This article reviews some English and French-language works about the Time of Troubles which have been published since the Second World War. The author notes that there are relatively few such publications, and that there are no distinct Western “schools” of scholarship on the Time of Troubles. Rather, a number of individuals have written about aspects of the Troubles which interested them for a variety of reasons. The theme of pretenders has been a popular one. Philip Barbour wrote a biography of the First False Dmitrii; while Yves-Marie Bercé and Maureen Perrie have written about the phenomenon of pretendership, and the popular attitudes associated with it, from a comparative perspective. Other scholars (Roland Mousnier, Chester Dunning) have approached the popular uprisings of the Time of Troubles as responses to a “general crisis of the 17th century”. Yet others took as their starting points parallels with more recent times. Paul Avrich presented the Bolotnikov revolt as the first of a series of “peasant wars” that continued into the 20th century; and Isaiah Gruber, in his monograph about the role of the Orthodox Church in the early 17th century, identified similarities between the Time of Troubles and Russia’s post-Soviet ills. Many of these historians were influenced in their approaches by current tendencies in Western historiography and scholarship: comparative history; peasant studies; the history of revolts and revolutions; the semiotics of cultural history; and the history of mentalités.
Recent Western Historiography of the Time of Troubles in Russia

M. Perrie


This article reviews some English- and French-language works about the Time of Troubles which have been published since the Second World War. The author notes that there are relatively few such publications, and that there are no distinct Western "schools" of scholarship on the Time of Troubles. Rather, a number of individuals have written about aspects of the Troubles which interested them for a variety of reasons. The theme of pretenders has been a popular one. Philip Barbour wrote a biography of the First False Dmitrii; while Yves-Marie Bercé and Maureen Perrie have written about the phenomenon of pretendership, and the popular attitudes associated with it, from a comparative perspective. Other scholars (Roland Mousnier, Chester Dunning) have approached the popular uprisings of the Time of Troubles as responses to a "general crisis of the 17th century". Yet others took as their starting points parallels with more recent times. Paul Avrich presented the Bolotnikov revolt as the first of a series of "peasant wars" that continued into the 20th century; and Isaiah Gruber, in his monograph about the role of the Orthodox Church in the early 17th century, identified similarities between the Time of Troubles and Russia's postSoviet ills. Many of these historians were influenced in their approaches by current tendencies in Western historiography and scholarship: comparative history; peasant studies; the history of revolts and revolutions; the semiotics of cultural history; and the history of mentalités. Keywords: historiography, Time of Troubles, First False Dmitrii, pretenders, general crisis of the 17th century, peasant wars, comparative history, peasant studies, revolts and revolutions, semiotics, mentalités, Russian Orthodox Church.
The book makes good use of printed primary sources in English, Russian, Polish, French, Italian, Latin, German, Swedish, and occasionally in contemporary Russian. It is a rich, varied, and timely contribution to the study of the late 16th century Russia. The author's book, Dimitry, Called the Pretender, was a specialist on early colonial America. In 1953 he published a translation of Pushkin's Boris Godunov: in the Preface to his book on Dmitrii he explains that it was Musorgskii's opera, and especially Chaliapin's performance in the title role, that had led him to read Pushkin's Godunov. Moscow, 1978.}


Philip Barbour (1898-1980), the author of Dimitry, Called the Pretender, was a specialist on early colonial America. In 1953 he published a translation of Pushkin's Boris Godunov: in the Preface to his book on Dmitrii he explains that it was Musorgskii's opera, and especially Chaliapin's performance in the title role, that had led him to read Pushkin's play and subsequently to undertake his work on the pretender. Barbour writes in an accessible manner, with a somewhat flowery literary style; the book is clearly intended for a general readership, but it is a much more scholarly piece of work than the average popular-historical biography. Barbour was an excellent linguist, and his book makes good use of printed primary sources in English, Russian, Polish, French, Italian, Latin, German, Swedish, and Spanish, as well as a wide range of secondary authorities. Barbour's extensive use of Polish sources, in particular, enables him to provide an unusually detailed picture of Dmitrii's contacts with his Polish and Jesuit entourage, both in the Rzeczpos-polita and in Muscovy.

To the perennially intriguing question of the pretender's identity, Barbour offers no definitive answer. He is convinced, however, that Dmitrii was not a "deliberate impostor" or a "shabby fake", since all the evidence suggests that he confidently believed that he was the true heir to the throne. In an Appendix, entitled, "Who was Dimitry?", the author revives the theory put forward by the journalist A. S. Suvorin, that Tsarevich Dmitrii did not die at Uglich in 1591, but was spirited away to safety by his kinsman Afanasii Nagoi and subsequently adopted by the Otrep'ev...
6 In that respect it is far superior to the popular biography of Boris Godunov by Ian Grey (1918-1996): Grey I. Boris
Godunov: the Tragic Tsar. London, 1973. — An author who had previously written popular biographies of Peter the
Great (1960), Catherine the Great (1961) and Ivan the Terrible (1964). Grey's book on Boris is mainly based on older
Russian secondary sources such as the works of Karamzin, Solov'ev and Platonov. The author notes that Boris is
best known in the West from Musorgskii's opera, which was largely based on Karamzin's History (Ibid. P. 14). Grey
seeks to rehabilitate Boris from the accusations that Karamzin and others levelled against him: he absolves him of
responsibility for the death of Tsarevich Dmitrii of Uglic, and presents him as a humane and enlightened ruler.

7 He had mastered native American languages for his work on colonial America.

8 Barbour worked in archives, including the Secret Archive of the Vatican, but his only new discovery was a
previously unknown portrait of Dmitrii in the Hessische Landes- und Hochschulbibliothek, Darmstadt, which he
reproduced as the frontispiece to his book.


11 Barbour P. L. Dimitry, Called the Pretender. Tsar and Great Prince of All Russia. P. 324.

12 Ibid. P. 327. — Suvorin's hypothesis about the rescue of Tsarevich Dmitrii is based largely on Jerome Horsey's
account of his strange encounter with Afanasii Nagoi in Iaroslavl' one night in May 1591. For a reexamination of
Horsey's evidence which makes this theory even more improbable, see: Perrie M. Jerome Horsey's Account of the

nary figures"13. After coming to the throne on the crest of a wave of popular support, Dmitrii embarked on
a programme of progressive reforms which in many ways — the author suggests — foreshadowed those of Peter the
Great4. Muscovy at the beginning of the 17th century, in Barbour's assessment, was still burdened by the traditional
formality of a Byzantine court whose rigid procedures had been introduced into Russia by Ivan III, under the
influence of his second wife Zoe (Sophia) Palaeologue15. The author draws a sharp contrast between Muscovite
"backwardness" and "superstition" and the enlightened ideas of the "revolutionary young Tsar"16. But, Barbour
argues, by failing to conceal his distaste for Muscovite tradition, Dmitrii revealed his rash and thoughtless character,
and this was to prove to be his undoing, since it played into the hands of the reactionary boyar Prince Vasili
Shuiskii. Dmitrii's reliance on his Polish courtiers in his efforts to modernise Muscovy provided Shuiskii with a pretext
for staging his coup against the tsar. The pretender's supporters, however, rose up under Bolotnikov in Dmitrii's
name against Shuiskii and the "old regime" of "oppression of peasants and serfs" that Dmitrii had begun to
ameliorate, in the first and possibly the strongest and longest-lived revolution against Tsarist tyranny in the history
of Russia before 1917"17. In general, Barbour pays little attention to the role of the masses in the Time of Troubles,
but he does occasionally employ the terminology and concepts of Soviet historiography: he describes Khlopkov's
revolt of 1603 as "the first stage of the peasant war against the State" in which "the peasants and serfs had stepped
over the brink of revolution"18; and in explaining popular support for Dmitrii he quotes with approval (from I. I.
Smirnov's monograph on Bolotnikov19), Stalin's famous comment to Emil Ludwig about the people longing for a
"good Tsar"20.

Another — and very different — work, which appeared at around the same time as Barbour's biography of Dmitrii,
was much more concerned with the role of the peasantry. Roland Mousnier's book, which compares 17th century
peasant revolts in France, Russia and China, was first published in French21, and then in English translation in a
series on "Great Revolutions"22. It brought together three types of scholarship that were very fashionable at that
time: comparative history; peasant studies; and the study of revolutions and revolts. An interest in peasants, who
had previously been of concern primarily to historians of medieval and early modern Europe, expanded after the
Second World War, when the Chinese Revolution demonstrated that Russia's was not the only so-called socialist
revolution to succeed in a country where the majority of the population were peasants, rather than industrial
proletarians, as Karl Marx had predicted in the 19th century. The wave of anti-colonial movements in Africa and Asia
also raised both scholarly and popular inter-

13 Barbour P. L. Dimitry, Called the Pretender. Tsar and Great Prince of All Russia... P. XII.


15 Ibid. P. XI, 158, 233, 246.

16 Ibid. P. 104, 193, 209.
As a specialist on 17th century France, Mousnier devoted the largest proportion of his text to the French revolts. His causes) on the one hand, and social structures (deeper long-term factors) on the other.

Conclusion in which he compared the three sets of revolts in terms of conjunctures or circumstances (short-term events) and "social structures" (for Russia, there were separate chapters on the social structures of the late 16th century and those on the eve of the Razin revolt). Then he provided a narrative account of each revolt, before a lengthy discussion of H. R. Trevor-Roper: "The General Crisis of the 17th Century". In its turn, revived interest in their earlier predecessors. Mousnier's choice of Russia and China as comparators to France for his 17th century study may well have been influenced by contemporary scholarly interest in the Russian and Chinese revolutions of the 20th century.

Roland Mousnier (1907-1993) was a distinguished historian of 17th century France, and a fierce anti-Marxist. He had participated in a famous debate in the left-wing English historical journal Past and Present on "The general crisis of the seventeenth century", which was launched by an article by the Oxford historian Hugh Trevor-Roper that compared the revolutions in England, France and Holland, in particular. Trevor-Roper rejected the Marxist view that these were "bourgeois revolutions" and concluded that they all resulted from a common crisis situation in which the social estates rebelled against their royal courts and the heavy burden of taxation they imposed. Mousnier's book may be seen partly as an attempt to examine whether the generalisations which Trevor-Roper and others had made in relation to Western Europe could be extended to Eurasia more broadly. In the Introduction to Peasant Uprisings he noted that there were revolts in the 17th century across the world from England to Japan, as well as in Mexico; and he called for "a collective enterprise by historians of all countries to investigate the characteristics of such movements, in accordance with the different types of social structure involved, and the reasons for their coincidence in time".

Mousnier's book did not, of course, attempt to cover the entire world: he limited himself to three countries which, he said, he had chosen "because their social structures are very different". For France, he focussed on the Croquants of 1636-1637, the Nu-pieds of Normandy of 1639, and the Torrébens of Brittany of 1675. For Russia, he dealt with "The peasant revolts of the 'Time of Troubles'" associated with the the False Dmitriis and Bolotnikov; and also with the revolt of Sten'ka Razin. For China, he investigated peasant revolts under the last Ming emperors. His study proceeded in a very systematic manner. For each country, he began with a chapter on its "social structures" (for Russia, there were separate chapters on the social structures of the late 16th century and those on the eve of the Razin revolt). Then he provided a narrative account of each revolt, before a lengthy Conclusion in which he compared the three sets of revolts in terms of conjunctures or circumstances (short-term causes) on the one hand, and social structures (deeper long-term factors) on the other.

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or to all those of peasant origin or background (including cossacks, bandits, strel'tsy and others) who participated in
war" approach to the Time of Troubles from their critics: whether the term "peasants" refers solely to agriculturists,
36 Ibid. P. 326, cf. pp. 180-181. — This is of course one of the issues which divided Soviet supporters of the "peasant
polarisation of Rus-
Social stratification, while Russian society was closed and immobile, especially after 1649. It was the dichotomy or
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(and Chinese) ones were not? One answer was that French peasants (like those of China) enjoyed property rights
character of peasant revolts. Why were Russian revolts revolutionary (or at least quasi-revolutionary) while French
So at last Mousnier reaches the climax of his investigation into the relevance of social structures to differences in the
country becomes somewhat clearer in his extended Conclusion. He begins by examining common causes for the
revolts in the three countries, and concludes that these were: an increased burden of taxation in order to pay for
armies; economic problems that particularly affected the peasants; and climatic variations leading to bad harvests
and epidemics. All of these conjunctures or circumstances, he suggests, may even be sufficient in themselves to
explain the revolts33. Nevertheless, he raises a number of questions about the revolts, which leads him to discuss
whether they display any "differences that can be explained by differences in social structure"34. First of all, he asks
who began the revolts and whether their initiators acted spontaneously. His answer is that the peasants did not take
the initiative in any of the three countries35. In the Russian case, he acknowledges that "in the years preceding the
Time of Troubles" (i.e. in the Khlopko uprising of 1603), "it was the peasants, apparently, who began the
movements". The author recognises that the majority of the participants in Khlopko's movement were bandits, but
he argues that "most of the bandits were of peasant origin", although he ad-
31 Vosstanie I. Bolotnikova. Dokumenty i materialy. Moscow, 1959. — It is not clear whether Mousnier read Russian
himself, or relied on research assistance.
33 Ibid. P. 306-319.

Mousnier's second question concerns the motives or grievances of the rebels. Here he concludes that in all three
countries it was the action of the state, rather than social antagonisms, that motivated the revolts38. In the Time of
Troubles, the main grievance for all participants was the perceived illegitimacy of Boris Godunov's claim to the
throne; the specific motives of the peasants were the burden of taxation and the process of enserfment by the
state39. The third question relates to the geographical area covered by the revolts, where the author suggests that
distance from the capital was a common feature40 (although for Russia this was more relevant to the Razin revolt
than to the Time of Troubles). In relation to his next question, concerning the organisation and outcome of the
revolts, Mousnier concludes that in Russia, as elsewhere, there was no distinct peasant organisation. In the Time of
Troubles the peasants were led by boyars and pomeshchiki; during the Bolotnikov revolt, the rebels elected their
own voevody, but it is not clear whether any peasants participated in this41. Finally, Mousnier considers the
programme or aims of the rebels. In France, he argues, the rebels simply wanted to return to an idealised version of
the past, and the same was true of the Russian peasants in the Time of Troubles, although he suggests that
Bolotnikov may have wanted rather more: a remodelling of the Russian state and society on the basis of equal
redistribution of the land and popular election of leaders, under a "good tsar"42. Mousnier acknowledges that the
sources leave room for doubt about how far Bolotnikov was proposing a "real peasant revolution", but he believes
that Razin did indeed envisage such a revolution43.

So at last Mousnier reaches the climax of his investigation into the relevance of social structures to differences in the
character of peasant revolts. Why were Russian revolts revolutionary (or at least quasi-revolutionary) while French
(and Chinese) ones were not? One answer was that French peasants (like those of China) enjoyed property rights
and personal liberties within the social system, where Russian peasants were increasingly losing these, with the
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36 Ibid. P. 326, cf. pp. 180-181. — This is of course one of the issues which divided Soviet supporters of the "peasant
war" approach to the Time of Troubles from their critics: whether the term "peasants" refers solely to agriculturists,
or to all those of peasant origin or background (including cossacks, bandits, strel'tsy and others) who participated in
the revolts.
38 Ibid. P. 332.
40 Ibid. P. 332-337.
42 Ibid. P. 341-344.
43 Ibid. P. 187, 344.

sian society, Mousnier argues, that created hopes of revolution among the peasants and slaves, who saw no other way of improving their position44.

Mousnier's book does of course have many weaknesses from the point of view of a historian of Russia. His sources are limited, and much of the secondary literature he consulted was outdated even at the time he was writing, in the 1960s. But, as a serious professional historian, he himself is fully aware of these limitations45, and he deserves to be commended for his bravery in venturing into such unfamiliar territory. He asks interesting questions, and proposes suggestive answers. And he is not embarrassed to have reached conclusions about the revolutionary nature of the Russian revolts that are very similar to the conclusions of Soviet historians, especially since he was so critical of Porshnev's Marxist interpretation of the uprisings in France.

Another scholar who was venturing into unfamiliar territory when he wrote about the Time of Troubles was the American historian Paul Avrich (1931-2006), whose previous publications had been on Russian anarchism in the 19th and 20th centuries. Avrich's book deals with the four popular revolts that were identified in Soviet historiography as "peasant wars": those led by Bolotnikov, Razin, Bulavin and Pugachev. He devotes a chapter to each of these rebellions, and in his concluding chapter he compares these earlier revolts to the revolutions of 1905 and 1917. In spite of the obvious differences between them, Avrich sees some striking similarities between the 20th century revolutions and their earlier predecessors: all were complex spontaneous explosions of mass discontent, directed against the state as well as against the rich and the powerful. But he argues that there were also continuities between the earlier revolts and the popular rebellions against the new Bolshevik regime during the Russian Civil War: those led by Makhno and Antonov, and the Kronstadt sailors' uprising46.

Unlike some other Western historians, Avrich is happy to use the term "peasant wars" to describe the four popular revolts of the early modern period47. He recognises that Soviet historians borrowed the term from Friedrich Engels' study of 16th century Germany, partly in order to draw an analogy between the course of Russian history and that of western and central Europe. Avrich acknowledges that the social and ethnic composition of the participants in all four "peasant wars" was complex, with cossacks playing an important leadership role. Nevertheless, he claims that peasants were the most numerous recruits to the movements, "so that the label "peasant wars", however imprecise, does in fact convey something of the nature of the risings". Moreover, he notes (as had Roland Mousnier) that many of the other categories of participants, including the cossacks, "were themselves essentially peasants, only recently uprooted from the soil", and that the majority of the "tribal adherents" to the revolts (the Mordva, Mari and Chuvash) were settled agriculturists rather than nomads48. In the concept of the "peasant war" Avrich also sees an element of continuity between the early-modern revolts and the revolutions of 1905 and 1917. He notes that both Marx and Lenin had identified "peasant wars" as accompaniments of proletarian revolutions in the modern period, and that Zinov'ev and Trotsky50

44 Ibid. P. 344-348.
45 See, for example: Ibid. P. 325-326.
48 Avrich P. Russian Rebels, 1600-1800. P. 4-5.

had used the term in relation to the Russian revolution of 1917. These Marxist thinkers, Avrich argues, had borrowed their analysis from Bakunin, who had seen the Razin and Pugachev revolts as prototypes of a forthcoming Russian anarcho-socialist revolution of all the dispossessed elements in society. Such revolutions, incorporating "peasant wars", he notes, had occurred in the 20th century not only in Russia, but also in China and in Spain49 (in Spain, of course, the anarchists played an important role on the Republican side in the Civil War)50.

Avrich's chapter on Bolotnikov in fact comprises quite a general narrative of the Time of Troubles, with brief background discussion of the reign of Ivan the Terrible. Khlopko is presented as the "first important social rebel" of the Time of Troubles, and the First False Dmitrii as a messiah-like figure whose followers opposed both autocracy and serfdom. Bolotnikov's supporters included relatively few peasants, but his revolt was "a social rebellion of the poor against the rich"51. Avrich makes use of a wide range of printed primary sources, including the collection of documents edited by Kopanev and Man'kov52, and of Russian-language secondary literature including Smirnov's
monograph. His interpretation of the role of the samozvantsy in the Bolotnikov revolt, and in the other revolts which he discusses, is heavily influenced by K. V. Chistov's concept of socio-utopian legends about "returning tsar-deliverers". The author's approach to the rebellions is not, however, solely derived from Soviet scholarship: in his Introduction, he refers to the model established by recent Western historians of popular movements such as Eric Hobsbawm and George Rudé. Avrich's book is scholarly in character, with detailed endnotes and a selective bibliography, but it is written in a lively and accessible style, suitable for the general reader. It has been a popular item on student reading lists for university courses on early modern Russian history for many years.

One of the most interesting and original comparative studies to include discussion of the Time of Troubles is a book by the French historian Yves-Marie Bercé (b.1936) on "popular political myths" in modern Europe. Bercé, like Roland Mousnier, was a specialist on French popular revolts in the 17th century, and in 1980 he published a comparative study of revolts and revolutions in early modern Europe. This book included relatively little discussion of Russian revolts, although there were two chapters on "peasant wars". In the first of these, devoted to the 16th and 17th centuries, a section on "The Cossack revolts", which depicted them as examples of resistance to the "second serfdom", included brief discussion of Bolotnikov and Razin, as well as the Khmel'nitskii rebellion.

49 Ibid. P. 265-267.

50 For the Russian and Chinese revolutions as "peasant wars of the 20th century", see also: Wolfe R. Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century, mentioned above.


52 Vosstanie I. Bolotnikova. Dokumenty i materialy.

53 Smirnov 1.1. Vosstanie Bolotnikova 1606-1607.


59 Ibid. P. 3-33.

60 Bercé's chapter on the Russian pretenders is based mainly on secondary sources and on accounts by foreign
Perrie did not consult archival sources, but in her discussion of the cossack pretend-er-tsareviches on the Volga in
"traitor-boyars", had much in common with the folkloric image of his supposed father, Ivan the Terrible.
Perrie suggests that the popular image of Dmitrii as a "good tsar", the champion of ordinary people against the
traitors to the "true tsar" Dmitrii, thereby legitimising their attacks on the rich and privileged elements of society.
grave. Later in the Time of Troubles, however, lower-class rebels denounced Vasilii Shuiskii's supporters as
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Cambridge, 1995. P. X.
67 Perrie M. Pretenders and Popular Monarchism in Early Modern Russia: the False Tsars of the Time of Troubles.
2, April. P. 221-243.
66 On the concept of pretenders as "social bandits", see: Hobsbawm E. J. Bandits. P. 101 and Longworth P. The
term "primitive rebels", see: Hobsbawm E. J. Primitive Rebels. Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the
19th and 20th centuries. For "socio-utopian legends about returning deliverers", see: Chistov K. V. Russkie narodnye
62 Ibid. P. 312.
63 Ibid. P. 340.
the belief that true kings have special physical characteristics, or special powers to cure
disease.
Bercé's book is highly erudite, and it brings together a huge number of popular ideas about monarchy, with
examples from a wide range of countries and historical periods. His argument that pretenders acquire popular
support because their stories resonate with myths and legends about hidden kings is generally persuasive. It must
be said, however, that many of the myths he discusses — for example, those from classical antiquity or medieval
chivalric romances — were largely unknown in Russia before the Time of Troubles, and it is doubtful how far they
could have influenced support for the False Dmitriis. Nevertheless, one of the author's most stimulating arguments
is that the image of the returning king has much in common with the figure of the risen Christ, which was of course
well known in all Christian countries, including Russia. Expectation of the return of the hidden king was a kind of
messianism, Bercé suggests, but it was a secular messianism, since the king's return was not miraculous: "he was
not resurrected, he simply returned."65.
Like Paul Avrich (see above), the British historian Maureen Perrie (b.1946) began her career by writing about the
Russian revolutionary movement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries: in her case, about the Socialist-
Revolutionary (SR) Party and the peasantry in the revolution of 1905. Her work on the SRs led Perrie to investigate
the phenomenon of "popular monarchy" — peasant faith in the goodness and benevolence of the tsar — which
had acted as an obstacle for the revolutionary socialists when they tried to conduct propaganda about a democratic
republic. Perrie subsequently published a book on the image of Ivan the Terrible as a "good tsar" in Russian folklore,
before writing about popular monarchy in relation to the Time of Troubles. In the Preface to her book, Perrie
noted that she had originally been attracted to the topic by notions of pretenders as "social bandits", of their
supporters as "primitive rebels", and of the Time of Troubles as a "peasant war" whose participants were guided by
"socio-utopian legends about returning royal deliverers."66. After some preliminary research, however, she had
concluded that the relevance of these ideas was not supported by the evidence, and her approach was instead
influenced by semiotic interpretations and by the concept of mentalité.
Perrie situates the Russian pretenders of the Time of Troubles in the broader context of other pretenders in early
modern Europe — Lambert Simmel and Perkin Warbeck in 15th century England; the Moldavian pretenders of the
late 16th century; and the false Don Sebastians of Portugal — and she notes some common features behind them, such
64 For a discussion of the idea of "royal marks" in relation to Russian pretenders, see: Perrie M. "Royal Marks":
Reading the Bodies of Russian Pretenders, 17th — 19th Centuries // Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian
65 Bercé Y.-M. Le roi caché. Sauveurs et imposteurs. Mythes politiques populaires dans l'Europe moderne. P. 228-
229, 312-313.
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independently, before acquiring influential patrons in Poland-Lithuania. After his invasion of Russia, he gained
support from all sections of society by claiming to be the "true tsar"; he may also have capitalised on the notion,
fostered by the "sacralisation" of the monarchy in the 16th century, that he had literally risen, Christ-like, from the
grave. Later in the Time of Troubles, however, lower-class rebels denounced Vasili Shuiskii's supporters as
traitors to the "true tsar" Dmitrii, thereby legitimising their attacks on the rich and privileged elements of society.
Perrie suggests that the popular image of Dmitrii as a "good tsar", the champion of ordinary people against the
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Perrie's book does not claim to be a general history of the Time of Troubles, although the author does present an account of the main events of the early 17th century, in more or less chronological order, as background to the appearance and activity of the pretenders. A fuller narrative of the period was provided by Chester Dunning (b.1949), an American historian whose first major publication on the Time of Troubles was an annotated translation of the account of the period written by Captain Jacques Margeret, a French

mercenary soldier who had been in service both to Boris Godunov and to the First False Dmitrii. In the Preface to his book on the Troubles, Dunning wrote that his original intention had been "to correct many glaringly obvious errors in Soviet scholarship", which had presented the period as a social revolution against serfdom. In the last few years, however, revisionist historians had abandoned this view in favour of the concept of a civil war "that split Russian society vertically instead of horizontally", and Dunning had decided instead to write a more general history of the Time of Troubles73.

Dunning's book is a substantial work of synthesis, drawing on the revisionist interpretations of both Russian and Western historians: he includes an impressive bibliography of published primary and secondary sources. The main body of the text is a detailed narrative of events from 1603 to 1610 (the concluding stages of the Troubles are covered much more briefly), with a strong focus on military issues. The introductory chapters provide background information. In the first chapter he offers a review of comparative history, beginning with the theory of a "general crisis" of the 17th century (see above). Dunning is particularly impressed by a work by the American sociologist Jack Goldstone, who explains revolts and revolutions in early modern Eurasia in terms of population growth and price inflation74. Goldstone does not deal specifically with Russia; and Dunning recognises that data on demography and other: Perrie M. Pretenders and Popular Monarchism in Early Modern Russia. P. 247-248. — In later articles Perrie developed this analysis to include Sten'ka Razin's "Tsarevich" Aleksei Alekseevich and the Zaporozhian cossacks' "Tsarevich" Simeon Alekseevich of 1673-1674. She described these cossack tsareviches as "pretenders in the name of the tsar", who did not challenge the legitimacy of the reigning monarch, and she drew a distinction between these "intra-dynastic pretenders", on the one hand, and "inter-dynastic pretenders" such as the False Dmitrii, on the other: Perrie M. Pretenders in the Name of the Tsar: Cossack "Tsareviches" in Seventeenth-Century Russia // Von Moskau nach St. Petersburg. Das russische Reich im 17. Jahrhundert (Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte, vol. 56). Wiesbaden, 2000. S. 243-256; Perri [Perrie] M. Samozvantsy XVII v. i vopros o legitimnosti pravishchego tsaria // Samozvantsy i samoz-vanchestvo v Moskovii. Materiały mezhdunarodnogo nauchnogo seminarâ (25 maia 2009 g., Budapesht). Ed. by Dula Svák. Budapest, 2010. P. 66-88.

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Rome declined: perhaps, the author suggests, because of Russians' identification of Rome with the Polish-Roman exile. While the concept of New Israel increased in prominence during the Troubles, the idea of the Third compared the sufferings of the Russian people to the afflictions of the Jews during their Babylonian captivity and world's only independent Orthodox state, claiming to preserve the true Christian faith. The idea of Muscovy as the acquired a distinctive form in Russia after the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453, when Muscovy became the world's only independent Orthodox state, claiming to preserve the true Christian faith. The idea of Muscovy as the New Israel, Gruber suggests, was more influential in 16th century Russia than the similar notion of Moscow as the Third Rome; and its significance developed further during the Time of Troubles, when Orthodox churchmen compared the sufferings of the Russian people to the afflictions of the Jews during their Babylonian captivity and Roman exile. While the concept of New Israel increased in prominence during the Troubles, the idea of the Third Rome declined: perhaps, the author suggests, because of Russians' identification of Rome with the Polish-
Gruber's second theme — for which he made use of some archival materials — is the role of the monasteries during the Time of Troubles. He concludes that the monasteries were primarily great economic corporations, rather than spiritual institutions, and that their main preoccupation was the pursuit of profit, whichever regime was in power. Only in the later stages of the Troubles, when their profits were threatened, did they participate in initiatives to restore political stability. The third theme of Gruber's book — and the one in which he arguably makes the greatest contribution to our understanding — concerns the role of Orthodox churchmen in developing new concepts of monarchical legitimacy following the dynastic crisis of 1598. In order to justify Boris Godunov's succession, the old hereditary criteria were replaced by three new principles, which Gruber identifies as vox Dei, voxpopuli and vox feminae. The first of these, the "voice of God", took the form of approval of the new ruler by the Patriarch and other Orthodox hierarchs; the "voice of the people" was expressed by the Assembly of the Land; and the "voice of the woman" was that of Tsaritsa Irina, who sanctioned the transfer of power from her husband, Tsar Fedor, to her brother, Boris Godunov. The "voice of the woman" continued to be heard throughout the Troubles, when the dowager Tsaritsa Maria Nagaia acknowledged the First False Dmitrii as her son, and Marina Mniszech "recognised" the Second Dmitrii as her husband. Finally, as his fourth theme, Gruber argues that Orthodoxy became fragmented during the Time of Troubles, as the Church leadership lost credibility with believers because of its constant shifts of allegiance amongst tsars who were presented as legitimate rulers one day, and as usurpers or impostors the next. The habits of independent thought acquired by the critics of official Orthodoxy during the Troubles, Gruber suggests, may have contributed to the similar independence of thought vis-à-vis the Church hierarchy that was displayed by the Old Believers later in the 17th century.

Gruber's book falls short of the author's aim of providing a comprehensive history of the Church during the Troubles — and indeed, as he himself recognises, the fragmentary nature of the surviving sources makes such an aim a difficult one to achieve. Nevertheless, his account represents an enterprising attempt to deal with a topic which — as the author rightly maintains — has considerable relevance for present-day Russia, and he successfully demythologises some of the more grandiose claims made for the role of the Orthodox Church in saving the country from disaster.

It will be evident from this review that there are no distinct "schools" of Western scholarship on the Time of Troubles: indeed, there are surprisingly few serious studies that deal with the period. The works we have considered are very much the products of individuals who have been attracted to aspects of the Troubles from very different starting points. We can however detect a number of main themes. Samozvantsy have of course been a popular and intriguing subject ever since the 17th century. Philip Barbour makes a lively contribution to the debate about the identity, personality and policies of the First False Dmitrii; and new approaches to cultural history, such as semiotics and the study of mentalités, have led to a reappraisal of the phenomenon of pretendership and the popular attitudes associated with it (Bercé, Perrie). Broader intellectual trends in Western historiography since the Second World War, such as comparative history, have influenced approaches to the social movements of the Time of Troubles (Mousnier, Dunning). Finally, the eternal search for relevance and topicality in relation to present-day concerns has influenced some historians. Paul Avrich found in the Bolotnikov uprising a precedent for the role of peasants and the urban poor in 20th century revolutions; while Isaiah Gruber sees parallels between the 17th century Time of Troubles and Russia's post-Soviet difficulties.


89 Perhaps the preoccupation of so many Western historians with the nature of the Russian state has led them to avoid this puzzling period of virtual statelessness.


Platonov S. F. Smutnoe vremia: ocherk istorii vnutrennego krizisa i obshchestvennoi bor'by v Moskovskom

Platonov S. F. The Time of Troubles: a Historical Study of the Internal Crisis and Social Struggle in 16th — and 17th


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Russian Revolution historiography is a fertile field, full of research and different approaches, ideas and perspectives. A good deal of the historiographical debate about the Russian Revolution hinges on this question. In October 1917 the Bolsheviks, acting in the name of the Soviets, overthrew Russia's Provisional Government. The Provisional Government was itself unelected but taken some steps towards forming and implementing a democratic government. Lenin claimed that the Bolsheviks had every right to seize power, citing Marxist theory and the backing of the Petrograd Soviet. Historians have formed different views about the Bolshevik seizure of power in October 1917.