his correspondence with Prince Kurbsky, in his letter to one of the most important *oprichnik* — Vasily Gryazny and in a message to Kirillo-Belozersky monastery.¹²

In his letters he presented — in the manner of describing a prophetic vision — his idea of divinity and illimitability of the tsar's authority, inherited from his ancestors. Convinced that he had an indisputable right to dispose of the property and the lives of his subjects he wrote to Kurbsky: "We are free both to reward our servants and to punish them with death. [...] The tsar ought to be wise: sometimes soft, sometimes severe; towards the good he ought to be kind and merciful, towards the evil — severe and cruel. And if such is not his conduct, then he is no ruler, for a ruler arouses fear not in those who do good, but in those who do evil... You want not to fear the ruler? Then do good, and if you do evil, live in fear, for a tsar carries his sword not in vain but to punish evil-doers and to reward the just."¹³

¹¹ А. М. Курбский: Сочинения, St. Petersburg 1914.

¹² Послания Ивана Грозного, publication of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, Moscow—Leningrad 1951.

¹³ *Op. cit.*, pp. 30, 20.

Nor did Ivan the Terrible have any doubt that he had power over the Church and that interference of ecclesiastics in secular matters was sinful and deserved punishment.¹⁴

For all the merits of Ivan's writings the finest political writer of his reign was Ivan Semyonovitch Peresvetov, whose views reflected clearly the interests of the gentry struggling together with the tsar against the aristocratic boyars.¹⁵

Peresvetov himself descended from humble Lithuanian gentry. At first warring was his favourite occupation; he served at the court of voivode Tęczyński, then went to Hungary to fight under the banner of John Zápolyai against the Habsburgs. While staying there he became acquainted with the Turkish army and the Turkish State organization; traces of this are found in his writings. After three years in Hungary he went to the court of the hospodar of Wallachia, probably with some political mission. He again joined the troops of Tęczyński to fight, this time on the side of the Habsburgs against John Zápolyai. Finally, in 1538 he went to Moscow for good. There he presented at the court his project of manufacturing hussars' shields, specially good for use in warfare against Tatars. At first the project was favourably received and Peresvetov was even given an estate and craftsmen for his workshop. However, after a time — probably as a result of wider use of fire-arms — the production of shields ceased to arouse interest. Peresvetov got into financial difficulties and even lost the fortune that he had brought from Poland. He wrote with bitterness about this period of his life ascribing his ill luck to the intrigues of the boyars who just then seized the opportunity of the tsar's minority to rob the country and the people.

As a publicist Peresvetov entered the arena of political writing about 1548, after the tsar had already attained his majority. At that time, after long years of the boyars' rule, the government passed into the hands of the 'Chosen Council', whose members agreed on one point: that the central power in the country needed consolidation, but advocated different ways and methods of this consolidation, having in view the interests of certain social groups. Peresvetov was the only man who managed to present in his writings a full project of reform which

¹⁴ М. Н. Коваленский: Из истории государственной власти в России, Moscow 1905; Г. Н. Плеханов: История русской общественной мысли, vol. I, Moscow 1914.

¹⁵ А. А. Зимин: И. С. Пересветов и русские вольнодумцы XVI века, „Вопросы истории религии и атеизма”, Сборник III, Moscow 1955; А. Л. Саккетти: Политическая программа И. С. Пересветова, „Вестник Моск. университета”, серия общественных наук, вып. I, 1955, pp. 107—117.

made then one of the most important documents of the socio-political situation in Russia in the middle of the sixteenth century.¹⁶

In his writings Peresvetov dealt principally with two main problems: the criticism of the abuses committed by the boyars during the minority of Ivan the Terrible; and the project of specific socio-political reforms.¹⁷ In his treatment these problems are inseparable, since the projected reforms were meant to make up for the harm done by the rule of the boyars.

Peresvetov openly criticized the rule of the boyars only in his *Supplications*, while in all the other works he expressed his criticism of the conditions in Russia in the form of an accusation of the Byzantine aristocracy from the time of Emperor Constantine's minority. The placing of action in Byzantium was meant as a disguise which permitted the author to treat historical events freely and to depict in the reign of Constantine — contrary to evidence — a situation and circumstances clearly derived from the time of Ivan the Terrible in Russia.¹⁸

In this *Tale of Sultan Mahmet* he declares that the Greeks were punished for violating "God's will", because, during the minority of Emperor Constantine, who was a wise and just ruler, the magnates used superstition and intrigue to bring him under their control, and then they put his wisdom to sleep and made his sword hang still by their "devilish tricks and intrigues". For this the Lord, who dislikes "deceit, pride and idleness" punished them in his merciless wrath. Peresvetov gave a lurid picture of the abuses of aristocracy who had seized the opportunity of the tsar's minority "to draw dishonest wealth out of the blood and tears of mankind."¹⁹ The nobles, suffering from the ruthless conduct of the magnates, were no longer willing to defend their country, and the lords themselves lost their fighting spirit in pursuit of riches.

¹⁶ The works of Peresvetov include: 1. *The Founding and the Conquest of Tsarograd*, 2. *A Tale of Books*, 3. *A Tale of Sultan Mahmet*, 4. *The First Prediction of the Doctors and Philosophers*, 5. *The Small Supplication*, 6. *The Second Prediction of the Philosophers*, 7. *A Tale of Tsar Constantine*, 8. *Conclusion*, 9. *The Great Supplication*.

¹⁷ O. W. Trachtenberg: *Myśl społeczno-polityczna w Rosji w XV—XVII wieku* [in:] *Z dziejów filozofii rosyjskiej* (Polish translation), Warszawa 1953, p. 93. Trachtenberg thinks that the practical part of Peresvetov's projects is connected with the policy of Ivan the Terrible after 1564 and especially with the organization of the oprichnina.

¹⁸ A. A. Зимин: *И. С. Пересветов и его современники*, ed. cit.

¹⁹ Сочинения И. С. Пересветова, Moscow — Leningrad 1956, p. 152 — *A Tale of Sultan Mahmet*.

The criticism of Byzantine society was put into the mouth of the Sultan of Turkey who simultaneously suggested a number of reforms. Towards the end of the book the critic assumed a moralizing tone, when the Latin scholars tell the Greeks that the Lord was angry with them for their "pride and lies" and gave them away to the sultan as slaves.

The charges made against the aristocracy in *A Tale of Sultan Mahmet* must have seemed to the author too mild, because he accused the magnates directly and much more violently in *A Tale of Emperor Constantine*.²⁰

In the *Great Supplication* — the last of all the works that are known to have been written by Peresvetov — the author asserted openly that abuses similar to those committed at Constantinople were perpetrated by the Russian boyars during the minority of Ivan the Terrible. Here Peresvetov gave up allegory and similar literary devices and openly made references to the situation in Russia. He put into the mouth of the Wallachian Hospodar Peter the warning that history could repeat itself and Moscow could share the fate of Byzantium if the tsar did not bring the boyars under control and did not reform the government of the State thoroughly. In his view any means were justified so long as they restrained the power of the boyars; the boyars could even be punished without a court trial, because they were a threat to the State. But Peresvetov did not confine himself to a mere branding of the abuses of the boyars; he criticized the whole feudal system and argued that the Muscovite Empire could be saved by the "truth", by which he meant a system of government in which strong, centralized power, resting on a competent and courageous army, would protect the interests of the masses of nobility.

The criticism of the government of Russia in the middle of the sixteenth century was only one aspect of Peresvetov's doctrine; it is a kind of background against which he presented his conception of the ideal State of "truth".

In the part containing his positive views the most important problems are those of the ruler and the army. They form the backbone of the centralized, nobiliary monarchy advocated by Peresvetov. He was convinced that the strength of the State depended on the role of a "wise and fear-inspiring tsar". The fear of the power wielded by the ruler arouses respect for the State and its laws being thus a guarantee of order and harmony. "The tsar cannot reign without terror", wrote Peresvetov, for "a State without terror is like unto a horse that the

²⁰ В. Ф. Р ж и г а: И. С. Пересветов, публицист XVI века, Moscow 1908.

tsar would ride without a bridle.”²¹ Force, however, cannot serve the whims of the ruler, for “terror” is only a way realizing “truth”, which the tsar recognizes through his “wisdom”. Thus the confines of absolutism are marked by two concepts: that of wisdom and that of truth, which jointly signify an absolute power protecting the interests of the nobility. In Peresvetov’s conception the range of power of the autocratic ruler covers four fields: legislation, finance, administration of justice and military affairs. His ideal ruler, Sultan Mahmet, himself issues laws and regulations, himself defines the salaries of his knights and dignitaries, appoints judges and supervises their work, nominates officers to manage his finances, and, lastly, he himself is the chief commander of his army. In executing his wide power the sultan may listen to the opinion of his Privy Council without an obligation of following it. Peresvetov spoke of a “wise council” or a “wise man” and repeatedly emphasized the advisory nature of these organs which were to remain in the shade of the all-powerful tsar.

Peresvetov realized that the power of the tsar depended on a disciplined and valiant army. “The tsar is strong and famous for his knights.”²² Hence the problem of the army has in his doctrine an importance almost equal to the problem of the ruler. He thought that a regular army should be formed, composed of free men who would receive payment and whose advancement and rank would depend only on their personal courage, prudence and merit. Thus organized the army should be divided into troops defending the boundaries of the State and the tsar’s body-guard.²³

While discussing the re-organization of the army Peresvetov touched on the problem of freedom which in his view is an indispensable condition of valour, ambition and courage. “In a State where people live in servitude”, he wrote, “none are valiant in the fight against enemy, for a slave fears not dishonour, nor does he care for his good name.”²⁴ When, on the other hand, the ruler frees the people who were in the power of the aristocrats, then in his service they will be brave. “Only the free are valiant; they play with death and fight the enemy fiercely.”²⁵

²¹ Сочинения Пересветова, p. 153.

²² *Op. cit.*, p. 156.

²³ A good evaluation of the military problems in the doctrine of Peresvetov can be found in A. Podgraza: *Iwan Pereswietow, rosyjski pisarz polityczny XVI w.* [in:] *Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce*, vol. VI Warszawa 1961, p. 224.

²⁴ Сочинения Пересветова, p. 157.

²⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 176.

In Peresvetov's conception we often sense the coolness of Machiavellian judgment, especially when we read that the State of „truth” is above all other values, for, as the author asserts ”where truth is not, nothing else is, for God loves not belief but truth.”

STRESZCZENIE

Rządy Iwana III (1462—1505), jego syna Wasyla III (1505—1533) i wreszcie panowanie Iwana IV zwanego Groźnym (1547—1584) — to okres formowania autokratycznych rządów w Wielkim Księstwie Moskiewskim.

Za czasów Iwana III i Wasyla III doktrynę polityczną formują koła cerkiewne, zaś w okresie Iwana Groźnego autorami oficjalnych poglądów są car i ludzie świeccy związani z jego polityką.

Za cenę zdecydowanego poparcia wielkoksiążęcej władzy Iwan III poparł interesy hierarchii cerkiewnej, której przedstawiciel — Józef Wołocki głosił teokratyczny absolutyzm władców moskiewskich. Tym samym oficjalnie potępiono ruch reformatorski, zmierzający do moralnego uzdrowienia duchownych drogą sekularyzacji ich ziem.

Za czasów Iwana Groźnego doktryny polityczne wypowiedane były przez ludzi spoza kręgu cerkiewnego. One bowiem wyrażały silnie odczuwane konflikty społeczno-polityczne, rozgrywające się między magnaterią (bojarstwem) z jednej strony, a drobną szlachtą służebną z drugiej. Bojarzy dążyli do ograniczenia władzy carskiej przez swych przedstawicieli zasiadających w Dumie oraz do utrzymania feudalnych przywilejów. Natomiast ideologowie szlachty nawoływali do zlikwidowania wszechwładzy magnatów i utrwalenia samodzielnia carskiego.

Przywódcą obozu bojarzkiego był książę Andrzej Kurbski, z którym polemizował w swych pismach Iwan Groźny. Najwybitniejszym jednak pisarzem politycznym tych czasów był Iwan Siemiõnowicz Pereswiewow, którego poglądy wyrażają interesy szlachty walczącej wspólnie z carem przeciw magnaterii bojarzkiej.

РЕЗЮМЕ

Царствование Ивана III (1462—1505) его сына Василия III (1505—1533) и, наконец, царствование Ивана IV, прозванного Грозным, (1547—1584), — это период формирования монархического правления в Великом Княжестве Московском.

Во времена Ивана III и Василия III политические доктрины формируются под влиянием кругов духовенства, в то время как в период царствования Ивана Грозного выразителями официальных полити-

ческих взглядов являются царь и представители светского общества, связанные с его политикой. За решительную поддержку великокняжеской власти Иван IV поддержал интересы церковной монархии, представитель которой Иосиф Волоцкий провозгласил теократический абсолютизм московских владык; этим самым официально осуждалось реформистское движение, направленное на моральное оздоровление духовенства путем секуляризации их земель.

Во время Ивана Грозного политические доктрины провозглашаются людьми, не принадлежащими к церковным кругам. Они ведь выражали резкие социально-политические конфликты, вспыхивавшие между боярской верхушкой, с одной стороны, и служилым дворянством — с другой. Бояре стремились к ограничению царской власти через своих представителей в Думе, а также к сохранению феодальных привилегий. Что касается идеологов дворянства, то они призывали к ликвидации полной власти магнатов и укреплению царского самодержавия.

Главой боярской оппозиции был князь Андрей Курбский, с которым полемизировал в своих письмах Иван Грозный. Однако наиболее выдающимся политическим деятелем той поры был Иван Семенович Пересветов, взгляды которого выражали интересы дворянства, борющегося вместе с царем против высшего боярства.

