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# Scots in Russia and the 'General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century' Revisited

**Paul Dukes**

The study of history cannot proceed without theory, or at least without generalisation. This is not to dismiss scholarship. The Soviet historian E V. Tarle put the point well in 1922, asserting that 'The more powerful, the more *authentic* the generalising thought, the more it needs the erudite and erudition.' Nevertheless, for Tarle, erudition should never be identified with science.[1] Of course, a problem immediately arises for users of the English language, for whom the word 'science' has a more restricted meaning than in Russian, German, French and other European languages. Moreover, the problem is not just semantic for English-speaking historians, who tend to place their emphasis on empirical research. However, there have been occasions when they have been able to overcome or at least circumvent their reservations about 'science' and engage with colleagues not only in Europe but also in the wider world to discuss generalisation and theory, a major instance being consideration of the 'General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century' inaugurated by Eric Hobsbawm in *Past and* Present in 1954. A few words about *Past and Present*. Launched in 1952 by a group of British Marxist historians, the journal initially had a subtitle, *A Journal of Scientific History*, expressing 'the belief that historical phenomena have an objective existence and may be studied by the methods of reason and science'. But this subtitle aroused the suspicion that 'scientific history' was a synonym for Marxism, and was dropped in 1958 when the editorial board was diversified.[2] Indeed, Marxism as propounded in the late 1950s, especially Soviet Marxism-Leninism, gave scientific history a bad name, from which it has yet to recover fifty years on.

Arguing in favour of scientific history in 1941, Marc Bloch conceded that the science of man would always have its peculiar characteristics, adding: 'When all is said and done, a single word, "understanding", is the beacon light of our studies'.[3] Certainly, Muscovite Russia in particular has been on the

[1] E. V. Tarle, 'Ocherednaia zadacha', *Annaly*, no. 1 (1922), 17–18, with his own italics.

[2] Christopher Hill, R. H. Hilton, E. J. Hobsbawm, 'Origins and Early Years', *Past & Present*, 100 (1983), 6, 11–13.

[3] Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft* (Manchester, 1954), 143.

receiving end of a lack of understanding. In the sixteenth century, foreigners often looked upon it as a 'rude and barbarous kingdom', to quote the title of the well-known collection edited by L. E. Berry and R. O. Crummey. However, it is worth recalling that Russians were not alone in receiving harsh criticism from outside. For example, describing the sequel to the shipwreck of the first Russian ambassador to England on the shores of North East Scotland in 1556, the English chronicler Hakluyt wrote of the theft of the precious gifts being carried by the ambassador by the 'rude and ravenous people of the country thereunto adjoining'.[4] More generally, Montaigne observed in his essay 'Des Cannibales', published in 1588: '… chacun appelle barbarie, ce qui n'est pas de son usage. Comme de vrai nous n'avons autre mire de la verité et de la raison, que l'exemple et idée des opinions et des usances des pays où nous sommes'. ('Everybody calls barbarity what he is not used to. Indeed we have no other criterion of truth and reason, than the example and the idea of the opinions and customs of the countries where we are'.)[5] Montaigne was publishing his essay in 1588 when the threat posed to England encouraged further racial stereotypes. For J. H. Hexter, the essential task of the historian was expressed by Garret Mattingly in his balanced judgement of the Duke of Medina Sidonia, the Admiral of the Spanish Fleet in 1558, when Englishmen believed that they were about to witness 'the beginning of Armageddon, of a final struggle to the death between the forces of light and the forces of darkness'.[6] We will return to the subject of cultural relativity later.

For the moment, let us note that 'The General Crisis' as presented by Hobsbawm and others was concerned with the dual transition in Europe to capitalism and absolutism, with special reference to the contemporaneous revolutions sweeping through Europe around the middle of the seventeenth century.[7]

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[4] L. E. Berry and R. O. Crummey, *Rude and Barbarous Kingdom: Russia in the Accounts of Sixteenth-Century English Voyagers* (London, 1968). Hakluyt remark from H. Morley (ed.), *The Discovery of Muscovy: From the Collections of Richard Hakluyt* ( London, 1889), 109.

[5] Michel de Montaigne, 'Des Cannibales', in Denis Bjaï and others (eds), *Les Essais*, (Paris, 2001), 318. Incidentally, one of Montaigne's tutors in Bordeaux was the Scottish scholar George Buchanan, later tutor to James VI.

[6] Hexter's observation from Paul Dukes, 'History Congress in Moscow', *The Russian Review*, vol. 30, no. 3 (1971), 240–9; Garrett Mattingly, *The Defeat of the Spanish Armada* ( London, 1959), 15.

[7] Trevor Aston, (ed.), *Crisis in Europe, 1560–1660: Essays from Past and Present 1952–1962* (London, 1965). A contribution of special relevance to the theme of this paper is V. G. Kiernan, 'Foreign Mercenaries and Absolute Monarchy', 117–40. The

In this essay, the principal focus will be on the Scottish diaspora in Muscovy as an aid to our understanding of the 'General Crisis', for enough Scots lived in seventeenth-century Russia to fulfil Montaigne's criterion of making observations on the basis of 'the example and the idea of the opinions and customs of the countries where we are'. Let us begin with a survey of some of the events leading up to and including the political crisis of mid-century, first in the homeland, from which so many soldiers of fortune, scholars and merchants set out from the beginning of the seventeenth century, and second in Russia, to which soldiers of fortune in particular travelled in considerable numbers from about the same time. To illustrate what was a dual process, I shall recall take episodes from the career of two generals with the same name, Alexander Leslie.

The first of them, later Earl of Leven, achieved an outstanding reputation in the army of Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden before returning to home to Scotland in 1638, the year in which the National Covenant was signed. Then, according to Spalding, he 'causit send to Germanye, France, Holland, Denmark, and vther countries, for the most expert and valient capitanes, livetennantis, and vnder officiares, who came in gryte numberis vpone hope of bloodie war'. The 'gryte numberis' were confirmed in a report of September 1640 that '26 of the principal colonels and officers that have served the Swede have obtained their license and got their rests in munition of war, a course begun by Leslie the Great [Leven], and are preparing at Gottenburg to sail in three ships for Scotland'. Then, in the campaign of 1644, when the Scottish army went into England to give important support to the Parliamentary cause, according to at least one calculation, in addition to the generals, 'every Lieutenant-Colonel save four, and every Major save three, had served in the Continental wars. Military expertise was joined to religious fervour to produce a force as efficient as it was highly motivated, playing a significant part in the later campaigns of the 1640s'.[8]

After the execution of the Scots-born Charles I on 30 January 1649, on 5 February, the Scottish Estates proclaimed his son King of Great Britain, France and Ireland, but then laid down conditions on 7 February. Charles II

discussion has recently been revived by Geoffrey Parker and others in *The American Historical Review*, vol. 113, no. 4 (2008).

[8] Spalding, *Memorialls*, vol. 1, 130; *CSP* (1640–41), 101; John Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, vol. 5, 604, as quoted by C. S. Terry, *The Life and Campaigns of Alexander Leslie, First Earl of Leven* (London, 1899), 42–3. A full description of the career of Leven in Sweden, and much more, may be found in A. Grosjean, *An Unofficial Alliance: Scotland and Sweden, 1569–1654* (Leiden, 2003).

would have to accept the anti-episcopalian Covenant and swear to maintain the Presbyterian religious settlement. This he duly did by signing the agreement of Breda on 1 May 1650, even though the Covenanters knew well that his convictions differed from their own. An invasion from the south could not be resisted for long after Cromwell led an army into Scotland in July 1650. Leven could postpone the inevitable no more than briefly, and the end for his army came at Dunbar on 3 September. At first confined in the Tower of London, then released on parole, Leven was finally freed in September 1653 at the intercession of Queen Christina of Sweden, for whose service he probably tried to raise a regiment in Scotland before retiring to his estate at Balgonie in Fife in May 1654 and dying there in 1661.[9]

Back in July 1651, Charles II himself led an army into England in the hope of attracting royalist supporters. But the hope was dashed at Worcester on 3 September.

On 13 June 1651, Patrick Gordon had watched the sun set over North East Scotland as he left it in a ship bound for Gdańsk. Among the reasons he gave for going, his allegiance to Roman Catholicism figured prominently. His devotion to his faith proved constant till death. So did his loyalty to the cause of the Stuarts, which was suffering severe setbacks at the time of his departure. While all too conscious of the 'great troubles', as he called them, racking his homeland and giving him another reason for seeking his fortune elsewhere, he was probably not fully aware of the momentous events taking place in England, Scotland and Ireland as he sailed away. In the mid-seventeenth century, news did not travel fast or completely, and rumour abounded. However, with less excuse, later historians have fallen short of understanding the Revolution in the three kingdoms, persisting for too long in the view that events in the offshore archipelago were cut off from those on the continent and overseas. In his subsequent illustrious career, Patrick Gordon was to provide further substantiation of the basic circumstance of European and wider interconnection in the later part of the century.

Let us move over to Russia, noting before we discuss the career of a second Alexander Leslie, that Scots had been involved in the Russian civil war known as the 'Time of Troubles' at the beginning of the century, some of them serving in a Swedish army of intervention. In a work published in London in 1614, Henry Brereton wrote: 'Now must the miseries of Russia be augmented by the coming of this Armie compounded of so many

[9] Terry, *Life and Campaigns*, 447–50.

Nations, English, French and Scots. For though they came as a friend, and for their aide, yet who can stay an Armie from spoile and rapine, which the unhappy Russian found true in the pursuit of this bloody warre'.[10] As is becoming more widely realised, an unbroken line of Scottish soldiers is to be found in Muscovite Russia army from the Time of Troubles onwards. An interesting connection most worthy of mention has recently been made by Oleg Nozdrin concerning an expeditionary force from 1612 to 1613 that included James Shaw, John Kerr or Carr, George Drummond and Thomas Garne among others and was led by Baron Adrian Flodorf or Flodroff. It turns out that the Album of the Scot George Craig, an Edinburgher of probable North-East Scottish descent, was signed in Geneva in 1602 by, among others, Otto Henri de Flodroff, Belga, and his brothers Adrian and Jean. James Shaw delivered a letter from Baron Flodorf to the Russian leader Prince D. M. Pozharsky. Dated 10 June 1612, Hamburg, the letter gave advance notice of the arrival of Flodorf and his followers.[11]

At the end of the Time of Troubles soon after the election as Tsar of Mikhail Fedorovich, some Scots remained in Russia but the next significant number of immigrants arrived in the period leading up to the War for Smolensk, 1632–4, many of them along with our second Alexander Leslie.[12] We will not rehearse his illustrious career at this point, but simply point out that he and others stayed in Russia after 1634, and were still there at the onset of further troubles soon after the accession of Aleksei Mikhailovich in 1645. In that very year, the Swedish resident Peter Krusebiörn deemed the situation to be so critical that a general uprising was imminent.[13]

A sharp eye-witness to the unfolding of the crisis was the Swedish resident in Moscow from 1647 to 1649, Karl Anders Pommerenning, in dispatches sent mostly to Queen Christina.[14] On 15 September 1647, Pommerenning

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[10] Henry Brereton, *Newes of the Present Miseries of Russia occasioned by the late Warre in that Countrey … together with the Memorable Occurrences of our own Nationale Forces, English and Scottes, under the Pay of the now King of Swethland* (London, 1614), 37.

[11] 'Album Amicorum Georgii Cragii, 1602–1605', *The Aberdeen University Review*, vol. X, no. 30 (1923), 193–5.

[12] See Paul Dukes, 'The First Scottish Soldiers in Russia', in Grant G. Simpson (ed.), *The Scottish Soldier Abroad, 1247–1967* (Edinburgh, 1992), 47–54; 'The Leslie Family in the Swedish Period (1630–5) of the Thirty Years War', *European Studies Review*, vol. 12 (1982), 403–24.

[13] Leo Loewenson, 'The Moscow Rising of 1648', *Slavonic Review*, vol. 27 (1948), 147.

[14] The dispatches as transcribed and translated by Ardis Grosjean Dreisbach from Riksarkivet, Stockholm, Diplomatica, Muscovitica 39, and passed on to me by Steve Murdoch and Alexeia Grosjean.

reported that many thousand *strel'tsy* or musketeers formed the guard of this 'large and populous city'. There were many Swedish and German officers, including three highly-paid Scots, Alexander Crawford, Alexander Hamilton and Mungo Carmichael, the first two of whom had been granted estates, while the third was constantly in the capital. Pommerenning added: 'None of the foreign officers has any soldiers to command, until they are to go into battle, then soldiers are rounded up or recruited and made available to them'. At this time, the situation throughout Muscovy appeared peaceful.

However, crisis returned in the summer of 1648. A recent authority, Valerie Kivelson, has written of unfair taxes and trading exemptions among townsfolk, dissatisfaction concerning runaway peasants among landlords, as 'long-term irritants', while noting the austerity policies of the tsar's chief adviser and brother-in-law Boris Morozov together with the administrative malfeasance of Levontii Pleshcheev and others as 'more immediate issues'.[15]

On 2 June, after the Tsar had rejected a petition from the 'common people', a crowd devastated and looted Morozov's house in the Kremlin, then went on to mock and kill Chancellor Nazarii Chistyi, who was left naked on a heap of manure,[16] before proceeding to set fire to the houses of other high officials. On 3 June, Pleshcheev was handed over by the tsar and then led from the Kremlin to the place of execution, when the crowd lynched and mutilated his body, before a monk threw it on the flames spreading towards the Kremlin, allegedly with the hope of extinguishing them.[17] After the pleadings of the

[15] Valerie A. Kivelson, 'The Devil Stole His Mind: The Tsar and the 1648 Moscow Uprising', *American Historical Review*, vol. 98, no. 3 (1993), 737–8.

[16] Loewenson, 'The Moscow Rising', 152–6, publishes a document from the Bodleian Library, Oxford: Ashmolean MSS, No. 826, 17–18B, entitled 'A true historicall Relation of the horrible tumult in Moscow (ye cheife citie in Moscovia, on the 22[sic] of June 1648, caused by the intolerable taxes and contributions, layd on the Commonaltie. All of which is described by a person of qualitie, who was present, and hath imparted it to a friend of his in Amsterdam'. On Chistov, the document relates, *inter alia*: 'The first man, that knockd him on the head with an axe, sayd unto him, jsmeenick to la [za] Solj, Traytor, this is for the Salt (for hee was the Man, that layd great Taxes upon the Salt) the Man being halfe dead, they haled him down the stayres by the heeles, draggd him like a dogg over the whole Court, and having strippd him, they flung him starck nacked upon the dunghill, there they put him qu[ite] to death'.

[17] 'A true historicall Relation' describes the sequel to the crowd's demands for the handing over of Pleshcheev and P. T. Trakhaniotov thus: 'Thereupon the Emperor presently delivered Plesseoph, to bee beheaded. But the Commons being extreamely enraged, could not have any patience, but drackd him on the market place, where they cuggelld him so black & blew and with axes they cut him asunder like a fish, the pieces they let lye nacked here & there'.

popular Patriarch N. I. Romanov and of the Tsar himself, the people consented that Morozov's life might be spared if the Tsar would keep his promise to send him so far away that he would never come back to Moscow or rejoin the government.[18] Still on 3 June, Morozov's brother-in-law Petr Tainovich Trakhaniotov was decapitated opposite the Armoury, and his head placed on his chest all day for everybody to witness. However, after the Tsar and Tsaritsa had placated with presents not only the people but also provincial nobles 'who had come in from the countryside in large numbers to feather their nests', the situation became calmer and Morozov was able to return to Moscow in October without widespread protest.

However, since the *strel'tsy* could not be counted upon, the Dutchman Bockhoven (Patrick Gordon's future father-in-law) was to command 5000 men as the Tsar's Imperial Guard, a move unwelcome to the Boyars and others. On 22 January 1649, the Scots Hamilton and Carmichael were ordered to go to Novgorod to drill the peasants at the border with Sweden, while an embassy to that country was in preparation. General Leslie had also been sent for. In February, Colonels Hamilton and Carmichael left Moscow with 16 captains and their officers, taking muskets, ammunition and grenades for 6000 men. They were to drill the peasants near Lake Onega who had willingly answered the call from the Tsar in lieu of paying taxes. In March, Leslie was allowed to return to his provincial estate. In November, Colonel Bockhoven's horsemen were preparing to move off, presumably to the northwest, but 200 of the best were to remain in Moscow.

In March 1650, news reached Moscow that Novgorod had followed the bad example of Pskov and risen in revolt, various people claiming that the dissidents in both cities had bound themselves to stand together. There were rumours that the Pskovites were not willing to reach an accommodation and were demanding the freedom that they had enjoyed under Tsar Ivan Vasilevich (IV or Terrible).

The discontent in Pskov, as described by Pommerenning, continued into the summer of 1650. On 11 June, the Pskovites would not surrender those who began the revolt, but made several demands including pardon for all. Detachments of *strel'tsy* and other troops had been sent to quell the

[18] According to 'A true historicall Relation', the tsar 'promised unto ye people, kissing the golden crosse (after the Russian manner at their swearing of an oath,) the which the patriarch held in his hand, and setting the Mother of God for a securitie, that he would send away Morosoph to turne Fryar in a cloister, and to be sent with a shaven head to the outermost frontiers'.

disturbance. It was said that the Pskovites were divided, but the majority would make an accommodation and that, if not, the Tsar himself would go there. In the meantime, his army was being strengthened: Alexander Crawford and the other Scottish officers had been summoned from their provincial estates (to which they must previously have been allowed to return) to Moscow, and were awaiting orders.

And so, towards the end, as at the beginning, the Scottish officers were there. They deserve some emphasis. Let us consider the three Moscow colonels in turn. Alexander Crawford had previously been in Danish service, during which he reached the rank of captain but was court martialled and sentenced to death for bribery and rape. Pardoned, he was sent with a recommendation to the Tsar, arriving in Moscow on 18 June 1629. Enlisted in the Russian army as a captain, he received pay in cash and kind as well as 650 serfs. In 1632, he was made lieutenant-colonel in the regiment of William Keith, but was soon promoted to colonel with a regiment of soldiers of his own. In 1632–4, he participated in the War for Smolensk, after which he commanded dragoon regiments in Tula and Belgorod. In 1639, following a decree from the Tsar, he instructed the *strel'tsy* in Western drill and combat skills, much to their resentment. In 1644, he showed that he had added entrepreneurial to his military skills by obtaining permission for seven years to produce potash in Murom. On 19 January 1646, he petitioned to bring his brother John into the Tsar's army. We have already described some of Alexander's activities in Moscow during the crisis of 1648–9. In 1649, he was part of B. I. Pushkin's embassy to Stockholm, of which more below. In 1650, the rebels in Pskov asked the Tsar why Colonel Crawford 'in going with the Tsar's envoys, did survey all the fortifications in Pskov'. The Tsar replied: 'Crawford is in our permanent subjection and serves us loyally, and did submit a draft to us, what forts should be erected in Pskov and about the city'. In June 1651, Crawford submitted a petition to admit to Moscow dyers and saltpetre masters invited by him from abroad. In 1653, while in command of four regiments, he wrote a report to the Boyar V. B. Sheremetev with important information on the use of muskets and ammunition. However, in September of that year, he was deprived of his large estate in the Arzamas district for his refusal to convert to Orthodoxy.

Several other Hamiltons had served in Russia before him, but the first recorded reference to Alexander is in a petition of 30 April 1646 submitted along with other foreigners for the exemption of their serfs from town duties pending a new *ukaz* on plough taxation. According to a document of

16 June 1646, he held an estate in the Arzamas district, 'part of the village of Krasnoe, 264 *cheti* of arable land save one third, 61 peasant households. We have already mentioned his activities during the critical years 1648–9. In 1650, he was sent to suppress the rebellion in Pskov. In September 1653, he lost his Arzamas estate, the reason given being his 'infringement' of his peasants in their Orthodox faith. This was not the last record of him, however. From August to October 1656, his regiment took part in the siege of Riga.

Russians had difficulty with the name of Mungo Carmichael, on occasion calling him 'Mungul Camel'. He came to Moscow on 9 December 1631 after being recruited by Alexander Leslie, and almost certainly fought in the War for Smolensk. We have already described his activities from 1648 to 1649 in Moscow, where he had a house and stayed while Crawford and Hamilton were on their estates. In 1650, he went with Hamilton to suppress the Pskov revolt. On 2 September 1654, 'Martyn' (another alias) Carmichael submitted a petition asking permission for his servant to travel to Riga and return to Moscow. Also in 1654, at the outset of the War with Poland, he died of wounds in Belorussia, leaving a widow.

The senior Scottish officer in Muscovy during the mid-century crisis, Alexander Leslie, was held in reserve during the events of 1648 to 1651, although he was called on for advice. Leslie and the others were given the Tsar's full confidence, held ready for action when the loyalty of others, in particular the *strel'tsy*, was in doubt.[19]

With the collapse of the revolts in Pskov and Novgorod, Russia's mid-seventeenth century crisis came to an end. Certainly, the uprising in Moscow including the lynching of several high officials in 1648 shook the government to its very core and led to the introduction of fundamental reforms. As an important contribution to the restoration of order in Moscow, S. F. Platonov pointed out that 'Tsar Alexis took a very active part in the discussions with the crowd', to many of whose wishes he had to accede.[20] Moreover, according to S. V. Bakhrushin, he had to bribe the *strel'tsy* musketeers to make a 'popular request' for the return of the tsar's favourite, since the tsar's oath concerning the man's exile could officially be broken in such a manner. Bakhrushin

[19] Information on Crawford, Hamilton, Carmichael and Leslie is contained in the unpublished prosopography by Dmitry Fedosov and Oleg Nozdrin, 'Lion Rampant to Double Eagle: Scots in Russia, 1600–1700.'

[20] Quoted by S. V. Bakhrushin, 'Moskovskii miatezh 1648g', *Nauchnye trudy*, vol. 2 (Moscow, 1954), 53.

suggested: 'In state conditions alien to all constitutional juridical forms, there was created a unique reciprocal relationship of the supreme power and the people, in which was possible a formal agreement between the tsar and his subjects reinforced by an oath. Thus peculiarly was composed the political life of Moscow'.[21] However, for a recent analyst, Valerie A. Kivelson: 'By spurning the proferred appeals, the tsar had eloquently demonstrated that he had little interest in preserving the traditional image of a merciful ruler extending his personal protection to his people. The act reverberated with significance: the age of personal intercession had given way to the age of the law code and the civil servant'.[22]

Although the preface to the *Ulozhenie* or Code of Laws of 1649 declared that it aimed at justice for all, the institution of serfdom was firmly entrenched and other concessions made to the wishes of the nobles and merchants. Thus, in an informal alliance with the upper strata of Muscovite society, the Romanovs consolidated their absolutism at the same time as any pretensions the Stuarts might have had in the same direction were crushed.

In Muscovy, political and economic reasons could be combined with the opportunity of appeasing social discontent. In 1649, for example, one hundred and sixty four deputies from Russian towns petitioned Aleksei, complaining that foreign mercantile competition was causing poverty and hunger amongst Russian mercantile families. In the context of the domestic disturbances, Aleksei decided to act: the Revolution in England, Scotland and Ireland was a convenient political pretext for revoking the Muscovy Company privileges. Of course, were Aleksei not to react in any way against the overthrow of monarchical rule and the imposition of republicanism, he would be displaying a dangerous political weakness.

If the privileges were to be revoked, customs duties previously unpaid would form an additional and valuable source of income for the Russian treasury. Thus perhaps, as Phipps suggests, 'the same action might have been taken even if the King had triumphed over Parliament in the Civil War'.[23] However, Loewenson argues that although political and economic motives were apparent, 'it would be wrong to presume that the shocking news from England was looked upon merely as a welcome pretext. The extent to which Moscow was impressed by the fact that the English "killed to death their King

[21] Ibid., 59.

[22] Kivelson, 'The Devil Stole His Mind', 756.

[23] G. M. Phipps, 'The Russian Embassy to London of 1645–46 and the Abrogation of the Muscovy Charter' *Slavonic Review*, vol. 68, no. 2 (1990), 257.

Carolus" is shown by the striking differences between the receptions accorded to the representatives of Charles II and of Cromwell'.[24] Moreover, for all the other possible reasons for the revoking of the privileges, the Russians were always to insist that the regicide was the one and only reason.[25]

The regicide was just one incident in a wave of violence circumnavigating the whole world. And this is no twentieth-century superimposition of a theory of 'crisis', for the beheading of Charles as just one of many upsets throughout the world affecting monarchs and their subjects alike was clearly discerned at the time it happened. In a survey of the years up to 1650, for example, James Howell wrote '… to take all nations in a lump, I think God almighty hath a quarrel with all mankind, and given the reins to the ill spirit to compass the whole earth; for within these twelve years there have been the strangest revolutions'. Howell continued:

> and horridest things happened not only in *Europe*, but all the world over, that have befallen mankind, I dare boldly say, since *Adam* fell, in so short a revolution of time … I will begin with the hottest parts, with Africa … The *Tartar* broke over the 400 miled wall, and rushed into the heart of *China* … The great *Turk* hath been lately strangled in the seraglio … The Emperor of Muscovia going on in a simple procession upon the *Sabbath* day, the rabble broke in, knocked down and cut in pieces divers of his chieffest counsellors, favourites, and officers before his face; and dragging their bodies to the mercat place, their heads were chopped off, into vessels of hot water, and so set upon poles to burn more brightly before the court-gate. In Naples, a common fruiterer hath raised such an insurrection … *Catalonia* and *Portugal* hath quite revolted from Spain … knocks have been betwixt the Pope and *Parma*: the *Pole* and the *Cossacks* are hard at it, *Venice* wrestleth with the *Turk* … [26]

More than 300 years before the enunciation of the General Crisis in Europe was advanced, then, James Howell had observed that the crisis had involved the whole world!

[24] L. Loewenson, 'Did Russia Intervene after the Execution of Charles I?', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, vol. 18 (1940–41), 75.

[25] Paul Dukes, Graeme P. Herd and Jarmo T. Kotilaine, *Stuarts and Romanovs: The Rise and Fall of an Old Relationship* (Dundee, 2009), especially Chapters 4–6.

[26] James Howell, *Familiar Letters on Important Subjects*, *wrote from … 1618 to 1650* (Tenth Edn, Aberdeen, 1753), 411–12.

There is a strong case for maintaining that this crisis began the modern era in world history,[27] and for placing at its centre the execution of Charles I after a formal trial, not just a straightforward murder, as had always been a threat to heads of state.

Soon after the king was executed, his last words were reported in English pamphlets and newspapers.[28] Not long later, these words came out in translation via German and Swedish in a Russian 'newspaper'.[29] We do not know for sure what effect the Russian version had on Tsar Aleksei, or even if he heard it, but we may be permitted to speculate that he still had it in mind at Kolomenskoe in February 1663 when he was taken ill and forced to make a sudden exit from a banquet after proposing a toast to the 'glorious martyr Charles I'. Quite possibly, he thought of his own relationship to his people and his Church. No doubt, the Moscow Revolt of the previous year, 1662, was also on his mind.[30]

Swedish involvement in the relay of news from London to Moscow takes on a further dimension in a communication of 9 June 1649 from Stockholm to Moscow. This was actually sent by the Scottish Colonel Alexander Crawford to his brother Colonel 'Ivan' Crawford and Lieutenant Colonel 'Ivan' Leslie. Alexander Crawford wrote that he had arrived safely in Stockholm on 6 June and brought news with him from Scotland while he was also expecting further news from Riga. As well as showing concern for the pay and conditions of officers and men, he also reported that the Marquises of Hamilton and Huntly

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[27] Twenty-five years before Eric Hobsbawm inaugurated the discussion in *Past and Present*, G. N. Clark observed in the *The Seventeenth Century* (Oxford, 1929), that 'somewhere about the middle of the seventeenth century European life was so completely transformed in many of its aspects that we commonly think of this as one of the great watersheds of modern history' (ix). Nine years after Clark's observation, Roger Merriman, concentrating on Europe, published *Six Contemporaneous Revolutions* (Oxford, 1938).

[28] For example, *King Charles his Speech made upon the Scaffold at Whitehall Gate, Immediately before his Execution…,* Published by Special Authority, Printed by Peter Cole at the Sign of the printing Press in Cornhill, near the Royall Exchange (London, 1649). The much published and most influential royal meditation *Eikon Basilike* (*The Royal Image)*, probably composed by the King's chaplain John Gauden, also made its first appearance soon after the execution.

[29] The most detailed study is by a philologist: R. Schibli, *Die ältesten russischen Zeitungsübersetzungen (Vest-iKuranty): Quellenkunde, Lehnwortschatz und Toponomastik*, Slavic Helvetica vol. 29 (1988). For an early notice, see D. C. Waugh, 'The Publication of Muscovite kuranty', *Kritika: A Review of Current Soviet Books on Russian History*, vol. 9, no. 3 (1973).

[30] Philip Longworth, *Alexis, Tsar of All the Russias* (London, 1984), 154.

had been executed for leading opposition to the new regime, but that the Scots still hoped to carry war to the English.[31]

To turn to a more recent reference to the same year, in 'Crisis and Catastrophe: The Global Crisis of the Seventeenth Century Reconsidered', Geoffrey Parker notes that many contemporaries attributed the disasters that had befallen them to supernatural forces: in Scotland in particular in 1649, after a decade of revolution, war and drought, when, according to Sir James Balfour, 'the prices of victual and corn of all sorts were higher than ever heretofore any[one] living could remember', the Scots Parliament declared 'that the sin of witchcraft daily increases in this land'. To avoid further cataclysm, the Parliament issued about 500 commissions for the trial of suspected witches, with more executions in 1649–50 than in any other comparable period in Scottish history.[32]

Only a few contemporaries blamed their misfortunes on climate change, Parker observes, while quoting Francis Bacon to the effect that 'men need to pray for fair weather' when the main pillars of government were shaken or weakened and suggesting that the Scottish Revolution 'offers a perfect vindication of Voltaire's thesis that rebellions arose during the mid-seventeenth century through a fatal synergy between government, religion, and climate.' Parker writes that 'Charles's insistence on creating "one uniform course of government in, and through, our whole monarchy" especially in matters of religion, coupled with the Little Ice Age, led to state collapse'. However, Parker warns against climatic determinism: 'Three other factors, all of them related to human agency, also shaped the General Crisis in Scotland (and elsewhere): contingency, imitation, and intransigence'.[33]

In his wide-ranging essay, Parker certainly includes events in Russia in the General Crisis, but says nothing specific about the role there of climate, although he devotes more than half of his essay to this subject. Indeed, he makes only one reference under this heading to Scandinavia, another important part of Northern Europe. The gap can be filled to some extent by reference to the work of Robert Boyle. In his Preface to *New Experiments and Observations touching Cold, or an Experimental History of Cold*, first published in 1665, Boyle

[31] Ingrid Maier, 'Newspaper Translations in Seventeenth-Century Muscovy: About the Sources, Topics and Periodicity of *Kuranty* Made in Stockholm (1649), *Explorare necesse est: Hyllningskrift till Barbro Nilsson,* Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis, Stockholm Slavic Studies 28 (Stockholm, 2002), 108–9, 146–7.

[32] Geoffrey Parker, 'Crisis and Catastrophe: The Global Crisis of the Seventeenth Century Reconsidered', *American Historical Review*, vol. 113, No. 4 (2008), 1061.

[33] Ibid., 1063, 1075.

wrote that 'our great *Verulam* [Francis Bacon] did not speak so inconsiderately, when he called Heat the Right Hand of Nature, and Cold her Left' before himself observing that 'though in our temperate Climate the effects of Cold seem not to be very remarkable, yet besides that, in more Northern Regions they are oftentimes stupendious …'[34]

Since 'some of the eminentest *Phoenomena* of Cold' could not be examined in England, Boyle turned to other authors for help: a Dutchman, a Swede and an Englishman.[35] He also writes of 'having once had the Opportunity of an Hours Discourse with an Ingenious Man, that not only liv'd some years in Muscovy, but was, and is still Physician to the great Monarch of that Empire'. This was none other than Dr. Samuel Collins, author of *The Present State of Russia*, first published in 1671, a year after he died. Collins had written to Boyle in August 1664 that 'in these thirty years the Winters are become so mild …'[36] It seems that extremes of temperature were in the other direction. At least, in another work Robert Boyle wrote: 'The *Czar's* chief physician confirmed to me, that in the year 1664, or 63, extraordinary dry and great Scopes of Land were set on Fire, and miserably wasted by the great Heat of the Sun'.[37]

Collins was not Boyle's only informant on Russia. Among others was a Scottish soldier, Lieutenant-General William Drummond, 'Governor of Smolensco', who described the effects of frost not only on alcoholic beverages but also on fish in ponds and lakes 'frozen over so strongly that men might march with canon over the ice'. It might seem strange that Drummond should observe such phenomena during thirty years of mild winters, but we are, after all, talking of Russia! Drummond as well as others also talked of 'very intense Frosts' producing 'great noise, like the discharge of Muskets' in wooden

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[34] Robert Boyle, *History of Cold* (London, 1665), with italics as in the original, Michael Hunter and Edward B. Davis (eds.), *The Works of Robert Boyle*, vol. 4 (London, 1999), 208, with his own italics. Of course, Francis Bacon is alleged to have died after catching a chill while stuffing a fowl with snow in order to observe the effect of cold on the preservation of flesh.

[35] Gerrit de Veer, *The True and Perfect Description of Three Voyages … by the Ships of Holland and Zealand* (London, 1609); Olaus Magnus, *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus* (Rome, 1555). Thomas James, *The Strange and Dangerous Voyage of Captain Thomas James in his intended Discovery of the Northwest Passage into the South-Sea* (London, 1633).

[36] Leo Loewenson, 'The Works of Robert Boyle and "The Present State of Russia" by Samuel Collins (1671)', *Slavonic Review*, vol. 33 (1954–5), 470–85.

[37] Robert Boyle, *The General History of the Air* (London 1692), with italics as in the original, Hunter and Davis, *Works*, vol. 12 (London, 2000), 110–11.

houses.[38] However, if the observation of Boyle via Collins were correct, and 'Heat the Right Hand of Nature' (in Bacon's phrase' were to be found in Muscovy as well as cold, it is quite possible that the key events of the revolt of 1648 in and around the Kremlin were influenced by summer temperatures intensified by the incendiary activities of the insurgents. If we add that the view of the Tsar was widespread that 'The Devil Stole His Mind', there can be little doubt that Voltaire's fatal synergy between government, religion and climate was as present in Muscovy as in Scotland.

Boyle's major informant on Russia, Samuel Collins, let us recall, was personal physician to Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich, perhaps the most eminent of Western doctors resident in Russia during the seventeenth century, normally engaged to care for the tsar's family and entourage. From the 1640s, demand for modern medicine spread, especially from the army, with surgeons becoming an integral part of army units from the middle of the decade onwards. In 1653, some 30 *strel'tsy* or their children were drafted to learn a range of medical crafts, and eight boys able to speak both German and Russia were recruited from among newly baptized foreigners for similar purposes. In the 1670s, the government began to encourage the children of the Russian personnel of the *Aptekarskii prikaz* to learn foreign languages, while new pupils had to be literate. In general, M. V. Unkovskaya notes, its pupils:

> were a small group of Muscovites, but they were the first among the lower strata of society to be placed in the position of close contact with foreigners. Their continuing loyalty to the Prikaz and their professions provides a striking example of the change in the attitudes of simple Russians towards foreigners and foreign learning and thus helps us to understand better the rapidity of Russia's Westernization during the following decades.[39]

Another important aid to this understanding, on medicine and much else, is the *Diary of Patrick Gordon*. When we add what we know of the activities in Muscovy of himself and his fellow Scots such as Paul Menzies operating in the higher strata of society, we have an important aid indeed. Gordon and

[38] Boyle, *History of Cold*, *Appendix*, Hunter and Davis (eds), *Works*, vol. 4, 551–2, 570. Loewenson writes of G. Drummond, but it must have been William, who left Russia in 1665, not 1664 as Loewenson writes, and probably met Boyle.

[39] M.V. Unkovskaya, 'Learning Foreign Mysteries: Russian Pupils of the Aptekarskii Prikaz, 1650–1700', *Oxford Slavonic Papers*, New Series, vol. XXX (1997), 6–7, 12 and quotation, 20.

many of his colleagues living in Moscow never forgot their homeland or their loyalty to the Stuart cause, but they did become familiar with the 'opinions and customs' (to quote Montaigne again) of Muscovy. Compare the Gordon of 1661 first arriving in Moscow, revolted by the city and its inhabitants, with the Gordon of 1678 blowing up the fortress of Chigirin in a spirit of devotion to a second cause, the prosperity of the Romanov dynasty.

Certainly, by the 1660s, with the establishment of a regular postal service between Moscow and the West, the opportunity was to present itself for a more regular exchange of news. Among those to take advantage was Patrick Gordon, who became the Moscow correspondent for the *London Gazette*,[40] as well as showing a great interest in acquiring a wide range of books from London. Furthermore, there can be little doubt that, well before the end of the seventeenth century, there were Russians fully aware of contemporary European cultural developments, for example V. V. Golitsyn and Ya. V. Brius, one of Scottish extraction, the other benefiting from contact with Scots.[41] Possibly, one of the first tutors of the future Peter the Great was Paul Menzies.[42] Without doubt, in many ways, Patrick Gordon contributed to Peter's early education.

To return as we approach a conclusion to the 'General Crisis', let us recall the observation made in 1965 by Christopher Hill, who suggested that there was some agreement that there was an economic and political crisis all over Western and Central Europe during the seventeenth century. Discreetly applied, the comparative method might be 'a useful tool for the historian, the nearest he can get to a laboratory test'. English history, Hill added, would not then appear as 'something unique and God-given'. [43] Enthusiasts for Scottish history have also been carried away in this introverted fashion, although the widening recognition of the mid-seventeenth revolution as taking place in the three Kingdoms, in England, Scotland and Ireland, has been a step in the right direction. But, while some specialists remain apprehensive of leaving

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[40] See Graeme P. Herd, 'General Patrick Gordon of Auchleuchries – a Scot in Seventeenth Century Russian Service', Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Aberdeen (1994), 223; Andrew B. Pernal, 'The *London Gazette* as a Primary Source for the Biography of General Patrick Gordon', *Canadian Journal of History*, vol. 38, no. 1 (2003), 1–17.

[41] Lindsey Hughes, *Russia and the West: the Life of a Seventeenth-Century Westernizer, Prince Vasily Vasil'evich Golitsyn, 1643–1714* (Newtonville, MA), 1984; Dmitry G. Fedosov, 'The First Russian Bruces', in Simpson (ed.), *The Scottish Soldier Abroad*, 55–66.

[42] See the argument of N. V. Charykov, *Posol'stvo v Rim i sluzhba v Moskve generala Pavla Menezziia* St. Petersburg, 1906).

[43] Christopher Hill, 'Introduction', *Crisis in Europe,* 3.

the offshore islands, how far should we attempt to roam? Should we stop now at the boundaries of Western and Central Europe, as Christopher Hill appears to have recommended in 1965? But let us recall the 'General Crisis' is no retroactive superimposition, indeed that, in the middle of the seventeenth century itself, James Howell took 'all nations in a lump', thinking that 'God almighty hath a quarrel lately with all mankind'.

In both the discussion of the 1950s–60s and that of 2008, for all its breadth of view, there is a lack of comprehensive coverage or pattern. Europe still appears to consist of the West, South and Centre, without much attention to the North and the East.[44] To a considerable extent, the boundaries of the activities of the Scots in Russia help to indicate the perimeters of the General Crisis. At the end, as at the beginning, an endorsement of Tarle's observation: 'The more powerful, the more *authentic* the generalising thought, the more it needs the erudite and erudition'. The concept of a General Crisis of the seventeenth century seems to me to be authentic. It certainly needs more erudition. There is, too, the danger of abstracting it from the course of history. In other words, the General Crisis needs to be not only scrutinised in itself but also placed in its chronological context. Among their many services, Scots in Russia help us to acquire an understanding of seventeenth-century momentum. Alexander Leslie and his comrades take us from the Time of Troubles to the events of 1648–51. From 1651 onwards, Patrick Gordon gives us an unparalleled account of the decline of Poland in 'The Deluge' followed by the transformation of Muscovy in which he and fellow Scots played an outstanding role, preparing the way for the reforms of Peter the Great.

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[44] Robert O. Crummey writes that the Russian example 'supports the notion of the "general crisis" of European polities and societies in the late 1640s' in his article, 'Muscovy and the "General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century"', *Journal of Early Modern History*, vol. 2, no. 2 (1998), 177. See also Paul Dukes, 'Russia and the "General Crisis" of the Seventeenth Century', *New Zealand Slavonic Studies*, No. 2 (1974), reprinted with some changes as Chapter 1 in *October and the World: Perspectives on the Russian Revolution* (London, 1979); Peter B. Brown, 'Muscovy, Poland and the Seventeenth-Century Crisis', *The Polish Review*, no. 27 (1982). Valerie A. Kivelson makes no reference to the General Crisis in 'The Devil Stole His Mind'.