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HUMAN NATURE AND
GOVERNANCE FROM PETER I TO
THE EMANCIPATION OF THE
NOBILITY**

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FROM PASSIONS TO AMBITIONS: HUMAN NATURE AND GOVERNANCE FROM PETER I TO THE EMANCIPATION OF THE NOBILITY²

This essay focuses on debates about the proper rules and procedures of promotion in military service from Peter I's reign and into the 1740s. It begins by considering the meaning of such peculiar Petrine innovation as selection of candidates for promotion through "elections" and the subsequent permutations of the promotion mechanism, and then moves on to analyze the discussions regarding the service obligations of the nobility culminating in the 1762 emancipation, marking official recognition by the monarchy of the nobles' autonomous subjecthood. While debates about the rules of promotion conveniently illustrate the reconceptualization of human nature in the 18th-century Russian administrative discourse and practice, they also provide a useful opportunity for discussing how and why ideas and institutional designs evolved. Rather than portraying the rethinking of human nature as a "natural," self-propelled process of transfer of Western European ideas, an attempt is made here to link various policy proposals and shifts to pragmatic agendas of individual officials involved.

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The Emancipation of the Nobility in 1762 was, arguably, the central event in social and cultural history of the Russian Imperial elite, indeed, a watershed in the relationship between the elite and the state in Russia, marking official recognition by the monarchy of the nobles' autonomous subjecthood. The road towards this recognition, it is argued here, was paved by a thorough reconceptualization of human nature in Russian governance practices in the first half of the 18th century, and it is the trajectory of this reconceptualization that this chapter seeks to reconstruct. Indeed, attempts to understand human nature were central for political thinking of the age, from Locke, Puffendorf, and Montesquieu to Smith and the American Founding Fathers. Scholars of government and practicing politicians in the West debated what were the limitations and opportunities inherent in human nature for organizing better governance of their societies. So, I argue, did their counterparts in Russia. Whereas in Petrine administrative thinking and legislation nobles appear as subjects swayed by their pernicious passions and thus liable to be restrained, in subsequent decades the members of the elite were increasingly viewed in a more positive light, as entitled by their praiseworthy ambitions and love of honor to being allowed to make decisions regarding their own lives and the public good in general.

In order to chart this transformation, this chapter focuses on debates about the proper rules and procedures of promotion in military service from Peter I's reign and into the 1740s. Service and attainment of ranks occupied, obviously, a central place in the lives and concerns of the 18th century Russian nobles, and not surprisingly, regulation of promotions was a matter of intense interest for them, as well as for the government ministers, who, after all, were also nobles themselves. The chapter begins by considering the meaning of such peculiar Petrine innovation as selection of candidates for promotion through "elections" and the subsequent permutations of the promotion mechanism, and then moves on to analyze the discussions regarding the service obligations of the nobility culminating in the 1762 emancipation. As we shall see, for Peter I, selecting candidates for promotion was about restraining the passions and countering the biases inherent in his officers' human nature – biases that were certain to cloud the selection process, and it was this fundamental concern that drove his search for institutional mechanisms that could neutralize passions and enable "truthful" decision-making. In the post-Petrine decades, noble subjects' individual interests and "desires" were reinterpreted in laws, ministerial memoranda, and administrative practices as acceptable and even praiseworthy ambitions and "zeal." This implied a radically different approach to governing, as the ruler was now supposed to motivate his servitors by creating fair opportunities for promotion, by appropriately rewarding merit, and by taking into consideration individual preferences for appointments. Indeed, this paradigm came close to introducing a degree of contractual mutuality (cf. Lotman 1996, 36, 52-57) into the

servitors' relationship with the ruler. At the same time, it also meant acknowledging the servitors' autonomous subjecthood, for within this framework they were implicitly entitled to have ambitions and inclinations, to expect "encouragement," and to fall into "despair" (and accordingly, to perform their duties with inferior zeal) when such encouragement was not forthcoming.

While debates about the rules of promotion conveniently illustrate the reconceptualization of human nature in the 18th-century Russian administrative discourse and practice, they also provide a useful opportunity for discussing how and why ideas and institutional designs evolved. Rather than portraying the rethinking of human nature as a "natural," self-propelled process of transfer of Western European ideas, an attempt is made here to link various policy proposals and shifts to pragmatic agendas of individual officials involved. Different ways of selecting candidates for promotion led also to different ways of distributing authority and opportunities for patronage; thus, servitors' susceptibility to passions (or alternatively, their ambitions and love of honor) became an issue hotly contested even by those officials whom we would otherwise not expect to be interested in debates regarding human nature. Indeed, these political implications of seemingly abstract notions, the links between these notions and routine administrative practices are central for our story. The chapter demonstrates how the road to the 1762 emancipation manifesto was paved by actions of numerous ministers and generals, who did not necessarily care very much about "freedom" of the nobility, but instead competed to introduce what they argued to be better principles of governance - and by doing so to further their own careers and to expand the boundaries of their own authority.

* * *

The introduction by Peter of voting as a mechanism for selecting candidates for promotion and for making decisions in general was motivated not, as one might suppose, by the tsar's trust in his subjects' political maturity, in their ability for rational, informed judgment regarding their colleagues' comparative merits, but on the contrary, by his deep mistrust of the servitors. Indeed, in baroque culture of the late 17th-century Muscovite court, in which Peter I was reared, human behavior was understood as largely shaped by reprehensible passions ranging from lust to ambition and avarice, which had to be subdued by reason and will. For Simeon Polotskii, "lust, sensations (*chuvstviia*), [and] passions" assisted the flesh in its "battle" against the soul. Still, the final choice was a matter of one's free will ("free-willed [*samovolen*] is the God-created man and not constrained by anything") (Polotskii 1990, 335, 340-341, 378). The

same point is asserted in an anonymous 17th-century manuscript treatise “On human nature, visible and invisible”: according to its author “desires [*pokhoti*] in a man come from his nature,” yet the soul can suppress “indecent mores,” so that the reason “reigns supreme” (Gavriushin 1988, 220-222, 226; more broadly, see Chumakova 2001, 31, 36).

At the very center of both the Muscovite and Petrine governance paradigms was, thus, an assumption that in theory the tsar’s “free-willed” subjects ought and are able to unconditionally accept their God-ordained duty towards their sovereign. *In principle*, the servitors were deemed capable – if they choose to do so – of putting aside their private interests and passions, of being “objective” and attaining “the truth.” Truth was a central category here, as it was in traditional Muscovite culture, for there was one truth, and this truth – be it religious truth; the “interest of the state”; one’s duty towards the sovereign; the “just” and objective verdict in a court case; the choice of the best candidate; the “best” decision on an administrative matter – was deemed self-evident to all well-intentioned and “obedient” subjects. Numerous 17th-century official documents, therefore, called on scribes and overseers to act “truthfully, without [accepting] bribes”; on tax collectors to serve “with great zeal, truthfully ... without any deceit”; on township representatives to “declare the perfect truth,” etc. (Kozlov and Dmitrieva 1999, 76, 106, 118; on the concept of “truth” in late Muscovite legal and political discourse see Kiselev 2012).

At the same time, it was understood that in practice the servitors were highly likely to fail to see the truth and to act accordingly – a failure explained, in very traditional terms, as a manifestation of their wicked stubbornness, or “evil will,” ultimately, of mankind’s post-lapsarian nature.³ Peter I was very much heir to this tradition. Indeed, this may explain why physical incapacity was the only legitimate excuse for deviation from one’s duty ever accepted and acknowledged by the Petrine state, while all other cases were viewed as a willful refusal to obey the sovereign. The tsar apparently believed that failure to conform to his explicit commands and even implicit expectations (construed as based on “reason” and directed towards common good) was a sign of, at best, stupidity, but likely of “laziness,” “stubbornness,” or worse, outright treason. The “Duties of the Admiralty Procurator,” as well as other documents, personally drafted by Peter, envisioned two possible explanations of one’s misbehavior: an official could fail in his duty either because of his stupidity (“simplicity”), or because of his “passions,” i.e. private interests (Voskresenskii 1945, 320-322, 345; OPI RNB, f. 1003, d. 14, 622-623). Likewise, “General Regulation” (1720) promised grave punishment for those who “because of

³ Thus, according to Count A.A. Matveev, the *strel'tsy* rebellions were a result of their “evil willfulness” (Bushkovitch 2001, 439-440). For a discussion of notions of human nature in Muscovite and Petrine political thinking see, among others, Kivelson 2002; Poe 2001, 214-9; Pliukhanova 1982; Fedyukin 2010, 744-748). For a suggestive discussion of this “obviousness of truth” paradigm in Western European pre-modern religious thinking see also Goldie (1991).

his stubbornness or wickedness (*s upriamstva ili nepravdy*) would not join the truthful opinion (*pravdivym golosam*) [during a meeting], or when there is nobody [truthful] to join, would not insist on recording his own truthful opinion in the protocol” (Voskresenskii 1945, 488). It is clearly assumed here that everybody present at the meeting would know what the truthful position is; failure to recognize the truth was taken to mean that one refuses to see it, thus committing a crime of willful obstinacy.

This concern with passions was shared also by Peter’s European advisors. In a memo submitted to Peter in March 1719 by Baron Ananias Christian Pott von Luberas the author urged the tsar to make one significant exception when copying the Swedish system of administration, that is, to refrain from going too far in dividing various offices along functional lines because such division enabled passions-driven behavior (RGADA, f. 16, op. 1, d. 171, l. 3ob.; Peterson 1979, 81-84; Berendts 1891). “Insofar as money has such a strong impact on human hearts that even the simplest and the most honest souls are frequently seduced and endangered by it,” the baron proposed, “as a special assistance for those who are appointed to collect, distribute, and count money, and who due to their firm loyalty don’t want to break their oath of office, and likewise as a deterrent for the evil ones,” to arrange the administration of state finances in such a way that “even though every officer has discretion in matters entrusted to him, still the conduct of affairs should be such that these were always in the full view of his colleagues.” This way, Pott von Luberas argued, “all their secret mischief might be revealed early enough.”

And indeed, Peter’s concern with human passions went beyond the realm of the theoretical and the rhetorical: this obsession also decisively shaped his policies, for the emperor attempted to design the institutions he introduced in Russia in such a way as to neutralize the negative impact of passions. Already in 1711 the Senate procedures required that all the senators were either to sign personally the minutes of each meeting they attended, or to register their dissenting opinion in writing. Most succinctly, perhaps, this doctrine is expressed in the “Spiritual Regulation” (1721), where Peter in his own hand inserted a passage that explains the need to abolish the patriarchy and to introduce collective decision-making in the form of the Synod (“*sobornaia vlast*”) by human fallibility, by impossibility for any single individual to attain the state of passionless objectivity (“*ponezhe v edinoi persone ne bez strasti byvaet*”) (OPI RNB, f. 1003, d. 14, 245; PSZ №3718, v. 6, p. 314). This principle of collective decision-making was extended to others spheres as well (Voskresenskii 1945, 128, 203, 206-207, 229, 240). As Peter explained, instead of the old *prikazy*, he founded Colleges, that is,

gatherings of numerous persons, where the presidents, or chairmen, would not have the same power as formerly the head of *prikazy* had. In the colleges the president cannot do

anything without permission from his fellows, and likewise there are other great restraints that take away the opportunities to do things the old way (Voskresenskii 1945, 66).

This concern with passions is especially striking in case of the most idiosyncratic, perhaps, of all the measures thought up by Peter in his efforts to institutionally restrain the unruly human nature - his decision announced in April 1714 that henceforth all the candidates for promotion to commissioned ranks were to be selected by ballot by their fellow officers. That the problem of identifying suitable candidates for promotion should arise is not surprising. As the Russian regular army grew in size and as the scope of its operations expanded, it was becoming physically impossible for the ruler to personally vet all the promotion decisions, even if he wished to do so. Indeed, the transition from a system where the monarch in his capacity of chief warlord personally rewarded his comrades-in-arms, each of whom he knew personally (as Peter himself knew the veterans of his guards regiments) to increasingly routine and impersonal mechanisms of promotion was built into the military revolution of the late 17th- early 18th centuries. Yet, given Peter's generally grim view of human nature, the tsar was increasingly ill at ease with the idea of delegating such an authority to his generals, whom he fully expected to succumb to their "passions" and to fail in their duty to select candidates "truthfully," according to their merits. The timing of the experiment might also be important here, for 1714 was the year of one of the most politically significant corruption scandals of his reign, the beginning of a large-scale investigation of Aleksandr Menshikov, Peter's long-time favorite and closest confidant; it was followed soon by the affair of Tsarevich Aleksei, where a number of Peter's lieutenants were also implicated (Bushkovitch 2001, 301 *passim*).

It was in this context that Peter attempted to design a system that would make it possible to select the "worthiest" candidates without the tsar's personal involvement and at the same time, to avoid granting his untrustworthy generals any discretion in the matters of promotion. In doing so, the tsar went against the general European trend. Given the exponential growth of European armies in the late 17th-early 18th century, an early-modern ruler simply had to delegate some authority in matters of personnel selection; yet, the monarchs from Louis XIV to Frederick II strove to maintain the administrative fiction that each appointment was personally made by the sovereign, who – allegedly - observed the merits and achievement of each individual officer (Smith 1996). As Louis XIV (or rather, his ghost-writer) boasted, the Sun-King personally took "care of distributing commissions down to the lowest, both in the infantry and the cavalry, which [his] predecessors had never done, it being left to the great officers, for whom this function remained an aspect of their authority [*dignité*]" (Louis XIV 1860, vol. II,

119). This personal involvement of the monarch in every promotion decision was meant both to stress his omnipresence and to maintain the traditional direct link between the ruler and the nobles serving him. The mechanism of promotion designed by Peter, however, deviated from this model as it removed – at least, in theory, if not necessarily in practice – the monarch from the picture altogether: an officer’s merit was to be observed and judged not by the sovereign, but by one’s peers.

Initially, according to the commissariat regulation of 1711, field-m Marshals were authorized to award ranks below that of colonel, full generals (*general-anshefy*) – ranks below that of major, but no criteria for promotion appear to have been specified (PSZ №2456, art.8, v. 4, p. 764). The decree of April 14, 1714, however, deprived the generals of their powers to bestow commissions arbitrarily: instead, the openings were now to be filled by the “nearest” candidate – an awkward phrase consistently understood by contemporaries to mean promotion on the basis of seniority. In a sense, the principle of seniority was an ideal solution for Peter, as it required no delegation of authority whatsoever: if there is a need to fill, say, a major’s vacancy, the job goes to the officer with the longest tenure as a captain among all the captains currently in active service. Thus, in theory, any position would be filled automatically (at least, as long as the seniority lists are not tampered with). The generals, thus, would get no opportunities for unfairly promoting their relatives and clients.

Yet, Peter understood also that the most senior candidate is not always the “worthiest” one: in some cases, deviation from the principle of seniority was plainly necessary. The strategy chosen here by Peter could only be described as an attempt to curb his generals’ cronyism by introducing institutional check and balances. According to the 1714 decree, exceptions to the seniority rule could be made by field-m Marshals and generals only on the basis of “certification” by the candidates’ peers. Officers in the field ranks (below major) were to be collectively “certified” by the officers in their regiments, while “certification” for officers of staff grades (majors, lieutenant-colonels, and colonels) was to come from the generals and staff officers of the entire division. In cases when a regiment was detached from its division, “certification” of a candidate for staff grades was to involve officers from at least three different regiments: an attempt on Peter’s side to minimize the role of any intra-regimental factional or personal loyalties and animosities. In order to ensure transparency, such “certifications” were to be publicized in the regiments concerned; after that, commanding generals were to approve the certifications and to direct both the papers and the candidates to the Military College, which was empowered to issue officer patents. Still, even after introducing all these checks and balances, Peter was worried that the electors might choose candidates not according to “the truth,” but on

the basis of “passions”: those found guilty of “untruthful” certification were threatened with loss of their property and “honor.”

The same logic is evident in the rules for balloting. The word “election” was used by Peter already in the 1714 decree regarding certification of candidates by their peers. Three years later, in November of 1717, he ordered that the presidents of his newly-created colleges appoint councilors and assessors not at their own discretion, but by picking two or three suitable candidates and submitting them to the vote of “all the colleagues.” Ever worried about possible corruption, the tsar warned the presidents not to select as candidates their own “relatives or creations [*kreatury*]” (Voskresenskii 1945, 218-219). This election was to be done specifically by “balloting” (*balotirom*), and exactly at the same time, in the fall of 1717, balloting was used for the election of a successor to Nikita Zotov, the “prince-pope” of the Most Comical and All-Drunken Assembly. The “Order of the Election” of the prince-pope was personally drafted by Peter, who went through four versions: the document spelled out in detail how black and white balls were to be issued to the electors, dropped into a special box, counted, etc. Even though the procedure was intended as a parody and the electors were to begin by praising Bacchus, they still were to swear to vote “not according to some factions, but according to [command of their] zealous hearts.” (Semevskii 1881, 296-302; Zitser 2004, 181).

In 1719 Peter extended the use of balloting to all the appointments, ordering to “select candidates for appointments by ballot from two or three candidates” (PSZ №3263, v. 5, p. 605). Finally, a year later, on January 22, 1720, in a personally written note, the tsar ordered the Military College to compose the rules for such balloting (Voskresenskii 1945, 79); apparently, he could not wait until his officials prepared the requested document, as the decree issued few weeks later was also drafted by Peter in his own hand (Voskresenskii 1945, 233-235; cf. PSZ №3406, v. 5, 724, dated July 24 and marked as “*imennoi, ob’iavlennyi iz Voennoi kollegii*”). These highly detailed rules closely followed the 1717 “Order of the Election” and were designed so as to minimize all the possibilities of tampering with the voting process, including special arrangements for seating, casting the vote, counting the balls, and certifying the results, etc. In November 1721 Peter also personally drafted a passage on balloting for the Admiralty Regulation (OPI RNB, f. 1003, d. 14, 587). These rules are so rich in technical details that we have to suspect that the tsar must have used some yet-unidentified Western-European sources when drafting them. However, as far as we can tell, “election” of the officers was not practiced in any major contemporary army. The earliest early-modern example of such election comes from France, where it was briefly advocated in mid-18th century as a way of boosting officer

esprit du corps, and equally briefly used in the revolutionary army (Blaufarb 1997; Blaufarb 2002, 100-102).

We know quite little about the practical uses of balloting in Peter's time – but we know, at least, that it was, indeed, used. One well-known instance of balloting is the 1721 election of the Master of Heraldry and the Master of the Requests: Peter composed a list of seven candidates and ordered the senators with the addition of “up to twenty Russian members of the Colleges” to select two from among these seven to be appointed to these offices (Voskresenskii 1945, 236). In 1722, Peter is known to have certified the results of the election by ballot of the president of the College of Justice (Anisimov 1997, 195). The use of balloting was not restricted to the high-profile cases of election of important official. Some light on the actual uses of balloting in everyday administrative practice is shed by a surviving protocol of balloting that took place in 1722 in the 2nd Grenadier Regiment, where eight sergeants voted to select one of them to be promoted to ensign (GIM, OPI, f. 137, d. 290, 1.7). There are also numerous references to confirmation of candidates selected by ballot in the minutes of the Admiralty board (Materialy dlia istorii russkogo flota, vol. 5, 367, 372, 382). Speaking more generally, balloting, as described in the 1720 decree, was viewed by Peter not just as a way of identifying suitable candidates for promotion, but as a universal decision-making mechanism: he envisioned it being used also for deciding criminal cases and settling “issues useful for the state” in general (Voskresenskii 1945, 235).

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With Peter's death the interest in rules and procedures of selecting candidates for promotion did not abate. In fact, in the next decade and half, the government revisited and readjusted these no less than eleven times; indeed, every new reign began with a reform in this field. For generals and dignitaries the right to promote clients and cronies was, naturally, an important channel of patronage, so Peter's attempt to curtail it by introducing institutional checks touched a raw nerve: in subsequent years field commanders and favorites repeatedly – and mostly successfully - argued for the practical necessity to give them discretion in matters of promotion. What is important for us here is the language of these arguments, as it reveals the gradual changes in the basic notions of human nature and hence, of governing. In the post-Petrine period, selecting the candidates for promotion, as we shall see, was increasingly about motivating the servitors, a task, for which balloting was patently unsuited.

As a matter of fact, it was Peter himself who began to roll back the universal use of balloting: already in 1721, due to the technical difficulties of organizing voting, he decreed that the balloting be done only in cases of promotions over certain key thresholds, i.e. when one is promoted from NCO's into the first commissioned rank, from field grade ranks into the first staff rank, from the colonel (and his naval equivalents) to the first general officer rank, and from one general officer rank to another (RGADA, f. 248, op. 7, kniga 390, ll. 298-298ob).

Further, and more radical adjustment of Petrine's system was, however, spearheaded by the tsar's closest lieutenants: already on June 1, 1726, just few months after the emperor's death, Catherine I, his widow, doing in this case Menshikov's bidding, abolished the balloting altogether. The decree claimed that it was the late tsar himself who intended to abandon this system, but was prevented from doing so by his death. Allegedly, the drafters of the decree argued, Peter recognized belatedly that balloting – designed, as we remember, to curb “passions” – in fact only incited more “passions” by fostering competition among candidates and attempts to bribe voters. As a result, many of the unworthy servitors were being promoted, while the worthy ones were pushed aside. The decree claimed to represent a reversal back to the 1714 system, but in fact stressed seniority as the key principle of promotion. The main beneficiary of the decree was the “senior field-marshal” – i.e. Menshikov – granted exclusive right to promote whichever candidates he judged to be “worthy,” at his own discretion (PSZ № 4896, v. 7, 655).

After Menshikov's disgrace in September 1727, this privilege was, not unexpectedly, abolished and the old system restituted for ranks up to lieutenant-colonel (RGADA, f. 248, op. 35, kniga 2201, delo 50, ll. 144-147ob). Already a few months later, however, the Admiralty, on suggestion from its head, Admiral Apraksin, proposed to abolish balloting and return to the 1714 system of certification: apparently, recent balloting resulted in promotion of many younger officers ahead of the longer-serving ones. A combination of seniority and certification was suggested as being “better and inoffensive”: under such system, even in cases when a senior candidate would be passed over for promotion, he would still know what exactly his fault was, which was not the case with balloting (Materialy dlia istorii russkogo flota, vol. 5, 582-583). Three years later, after the accession of Empress Anna, the first Military Reform Commission (*Voinskaia komissiiia*) under Prince M.M. Golitsyn inquired whether promotions over key thresholds (i.e. from field to staff grades etc.) should be done “according to old decrees, or by balloting, or by merit as assessed by generals.” The Senate ruled that promotions be based “on balloting, and not on attestation [by commanding generals], so that promotions were done on the basis of merit, and not passions” (RGADA, f. 248, op. 7, kniga 389, ll. 298-310; Petrukhintsev 2001).

In the following years, however, the leading generals successfully lobbied Empress Anna for ever wider discretion in matters of promotion. In 1733, Prince von Hessen-Homburg received the right to award commissions to the NCOs of the corps of engineers, serving in the Russian army in Persia, without balloting (PSZ №6505, v. 9, 229). In 1734, Field-Marshal von Munnich was permitted to promote officers in the cuirassier regiments, raised and patronized by him, on the basis of “worthiness and attestation,” rather than balloting. Next year, he persuaded the Empress to allow promotion of all the officers in the field armies “for good and outstanding merits” on the basis of “worthiness and attestation.” In the summer of 1735, Field-Marshal Lassie, another leading general of the reign, was granted the right to promote his officers “on the basis of seniority and his own consideration” – and moreover, he was granted the authority to award the ranks of colonel and above, previously reserved exclusively for the sovereign (RGADA, f. 248, op. 35, kniga 2201, delo 50, ll. 144-147ob). A year later, the empress decreed that the candidates were to be promoted from NCOs to ensign (first commissioned rank) and from captain to major (from field to staff officer grades) on the basis of balloting, while all the other promotions were to be made on the basis of merit only, as promotion on the basis of seniority was judged to be a source of “many disorders” (PSZ №7022, v. 9, 893). In 1737, citing the upcoming military operations against the Ottomans, von Munich successfully applied for powers to skip balloting altogether; a year later the empress extended this dispensation for the duration of the war (PSZ № 7487, v. 10, 390).

Predictably, Elizabeth’s coup of 1741 led to a major redistribution of authority: in February 15, 1742 she personally came to the Senate to decree that henceforth all the promotions were to be made on the basis of seniority, thus removing the powers to bestow commissions from the hands of the generals who successfully appropriated it from the crown in the previous reign. This reversal, however, produced a protest from her two most senior generals. Already a year later, two field-marshals, von Lassie and the new president of the Military College, Prince Vasilii Dolgorukov, submitted a report: they duly acknowledged the Empress’s order to award ranks on the basis of seniority, but still dared “to most loyally inquire whether it would be ordered by Her Majesty” to grant the powers of promotion to the senior generals. Having received no answer, one of the signatories, Field-Marshal von Lassie, went so far as to submit a second report to the same effect a month later (RGADA, f. 248, op. 35, kniga 2201, delo 50, ll. 142-149ob).

What’s noteworthy here is the generals’ line of argument. Peter explained the introduction of balloting by the need to combat “passions” – individual interests that made it impossible for commanders to make a “truthful” evaluation of the candidates for promotion, and this concern with “passions” was still cited in the official documents as late as 1731. Yet, already

the 1726 decree abolishing balloting, while still referring to “passions” inherent in this procedure, claimed also that insofar as these passions resulted in promotion of unworthy candidates, the worthy ones ended up not receiving “encouragement” (*kurazhu*) and therefore served poorly, which could undermine the effectiveness of the armed forces. It was ordered therefore that the officers who are “unworthy and unwilling to serve” were not to be promoted in order not to undermine the morals of their “industrious and the willingly-serving” colleagues.

This is quite a radical shift away from Petrine logic. In fact, the idea that the procedures of promotion should serve as an instrument of motivating officers is found in Petrine decrees on this matter only once. On November 23, 1717, it was ordered that the vacancies within a regiment were to be filled only by candidates from this regiment. This way, the decree argued, the officers would not be caused an “offence” (*obidy ne uchimitsia*): one promotion would lead to a cascade of further promotions to replace those moving upwards, and so many servitors would thus be “satisfied” (*dovol'ny*) (PSZ №3120, v. 5, 519). It should be noted, however, that this particular decree was “announced through General Prince [Vasilii] Dolgorukov”, the Tsar’s new favorite – the very same Dolgorukov, who would later co-sign the 1743 report. Evidently, however, this measure was not really dear to Peter. When in 1724 the Military College suggested the diametrically opposed policy, i.e. to choose candidates for promotion not only from within the given regiment, but from the entire army, Peter approved it without as much as a comment (PSZ №4589, v. 7, 360).

In the 1730s, however, this approach gained wide currency as a way of justifying the need to give generals more discretion in matters of promotion. In 1733 von Hessen-Homburg gave this idea a new twist: he argued that by exempting the most qualified NCOs of the corps of engineers from balloting, the government would motivate others to apply themselves to their studies: “by such means many would get additional desire to study engineering, and everyone would be zealous” (“*ot togo mnogim inzhenerstvu obuchatsia okhota pribavitsia, i vsiak k tomu tshchitsia budet*”). The Military College concurred, asking for a permission to “give satisfaction” to the most qualified NCOs by exempting them from balloting in order to “produce better desire” in others as well (PSZ №6505, v. 9, 229). The field-marschals’ 1743 reports developed this line of argument further. The signatories argued that the right to promote officers should be delegated to the commanding generals because, being in the field, they are the best positioned to observe the servitors’ comparative merits. Therefore, they ought to be given powers to promote the worthiest ahead of their peers so as to motivate them - “produce in them better zeal and desire for the service of Your Imperial Majesty” (“*naivishchaia revnost’ i okhota ... k sluzhbe*”). When such motivational promotions were not awarded, as was the case after the return to the principle of

seniority, the officers might fall into “despair” (“*otchaianie*”) (RGADA, f. 248, op. 35, kniga 2201, d. 50, ll. 142-143ob.)

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Scholars have noted the explosion of interest in human sentiments in the Russian literature of the 1730s. In her study of the Russian poetry of that decade Elena Pogolian describes what she calls the "official culture of 'sensitivity'" [*chuvstvitel'nosti*] cultivated at Anna's court and defined by the "obligatory emotional and sincere participation of a subject in ritualized political life." Official poetry of the day (including the addresses presented to the empress by various individuals and institutions) emphasized the sincerity of their civic feelings: the poets routinely juxtapose their own "true" and "sincere" adoration of the Empress to the allegedly formulaic congratulations of "other" authors. In a New Year address (1736) the representatives of the Cadet Corps claimed to be moved by their "nature" to congratulate the sovereign. The same feelings were also supposed to motivate nobles in their service. An address from the Cadet Corps, for example, emphasized the personal and emotional connection between the empress and her officers: the cadets claimed to be serving out of sincere "loyalty" and "zeal" further enhanced by the imperial generosity towards them (Pogolian 1997, 23-84; on passions in post-Petrine Russian literature, see Demin 1997, 259-267; Sazonova 1991).

The emphasis on “obligatory emotional and sincere participation of a subject” was not limited, however, to the realm of the rhetorical only: in fact, it had direct parallels in the changing notions of human governability and principles of institutional design, and indeed, in the changing practices of governing. Servitors were now expected not simply to obey, conform, and fulfill their duties, but to possess a desire to serve – to display “zeal” (*revnost'* or *rvenie*) and “diligence” (*prilezhanie*), to be motivated by emotionally charged “ambition” (*chestoliubie*). The ruler in turn was not simply to assume his subjects’ obedience and devotion, but to elicit them, that is, to stimulate their “zeal” by “encouraging” servitors (on this change, and especially on the 1736-37 reform of noble service, see Fedyukin 2014).

This new paradigm was a reflection, of course, of a larger pan-European reconceptualization of reprehensible passions as emotions (for an overview see Dixon 2003, 63-134), which also had direct repercussions for the culture of royal service and the notions of governing. As Jay M. Smith demonstrated, in the early seventeenth century “ambition” was viewed as something reprehensible, evoking base self-interested motives, which among other things, prevented commoners from serving honorably. By the early eighteenth century, however,

the same term could also denote one's effort and dedication to his chosen profession. Indeed, ambition could become something praiseworthy: according to the regent, Philippe d'Orleans, "those who have ambition (and everyone should have this) are not satisfied with what they see and hear in schools; they study by themselves, take private lessons," etc. Thus, "they become men of the first merit in their profession; this should be the officer's sole objective." A related quality, equally praiseworthy and prized in an officer, was "emulation" - according to the Académie Française, "a kind of jealousy that inspires one to equal or surpass someone else in some praiseworthy endeavor." An effective way for a prince, a minister, and a general to govern was, therefore, by fostering and exploiting these qualities. A ruler should stimulate emulation by observing the actions of his officers closely and by distributing reward and promotions justly and proportionately on the basis of these observations (Smith 1996, 214-216). According to an increasing number of military theorists and experienced practitioners, such as Antoine de Pas, marquis de Feuquières (1648-1711), who had served under Luxemburg, Turenne, and Catinat, a prince should "form" his generals, "cultivate their talents and produce emulation in young men, inspire them to apply themselves." To achieve this, he "must constantly examine the officers whose good qualities for war might put them in a position to command at some point. Having recognized their talent for war in an unprejudiced way, he must place them [in an appropriate position] as soon as possible." As a matter of fact, Feuquières devotes a number of pages specifically to criticizing the model of promotion based on seniority: to him, it is a "very pernicious maxim" that "suppresses all the emulation and desire to distinguish oneself" and "disgusts all those who have talent for war." In short, "this manner of promotion is surely very dangerous and has very sinister consequences for the state" (Feuquières 1735, vol. II, 10-14).

The echoes of this paradigm are increasingly noticeable in correspondence and policy papers penned by the leading ministers of post-Petrine period. Thus, in a letter, sent to von Münnich on November 21, 1731, the first director of the Cadet Corps Baron Johann Ludwig Pott von Luberas (1687-1752, the son of Pott von Luberas quoted earlier) opined that the ability to discern and to reward abilities of his or her servants was the most important quality of a sovereign. Congratulating von Münnich on the latest promotion, the baron pointed out that it is by justly rewarding the most loyal subjects that the monarch is able to encourage both them and, what is important, every other *honnête homme*, to serve with utmost application. Empress Anna, argued the Baron,

could not better illustrate her high wisdom than by including in her internal council those whom she finds the most zealous, the most skillful, and the most applied among her all subjects. Therefore, it is viewed as a matter of utmost importance to judiciously seek that

every honnête homme makes it his goal and pushes himself with all his heart to work for the public, to the envy of others (RGADA, f. 11, op. 1, d. 419, ll. 6-7).

It is this “science of governing”, of course, that underlies the new approach towards selection of candidates for promotion outlined earlier – an approach that implied the ruler’s duty to motivate servitors. It can also serve as a key for interpreting other policies pursued or advocated by the ministers of Anna’s reign. Already in the immediate aftermath of the 1730 crisis Heinrich Johann Friedrich (a.k.a. Andrei Ivanovich) Ostermann (1686-1747), advised Empress Anna that it was “appropriate” to reward her most loyal supporters “regardless of seniority or other circumstances for the sake of encouraging [*ankurazhirovaniia*] others” (quoted in Troitskii 1974, 125). In a memorandum prepared by Ostermann in 1740 for Princess-Regent Anna, the mother of the infant emperor Ivan VI, the minister outlined the general principles of governance and rulership and also offered specific suggestions. First, the ruler needs to be able to discern the qualities of the subjects, that is, to be able to judge them by their deeds. Besides, servitors need to be encouraged by giving them opportunities to demonstrate their zeal. Thus, Ostermann suggests that the Senate and the Colleges submit weekly or monthly reports, which would be examined either by the regent personally, or by a specially appointed person. This extension of the sovereign’s assessing gaze, he believed, would “motivate” [*pobudit*] the governmental departments to be more “attentive.” In a similar vein, Ostermann argued that the reason why nobles did not enter naval and civil services was the relative scarcity of opportunities for promotion there: therefore, the government had to somehow stimulate zeal [*pridat’ revnovaniia*] in the nobles serving in the navy and in the civil administration.

Within the system designed by Peter I, each governmental bureau was administered by a board whose members were to decide the matters collectively and to share responsibilities: this was a way of introducing institutional safeguards against the “passions” of individual members. Ostermann, however, now suggested entrusting each member of these boards with supervising the work of a specific department. Having this area of personal responsibility would give each of the officials an opportunity to display his “diligence and application” [*prilezhaniie i rachenie*], and thus would encourage him to further apply himself (Osterman 1873, 258, 267, 270; Petrukhintsev 2001, 75; Osterman 1880). What’s noteworthy about these suggestions is that they assume that *in principle it is possible to motivate, to “encourage” servitors* - that they are not necessarily bound to succumb to passions. The reform of the Admiralty, masterminded by Ostermann, also included an assault on the principle of collective decision-making: the authors of the reform suggested dividing the business of the Admiralty up into separate “expeditions” headed by full-time bureaucrats; the Admiralty board was to be composed of these bureaucrats,

and not of all the available admirals, as was the case earlier. The drafters acknowledged that Peter has introduced collective decision-making for a reason – as an attempt to combat the evil passions of private interests. Still, in a striking rejection of the fundamental logic of the entire Petrine reign, the Commission headed by Ostermann now recommended a different approach, that is, to “appoint to this [Admiralty] board honest and worthy people, who would follow their sworn duty as honest and conscientious people should, *insofar as no laws are effective against shameless (bezsovestnykh) people*” (RGADA, f. 248, op. 10, kniga 544, ll. 474-475ob).

This assumption that there are actually honest and worthy people who could and should be motivated is evident in the key documents of Anna’s government. Already in 1731, rather than simply drafting to the newly established Cadet Corps a required number of young nobles, as Peter would have undoubtedly done, the Imperial manifesto explicitly called for recruitment of volunteers only, of “those who wish [to study].” For most officials of that time, however, this method of supplying the new school with students would have appeared simply unfeasible from the practical point of view. Indeed, two views on governability clashed directly in the debate around one of the very first reforms of the military initiated during Anna’s reign. The second Military Reform Commission, a panel of generals convened in 1731 and headed this time by von Münnich, was concerned, among other things, with the establishment of heavy cavalry, or cuirassier, regiments in Russia. The commission suggested inducing well-to-do nobles to join these crack troops voluntarily by giving them “a considerable advantage [*vygodu*]” as compared to their peers. In particular, the cuirassiers were to enjoy reduced terms of service, better quarters, extended leaves of absence, exemption from corporal punishments etc. This, it was argued, would allow to “introduce zealous diligence towards service in this [cuirassier] Corps,” whereby the cuirassier regiments “could become much better than the old dragoons” (RGADA, f. 248, op. 7, kniga 389, ll. 644ob-647). The senators, however, vetoed the idea arguing that no nobles of sufficient means would ever “willingly [*voleiu svoeiu*] join the service.” Given the opportunity, all nobles would abuse the system so as to indulge their laziness – even at the cost of financially ruining themselves, if need be. As a result, given a choice the nobles would “live at their homes in all sorts of idleness and laziness, without any good studies and sociability [*obkhozheniia*]” (RGADA, f. 248, op. 7, kniga 389, l. 807; PSZ №5804, Vol. 43, Part 1, 81-84; Petrukhintsev 2001, 141-146, 157-158).

It appears that the reform of noble service implemented in 1736-1737 could also be interpreted in this context. The decree of February 9, 1737, which set the legal framework of noble service for the next 25 years (PSZ №7171, v. 10, 43), reaffirmed many principles of Petrine policy towards the nobility. The goals of the legislator were, apparently, to achieve

“perfect benefit to the State” by making sure that “all the nobles were educated, and fit for military and civil service”; the service was universal and mandatory, and noncompliance was punished harshly. At the same time, one finds here a number of themes that the decree shares with other policies of Anna’s reign, and which set it apart from Petrine governmental practices. One of the most important among them was the insistence on “encouraging” young servitors. Thus, in the decree of February 9, 1737, one finds numerous statements regarding the intention of the legislator to motivate nobles to display “diligence” through observation and just reward. The authors of the decree were not content with making sure that “all the nobles were educated,” but also desired that they were “making diligent efforts towards this end.” The decree stipulated that “it is to be strictly observed that those who made more progress in their studies and *display a diligent effort*, were also the first to be promoted into the [commissioned] ranks, and thus be *rewarded for their diligence* in studies. The [promotion] decrees are to be sent to their place of service with a detailed description [of their achievement], so that others, having seen that, were *urged towards similar diligence and zeal* and refrained from soul-damaging running around and other indecencies.”

* * *

Thus, the post-Petrine decades were marked by increasing dominance of a new “science of governing” in Russian administrative discourse and practices. Whereas Peter, as well as the Muscovite political culture in general, assumed subjects to be inherently wicked and bound to be swayed by their “passions,” the ministers of subsequent reigns believed that it was possible and, indeed, necessary to appeal to their ambition and love of honor, to “encourage” servitors to make them “zealous.”

This new paradigm followed the general trends in the European theories of governing and notions of the nobility, and it is notable that many of its earlier exponents were foreigners themselves, making the reign of Anna crucially important for this paradigm shift. Yet, it is equally notable that the new paradigm was gaining currency because it was actively promoted by the leading members of the administrative elite, as it furnished them with convenient arguments for expanding their authority and indeed could be employed in competition for resources. Thus, the Admiralty in the 1740s successfully appealed to this paradigm to request increasing funding and better premises for the Naval Academy and improved promotion opportunities for its graduates: all those were necessary to keep the naval students on an equal footing with the land cadets, as otherwise future mariners would be “discouraged,” and would not serve with sufficient “desire” and application (RGA VMF, f. 212, op. 7, d. 319, ll. 315ob-317ob; PSZ №10062, v. 13,

756). And the generals, as we have seen, found it naturally convincing that promotion should be based on merit as assessed by commanding officers, since it also conveniently justified expansion of their discretionary powers. Indeed, it is possible to argue that this paradigm shift could take place and become sustainable largely because the concepts and practices associated with it were utilized by individual actors for their practical goals.

The new paradigm also implied a reshaping of the relationship between the rulers and the ruled. The onus was now on the sovereign and his ministers to elicit application and zeal from the servitors, to encourage them; by 1750, a general, according to Petr Ivanovich Shuvalov, was expected not simply to issue orders and demand obedience, but to motivate his troops, to find ways of “*making himself beloved by the army*” (Shuvalov 1912, 43). Conversely, this approach implicitly acknowledged and even legitimated the servitors’ right to “lose their courage,” to “avoid their due studies,” and generally “to consider themselves with extreme sorrow” if expected encouragement was not forthcoming. The servitor was thus coming close to becoming an autonomous subject in his relationship with the state. Practically speaking, this shift had also a profound influence on the evolution of key institutions shaping the lives of the elite by sparking a debate on whether it was possible to organize service and generally to govern without coercion - in other words, on whether the subjects were able to willingly accept and follow their civic duties. Artemii Volynskii’s correspondent commenting in 1730 on the supposed plans of the Supreme Privy Council to grant “freedom in service” to the nobility, answered with a resounding “no.” He conceded that “to serve under coercion [*v nevoliiu*] is hard.” Yet, he went on, “if complete freedom is given, you know as well as I do, that our nation [*narod*] is not ambitious at all [*ne chestoliubiv*], but rather lazy and not industrious. So, if there is no certain coercion [*prinuzhdeniia*], even [the poorest nobles] would not want to earn honor and subsistence [by joining the army], but would rather prefer to stay at home.”⁴ By Elizabeth’s reign, however, such pessimism regarding the capacity of Russian servitors to be moved by ambition and to display desire for service was increasingly rejected by the members of the elite: Prince Boris Grigor’evich Iusupov (1695-1759), a graduate of the Toulon naval academy, Moscow vice-governor in the 1730s, and the future commander of the Cadet Corps, insisted that “it is possible not only to staff well the army and civil service without depriving [the nobles] of leisure and without coercion [*bez prinuzhdeniia*], but to improve domestic administration as well” (RGADA, f. 1290, op. 2, d. 32, l. 2).

⁴ That was unacceptable because in this case the state would be forced to promote former serfs to the officer positions, and the army would fall apart, for the soldiers would be so indulged by these non-noble officers that they would be “more evil than the *strel'tsy*.” This reference to *strel'tsy* – the standard symbol of evil willfulness, of freedom run amok - is especially revealing (Volynskii 1872, 743).

In the longer run, it was this more optimistic view of the servitors' human nature that paved the way for the 1762 emancipation of the nobility. Indeed, rhetorically the 1762 Manifesto directly builds on the post-Petrine transformative paradigm (for an overview, see Marasino 1999, 48-54; Marasino 2008, 204-218). According to the drafters of the Manifesto, Peter labored hard to "raise Russia to perfect mastery of military, civil, and political affairs." To achieve these goals, however, he had to improve "the main Member of the state," that is, the nobility. This included inviting the nobility to join military and civil service, and to study in Russia and abroad. The nobles resented and resisted this "invitation," and so the sovereign had to use coercion and harsh laws. Now, this coercion was no longer necessary precisely because, the authors argued, Peter had earlier applied it so successively as to make governing through motivation possible. Indeed, the preamble stated,

as We [Peter III] observe with great pleasure, and as every true son of the Fatherland cannot but recognize, [these measures] resulted in innumerable benefits. Their coarseness is eradicated in those previously indifferent to the common good; ignorance is transformed into sound sense ... To sum up, noble thoughts have resulted in *unlimited loyalty and love toward Us, great diligence, and perfect zeal* towards Our service taking firm root in the hearts of all true Russian patriots. Therefore, We do not find it necessary to continue the coercion that has been hitherto needed.

At the same time, the Manifesto did not declare that the nobles would no longer serve: on the contrary, its authors firmly expected them to "honestly continue" service with even more "zeal" and "diligence." The nobles, it was hoped, would be encouraged to serve by this display of Imperial favor, while the few lazy and insufficiently virtuous ones were to be punished by naming and shaming: all loyal subjects were called upon to "despise and humiliate" them and to exclude them from "public gatherings" (PSZ №11444, v. 15, 912). In her works Elena Marasino asserts that indeed by that time the moral imperative and prestige of "zealous service" has been interiorized by the top strata of the nobility (Marasino 1999, 63-67; Marasino 2008, 226; also Raef 1966, 69-70).

The same sentiments were expressed a year later by a commission appointed by Catherine II after Peter III's overthrow to review the Manifesto and the status of the nobility in general (Omel'chenko 2001). The old Count A. P. Bestuzhev-Riumin still worried that allowed complete freedom nobles might "lapse into lack of diligence and their ancient laziness." (Omel'chenko 2001, 96, 102). In its final report, however, the commission reiterated the argument found in the Manifesto, perhaps, in even starker terms. It agreed that Peter I

could not create a good army except through direct coercion, forcing to serve those who, *not having in them deep-rooted ambition* for knowledge and studies, and not realizing that service produces ambition, and ambition leads to service, did not understand their own glory and therefore avoided service, preferring their ancient tranquility and seclusion at their homes and estates to acquiring fame.

Now, however, the nobility was “so much *moved by its love for honor* [*liubochestiem*] that there is no slightest suspicion... that it would revert back to its former lack of diligence for service.” The task was, therefore, to

invent such laws, under which noble freedom would be combined with zeal for military and civil service coming from no other source than *ambition* [*chestoliubiia*] *ingrained through upbringing* [*vospitaniia*], not restricting in any way the freedom of the nobility (Omel’chenko 2001, 14-115).

Thus, the willingness of the government to grant “freedom” to its servitors was premised on assumption of their newly acquired – thanks to Petrine transformative policies – capacity for self-discipline and self-motivated action, of their “ingrained ambition.” “True nobles” should not be subjected to coercion because no coercion was required, as they would be moved to willingly contribute to the public good by their unflinching love for the monarch and the Fatherland (see, most recently, Bugrov 2013; Kiselev 2013). In other words, the recognition and even legitimation of the servitors’ autonomous subjecthood did not imply their estrangement or alienation from the state, but on the contrary, presupposed full immersion of their personae in the general atmosphere of patriotic zeal; theirs was not so much an “emancipation,” as a new, affective form of engagement with the state, to which they now owed not only service, but also emotional attachment. Yet, this new form of engagement was also becoming increasingly crucial for the post-Petrine elite’s claims for its privileged status within the society. It was the ability to be motivated without coercion, to experience ambition and to be moved by honor - and by extension, to make decisions motivated by concern for public good, rather than their own base passions - that supposedly sharply distinguished the “true nobles” not only from the other social classes, but also, perhaps, from the lower, unreformed sectors of the nobility. By the mid-18th century this ability was becoming central for the elite’s public identity and justified its assumed right to speak on behalf of the society and, perhaps, even to view itself as something of a stakeholder in Russia’s modernization project.

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RGAVMF

F. 212 (Admiralteistv-kollegiia), opis' 7, d. 319. Zhurnaly Admiralteistv-kollegii, 1747.

RGADA

F. 11 (Perepiska raznykh lits), op. 1, d. 419. Perepiska Liuberasa s grafom Minikhom, 1728 i posleduiushchie gody.

F. 16 (Vnutrennee upravlenie), op. 1, d. 171. Raznye perevody bumag tainogo soventnika barona fon Liuberasa po delam vnutrennego upravleniia. 1719 i drugie gody. Vsepoddaneishee razsuzhdenie o ispravlennom korolia Karolusa XI shvedskom gosudarstvennom domostroitel'stve.

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F. 248, opis' 7, kniga 390. Kantseliariia Senata. Dela po VoЕННОj kollegii, 1730-1738, ll. 298-310. Delo ob ustanovlenii poriadka vybora ofitserov na vakantnye mesta ballotirovaniev, 1731.

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