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**SIMEON DENISOV'S *ISTORIA O OTSEKH I
STRADAL'TSEKH SOLOVETSKIKH* IN THE OLD BELIEVER
TRADITION IN RUSSIA**

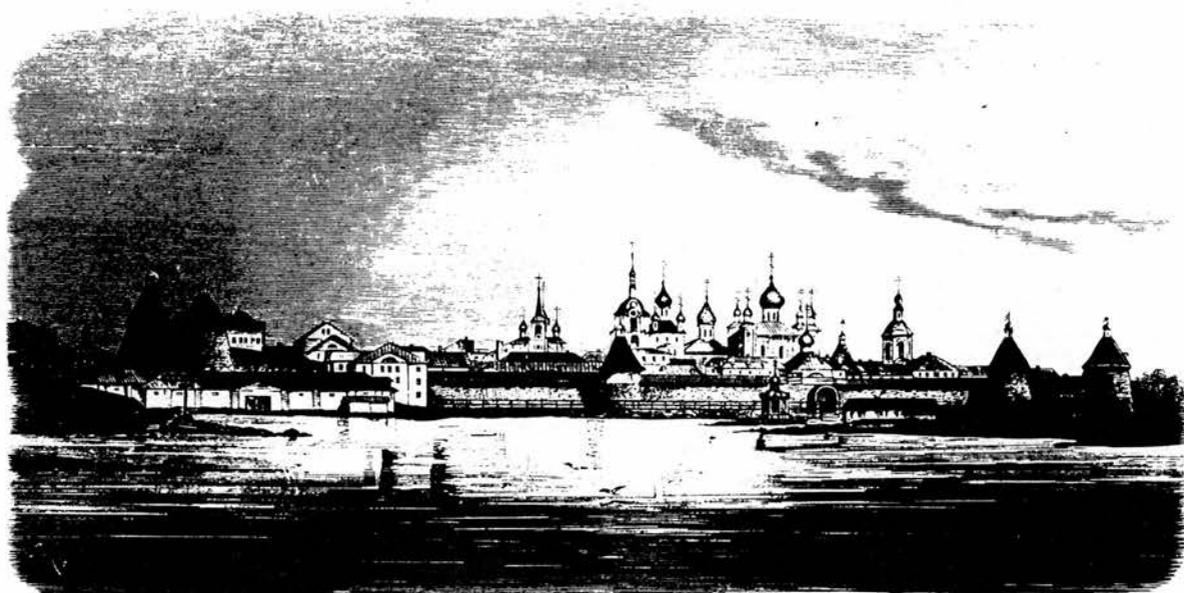


Рис. из кн. Н. С. Павлов, тираж. Л. А. Соловецк.

Соловецкий монастырь

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1 May, 1990



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Precis

This dissertation is divided into three chapters. The first deals with the general historical background to the schism in the Russian Church in the seventeenth century. It looks at the social and political causes, as well as the religious motives behind it. In particular, events leading specifically to the uprising at the Solovki monastery are examined.

The second chapter is primarily concerned with the aftermath of the Solovki uprising, and the influence of the monastery on Old Believers in the early eighteenth century. In particular, the foundations of the Vyg community of Old Believers, under the leadership of Andrei Denisov and later his brother Simeon - the writer of the Istoria o otsekh i stradal'tsekh solovetskikh - is studied. Special attention is given to the literary and educational accomplishments of the community and its contribution to the Old Believer tradition in Russia.

The final chapter concerns the Istoria itself as a work of literature. An examination is made of its structure and stylistic devices. Its place in relation to other literature of the period is also discussed, as is its accuracy and value as an historical document. Finally, the ideology of Simeon Denisov as found in the work is examined.

TRANSLITERATION SYSTEM

Throughout the dissertation the British Museum transliteration system has been used with the following modifications:

ы is transcribed as y
ы ѣ is transcribed as y
и ѣ is transcribed as ii

The spelling of Old Russian forms has been transmitted as they occur in the text without translation to their modern equivalents.

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INTRODUCTION

The Old Believers as a movement have been paid relatively little attention. It is rare to find more than a few pages, or even paragraphs concerning them in general history books, and with few exceptions mention of them is virtually non-existent in literary histories. This is all the more strange considering their significance in both the historical and literary development of Russia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Even in the nineteenth century Old Belief had the support of possibly one sixth of the entire Russian Orthodox population. Nevertheless, scholarly study about any aspect of Old Belief remains scarce.

Part of the problem for western scholars, unfortunately, has been the difficulty of obtaining access to primary sources. Most of these are located in Soviet libraries and private collections. Even under the era of *glasnost'*, Soviet researchers are unwilling to let outsiders examine materials before they themselves have had a chance to do so. Some of the most useful bibliographies to date are: Druzhinin's *Pisaniya russkikh staroobryadtsev* published in St. Petersburg in 1913, Sakharov's three volume *Literatura istorii i oblicheniya russkago raskola* published in Tambov in 1887 (vol. I) and in St. Petersburg in 1892 (vols. II and III). Useful secondary reference works are the *Opisanie nekotorykh sochinenii*,

napisannykh russkimi raskol'nikami (1861-62) by Aleksandr B., and articles from Novosibirsk in the publications of the Siberian section of the Academy of Sciences. These include *Drevnerusskaya rukopisnaya kniga i ee bytovanie v Sibiri* (1982), *Istochniki po kul'ture i klassovoi bor'be feodal'nogo perioda* (1982), *Rukopisnaya traditsiya XVI-XIX vekov na vostoke Rossii* (1983) edited by Pokrovsky and Romodanovskaya, and *Istochniki po istorii russkogo obshchestvennogo soznaniya perioda feodalizma* (1986), and *Khristianstvo i tserkov' v Rossii feodal'nogo perioda* (1989) edited by Pokrovsky. Malyshev's "Bibliografia sochinenii protopopa Avvakuma i literatury o nem 1917-1953 godov" published in *Trudy otdela drevnerusskoi literatury* (Leningrad, 1954) is a further important source.

Avvakum is the one exception. With his zeal and fiery intransigence, he became a legend in his own time, and he has captured by far the most attention from historians and literary analysts alike. He was a remarkable leader, and ahead of his time as a writer and preacher. But it is perhaps unfortunate that his legend overshadows other leaders of Old Belief whose accomplishments were equally remarkable and important to the movement as a whole. Among these can be counted many of the fathers of the pre-1676 Solovki monastery, and the Denisov brothers, Andrei and Simeon.

The Solovki fathers are responsible for many of the earliest tracts on Old Belief, most notably the fifth petition to Tsar Alexei, the "Slova" of Spiridon Potemkin, and Gerasim

Firsov's defence of the two-fingered sign of the cross. It is they who, after their monastery was overrun - the first great stronghold of the old ritual - spread out across Russia preaching to the masses and converting disciples to their cause. Many lived in conditions of extreme hardship, compounded by persecution, and many of those who did not die as martyrs during the raid on Solovki did so elsewhere at a later date.

Two of the most important and noteworthy later disciples of Solovki were undoubtedly the Denisov brothers. Leaving home as teenagers, they turned a tiny hermitage in the far north of Russia from a desperate colony continuously on the brink of annihilation into a large and flourishing community. Not only was the community economically successful, but the brothers became the leaders in education, scholarship and literature of the entire Old Believer movement. Both Denisovs managed to acquire an extraordinary level of education and knowledge of literature and history, and were able to put this to use in the most beneficial way possible for their own community and for the community of Old Believers as a whole. They left for future generations a legacy of an excellent educational system and a large mass of original Old Believer literature.

Simeon is best known for his martyrology the *Vinograd Rossiiskii*, and most study concerning him to date has been directed at this. However, his earlier work, the *Istoria o otsekh i stradal'tsekh solovetskikh* is equally important as an example of his literary style, his philosophy, and as an

historical account of the uprising from the Old Believer point of view. This dissertation attempts to examine the place of both the uprising of the Solovki monks, and the Denisov brothers, in the Russian Old Believer tradition, as well as to study the *Istoria* as a work of literature, and its place in that tradition.

CHAPTER ONE

The Schism in the Russian Church and the Old Believer Movement

The story of the Old Believer movement in Russia is a complicated one, and like all events in history, there is no simple point at which it can be stated "this is when it started". Its roots stretch far back in time, as conditions changed slowly into those in which an uprising became inevitable, religion became the catalyst, and the Old Believers the leaders and main players. Scholars for years could not even agree on exactly what sort of movement it was - were the Old Believers really motivated by religion, or were their reasons in fact social, political, or personal? And was it mere chance that caused such an enormous reaction to such apparently minor reforms, or had the movement in fact been brewing, unrecognized, for years waiting for the right moment to raise its head? The extent of the role different factors had to play is still argued today.

Part of the confusion has been caused by the sheer difficulty of studying the subject, which was shadowed by varying degrees of censorship from the seventeenth century

until recent times. Zenkovsky remarks that serious study of Old Believers only began in the mid-nineteenth century, because before then works had only been done by representatives of the official church - whose goal it was to discredit them and win converts to its own position. Works by Old Believers themselves stating their side of the conflict could not be published due to censorship laws.¹ This led to the mistaken view that the Old Believers were simply too ignorant to understand the reforms, that they could not tell the difference between ritual and dogma, and therefore stuck tendentiously to their traditional service books, which had long been corrupted by copying errors. Even when censorship was relaxed - as it was under Alexander II - popular philosophical trends of the day would often influence an historian's interpretation of events in the seventeenth century.

In general it can be said that two main schools of thought grew up concerning the Old Believer movement: that which sees it as arising from purely religious motives, and that which considers it essentially a form of social, cultural and political opposition. The latter, which is usually called the populist theory, was prevalent particularly in the mid to late nineteenth century, when Populist ideas were developing in Russia.

V.V. Andreev, one of the main proponents of the populist school argues that the schism was fundamentally a social

¹Zenkovsky, Sergei; *Russkoe starobryadchestvo: dukhovnye dvizheniya XVIIogo veka*, (hereafter known as Zenkovsky, S. *Russkoe starobryadchestvo*), Munich, 1970. p. 15.

movement because, "Common sense refuses to let us believe that the *raskol*, which brought such dissension into the midst of millions of Russian people, was the result of deviation in insignificant details from religious dogma and church ritual".¹ If this had been the case, he continued, the schism would have begun long before it did, for others had reformed and corrected church books as long ago as Metropolitan Alexei and Maksim the Greek (early sixteenth century), and as recently as Filaret, patriarch from 1619-1633. He notes that in fact a schism occurred over church reforms only when zemsky rights were gone, and central government power was absolute - both of which were achieved for the most part by the Law Code of 1649.

What Andreev and the populist school do not take into account, however, is the enormous role religion, and particularly religious ritual, had in the lives of the Russian people at the time. Modern scholars now tend to agree with Robert Crummey's view that to the Russian masses ritual was the outward expression of inner faith, and was inseparable from doctrine; to change the ritual would mean betraying one's faith.² The Old Believers argued that if their ritual was wrong, then the early Russian saints who had practised in this way would have to be considered heretics. Such an idea was totally unacceptable. These "minor" changes were not at all

¹Andreev, V.V.; *Raskol i ego znachenie v narodnoi russkoi istorii*, St. Petersburg, 1870. Reprinted Osnabruck, Otto Zeller, 1965. p. 1.

²Crummey, R.O.; *The Old Believers and the World of Antichrist*, Madison and London, 1970. p. 9.

insignificant; they bit into the marrow of Russian tradition and doctrine as it was understood by the people.

Sergei Zenkovsky believes that the schism was indeed primarily a religious outburst: "The Russian seventeenth century dissent developed as a purely religious movement aimed at satisfying the spiritual needs of believers".² Nevertheless, he agrees that other factors also played an important part. "Social and political motives, economic discontent, distrust of the leadership of the Tsar and government, embitterment against boyars and nobles, personal injuries, and aversion to new cultural trends played a large role in the growth and development of the Old Believer schism."³ It is this mixture which makes the movement so complicated. The important point in deciding which view seems closest to the truth, is which factors were uppermost in the minds and motives of those involved, and when they reached this position. Some understanding of the causes of the schism itself is therefore vital to any discussion of the uprising of the monks at Solovki, and its significance in the history and development of the Old Believer movement as a whole.

The seventeenth century in Russia was a time of transition and instability. It began with the Time of Troubles, when various factions and pretenders fought for control of the country. The Poles seized Moscow and Smolensk, and Novgorod was taken by the Swedes. There were also numerous

² Zenkovsky, S.; *Russkoe staroobryadchestvo*, p.12.

³ *ibid.*, p.487.

peasant uprisings. When Mikhail Romanov was finally elected to the throne in 1613, his position was by no means stable. He and his successors had to consolidate their power at home, while being forced to defend borders from invasion in both the east and the west. The boyars and nobles - potential threats to the throne - had to be kept satisfied, while money had to be raised to pay for the enormous cost of war. This meant high taxes fell on the shoulders of the common people which in turn engendered dissatisfaction and instability.

In 1619 Tsar Mikhail's father, who had been in prison in Poland, returned to Russia and was named Patriarch Filaret. Fedor Romanov would have been crowned Tsar himself, had he not been forcibly consecrated a monk while in Poland. Filaret's special position gave him privileges and power far beyond those normally extended to the patriarch. Unlike in the West, where the pope had power over secular rulers and could even depose emperors, Russia followed the eastern tradition whereby the church was still subject to the state. Filaret, however, was called "Velikii Gosudar'" ("Great Lord") along with his son, even though this title had formerly been reserved only for the Tsar. Filaret issued decrees jointly with the Tsar, handled petitions and received foreign ambassadors, and ruled the country when Mikhail was away. He also set up government "prikazes", or departments, that took over day-to-day administration in areas such as trade and industry, and soldiers' pay. The "dukhovnye prikazy" were set up in 1620 to put church management under bureaucratic control. To all intents and purposes, Filaret was both head of the church and

co-ruler of the Russian state, equal in power to the Tsar. Indeed, a dangerous precedent was set which was to play a part in the schism half a century later.

When Alexei Mikhailovich ascended the throne in 1645 he was only sixteen years old, and had inherited a number of pressing concerns. He immediately faced a revolt in Moscow and smaller ones in other cities. The people were particularly unhappy over higher taxes, such as the salt tax of 1646. While the poor struggled to pay it, important figures in Moscow were exempt. Large crowds gathered in Moscow which could only be calmed by the execution of two unpopular officials, L.S. Pleshcheev and P.T. Trakhaniotov, and the exile of one of Alexei's closest advisors, Boris Ivanovich Morozov. Continued dissatisfaction erupted in revolts in Pskov and Novgorod in 1650, and the copper riot of 1662, in which soldiers mutinied over low pay in base copper coins. The most serious uprising was that led by Cossack Stepan "Stenka" Razin, which began in 1667. Razin was able to seize control of much of the Volga and may have considered moving on Moscow until his army suffered a serious defeat in 1670. Razin himself was executed a year later.

In order to keep better control over his vast empire, Alexei wanted to re-organize it and build a more centrally ordered government. One of the major accomplishments of his reign was the creation of the 1649 *Ulozhenie*, or Law Code. The Code states that its purpose was "to make the administration of justice in all cases equal for men of all ranks, from the higher

to the lowest",¹ but in fact it served to strengthen the position of boyars and nobles, while serfdom was established definitively. The time limit for returning runaway serfs was abolished, which left them bereft of any possibility of escape. The Law Code also weakened the power of the church by handing over all church settlements to the state and depriving their inhabitants of tax exemptions. The Church was put under the official protection of the state, and blasphemy was now punishable by state law, which meant church hierarchs had lost some of their power to secular authorities. This later became another point of collision between patriarch, boyars and Tsar.

Alexei's personal beliefs and vision of Russia were also important factors leading up to the schism. He was an extremely devout man, and from the beginning of his reign he wished to improve religious observance among the populace. Zenkovsky said of him, "never in the history of Russia has the ideal of an orthodox kingdom been so dear to the Tsar and been so actively realized in life, than in the first years of the reign of Alexei Mikhailovich".² His marriage in 1648 was a three day solemn affair, and conspicuously absent were the *skomorokhi*, or minstrel singers, who had formerly been a traditional part of court entertainment. They were considered pagan, and a decree was passed banning them. The Tsar's religious commitment was supported by his three closest advisors, Boris Morozov, Fedor Rtishchev, and his confessor

¹ Dukes, Paul; *The Making of Russian Absolutism 1613-1801*, London and New York, 1982. p. 49.

² Zenkovsky, S.; *Russkoe staroobryadchestvo*. p. 102.

Stefan Vonifatiev. It was in large part thanks to these men that a circle of like-minded zealots began to gather around the Tsar and the court to press for further reforms.

In the 1630's a group called the Zealots of Piety, also known as the Bogolyubtsy (Theophiles) had formed to produce a revival of morality and religious purity particularly among church hierarchs who had grown lazy and corrupt, but also in the life of the people in general. Vonifatiev and Ivan Neronov were the leaders of the group, and with the support and encouragement of the Tsar they gained prominence and power both within the Church and at court. In 1647 Ivan Neronov had been brought to Moscow by Rtishchev and introduced to the Tsar's circle, but he had been an outspoken defender of reforms in the Church for some time already. At the beginning of the seventeenth century the oral sermon was virtually unknown in Russia, but Neronov began to use it to preach to the masses that they must bring religion into their daily lives, and not just pray for their souls when death was upon them. He was unpopular among the boyars because he spoke out against their lack of piety and irreverent behaviour. Filaret had tried to silence him in 1632, but to no avail. Others who joined the Zealots included Ivan Nasedka, who had lived with Neronov in the Troitsa-Sergieva lavra, and Archpriest Avvakum. Like Neronov, Avvakum had also begun using the oral sermon as an effective way of reaching out to the people. He went to Moscow in 1652 and became Neronov's helper and a member of the Theophiles. As Neronov grew older and began

to weaken, it was left to Avvakum to emerge as the leader of the Old Believers during the first stormy decades of the schism.

Also in 1647 Vonifatiev introduced the Tsar to Nikon, then head of the Kozheozerskii monastery. He so impressed Alexei that he was quickly made archimandrite of the Novospasskii monastery - the traditional cloister of the Romanov family. In 1649 Nikon became metropolitan of Novgorod. He too was an ardent supporter of church reform and joined the Zealots of Piety. In the early years the Zealots were working together toward a common goal - increasing morality in Russia - and originally met with considerable success.

The first major reform brought on by the Zealots was the introduction of *edinoglasie*. The usual practice of a Russian service was to have several different parts of the liturgy sung simultaneously, which was called *mnogoglasie*, meaning "many voices". The reason for this was mainly to shorten the service - which, lasting from two to four hours, was already longer in Russia than anywhere else in the Orthodox world. It resulted, however, in a disorganized service, and it was impossible for listeners to make out what was actually being said. *Edinoglasie*, or "one voice", meant that one portion would be read or sung at a time. Most hierarchs were against *edinoglasie*, some out of laziness and others because they feared it would discourage people from attending the services. As Nikon was the only prominent hierarch in favour of it, when the proposal was first put to the general church Council in 1649 he was not invited to attend. The Council voted to continue as

before, but the Tsar did not support their decision, and in 1650 the patriarch of Constantinople categorically stated that edinoglasie must be instated in all churches. The next year the matter was again put to the Council, and this time the Theophiles were victorious. They had gained so much influence that then-Patriarch Iosif declared angrily that it was they, and not he, who now controlled the church.

Despite their common goal, however, there were important differences between Nikon's views and those of the other Zealots. One of these was their vision of how the Russian church should be run. The original aim of the Zealots to shake up the church hierarchy went beyond their belief in the corruption and laziness of the officials. For centuries discontent and resentment had been brewing among the white, or parish, clergy in relations with the hierarchs and black (monastic) clergy from which these were usually chosen. The inequality between bishops, who were among the richest members of society, and priests who were often among the poorest, had grown particularly bad. Besides paying ten percent of their salaries to their bishops, ordination costs for priests had risen and bribes had become an inherent part of ordinations, wedding ceremonies and other occasions. Both the people and the lower clergy had become indignant at the luxurious life of the hierarchs.¹

¹Preobrazhensky, A.; *The Russian Orthodox Church: 10th to the 20th Centuries*, Moscow, 1988. p. 88.

Along with renewed zeal for morality and religious practices, the Theophiles also wanted the white clergy and their parishes to have a greater voice in church affairs. They advocated a kind of *sobornost'*, administration by assembly, in which everyone, not just the hierarchs, could participate in the church Councils and have their interests represented. By contrast, Nikon advocated decreasing the power of the bishops and Council and concentrating it in the hands of one man, the patriarch.

The Theophiles did continue to maintain that the Tsar was the ultimate authority in both church and state matters. Lupinin notes that in a 1669 message to the Tsar, Avvakum claims that it is he (the Tsar) who bears chief responsibility for the church.¹ This is the traditional eastern Byzantine point of view. Nikon however was really a theocrat, and shared the more western Catholic view that the power of the church should be superior to that of the Tsar. "Practically all alone of all the Russian hierarchs Nikon attempted to advance in Russia the medieval western doctrine of the supremacy of the spiritual over the secular power, but in this he was not supported by the church".² In 1658 he stated that "priesthood is greater than tsardom", and he would not tolerate any secular control impinging on his authority. Nikon had never been in favour of the 1649 Law Code and made it a condition of his acceptance of the Novgorod metropolitanate that its restrictions

¹Lupinin, N., *Religious Revolt in the XVIIth century: The Schism of the Russian Church*, Princeton, NJ, 1984, p. 120.

²Karpovich, M.; "Church and State in Russian History", *Russian Review*, Cambridge, MA, vol. 3, no. 2, 1944, p. 14.

would not apply to him and his domain. The same conditions applied to his accession to the patriarchal throne, and when he became patriarch Nikon began openly to criticize the Code.

Nikon's ambition and hunger for power quickly began to anger the boyars as well as the Theophiles. He was much older than Alexei Mikhailovich and exercised enormous influence over the young Tsar. When Patriarch Iosif died in 1652 Nikon was named in his place. Gradually he took on powers on a par with Patriarch Filaret's. He concerned himself with government affairs as well as the church, and would have letters sent in the name of both Tsar and patriarch. He took on the title of "Veliki Gosudar" making himself, like Filaret, effectively co-ruler.

One important difference between these two patriarchs was their attitude toward the Orthodox Church outside Russia. Filaret had been inward-looking; like the Zealots he was concerned specifically with the Russian Church and held a deep mistrust of all foreigners. Nikon also distrusted non-Orthodox foreigners and took stringent measures to keep them separated from the Russian community. It was Nikon who created the "Nemetskaya sloboda", the Moscow suburb where foreigners were forced to live so they would not corrupt the Orthodox population. But he also believed that, just as the patriarch's power should be greater than that of the Tsar, so should his empire be larger. He saw Russia as the leader of the entire Orthodox world, and this belief served as one major reason for his intransigence in his own methods of reforming the Russian

Church. If the Orthodox Church in Russia was to lead the rest of the world, it had to be the same - which meant conforming to the Greek rituals and practices, and changing some of the "idiosyncracies" that had developed among the Russians.

The first reforms appeared in a memorandum and psalter in 1653. In publishing it, Nikon had consulted neither the church Council nor any officials, and had instituted unprecedented changes in ritual without the consent of any authority. The changes consisted of bowing at the waist during service, rather than at the knees, and crossing oneself with three fingers (signifying the Father, Son and Holy Ghost) instead of two (symbolizing the dual nature of God). The Greek three-finger sign had been rejected by the Stoglav Council of 1551, which most Russians considered the supreme authority in such matters. Later changes included the use of the four-pointed Catholic cross instead of the traditional eight-pointed one, changing the number of "alleluias" to be sung at the end of a psalm from two to three, changing the spelling of Christ's name from "Isus" to "Iisus", and the number of proshoras to be used during service was reduced from seven to five. Some texts in the Creed were also changed slightly. This was really the extent of the reforms that caused so much damage to the Church, the country and to many individuals caught up in the furore.

Despite the abrupt way in which these innovations had been introduced, they were officially accepted with little fuss. Alexei was in favour of them because he too wished to bring

the Russian Church into line with the Greek - this would reinforce his own claim to be Tsar-protector of them all. The changes were approved by the church Council in the Spring of 1654, with a vote of 29 out of 35 in favour. Bishop Pavel of Kolomna spoke out against the measures and was immediately imprisoned in a monastery, where he eventually died and became the first Old Believer martyr. The 1654 Council also acted as a catalyst for drawing the Old Believers together. After debates among themselves Avvakum, Neronov and the Zealots decided to stand against the new patriarch¹. Nikon was quick to react to any challenge to his authority - perhaps he feared the Zealots were his greatest threat, as they had managed effectively to take the place of his predecessor Patriarch Iosif. By the end of 1654 Neronov, Daniil of Kolomna, Gerasim Firsov and all other opponents to the innovations were sent to monasteries, except Avvakum, who was exiled to Siberia. But this was not the end of the movement; rather it was just the beginning. The "raskol'niks" (schismatics), as they came to be called officially by the Orthodox Church, continued to write and speak out even more forcefully against changes taking place in the Church, and particularly against the instigator of these reforms, Nikon. Their support, particularly among the lower classes, was enormous². The priest Lazar' wrote to Tsar Alexei, "Our rulers, lying to you, Great Lord, tell you that we stand alone with our books and the laws of our

¹Zenkovsky, S., *Russkoe staroobryadchestvo*, p. 209.

²Ankudinova, L.E., "Social Composition of the First Schismatics", *Vestnik Leningradskogo Universiteta*, Leningrad, no. 14, 1956. She does note that of famous women raskol'niks nearly all came from the higher strata of society, boyarinas and princesses.

forefathers. Nay, nay, we are not alone. In Great Russia there are a hundred thousand who are ready to die for these ancestral laws."¹

Another objection to the new books was that they had been corrected according to Greek books published in Venice at the end of the sixteenth century. Nearly 3,000 old texts - both Russian and Greek - had already been collected by the Printing House for the task of publishing a standard version of psalters and service books. There were very few scholars in Moscow at the time able to read them, however, and the job of going through all the available works would have taken many years. So, partly out of haste and partly out of his wish to make the Russian Church identical to the Greek, Nikon used only the modern Greek versions. In fact, had the older books been examined, they would have shown, as scholars have now found, that both Greek and Russian churches in the Middle ages used, for example, both the two- and three-finger sign of the cross². The main problem with the Greek texts was that the Russians believed they contained Catholic heresies which the Greeks had accepted at the Council of Florence in the fifteenth century. Since Byzantium had been overrun by the Turks a few years later, this was seen as divine retribution for accepting those heresies.

The victories of Ivan IV over the khans in the sixteenth century had led to the belief in the theory that "Moscow is the

¹ibid. p. 55.

²Preobrazhensky, op. cit., p. 95.

third Rome, and a fourth there will not be". That is, that Moscow was to be the third and final leader of the true Church. Rome and Byzantium had fallen to heretics and infidels, and it was now forever up to Russia to lead the faithful. If Moscow, the third Rome, was to accept the same heresies as had Byzantium, then it too would fall. Since "a fourth there will not be", acceptance of Nikon's innovations would inevitably bring on the end of the world. This was no idle threat. The eastern Church has always contained a larger element of mysticism than the west; fears about the coming of the apocalypse were always surfacing, especially in times of great hardship, or at the coming of a millennium. Since the Time of Troubles these apocalyptic forecasts had again become widely believed in Russia, and the nearing of the year 1666 was also cause for great concern. According to the Bible the number 666 is the mark of the Beast, the Antichrist, and his advent on earth foretells the end of the world. Changes in the Church, coming so close to that year, seemed to confirm the worst fears of the Russian people.

There was also a general mistrust of foreigners among the population. During the course of the seventeenth century Russians had been subjected to numerous invasions, and seen their people and churches treated abominably by both eastern and western armies. Trade with England, Germany and Holland had greatly increased during the reigns of Mikhail Fedorovich and Alexei Mikhailovich, and an influx of foreigners had settled in Moscow. Since there was such a dearth of educated Russians, Nikon had imported scholars from Greece, as well as

from Byelorussia and the Ukraine after its unification with Russia. The latter had been greatly influenced in its teachings by the Latin Catholic West. These foreigners were appointed instead of Russians to official positions within the government and court, which helped to fire resentment.

Nikon's forceful personality also seems to have played a part in the Old Believer movement. A contemporary described him thus: "Beneath his ecclesiastical robes there beats the heart of a power-hungry boyar. Though personally pious he had a fondness for luxury, ostentation and ceremonial display"¹. The anger of the earliest Old Believers was directed almost as much against him as against his policies. Zenkovsky suggests that the loss of influence within the church by reformers such as Neronov, who was barred from acting as a priest, may have been one reason why he worked so actively against Nikon. "In the opposition of Neronov to the patriarch's measures, personal, and not just ideological motives, undoubtedly played a significant role"². Syrtsov would agree with this. He describes Neronov as wavering over the reforms, at times admitting that Nikon was right, and suggests all Neronov really wanted was for the patriarch to respect and take counsel from himself and the other Zealots³. Lupinin speaks more generally of the enormous amount of hatred engendered by Nikon, which played a disproportionate role in

¹Dukes, Paul, op. cit., p. 6.

²Zenkovsky, *Russkoe staroobryadchestvo*, p. 236.

³Syrtsov, I., *Vozmushchenie solovetskikh monakhov - staroobryadtsev v XVII veke*, Kostroma, 1888. Reprinted Farnborough, 1969. p. 32.

the schism¹. In some of the Old Believer literary works - most notably those by Avvakum - references to Nikon become frenzied with anger and hatred. Certainly Nikon's treatment of his former friends and allies was cruel, abrupt, and inexplicable, and this acted as a common complaint which united them and strengthened their resolve against him.

Just as painful and bewildering to both Zealots and the Russian masses was the scope and arbitrariness of the changes themselves. The Greek hierarchs and Patriarch Paisios of Constantinople sent Nikon a letter in 1655 explaining that although the entire Orthodox Church must be unanimous on points of dogma and the confession of faith, minor variations in ritual, such as whether a two- or three- finger sign of the cross was used, were acceptable. They urged him not to risk splitting the Church over these unimportant details. Nikon, however, would not listen. "While bringing almost no improvement to the text or order to the service, all these innovations made more difficult the work of the clergy, brought chaos into the church service, and, what was particularly dangerous, undermined the faith of parishioners in the meaning, purity, and correctness of its rules"². And since these reforms had been forced on them so quickly and so incomprehensibly, the Old Believers and their followers mistrusted every other action of the patriarch as well.

¹Lupinin, N., op. cit., p. 86.

²Zenkovsky, *Russkoe staroobryadchestvo*, p. 225.

Between 1668-1676 the fury over church reforms erupted in what Ankudinovna calls "the culminating point of the beginning of the raskol",¹ and in what was certainly an unprecedented event in Russian history. Russian troops carried on a military siege not during war but in time of peace, against not a foreign army, but rebellious monks at the Solovki monastery, its own Russian people. The uprising was perhaps the most significant event in the entire Old Believer movement with the exception of the actual changes wrought by Nikon. For one thing, it was a watershed in the frustration felt against the authorities who imposed those changes, which had been building since the persecution of their first opponents. Also, the occurrence at Solovki was a kind of microcosm of the entire church schism; the roots of the uprising there had many of the characteristics of what had happened outside: a mixture of religious zeal, misunderstanding, ambition, and personal dislike, and the later attachment of non-religious, political protesters who used the occasion to rebel against the state. The martyrdom of so many monks at one of Russia's largest and most prominent monasteries engendered massive support for the Old Believer cause, convincing many of those wavering toward the official Church to keep the old faith. Finally, the legacy that it left through the teachings of its former monks may well be said to have laid the foundations on which the Old Believer movement was to survive and continue through the coming centuries.

¹Ankudinovna, L.E., *op. cit.*, p. 67.

The monastery of Solovki is located far in the north of Russia on an island in the White Sea. Almost since its foundation in the 1430's it has held an important place in Russia's history. It was one of the strongest centres in the country for collecting, creating and distributing manuscripts, had built up a large library, and had a long tradition of well-educated elders. Because of its location, the monastery was also used as a fortress against invading Swedes. Likhachev called it "not just a fortress, but that efficient centre from which emanated the general leadership in defensive preparations, and in the event of invasion also in military operations"¹. The monastery was preeminent both for its spiritual heritage (Crummey calls it the religious capital of the European north) and its economic wealth, due mainly to its extraction and sale of salt. It was usual for monasteries, who were generally the richest landholders in the country, to help the Tsar pay his troops in times of difficulty, and one source notes that during the reign of Alexei Mikhailovich (1645-1676), the Solovki monastery sent 41,414 roubles to Moscow for military pay². The prestigious position of Solovki may have made Alexei particularly loath to take too drastic or violent steps over its insubordination, which helps explain why the siege lasted for so long. In the minds of the people, the opposition of this particular monastery had added authority, and the tragedy of its ruin was so much the greater.

¹Rozov, N.N., Commentary, *Povest' o solovetskom vosstanii. Faksimile rukopisi XVII veka.* Moscow, 1982. p.23.

²Pushkarev, S.G., *Rol' pravoslavnoi tserkvi v Istorii Russii,* New York, 1985. p. 30.

Nikon had come into conflict with Solovki long before he became patriarch. In the 1630's he had been a student of Eleazar, who was the head of the Anzerskaya pustyn', a small cloister on a patch of land owned by Solovki. This small community kept turning to the monastery for help, which was usually refused. The monks resented a cloister living independently on their land, and also they disliked the favouritism shown by Tsar Mikhail toward the Anzersk monks. In 1656 at Nikon's suggestion Alexei made the Anzerskaya pustyn' definitively independent of Solovki, while the Solovki monks were still ordered to give bread and workers to help the cloister. As patriarch, Nikon also established the new Krestny monastery, and gave it two of the best Solovki estates.

In 1649 Nikon was made metropolitan of Novgorod, so that the monastery at Solovki now fell under his jurisdiction. Traditionally, the metropolitan wielded unlimited power over his possession, which included the church and clergy, as well as the lands it owned and the peasants and serfs who worked the land. Although this power had been curtailed by the Law Code, Nikon was made exempt from its restrictions. In 1651 he was given a letter from the Tsar giving him full rights and control over the entire Novgorod region.

Because they were so isolated on their island, the Solovki monks were used to exercising complete freedom from official secular or religious authorities. They set their own rules, and judicial matters were resolved by the monastery's own councils. Traditionally they had always elected their own

leader (most monastery hegumen and archimandrites were appointed by the Tsar), who was then sent to Moscow for official confirmation. Nikon now began to intrude in their affairs.

He tried to improve morality at the monastery, which had degenerated considerably, particularly under Archimandrite Il'ya (1645-1659). Drunkenness, brawling and thievery were among the vices allowed to go unchecked, for which Metropolitan Makarii accused Il'ya of bringing dishonour to the monastery.¹ Il'ya was also warned by the Tsar in 1647 to stop and punish drunkenness, but little heed was paid to outsiders. Orders sent from Nikon refusing to allow fish to be served on Saturdays and forbidding alcohol at any time were deeply resented. One action of Nikon's above all earned him the eternal hatred of the monks: the removal from Solovki in 1652 of the sacred relics of the prelate Filipp. Nikon had the relics brought to Moscow with great ceremony, and Alexei acknowledged the guilt of his ancestor Ivan IV, who had had Filipp executed for speaking against him. Nikon probably hoped by this to strengthen the tacit understanding that a Tsar should not dominate his spiritual counterpart. The Solovki monks, however, saw only the theft of one of their most cherished treasures, which they were powerless to stop.

Although emotions were running high from an early stage, Nikon seems to have been unaware that any real trouble

¹Syrtsov, I., op. cit., p. 21.

was brewing at Solovki. Such Old Believer stalwarts as Gerasim Firsov and Prince Mikhail L'vov were exiled to the monastery in 1653 and 1655 respectively. Firsov wrote one of the first major Old Believer tracts on the two-finger sign of the cross. L'vov had worked with Avvakum and other Zealots at the Printing House. Both these men were leading agitators within the monastery, and spoke out publicly against the reforms. In 1655 Neronov escaped from his prison at the Kandalaksha monastery to Solovki, where he was greeted enthusiastically. He did not stay long, but his presence and warm words with Il'ya strengthened the commitment of the monks.

The Solovki monastery was popular already with pilgrims and wandering *yurodivye*, or holy fools, and people visited it from all over Russia. Many people had taken to making holy pilgrimages because of the innovations, and they often came to Solovki. As a result, many enemies of Nikon were constantly coming and going. Rumours began to spread that Solovki was the only cloister still using the old ritual, which attracted even more people who were devoted to the old faith.

New books were published at the end of 1655 and were sent out all over Russia. They reached Solovki at the end of August, 1657. Il'ya however told no one of their arrival, and immediately locked them in a cupboard. Since the island was cut off from the mainland by moving ice from October onward throughout the winter, there were no visitors or informants to report this until Spring. Some of the brothers did find the books however, and one service was sung according to the new

fashion. This worried Il'ya, who laid down a new order in the monastery: no one was permitted to use the new books, or attend a service which did so. This was written on a petition which the monks signed "unanimously", although in fact they had no choice. Syrtsov states that most of the rank and file monks were prepared to sign with no objection; those who objected were among the higher priests. He notes too, however, that only fifty-one inhabitants of Solovki could sign for themselves - which meant the rest were illiterate¹. These were much more likely to follow the archimandrite blindly, whether they understood the real issue or not.

1658 was an important year for the schism in Moscow. In denouncing the Law Code and overstepping his patriarchal authority Nikon had angered the boyars, and this in turn began to alienate the Tsar. Left alone, with no support either from the Church or from Alexei, Nikon bowed to pressure and left. Although still officially patriarch, his power was gone and he lived as a simple monk at the Voskresensky cathedral. This at first seemed a victory for the Old Believers. It had long been assumed that Nikon alone was responsible for the changes, for which he had been labelled "Antichrist" by many. His fall seemed proof of the rightness of their cause. With his departure it was expected that the new books too would be abandoned, and indeed at first the official Church seemed to give the Old Believers cause for hope. For the moment, persecution of opponents to Nikon and his innovations was

¹Syrtsov, I., op. cit., p. 52.

stopped, and the Solovki monastery was not punished for continuing to use the old books.

This period of grace did not last long, however. In 1659 Il'ya died, and a new archimandrite succeeded him. Archimandrite Varfolomei was neither a staunch Old Believer nor a strong supporter of Nikon. He wanted to risk neither anger from Moscow by disobeying the order to use the new books, nor an insurrection against himself by the monks by contradicting their signed petition and using them - so he wavered between the two sides. Although the old ritual was kept at the monastery, it is probable that he sang the new service, or at least attended it, while in Moscow being confirmed in his position. In 1664 Varfolomei was again in Moscow at a time when Alexei needed money for troops to fight the Polish King Kazimierz. In return for his aid, Varfolomei was not reproached for the stubbornness of his monks or reminded to start using the new books. He therefore kept the friendship of the Tsar, while at Solovki he was protected by his own small but powerful circle of supporters. Many of these were loyal to him because he had promoted them to his council, though in doing so he had also created some enemies. While some monks had been promoted, others who had been loyal to Il'ya had been distanced from the monastery council for no apparent reason. These began to form an anti-Varfolomei faction which included such noted Old Believers as Ignatii, Pimen and Ferapont.

At Solovki the situation remained fairly calm until 1666, when a new church Council met to depose Nikon officially. At the same Council, however, Nikon's innovations were upheld, and persecution of those who refused to submit to them began once more. Old Believers were officially anathematized. In 1666 Archimandrite Sergei was sent to Solovki to enforce the new ritual, and he discovered that a militant party of Old Believers had formed there under the leadership of Nikanor, who had been archimandrite of the Tsar's favourite Savvinsky monastery, but who had been consecrated a monk at Solovki. There had been reports of cruelty committed by Varfolomei against those who disobeyed him, and one monk was nearly beaten to death. In 1666 the monks voted to depose Varfolomei - whom they also suspected of accepting the reforms - and to replace him with Nikanor. The Tsar however named Iosif, a partisan of Varfolomei's, to head the monastery instead. The monks refused to accept Iosif, and he was sent back to Moscow. Nikanor became the Solovki leader.

A turning point in the crisis came in 1667 with the famous fifth petition from the monks of Solovki to Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich. In it they stated flatly that the changes in the service were in contradiction with their faith and with the laws set down by their forefathers, and that they preferred to die rather than accept them. This petition has been called one of the foundations on which all future Old Believer literature was based. It was important because in the eyes of the state the monks began to look like rebels, and by disobeying direct orders set down by the Tsar they became criminals. For the

monks too the battle had changed. Previously, their main enemy had been Nikon, but he had been deposed. Now it was the Tsar himself who was demanding changes to the faith - which meant he too could be the Antichrist. Those monks who may have hesitated about taking up arms against their own Tsar could be persuaded now to do so with zeal, for their fight was now against the devil.

In 1668 Ignatii Andreevich Volokhov was sent to Solovki with government troops. His orders however were unclear. Alexei himself still preferred to try persuasion rather than use force against the monks, so Volokhov was instructed not to open fire. During the fierce winters the troops had to move to Sumsky island, and Solovki was again left isolated but safe for a good part of the year. Although the monks had the support of the surrounding peasants, who would sneak food and other supplies to them, the long winter delays had drawn out the siege and they began to get impatient. In 1670, to the astonishment of the troops it was the monks who opened fire with their canons from the monastery walls. Volokhov was replaced by Strel'tsy Chief Klementii Alekseevich Ievlev with more troops in 1672, but he too failed to get results and his place was finally taken by Stolnik Ivan Alekseevich Meshcherinov.

The patience of the Tsar had finally run out, however, and Meshcherinov was given more troops as well as orders to take the monastery by force. Tunnels were built leading up to it, and a secret passage inside was shown to the troops by a

defector monk, Feoktist. The troops fell upon the monastery on 22 January, 1676 and sacked it. The few who survived the original attack were interrogated and then executed.

CHAPTER TWO

The Denisov Brothers and the Old Believer Tradition in Russia

The destruction of Solovki ended the largest and most violent demonstration against the reforms in the Church. On hearing of the brutality with which the troops dealt with the remaining monks, and of the bravery displayed by the martyrs, many of those unsure whether or not to take up the new rituals came down firmly on the side of Old Belief. But the fall of one of the largest and most respected monasteries in Russia was also cause for despair - the last great bastion of the old faith was gone, and its passing coincided with the beginning of another, even more destructive phase in the Old Believer movement which had its origins in religious beliefs which were spreading in Russia long before Nikon. Even in the 1620's fears about the end of the world and the coming of Antichrist were widespread, probably due in part to the chaos and violence of the Time of Troubles. Around Vyazniki and in the Ukraine the monk Kapiton began preaching extreme asceticism to purify oneself in anticipation of the final consummation. He became famous for wearing heavy chains and severe fasting, and he scorned any who did not agree with his beliefs. Eventually Kapiton ceased going to church services and confessions - the

official priests were not "holy" enough, they had become corrupt. Indeed, there were originally two trends to the schism: one was the Old Believers - those who denounced the higher clergy and secular powers for their betrayal of the old Russian faith, but who still held to the original dogma and foundations of the church. The other, "Kapitonovshchina", or followers of Kapiton, completely rejected the institution of the priesthood, the holy sacraments and even the ritual of the church service. These were the first to be labelled "bespopovtsy", or "the priestless". Early on the two trends became confused in the minds of the people, and the monarchy considered all schismatics as a single group in opposition to the state. Also, some of the philosophies of Kapitonovshchina were adopted by Old Believers, further mixing the groups. In particular, the ideal of self-abnegation and self-denial, which began to take on the extreme form of fasting to death, gained popularity.

Once reforms had been introduced and serious persecution of the Old Believers had begun, apocalyptic fears and belief in the reign of Antichrist became even more widespread. Not only had life itself become considerably more difficult and dangerous for those who clung to the old ritual, but the mere fact of continuing to exist in a world ruled by evil was for many unthinkable. Life meant living among the *otstupniki*, the apostates; it also meant giving birth and being born under Antichrist. Surely it was better to die than to serve the devil in any way, and thus carry his mark forever.

During the 1680's and '90's the creed of self-destruction brought to Russia what became known as the "epidemic of death" (*smertonosnaya yazva*). People committed suicide by starvation, drowning, and cutting their own throats, but by far the most popular form was by self-immolation. The most radical teachers of Old Belief travelled all over preaching self-immolation as the only path to salvation, and many of the best known among them were originally from Solovki. They would gather together large groups in one building, usually a church, and set it alight. In 1687 Ignatii burned himself at the Paleostrov monastery with 2,700 others, while Pimen led 200 into a fire. Before burning, all Pimen's followers were consecrated monks - and those who did not wish this were consecrated by force. A year later another well-known Solovki monk, German, also burned in Paleostrov, and Iosif in 1693 collected his followers in a hut while he himself climbed onto the roof and was shot by government troops as he tried to speak to them. Individuals and whole families would construct their own fires and burn to death. According to Pascal self-immolation took 20,000 lives by the year 1691.¹ Vasilii Volosaty, an early and vociferous proponent of self-immolation, saw it as the only way left to be saved from profanation. Like Kapiton, he refused the ministrations of "unholy" priests - i.e., Nikonian ones. There was therefore no way to repent, or to receive purification. All that was left was "Крещение огнем и постом, и покаяние огнем и постом".² The movement was

¹Pascal, P. *Avvakum et les Débuts du Raskol*, Paris, 1963. p. 554.

²Smirnov, L.S., *Istoria russkago raskola staroobryadchestva*, St. Petersburg 1895, p. 61. "Baptism by fire and fasting and repentance by fire and fasting".

probably spurred on by the fact that Avvakum himself seemed to be in favour of the practice. He never specifically stated his position - in fact, according to the widow of Priest Lazar', the fathers at Pustozersk never even discussed the question among themselves - but certain phrases of his were taken as indications of his support. Smirnov declares, "And if, in particular, approval had not been given by Archpriest Avvakum, self-destruction would not have reached its horrific measures."¹ In 1675 Avvakum apparently sent a letter in which he called it "blessed to God", which was quickly disseminated throughout Russia.²

There were other reasons too for the enormous popular appeal of self-immolation. Sophia came to the throne as regent in 1682, after a considerable struggle between the two families supporting Alexei Mikhailovich's first and second wives. Originally the Naryshkin family and Patriarch Ioakim declared Peter I as sole successor, but the Miloslavskys - under Sophia - managed to bribe the strel'tsy into staging a palace coup. The Kremlin was invaded and most of the Naryshkins killed, and Ivan (Sophia's brother) and Peter (her half-brother) were crowned joint tsars. Sophia's victory was based on shaky foundations: not only was she a woman and mere regent, but her power depended almost entirely on the support of the strel'tsy.

¹ibid., p. 62.

²ibid., p. 62.

The majority of strel'tsy, and in particular their leader Prince Khovansky, were supporters of the Old Believers. One possible reason for this is that, "For many of the strel'tsy the question of Old Belief was a question of the old customs, of the establishment in Moscow at that time of new manners; it was a question of life, because the bringing of soldiers from the west was now already threatening to uproot the former strel'tsy army."¹ In order to pander to the troops, Sophia at first approached the Old Believers amicably, and she allowed a public debate in which they could defend their position. Their representative, however, Nikita "Pustosvyat", seized the opportunity to attack not only the Orthodox Church, but Sophia herself as well, and for this they were never forgiven. From then on she mounted a huge campaign of persecution against all schismatics.

Nevertheless, the subject of self-destruction began to cause debate among the Old Believers. Some leaders began speaking out against the practice, most notably Dosifei - a former Solovki monk - and his student Evfrosin, who wrote a tract against it, *Otrazitel'noe pisanie o novoizobretennom puti samoubiistvennykh smertei*, in 1691. Their main arguments were that suicide, for whatever reason, ran counter to Christian doctrine and was a mortal sin. Killing oneself was therefore as bad as submitting to Antichrist, whereas by living the faithful could continue the fight against him. Avvakum is also said to have had a dream in which Satan tells him, "I cannot possess

¹Andreev, op.cit.,p. 115.

those who do not wish it", which was taken to mean that he did not see self-destruction as the only possible means of escape. Suicide also showed a lack of faith in God, not the opposite: to those who remained faithful God would give the strength to resist temptation. With increasing opposition of this kind, as well as a lull in severe persecution when Peter I took the throne, incidents of self-immolation began to die down. However, it was still considered the last recourse in extreme circumstances.

Other differences in opinion among Old Believers on issues besides self-destruction also began to arise, and one in particular caused a permanent division in the movement. This was the argument over what to do about the rapidly decreasing number of priests who had been ordained before the reforms became official in the church Council of 1666-7. The more moderate Old Believers decided to accept priests ordained by the Orthodox Church and who then converted to Old Belief. They took as their guideline Avvakum's exhortation to accept as priest any who agreed to serve according to the old ritual. These became known as the "popovtsy", or priestly Old Believers.

The more radical, however, refused to accept anyone attached to the heretic Nikonian church. They too found support from Avvakum, who had also said that it is better to be your own priest than to go to a Nikonian one. In fact, there is no real contradiction here. Avvakum almost certainly meant that if there was no priest who would serve according the old

rites, it was better to do without. In any event, this group became known as the "bespopovtsy" (priestless), and they did share some of the characteristics of their Kapitonovshchina predecessors. Since there were no priests, they too denied the sacraments (except for baptism, which can be performed by a layman when necessary), the Eucharist, and consecration of priests and monks. And, like Kapiton's followers, most of the justification for such severe measures was the certainty that the end of the world was at hand, and that therefore the greatest need was for purification rather than continuation of "normal" life.

The disagreement between popovtsy and bespopovtsy heightened as time went by. In 1692 a council of bespopovtsy was called in Novgorod under the leadership of Fedosii Vasiliev, to discuss the particularly galling actions of the popovtsy priest Ivan Kolomensky, who not only accepted Nikonian priests, but allowed his parishioners to have contacts with Nikonians. The legacy of the democratically-minded Zealots of Piety can be seen in the organization of the council. For one thing, there were no official hierarchical titles, everyone was simply known as "uchitel'" (teacher), which as Zenkovsky remarks underlines the equality of all bespopovtsy teachers.¹ All decisions were taken in the name of all participants, with no regard to "rank" or walk of life.

¹Zenkovsky, S., *Russkoe staroobryadchestvo*, p. 439.

The "crisis" of Ivan Kolomensky had made it imperative to find a definite policy and set of rules by which to live. The first decision taken was the prohibition of all marriages (and therefore the bearing of children as well) among bespopovtsy. In 1694 a second council enforced even more stringent regulations. Most importantly, bespopovtsy must reject all marital relations and live celibately. That meant that even marriages which had taken place before conversion to bespopovshchina were considered annulled. Zenkovsky comments, "the decisions of the Novgorod bespopovtsy councils only summed up all the preceding preachings of the Russian religious radicals of pessimism."¹ That is, by forcing its members to live only as monks the bespopovtsy, like the followers of Kapiton, denied the continuation of the human race. This was considered necessary because, as the council had also declared, the Antichrist had come and was now reigning on earth. This conference also bore witness to a definite new development in the Old Believer movement. The main concern was no longer the legacy and rites of ancient Russia, but the new dogma of Antichrist and his presence on earth. In the words of Evfrosin, "тетрами своими всю Русь возмутил"; "не по писанию пишут, но по тетраткам незнамым церкви".² The main supporters of this new dogma tended to be those who were also most devoted to self-immolation, such as Ignatii of Solovki.

¹ibid., p. 441.

²ibid., p.444. "With their doctrines they have roused all Rus"; "They write not according to the gospels, but according to doctrines unknown to the church".

As the extreme desperation of Old Believers subsided and their enthusiasm for self-destruction died down, they began to look more toward the alternative suggested by Evfrosin and others to suicidal martyrdom: flight into the "desert", to live as a hermit-monk. Becoming a hermit had long been considered one of the most praiseworthy forms of religious devotion, in the mystically oriented eastern church in general, but particularly in Russia. Many of the old saints of Russia had done this in times of persecution. The "desert" was invariably the sparsely inhabited and inhospitable regions on the edges of the Russian empire. Although conditions of land cultivation and daily life were often extremely difficult, these places held several important advantages. They were for the most part far removed from Moscow and the central government - thus it was possible to continue to practise the old ritual in relative peace. Also, proximity to the Russian border made it possible to flee to another country in an emergency. Some of the most popular areas for Old Believers were Siberia and the Olonets region in northern Russia, the Starodub district, the woods in Belorussia and the Ukraine in the south, and the Cossack territory on the Don steppes.

In general the bespopovtsy took control of the north, while the central and southern regions tended to be taken over by the popovtsy. This was in part because in the south, particularly around Starodub, there were already priests who had long been known and respected, even though they were originally ordained in the Nikonian Church. In the north, on the other hand, the early traditions were more conducive to

bespopovshchina. Even before the church reforms people had been accustomed to services without priests because they were so scarce. Especially in the Novgorod region, the peoples' choice of priest had always been considered more important than that of the metropolitan's, and confirmation was invariably given as a matter of course.

Just a few years before his death, Ignatii settled in a small hermitage on an island in Saro Lake. Daniil Vikulin, who had been converted to Old Belief by Dosifei, was recommended as a pupil to Ignatii when Dosifei left for the Don region. In 1684 Vikulin joined the *skit* (small monastic community) on Saro Lake, and soon after Petr Prokopiev, who was also to become an important Old Believer leader, joined him. Ignatii also converted two other important future leaders: Andrei and Simeon Denisov. Vikulin, Prokopiev and the Denisovs later became known as the "four most glorious teachers" of their community. Each was given a special day of service devoted to him.¹

While still a teenager, Andrei Denisov left home to build his own hermitage. He settled near Vikulin's skit, and often celebrated religious festivals there. Hermits of the Olonets region in particular drew together for the cooperation and support which they needed in so harsh a climate. In 1691 he formally became a member of the community. The island

¹Daniil Vikulin: 31 December; Petr Prokopiev: 16 January; Andrei Denisov: 19 August; and Simeon Denisov: 24 May. See Aleksandr B(rovkovich), *Opisanie nekotorykh sochinenii, napisannykh russkimi raskol'nikami v polzu raskola*, St. Petersburg, 1861. p. 90.

however was too small to support a colony of any size, so Andrei and Daniil soon began looking for a new location. The valley of the Vyg river was ideal both because there were so few inhabitants, and because the region fell between the governments of Olonets and Kholmogory - and so was not really controlled by either. Thus settlers there had additional freedom. Daniil and Andrei chose a spot at the conjunction of the Vyg and Sosnovka rivers. Their hermitage was destroyed by fire, however, and they joined the nearby community led by Zhakharii Stefanov, which became known as the Vygovskaya pustyn'. Early on Andrei's sister Solomoniya joined them, and not long after in 1697 Andrei's father and brothers Simeon and Ioann followed. After Stefanov's death Andrei Denisov and Daniil Vikulin headed the community jointly, but in 1702 Andrei became the sole leader of Vyg.

The early years at Vyg were extremely difficult, and most of the community's efforts had to be directed at sheer survival. Starvation was the main threat. One year an early frost killed the grain crop and the community only survived through desperate action taken by Andrei. He collected together all remaining personal possessions of the members and sold them for food. Nevertheless, the community grew quickly, particularly in numbers of women. The women had always been kept strictly segregated from the men, and in 1706 an entire separate settlement was built for them nearby on the Leksa river. This was put under the charge of Solomoniya, with some men being sent to carry out heavy labour there. The two communities worked in close mutual

cooperation, under the ultimate leadership of the head of Vyg. Also that same year land was acquired on the Chazhenga river, which was more fertile and able to grow larger quantities of crops. This finally safe-guarded Vyg from its continuous and precarious fight against starvation.

The Vyg was organized by Andrei Denisov in accordance both with the democratic principles of the Zealots of Piety, and especially with the spirit of independence and great piety for which the Solovki monastery had been so renowned. The importance of the Solovki tradition at Vyg was very great. "Its [Vyg's] early leaders were determined to build a community that would embody the great Russian monasteries, especially the Solovetskii cloister, which had stood fast for Old Belief."¹ Its leader was chosen by all the members, and by no other outside authority. All members swore complete obedience to him, and any infraction against this could result in severe penalties, including expulsion from the community. In return, Andrei Denisov made it clear by his example that no major policy concerning the life of Vyg's inhabitants would be instituted without consultation and approval from them. Decisions were made by majority rule, with the leader's decision taken as final in the event of disagreement. Work for the community was done collectively. A council of *startsy* (elders) was in charge of the daily running of the community, as well as its spiritual life. "...thanks to their managerial and organizational abilities, the Vyg monastery became the

¹Crummey, R., op. cit., p. 64.

successor of Solovki, which for long already had not been able to right itself from the destruction of the 1670's."¹ And indeed, aside from the outer organization of the community, much of the radicalism and intransigence of Solovki in its view on Old Belief were also inherited by the Vyg.

The Vyg was a bespopovtsy community, which demanded that its members live a strict monastic life. A considerable amount of literature was written regarding rules for keeping men and women separate and chaste; even brothers and sisters were only allowed to see each other once a month. Like Solovki, they were always prepared to take extreme steps if they felt there was no other option. Twice the community was on the verge of mass self-immolation: once at Leksa in response to direct threats from the government; and once much earlier, when members of Vyg gathered in a chapel filled with wood and straw because it was reported that Peter and his troops, on their way to Finland, were heading straight toward the community. Both times, disaster was averted at the last moment.

One of the reasons why Vyg was able to prosper was the attitude of Peter I towards the Old Believers. For much of his reign he paid little attention to them, as long as they did not hinder his own plans. Those who joined peasant revolts against the state (e.g. the Bulavin uprising of 1707-8) were dealt with mercifully, and there was severe punishment for cases of

¹Zenkovsky, S., *Russkoe staroobryadchestvo*, p.458.

lèse-majesty, such as those who accused the Tsar of being the Antichrist. Otherwise, for the most part the Old Believers were left alone. The existence of the Vyg community itself had in fact become known to the government very early on, but no action was taken against it, mainly because it would have been too much trouble to do so. When, in 1714, Simeon Denisov attempted to make legal arrangements for the entire Vyg community to transfer to Chazhenga (for easier access to food supplies), he was arrested by Metropolitan Iov and was brought before Peter for interrogation. After a not unfriendly conversation Peter adopted a "hands-off" approach to the matter. He ordered that Simeon be well-treated and not tortured, but despite petitions from the Vyg Peter gave him back into the custody of the the metropolitan. Denisov managed to escape four years later and hid for six months before returning to Vyg, but no search was ever made for him.

Certain *ukazes* (government directives) which Peter passed also helped improve the situation for Old Believers. In 1702 a law declared a general religious toleration, whose main purpose was to attract foreigners, such as German Protestants, to bring their expertise to Russia, but it applied to everyone who was not a member of the Orthodox Church. In addition, in 1714 Old Believers were given citizenship as a reward for their help in the war with Charles XII of Sweden. The Vyg especially benefitted. In 1711 and 1714 ukazes were passed which forbade anyone from hindering or harassing Old Believers from the Vyg on legitimate business.

The reason for this unprecedented tolerance was the enormous service Vyg gave to Peter's iron industry. For Andrei Denisov was also practically minded, and his goal was the continuation of Old Belief and the life of his community, not martyrdom. "From its very first years, this Church [Vyg] which had pushed the logic of its apocalyptic doctrine all the way to the renunciation of the sacraments, threw itself into the exigencies of a life which was continuing, into those exigencies foreseen by Avvakum."¹ This was what had compelled Andrei to seek out trade with the outside world, and to accept certain compromises with Peter's government. In return for freedom to live and practise their religion as they wished, the Vyg had agreed to supply the important factory at Povenets with lime and iron ore. Vyg was thus able to enjoy the protection of the state even when other Old Believer communities were still suffering persecution. Zenkovsky agrees that despite the use of eschatological themes in their literature, neither Andrei nor Simeon ever succumbed to apocalyptic despair.² In this they proved themselves closer to the disciples of Dosifei, Evfrosin and the popovtsy than to Ignatii and the followers of Kapiton.

It had always been the goal of Andrei Denisov that the entire old Russian Church would be reborn as one, and take up its role as leader of the Christian world. The belief in the "Moscow the third Rome" ideal had not disappeared; "Moscow" had simply been changed to "Russia". Both Denisovs worked toward the reconciliation of all Old Believer factions, and

¹Pascal,P., op. cit., p. 560.

²Zenkovsky, S., *Russkoe staroobryadchestvo*, p. 462.

Andrei was one of few bespopovtsy leaders who kept friendly links with some popovtsy. He helped popovtsy Deacon Aleksandr from Starodub formulate answers to questions on the service ritual put to his community by Orthodox missionary Bishop Pitirim. Andrei seemed to believe that at least in theory it would be possible for a priesthood of Old Believers to exist, but that it was impossible at that time because the authority for consecration was monopolized by the Nikonians. Enormous efforts had been made by the popovtsy to find in the East a bishop of the true old Orthodox Church, who could legitimately ordain more priests, and in the 1730's Vyg together with Vetka (the largest popovtsy community) sent ambassadors to help in the search. But for both Andrei and Simeon, as it had been for Avvakum, the importance of a church hierarchy was secondary to faith in Christ and the leading of a sincerely religious life.

Also like Solovki, the Vyg community under the Denisovs quickly became highly regarded for its scholarship and education. In the first half of the eighteenth century Vyg produced literature, icons in the old style, manuscript copies, and its own system of education, and became the "cultural capital" of Old Belief - for both popovtsy and bespopovtsy alike. People came to Vyg from all over Russia in search of edification and instruction. It was the specific duty of many of the Leksa women to copy manuscripts so that they could be disseminated. "To respond to their demands, Andrei began a workshop where without let-up copyists, with a handwriting still admired today for its cleanness and beauty, copied

liturgical books, the Fathers, the *Supplications*, and other books recently composed for the defence of the faith."¹ Much of this was due to the work of Andrei Denisov, carried on by his brother and other students. Although it is uncertain where Andrei received his education, it is clear that he was extremely learned in ecclesiastical history and literature, as well as being knowledgeable on the rhetorical conventions of the day. He made frequent trips on behalf of Vyg, and used every opportunity to study and collect books. Druzhinin notes that by the 1730's 257 books were recorded in the Vyg library.² It contained not only theological works, but history, grammar, poetry and philosophy as well.

Early scholars seemed to think that Andrei studied grammar and rhetoric while in Kiev with Manuil Petrov. Barsov even suggests that Feofan Prokopovich, rector of the Kiev academy, was Andrei Denisov's teacher. Druzhinin believes it more probable that he studied in Moscow or Novgorod under Likhud³. Wherever he studied, Andrei was certainly able both to produce his own works of considerable scholarship, and to pass his knowledge on to others at Vyg. As Crummey notes, "Andrei Denisov, more than any other leader, was the creator of the Vyg community's literature and culture. With his usual perceptiveness, he realized that, if the Vyg community and Old Belief as a whole were to survive, their leaders would have to arm themselves for the fight against the

¹Pascal, P., op. cit., p. 559.

²Druzhinin, "Slovesnyya nauki v Vygovskoi Pomorskoj pustyni", *Zhurnal ministerstva narodnago prosveshcheniya*, 1911, no. 6. p. 230.

³ibid. p.235-6.

literary and scholarly weapons of the official church."¹ This was particularly important because the vast majority of Old Believers came from the lower strata of society, serfs, peasants and minor parish priests and monks, as well as some tradesmen.² The level of education among them was generally extremely low, the attainments of leaders such as Avvakum being a rare exception. Orthodox missionaries, who had the advantage of the state printing press behind them and the right to publish their works (which the Old Believers did not have), had already proved themselves far more of a threat to Old Belief than troops, taxes, and persecution. But by educating the peasants and lower classes the Old Believers made sure that their followers could read their literature. There was much more ideological resistance to western culture among them than among the nobility who had been educated in the modern Latin schools. Thus the Old Believers' education was doubly effective.

Since most Nikonians, as well as Peter I, were convinced that the only reason Old Believers refused to change their ways was ignorance and misunderstanding of what the reforms were about, several direct "scholarly" challenges were made. In 1716 Pitirim, a former Old Believer, sent a list of 130 questions on differences in the service to popovtsy Old Believer leaders in Nizhni-Novgorod and demanded that they prepare for public

¹Crummey, R., *op. cit.*, p.93.

² The Denisovs themselves were descended from the Myshetskiis, a line of princes, although their immediate ancestors had lived as fairly well-off peasants. Other notable exceptions were the Boyarina Fedosiya Morozova and her sister Evdokia Urusova.

debate. With no scholars, no materials or proper conditions for study, and the fact that Pitirim could always resort to force if necessary, the Old Believers were unwilling to come forward. Finally the Nizhni-Novgorod leaders asked Andrei Denisov for help, and in answer to the questions he produced the *Diakonovy otvety* in 1719. The government, however, wanted a public debate, and in 1722 an ukaz laid down conditions according to which the Old Believers must appear and defend themselves. If they did so, they would be free to go in peace, but if they did not appear before the deadline they would be put on trial by the state. At first there was no response, but pressure from the monk Neofit on the Vyg leaders finally forced their hand. They responded with the *Pomorskie otvety*, which both put an end to attempts by the Orthodox Church to convert them through "reason", and firmly established Andrei Denisov as the acknowledged authority among Old Believers.

Andrei and those who worked on the *Otvety* proved their erudition in other ways as well. Aside from depending on arguments culled from the writings of the Church fathers, they undertook paleographic analyses of historical texts as well - for the first time in Russia. They were able to prove that a work supposedly written in Kiev in 1157, which strengthened the case for the state church, was in fact a fraud. Other forgeries were also exposed.

Crummey notes that in addition to polemical compilations and numerous sermons and letters, Vyg produced three historical works of particular importance: Simeon Denisov's

Vinograd Rossiiskii, his *Istoria o otsekh i stradalt'sekh solovetskikh*, and Ivan Filippov's *Istoria o zachale Vygovskoi pustyni*. "The emphasis on history was only natural. The Vyg fathers wanted to construct for their followers a complete ideological system that would explain their isolation from the rest of Russian society, justify their opposition to the ecclesiastical and civil authorities, and give them hope that their cause would ultimately triumph."¹ The importance of history to the entire Old Believer movement, which was really a conservative backlash, was from the start enormous. Although even the Zealots of Piety had been originally a radical reform-minded group, the reforms they wanted would not move them forward, but back in time. They wanted a return to the golden era of the Russian saints and early Greek fathers, and away from the corruption which had fallen upon the church due to more recent political and social upheavals. Simeon too believed that pre-reform Russia had been the embodiment of the perfect Christian state, what he called "the wonderful Vineyard of Russia, planted by God as a second paradise," "a vineyard ruled by the miraculous power of the law of salvation."² Although Peter I had, on the one hand, alleviated and even helped the plight of Old Believers, he also shocked and horrified them by his extreme reformist measures. As Peter became more radical and determined in his goal of "driving" Russia into the eighteenth century of western Europe, the Old Believers became more adamantly

¹Crummey, R., op.cit., p.96.

²Zenkovsky, S. "The Ideological World of the Denisov Brothers", *Harvard Slavic Studies*, Cambridge, MA, 3, 1957. p. 57.

conservative. Such diametrically opposed forces in society could not continue long in the fairly neutral stance toward each other with which Peter's reign had begun.

There were various sections of the Russian community that were disturbed by Peter I's drastic reforms, and several popular revolts broke out during his reign. The first one on a large scale occurred in Astrakhan in 1705. Soldiers, strel'tsy and peasants were unhappy with harsh taxes and discipline exacted by the voevoda in charge. In 1707 Cossacks on the Don led by Kondraty Bulavin revolted and were not stopped for almost two years. Smaller-scale uprisings occurred into the 1720's. Part of the problem was Russian conservatism: in Astrakhan, "the last straw turned out to be the decree prohibiting the wearing of beards and Russian dress."¹ The Old Believers were not the only ones to feel injured and appalled by the sudden enforced flood of foreign customs and manners. There were many who believed Peter was a changeling, not the real Tsar at all but the Antichrist.

For Old Believers however the problem was especially acute, and became worse as Peter began to realize the extent of their following in Russia. According to Crummey two things in particular brought the Old Believers to his attention. One was the death of his son Alexei in 1718, which made Peter very suspicious of all conservative elements in Russia hostile to his reforms. The second was a report by Pitirim which showed

¹Dukes, P., *op. cit.*, p.83.

how large the numbers of Old Believers were, and that they did not say prayers for the imperial family.¹ In 1714 and 1716 ukazes forced all Old Believers to register with the government and pay double the usual capitation tax. Strict punishments awaited any who neglected to register, or any who helped Old Believers to avoid doing so, such as Orthodox parish priests who had at first agreed to put the names of Old Believers on their church lists even though they never appeared in church. In 1722 anyone who wore a beard - which the Old Believers' religion forbade them to shave - also had to wear old-fashioned clothes. A special tax was placed on beards, and those who kept them also had to wear a copper medallion, the receipt for having paid the tax.

Vyg itself continued to flourish, in part because of the favouritism it was shown due to its help in the iron factory, and in part because many of Peter's measures were easily avoided and the number of names on the register kept low. Andrei Denisov led the community until his death in 1730. At that time his brother Simeon was elected as co-leader with Daniil Vikulin. Under this joint leadership it seems that Daniil looked after the inner, spiritual life of the community, while Simeon took over the more practical aspects of running it.² When new buildings were put up Simeon worked along with the others digging with his hands and carrying stones.

¹Crummey, R., op. cit. p.80.

²B(rovkovich), A., op. cit., p.74.

The first crisis that faced the new leaders occurred in 1729-30. The Povenets factory had closed in 1726 and, possibly to compensate for service there, Vyg was ordered to give double the number of recruits for military service that Orthodox communities gave. Petitions were sent begging to be excused from recruitment because of the poverty of the region and the fact that they were already paying double capitation taxes. The situation worsened when Ivan Filippov was arrested, and it was then that Andrei died. In the end, help came from an unexpected source. A general in the senate agreed to help them, and pushed through a decree which exempted the community from supplying any soldiers at all.

Vikulin died in 1733 and Simeon Denisov was elected sole leader of Vyg. However not everyone was entirely happy with this. One of the elders, Filipp, began to quarrel with Simeon over the policy of compromise with Antichrist's government, which he felt should be rejected completely. Filipp had agreed with Vikulin, who supported the practice of self-immolation, while Simeon was against it. Filipp may have felt that he, rather than Denisov, was the rightful successor to the Vyg leadership. For a while the antagonism caused tension in the community, but nothing more. A few years later however it would come to the surface and cause a serious rift.

Under the reigns of Empress Anna, and later Elizabeth, the situation for Old Believers became more difficult. They were considered potential political opponents, and once again real attempts were made to wipe them out completely. New

legislation was passed prohibiting all missionary work for Old Belief, and all registered Old Believers had to educate their children in official Orthodoxy. Also, the exemption from military service attracted people to Old Belief, so in 1738 the law was changed, and once again they too had to supply men and horses to the state. Also that same year investigations were made to ascertain more exact numbers of the Old Believers and to find out more about the nature of their practices. Orthodox missionary work was again encouraged. Aside from introducing new legislation, the government put more effort into enforcing laws on Old Belief already in existence.

It was under Simeon's leadership that Vyg had to face "the most grave crisis of its entire existence"¹ - the affair of Ivan Krugly. Krugly had been a member of Vyg but was expelled for willfulness and breaches of discipline. He went to a new community on Vygozero and became *starosta*, or elder, but was expelled from there as well. In anger Krugly tried to get revenge, and Vygozero retaliated by accusing him of theft. To escape the police investigation Krugly fled back to Vyg in 1736, but was nevertheless arrested and taken to St. Petersburg. To defend himself, Krugly began revealing facts about Old Believer practices, especially those at Vyg, which led to the arrests of several of its members. Finding itself in danger, Vyg struck back by giving details of Krugly's past to the authorities, and in particular of how he had been a fugitive

¹Crummey, R., op.cit., p.168.

peasant from Moscow. Unfortunately, this defence backfired for, with nothing left to lose, Krugly told his captors everything he knew about the Vyg, most importantly that prayers were not said there for the empress and royal family. This turned the case into an extremely serious one against Vyg for lèse-majesty.

Many Old Believers refused to pray for the empress because they believed the imperial family either to be, or to be descended from, the Antichrist, who had tried to destroy the true faith. But some, such as the popovtsy at Vetka, continued to pray for the royal family simply out of habit, because these prayers were a traditional and accepted part of the service. For Vyg, however, the refusal to keep these prayers was symbolic both of their discontent with the government, and of their ties with the early Old Believers. In keeping with the democratic principles of the early leaders, Vyg had declared in 1698, "We...do not pray for the tsar. We are all equal and do not accept any imposed authority."¹ Even more importantly, "every one of its [Vyg's] members knew that the monks of the Solovetskii monastery, whom they honoured as their precursors, had chosen the gesture as the best possible expression of their hostility toward the Russian state."² A challenge to this gesture was therefore particularly significant, and the reaction to any consideration of compromise on it would inevitably be charged with emotion.

¹ Zenkovsky, S., *The Ideological World of the Denisov Brothers*, op. cit., p. 60.

² Crummey, R., op. cit., p. 171.

Simeon and other moderate members of Vyg had long realized that the government would never be able to tolerate such disloyalty, and their best defence had been to conceal the omission from the authorities. After Krugly's revelations, Denisov called a council meeting and urged the members to submit to demands that they pray for the emperess in order to save the community. The motion was passed, but the idea so thoroughly incensed Filipp and his followers that they had not even attended the meeting. Rather than compromise with Antichrist, he left Vyg and went into hiding with a number of supporters.

In any event the decision had come too late - Anna had already sent out the Samarin commission to conduct a full investigation and Manuil Petrov, Ivan Filippov, and Simeon Denisov were all arrested. Leksa prepared for self-immolation, and were only dissuaded from this course by a letter from Simeon himself begging them not to do so. Just when it seemed there was no escape, Krugly suddenly changed his testimony, although exactly why is still unknown. He claimed, even under torture, that all he had said before was false. The lèse-majesty accusation was dropped and the community was saved. In 1739 the prisoners were released, and in 1744 the Samarin investigation was officially ended by decree.

The affair, however, had serious long-term effects. During the years of investigation morale in the community had lowered considerably, and discipline while the leaders were in

prison had broken down. Robberies took place in both settlements. Also, while in prison Simeon had become seriously ill, and he died in September, 1740. Ivan Filippov became the next leader, but just at the time when a firm guiding hand was essential Filippov took much less direct control in the running of Vyg than had his predecessors. The rupture left by Filipp was also irreparable. He himself was discovered by the government in 1742 and committed self-immolation with fifty followers, but his militant ideology had attracted other Old Believers. Some left Vyg and set up colonies in northern Norway, as well as one in Russia which became a rival to Vyg.

Perhaps most important was the moral authority that Vyg lost due to the Krugly incident. It might seem ironic that at the moment of crisis Simeon Denisov had backed down rather than destroy the community when faced with a direct challenge by the government - exactly the opposite of the decision he so admired in the Solovki fathers. In this Simeon and the Vyg had departed completely from the Solovki tradition so important to it, by choosing compromise with a heretical government, and life, instead of standing firm to the death for the old faith. By doing so he weakened the ties of tradition which bound them. Much of the integrity of the community and what it symbolized was gone too. Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that the conditions at both Vyg and for Old Believers in general had changed considerably from the desperate early days of the schism and the Solovki uprising. Vyg had proved that even in a world

ruled by Antichrist there was still a place for the faithful on earth, and work for them to do. It had proved that it was possible to continue and to flourish as a community loyal to Old Belief. At the same time, it had become clear that both the Nikonian church and Old Belief were going to remain in Russia side by side for some time to come. Simeon Denisov may have realized that the age of martyrdom was over, and what was necessary now for Old Believers was to have leaders and teachers for the next generations. At least at Vyg, destructive fanaticism had given way to reason, moderation, and compromise, which allowed for survival and the continuity of the old faith and traditions.

Map of Northwestern and Central Russia*



* Reproduced from Crummev, R., op. cit., p.17.

CHAPTER THREE

Simeon Denisov's "История о Отцехъ и Страдальцехъ Соловецкихъ"

The story of the Solovki martyrs was extremely popular among Old Believers and there were numerous editions printed of Simeon Denisov's *Istoria o otsekh i stradal'tsekh solovetskikh*.¹ In 1912 Druzhinin cited the manuscripts of the *Istoria* under the various titles by which it was known. There were then six.² At least fifty-two manuscripts containing versions of the *Istoria* have been identified since the publication of Druzhinin's guide, especially in the manuscript collections of Druzhinin, Kalikin, Egorov and Barsov. Seven copies were known in 1912 under the title "История о отцехъ и страдальцехъ Соловецкихъ, иже за благочестие и святыя церковныя законы и предания въ настоящия времена великодушно пострадаша",³ and since then at least fourteen more have come to light. There are sixteen recorded copies of the "Повесть о отцехъ и страдальцехъ Соловецкаго

¹All references in this work refer to: "Istoria o otsekh i stradal'tsekh solovetskikh", *Pamyatniki istorii drevnei Rusi*. XVII veka, Kniga pervaya, Moscow, 1988. pp. 155-196. Hereafter known as *Istoria*.

²Druzhinin, V.G., "Pisaniya russkikh staroobryadtsev", *Letopis' zanyatiya arkheograficheskoi kommissii za 1912 god*, St. Petersburg, 1913. p. 135-136.

³"History of the Solovki Fathers and Martyrs, and How They Suffered Greatly For the Piety and Sacred Laws and Traditions of the Church in Our Time".

монастыря, иже за благочестие и святая церковныя законы и предания великодушно пострадаша въ лето 7172, сочиненная Выгорецкаго общежителства настоятелемъ Симеономъ Дионисиевичемъ"¹ to which we can now add at least two more. These are the most popular versions. Renditions under shorter titles occur less frequently. There were two known copies of the "История о взятии Соловецкой обители", and a third has since been discovered. One copy is known of the "Повести о отцехъ и страдальцахъ Соловецкихъ"; and three of the "История о взятии Соловецкаго монастыря".² In 1912 there were also two known copies of the "История о еже кия ради вины святыхъ Соловецкия киновии святые отцы и ихъ трудницы подъяша лютая страдания и скончашеся, ейже предисловие сице"³, and since then one other manuscript and one incomplete manuscript under this title has been discovered. Since Druzhinin's study two new titles have also been found. There are at least four known manuscripts with the title "История о оцехъ и страдальцехъ соловецкого монастыря", and at least one has been found entitled "История или повесть о страдании иноков соловецкого монастыря".⁴ An extended redaction of the story has also been found in an extended

¹"Story of the Fathers and Martyrs of the Solovki Monastery, and How They Suffered Greatly for the Piety and Sacred Laws and Traditions of the Church in the Year 7172 , Written by Simeon Denisov, Leader of the Vyg Cloister".

²"History of the Siege of the Solovki Cloister"; "Story of the Solovki Fathers and Martyrs; "History of the Siege of the Solovki Monastery".

³"History of How the Sacred Fathers and Labourers of the Sacred Solovki Cloister for Their Sins Underwent Cruel Suffering and Died".

⁴"History of the Fathers and Martyrs of the Solovki Monastery", "History or Story of the Suffering of the Monks of the Solovki Monastery".

version of the *Vinograd Rossiiskii*.¹ The *Istoria* was published at least five times just between 1788 and 1795, and in the nineteenth century publications were made in Poland and Romania.² A complete study of all available versions has only recently begun.

In his study of the *Istoria*, Aleksandr B. sees that its structure is divided into five main parts: 1.) the introduction, 2.) the foundation and early years of the Solovki cloister, 3.) descriptions of the fathers and monks who lived there before the revolt, 4.) the uprising itself, and 5.) the conclusion.³ This is a reasonable appraisal, but it does not really reflect the true points of emphasis of the work, and ignores to a certain extent the literary tradition from which it comes.

Just as Denisov's later work *Vinograd Rossiiskii* was a martyrology of nearly all Old Believer martyrs, the *Istoria* is also a tribute to early martyrs who died for the old faith. Thus it is related to the many *zhitiya*, or biographies, written about famous monks (such as Epifanii) or stalwart lay Old Believers (such as Boyarinya Morozova), and to some extent shares their hagiographic format. It also shares some of the propagandistic characteristics of much Old Believer literature, and it is a work that seeks to teach and strengthen its readers in the rightness of the cause, as well as to lament and praise the dead. Finally,

¹Sullivan, J., "Vertograd Dukhovny: An Extended Edition of Simeon Denisov's *Vinograd Rossiiskii*", *Slavonic and East European Review*, London, vol. 58, no. 4, Oct. 1980. p. 504.

²Rozov, N.N., op. cit., p. 32.

³B(rovkovich), Aleksandr, op. cit., p.93.

the work is specifically about the rebellion of these monks against the demands of Nikon and the government, and the consequent battle and final destruction of the cloister. Denisov's account is structured around this event and therefore it can be more accurately viewed as divided into three parts, each with three subdivisions, plus an introduction and conclusion:

Introduction

- I. Historical background (foundation; early fathers; events leading up to the siege).
- II. Siege of the monastery (under Volokhov; Ievlev; Meshcherinov).
- III. After the siege (fate of the monks and Meshcherinov; miracles associated with the martyrs; Solovki teachers who escaped).

Conclusion

Denisov sets out in the introduction what he intends to relate. First, he says, he will describe the foundation of the cloister, its founders and early fathers, and the laws and traditions by which they lived. Then he will tell of the suffering and strength of spirit of the monks at the time of the monastery's destruction. He also explains here the sources of his information: descriptions of events were collected from various writers, as well as from oral accounts by those who were present during the siege, and from remaining Solovki fathers. This is important because confirmation of the truth of what happened as related in Simeon's account is given by so many sources that an even greater air of authority and veracity is achieved. Denisov also gives the reason for writing down the story here: "В сем собрании предлагаем, да от корене древо и от сего ветви, от ветвей же плоды

удобнейше объявятся, и неведящие, слышавше, удивятся, ведящие же памятью обновятся..."¹ These martyrs must never be forgotten, and just as importantly, nor must the roots - the teachers, fathers, and traditions - from which they came.

Part One begins with the "roots" of both the monastery and the Old Believer rebels. We are told how Savatii and Zosima built the first cloister, and some of the most famous fathers who lived there are mentioned. Among these are St. Filip - the "second founder" who helped to build the church, Irinarkh - hegumen and hermit, Diodor and Andrei - who both worked at Solovki before living many years as hermits. Later fathers include Eleazar', leader of the Anzerskaya pustyn', who "foresaw the evil that Nikon would do", and Il'ya - hegumen and first archimandrite of Solovki.

There are several passages concerning Nikon, who came suddenly into this "blooming garden of monks", and exacted irreparable damage. Denisov exclaims that even in the deepest confines of his heart, a man should not contemplate his innovations. Nikon is said to have shaken the unshakable parameters of the church, and changed the unchangeable rules of piety.

Some of the most important events leading up to the rebellion and siege are then described. For example, the

¹*Istoria*, "In this work we set out the tree from its roots, and from this the branches, from which branches the fruits most clearly appear, and he who does not know the story, on hearing it, will wonder, and he who does know it will have his memory renewed..."p. 156.

receipt by the monastery of new service books in 1667, and the monks' reaction to them. Also, the signing of the famous "fifth petition", where the monks firmly declare their refusal to accept changes to the old ritual, even if it means death. Despite attempts made by many spiritual authorities to persuade them to accept the reforms, all of Solovki staunchly refuses.

The monastery was put under siege (or as Denisov puts it, the monks shut themselves behind their walls) in the summer of 1669, and here begins Part Two of the *Istoria*. The first commander in charge of troops was *Stryapchii* Ignatii Andreevich Volokhov. He stayed four years, spending the summer on Zaitsky Island, and retreating in winter to Sumsky Island. Rather than resort immediately to violence, the first step taken by the Tsar to bring the situation under control was to blockade the monastery - there was no way to trade for essential goods, and the monastery's own supplies were eventually depleted. The monks did receive help secretly from the surrounding peasants, but conditions grew extremely difficult. Those monks who were captured were tortured and killed. Denisov says of this time, "Велие утеснение и нужду, велие насилие и скорбь монастырю сотвориша."¹ Under Volokhov the monks first started to feel heavily persecuted.

The next commander to take over was Strel'tsy Leader Klimentii Alekseevich Ievlev. He began to attack the

¹*Istoria*, "...they brought great oppression and need, great violence and grief to the monastery", p. 164.

monastery more actively, by driving its horses into a courtyard and burning them, and burning fishing huts, boats, traps, etc. which were being used by the monks. He was stopped, however, by a great sickness which befell his troops, and which Denisov interprets as the wrath of God. Ievlev returned to Moscow and soon died.

Stolnik and Voevoda Ivan Alekseevich Meshcherinov took his place, arriving with still more troops. By now the Tsar had run out of patience, and Meshcherinov was determined to get results. After two years without success, he found a new plan - digging mines up to the walls. Even then the guards managed to keep the monastery secure, until one monk betrayed them, and showed the troops how to enter the walls when the guard was changing at dawn.

Part three begins with the fall of the monastery, which is described in great detail. Login is given a warning by a ghost of the oncoming troops. He woke up the brothers for prayer until morning, when they returned to their cells. When the troops charged in, some monks, led by one Antony, attacked them and died. Others locked themselves in their cells. The troops swore that if they came out, they would come to no harm - but these promises were not kept. Those who came out were put under guard, interrogated, tortured and executed. Justice did come, however, as Denisov is careful to point out. Meshcherinov was recalled to Moscow for robbing the monastery, and while in Vologda he fell to prodigal ways,

became diseased and died in great pain. Just at the time of the last battle in the monastery, Tsar Alexei fell ill and died.

The bodies of the monks were left on the ground and ice, without proper burial. There were some, however, who had managed to escape. These monks, priests, and preachers who travelled and taught were essential to the spread and survival of the Old Believer movement. Simeon appreciates their importance and acknowledges it, explaining that pupils without a teacher are like sheep without a pastor. Those who escaped from Solovki went out and built other hermitages, and thus "Тако саждение преподобныхъ отецъ Зосимы и Саватиа, изменивъ место отока на пустыни, паки возрастати, паки процветати..."¹ Epifanii preached Old Belief in the Obonezh region, Starets Kirill went to Moscow and suffered torture and prison with Avvakum, Lazar', and Deacon Feodor. The fates of numerous others are also given. As Denisov explains, it would take a year to name all disciples of the Solovki fathers - they are like grains of sand and stars in the sky, innumerable; and among them are both himself and his brother Andrei.

The conclusion is both a lament for the martyrs and a glorification of them. They stood bravely and suffered during a time of trial, and for this they are praised, and those who hear their tale owe "most bitter and most sweet tears". They are called saints, because it was as saints that they lived their lives

¹*Istoria*, "the seeds planted by the most venerable fathers Zosima and Savatii, exchanging their island for the desert, again grow, again flourish". p. 184.

and died for their faith. Denisov exhorts the reader to follow their example and way of life and always to be zealots of the faith.

Some influence from very early literature is apparent. The number three frequently appears in the *Istoria*. Structurally it really consists of three main divisions, with three subdivisions each. Events, too, often occur in threes. There were three smiths forced to make shells for Meshcherinov's cannons: one made 160, the second made 260, and the third - 360. One by one, each allotment is fired on the monastery: the first came through the air, burning and bursting into pieces, but they broke at the walls and did not get near the cloister. The second supply also did little harm. The third and largest consignment came flying at them, making a terrifying noise - but the monastery did not suffer. It was three cannons only that fell within the walls. Later, just before the final raid, a ghost comes to Login three times to warn him of the coming danger. On the third warning, Login finally wakes up the others for prayer. In each case, every step builds slightly toward the climax - the situation goes from bad, to worse, to worst. Even the three commanders grow progressively crueller. No adjective is attached to Volokhov, but Ievlev is called "человек лютой и немилостивый", while for Meshcherinov Denisov uses the description "лютейший мучитель".¹ Three forms the perfect triangle, and represents the Holy Trinity. The concept of the threesome is found in the

¹*Istoria*. "a cruel and heartless man"; "most cruel tormentor". p. 166.

early Russian fairy tales, skomorokh songs and byliny, and is a traditional element of most folk literature.

There are also hints of the Russian military tales in Denisov's description of the battle scenes and the siege itself. The unanimity and brotherhood of spirit of the monks is stressed, as is their unfaltering strength of will even when outnumbered by hundreds. According to Denisov, the decision to stand against the troops was taken by all the monks in council, and despite being given the opportunity, none chose to leave. Before describing the fall in 1676, Denisov is careful to tell the reader first of the successes and miracles that showed God was on the side of the Old Believers. Three different commanders are sent to assail the monastery, each time with more troops and military equipment, but all to no avail. Even cannons shot by the government troops could not breach the walls - except for one, which landed harmlessly in the middle of the courtyard. It is implied that the final defeat was caused solely by the treachery of the monk Feoktist. These elements appear too in, for example, *Povest' o prikhozhonii Stefana Batoriya na grad Pskov*. Loyalty to the Tsar is important: all the soldiers and townspeople are made to swear on the cross as preparation for battle. The victories of Tsar Ivan over the Germans and their terror of him precede the story of the Lithuanian invasion. The Russians are hopelessly outnumbered, but manage to hold back Bathory's troops anyway. When they have done all they can in their own defence, the people of Pskov band together "like loving brothers" and put their trust in God, praying and crying all

through the night. Tears, prayer to God and services all night long are also described by Denisov in the monks' last few days of vigil.

It has been said that in literary style "the Old Believers form a transition from early Russian literature to the literature of the eighteenth century"¹. Elements of both certainly appear in Simeon Denisov's *Istoria*. The influence of early hagiographic literature is felt in much of the format and tone of the work. One traditional element of hagiography is the recounting of miracles associated with the saint. This Denisov does also. When Spring came the ice and snow melted, but near the sea the bodies of the Solovki martyrs lay unmelted and uncorrupted - and this is seen as a supernatural sign of their sainthood. It is also confirmation of the rightness of the cause for which they died, and their bodies are "like trumpets preaching to all". Visions were seen by those in power, in which they are told that if they want the ice to melt, the bodies must be buried. Unusual lights appeared in the sky and visions were seen by many people in the area. As in hagiographical literature, the introduction is highly rhetorical, with comparisons made between the destruction of Solovki and the sack of Troy. The conclusion, extolling the greatness and praiseworthiness of the lives and martyrdom of the monks, is also typical of hagiographical literature.

¹Sullivan, J., "Staroobryadcheskaya rukopisnaya traditsiya i 'Vinograd Rossiiskii' Semena Denisova", from *Sprache, Literatur und Geschichte der Altgläubigen*, April 1986, p. 314.

One way the *Istoria* differs from the old style is in its greater attention to the individual, and in this Denisov follows the newly developed, *prostorechie* ("plain-spoken") style of literature, most notably exemplified by Avvakum. In his *Zhitie protopopa Avvakuma im samym napisanoe*, Avvakum wrote the first autobiography to appear in Russia. His reason for writing it was not to make himself appear a saint, but to bring out the "humanness" of the defenders of Old Belief, despite their heroic suffering and sacrifice. In doing so, he hoped to give strength and encouragement to those who might face trials in the future, so they would not waver. To a certain extent, Denisov follows this example. At each stage of the story, he not only writes about the monks as a group, but gives the names and actions of specific individuals. When the first government commander Volokhov began to persecute the monks, some old men and servants were seized. One of them was Ioann Zakhariev, a former Solovki clerk, who had begun living as a hermit. He was reported to Volokhov by a villager, and was captured. When he refused to reject his old ways and accept the innovations, he was sent to prison where he died of hunger and thirst. Other Solovki inhabitants who died of hunger and cold in prison, such as Dmitri, Tikhon and the novice Iov, are also mentioned by name, and their stories told. After the monastery was taken, the fate of some specific men of Solovki is given: the woodcutter Khrisanf, Feodor, and a student Andrei - who had been known for their piety inside the cloister - were executed by first having their arms and legs cut off, and then their heads. Finally, the work of certain fathers who escaped from the destruction and continued to preach Old

Belief is described. Epifanii and Ignatii wandered around the Obonezh and Kargopol' districts "strengthening people in the old faith"; Pavel, Deacon Serapion, and Login miraculously managed to survive thirty years on an island in total isolation from any other human being, keeping to the old rites.

Toward the end of the seventeenth century rhetoric and poetics made their way to Russia, particularly through the efforts of poets such as Simeon Polotsky, who attended the western-oriented Mogila Academy in Kiev, before moving to Moscow. Books on rhetoric and poetics were among those collected in the library at Vyg, the Denisov Brothers' community, and writers there even created some versions of their own¹. Some influence of these conventions can be seen in Simeon's own work. For example, one mark of this new "Baroque" literature was the use of allusions to Greek classical literature and mythology, often for comparison to bolster the grandness of the subject. Indeed, Denisov begins by comparing the destruction of Solovki to that of Troy, and explains that if Homer manifested such zeal, hard work, and selfless devotion to portraying the brave men who fought that battle, so it befits Denisov to show even greater zeal and effort in recalling the monks of Solovki.² The reference to Troy is continued later, when the monk who revealed to the troops a secret passage

¹Sullivan, J., *ibid.*, p. 314. For a more detailed description of the books found in the Vyg library see also, V.G. Druzhinin, *Slovesnyya nauki v Vygovskoi Pomorskoj pustyni*, *op. cit.*, p. 243-248.

²*Istoria*. Compare the description of Homer's efforts, "только тщание, только подвизание, толикий трудъ показа..." to what Solovki deserves from its author, "множайшее тщание, вящий подвигъ и теплейшее усердие явити..." p. 155.

into the monastery is described "И яко Енея и Антеноръ трояномъ, тако лукавый Феоктисть своей обители..."¹ Like the Baroque poets, Denisov mixes secular and religious works. To strengthen his claim that the Solovki martyrs were saints, he also quotes passages from John Chrysostom (e.g. "Святыню вера творить"; "Святи суть вси, елицы веру праву съ житиемъ имуть")² on the nature of sainthood.

The use of rhyming prose was characteristic of early Russian literature - for example, it occurs in the *Molenie* of Daniil Zatochnik - but became more popular in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Among Old Believers, Evfrosin uses the device in his tract against self-immolation. "The works of the Old Believer writers reflect the general literary trends of the time...The main literary figures of the Vyg Community in its early years, chiefly Andrei and Simeon Denisov, were quite prepared to use verse forms where their subject matter warranted it."³ Simeon uses both poetry and rhyming prose especially in the *Vinograd Rossiiskii*, but also in the *Istoria*. In *Istoria* the distinction between prose and verse is not precise, and different copyists set out different passages as verse. For example, at least one manuscript copy has been found in which the introductory passage (quoted above p. 64-65) is isolated as verse, although the rhyming lines are all based on the same

¹ibid. "as Aeneas and Antenor were to Troy, so cunning Feoktist was to his cloister". p. 169.

²ibid. "Faith creates sainthood"; "All are saints who live by the true faith". p. 181.

³Sullivan, J., "Eighteenth Century Russian Verse from the Vyg Community of Old Believers", *Slavonic and East European Review*, London, Oct. 1989, vol. 67, p. 518 and 520.

part of speech, which is normally considered simple rhyming prose. However, in some manuscripts even the well-known poem quoted below is not separated from the prose text.

A small part of the *Istoria*, concerning Patriarch Ioakim and the Tsar's illness, is written in syllabic verse. The two main forms of syllabic verse in the late seventeenth century were rhyming couplets of eleven syllables or thirteen syllables per line. Examples of each are found here:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
 "Па три архъ/ же/ все рос сий ский/ Ио а кимъ/

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
 креп чай ший/ я ви ся/ ко/ про ше ниям/ сим/"

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13
 "Па три архъ/ о же сто чи ся/ па че/ ка ме не/

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13
 не/ смо тря ше/ ца ре вы/ бо ле зни/ пла ме не/"¹

There is no regard to stress - syllabo-tonic poetry did not enter Russia until some ten years later - even on the penultimate syllable. It was usual for Russian poets to follow the Polish system of giving a feminine ending to each line, but Denisov does not do this. Normally there would be a caesura after the fifth syllable in a line of eleven, or after the seventh in a line of thirteen, but these too are missing here. The poems in the

¹*Istoria*, "Patriarch of all Russia Ioakim, stands most firmly against these petitions"; "The patriarch hardened like a rock, he did not look at the flames of the Tsar's illness." p. 176.

Vinograd Rossiiskii are also syllabic. The vast majority of its lines do have feminine endings. It too makes use almost exclusively of the thirteen- and eleven- syllable syllabic line, with the cesura occurring regularly in the correct place. This may demonstrate the author's gain of skill, as the *Vinograd* was written a few years after the *Istoria*. Even in the later work there is very little evidence of tonicization.

Devices such as the rhetorical question and exclamation are also used widely. For example, when Denisov wants to stress that Meshcherinov paid for his cruelty to the monks, he says, "Что же прелукавый онъ предатель, въторый образы и дела Июда...Еда без наказания, еда безъ отмщения житие сие преиде? Никако же. Но яко же множайшую сотворивъ злобу, тако множайшее и томление получивъ..."¹ The tone of the question and the abruptness of the answer is extremely effective. When he describes Meshcherinov's use of cannons against the monastery, he punctuates each stage of this new development with an exclamation of horror. One ball was aimed at the church itself, and Denisov comments parenthetically on this. "И некогда направивше пушку (о, дерзосте безумная!) во олтарь соборная церкве, стрелиша."² When one missile flies through the window and hits an icon, Denisov begs "(твоего терпения, Христе!)".³ As in

¹*Istoria*, "What of that most cunning traitor, who copied the model and deeds of Judas... Did he pass through this life without punishment, without revenge? Not at all. As he inflicted the greatest evil, so he received most great torment."p. 177.

²ibid. "And at times they aimed the cannon (o, mad impertinence!) at the altar of the church as they shot." p. 167.

³ibid. "(have patience, Christ!)". p.167.

a story told orally, such interjections make the listener take special notice and the moment seems even more dramatic, more terrible. Denisov puts himself, as the storyteller, into the work as well. He gets carried away while describing the torment that some Solovki fathers, such as Pimen, underwent at the hands of Volokhov, and must remind himself to return to the siege: "Но отнуду же изшедше слово, паки, си есть к повести о Соловецтей обители, возвратимъ [его]."¹ Denisov claims to recognize that such episodes may be tangential to the main subject, but they are important as examples of both the enormous suffering of the monks, and the great cruelty of the authorities.

The use of metaphors and similes was another rhetorical convention, and the *Istoria* includes many of these. They are used especially at moments of great intensity. Denisov leads up to describing the betrayal of Feoktist by first comparing it to other betrayals: "но понеже случается домою великимъ от домашнихъ развращатися, случается и исполиномъ храбрымъ от приближенныхъ умерщвятися, случается градомъ крепкимъ и непреборимымъ от своихъ соплеменникъ предаватися, и zde о киновии тожде сострояется"². This is a very effective way of building the suspense, thus making the monk's action seem as awful as possible, as well as unavoidable - there is nothing wrong with

¹ibid. "But our talk has strayed from the point, for this is the story of the Solovki cloister, let us return to it." p. 165.

²*Istoria*, "But as it happens to great houses to be ruined by their servants, as brave giants are killed by those near to them, as strong and invincible cities are betrayed by their own tribesmen, so here this happened to the cloister." p. 169.

the general loyalty and cohesion of the group, it is merely fate that has decreed that there should be a Feoktist. In the face of pressure from hierarchs to take up the new service, the monks keep their resolve: "Но тии тверди в древлецерковнемъ благочестии, яко адаманти, стояху, к преждеявленнымъ уветствованиемъ, яко столпи къ ветру, обретошася"¹. Comparing the monks to other objects is a more forceful way of portraying their strength of character than merely stating it directly.

The most prominent and important metaphor likens all monks to trees and flowers. Solovki is compared in the introduction to a tree, whose roots are the founders Zosima and Savvatii. Denisov saw the entire development of the Russian church as comparable to the growth of a tree, which is also an image seen in icons. From the roots of the early fathers would grow great branches - teachers and monks who spread their knowledge and wisdom to their disciples, who then blossom like flowers. Thus the early fathers are an important part of the history of Solovki, and by their legacy they too played a part in the uprising and its consequences. The idea was clearly an important one, and is one reason for the title given to his other major work, the *Vinograd Rossiiskii*. It continuously reappears, and supports the belief in the immortality of the martyrs, who died for their faith but continue to live through those who follow after them. This is most striking when

¹ibid. "But these men are firm in their piety and the old faith, they stood like diamonds against these previously displayed persuasions, they were as pillars in the wind". p. 163.

Denisov describes the aftermath of the siege, and the bodies left exposed in the courtyard and on the ice. The bodies are described as "вышестественным благодати содержанием, яко живыхъ или спящих, телеса, тако лежаху; яко цветъ на полях, яко кринь во удолахъ..."¹ At the same time, the cloister itself is compared to a plucked flower, a torn garden, a chopped branch - all these images again recall Simeon Denisov's idea of the entire brotherhood of monks, throughout history, as one organic being, a kind of tree. The supernatural power that preserves the bodies "living" proves that these are the rightful inheritors of the sacred laws and traditions of the true church. Those who take over, the monks who were sent to Solovki to renew services there, using Nikon's reforms, are false, merely a "chopped branch". They are the betrayers of the true faith, and bring impurity and disorder. "въместо благочинныхъ неблагочиннии, вместо трезвыхъ пьянстволубнии, въместо целомудренныхъ оплазивии, вместо молитвенниковъ молвотворнии..."² The categorizing of traits in this way, along with a certain amount of word-play, is also a stylistic device. The old faith is pure, uncorrupt, and is the faith of the Russian saints ("Еда не спасошася святии чюдотворцы, креститися двема перстома и благословляти научившии? Ей, спасошася!").³ The new is vile and impious, it has no history and therefore no legitimacy.

¹*Istoria*, "preserved by a supernatural grace, the bodies lay as if living, or sleeping; like flowers in the fields, like lilies in the valleys." p. 178.

²*ibid.* "In place of the decorous, the indecorous, in place of the sober, lovers of drink, in place of the chaste, the voluptuous, in place of the prayerful, loudmouths." p. 179.

³*Istoria*, "Were not our sainted miracle-workers saved, crossing themselves with two fingers and blessing as they had learned? Yes, they were saved!" p. 182.

Perhaps one of the most important literary traditions to influence Denisov's style was that of Old Believer writers themselves, and particularly the works of other writers at Vyg. Simeon Denisov's *Istoria* was written in the 1720's by what might be considered the 'second generation' of Old Believer leaders. Even by this time, however, there had already been established a fairly strong tradition of Old Believer literature. One reason for this may be that some of the Zealots of Piety, such as Avvakum, Prince L'vov, and Deacon Feodor had their origins in the state printing press and realized how important it was to be able to communicate to large masses of people spread all over Russia. As reformists, they could spread the word through books now, as well as sermons. Also, running such a potentially powerful state organ helped them gain influence in government as well as church circles. Nikon too realized the power of the press. As he began to move away from the Zealots with his own ideas, he made sure to break up their former base. In 1652 a pro-Nikon monk, Arsenii the Greek, replaced Ivan Nasedka as chief editor, and by 1654 the printing house was under the patriarch's complete control.

Many of the personal and political motives driving the early schismatics and their supporters had died with them and the time had come for more scholarly debates on real religious differences between the Orthodox Church and the Old Believers. Perhaps it was seeing the need to defend their faith with reason as much as suffering that caused Old Believer communities, especially Vyg, to stress the need for education

and the writing of manuscripts. For whatever reason, nearly all of Andrei Denisov's first pupils continued this tradition. Druzhinin gives an impressive list of the output of Andrei's first pupils (which included his brother Simeon), most of which deals with specifically Old Believer issues¹. Trifon Petrov wrote laudatory tracts to self-immolators, and funeral sermons for Daniil Vikulin and both Denisov brothers. Manuil Petrov wrote on the Antichrist; Daniil Matveev also wrote sermons on Vyg's first leaders(*nastoyateli*), as well as works on the sign of the cross, prayers to the Tsar, and the followers of Feodoseev - who formed a separate sect of Old Belief. Simeon himself produced numerous essays, sermons and epistles, in addition to his major works.

Aside from his account of the uprising at Solovki and the *Vinograd Rossiiskii*, Simeon, with Trifon Petrov, helped Andrei Denisov draw up the famous *Pomorskie otvety* - answers to questions posed for debate by the Orthodox monk Neofit. This was one of the most important works written in defence of Old Belief. Thoroughly researched and eloquently written, the *Otvety* established their right to reject the state church and attacked the reforms through numerous citations from Russian and eastern ecclesiastical literature. Simeon Denisov's contribution came mainly in five articles: on making the two-finger sign of the cross, on the blessing of priests, on the songs

¹Druzhinin, V.G., *Slovesnye nauki v Vygovskoi Pomorskoj pustyni*, op. cit., p. 230-234.

of angels, against the four-pointed cross, and on the spelling of the name Isus.¹

Much has been written about collaboration and "borrowing" in Old Believer literature, which in part accounts for considerable similarities in many of their works. Part of this is due to the huge influence of the Vyg community. As has been pointed out,² Vyg under the Denisovs blossomed during the early years of the eighteenth century when it held significant authority over Old Believers even outside the Olonets region. Many other communities looked to them for leadership in ideology and in literature. Among Vyg writers themselves, it is not surprising to find many similar ideas and attitudes, and cooperation on works was widespread. "Of course, authorship of many works cannot be established precisely; many of them are clearly compilations. Even in those cases where we traditionally ascribe a work to a particular author, there are signs of collective authorship"³. This includes Simeon Denisov's *Vinograd Rosisskii*, Ivan Filippov's *Istoriya o zachale Vygovskoi pustyni*, and Andrei Denisov's *Pomorskie Otvety*. It is therefore worth examining the *Istoria* to see what evidence there may be of such influence.

¹B(rovkovich), Aleksandr, op. cit., p. 69.

²Kafengauz, B.B., and N.I. Pavlenko, eds., *Ocherki istorii SSSR XVIII v. pervaya chetvert'*, Moscow, 1954. p.381.

³Sullivan, J., *Staroobryadcheskaya rukopisnaya tradititsiya i "Vinograd Rossiiskii" Simeona Denisova*. p.315.

Looking at the work as a whole, ideas belonging to the Vyg tradition are certainly visible. For example, Ponyrko notes that another work which seems to have been worked on, at least in part, by Ivan Filippov, the *Zhitie Epifaniya*, is penetrated with the spirit of loyalty to the Tsar, and she calls this a "particularly Vyg position"¹. This same loyalty is also apparent in *Istoria*. When the cloister has been taken and Meshcherinov is interrogating prisoners, each is asked how he could have dared to oppose the Tsar. Samoil answers, "Не самодержцу азъ противихся, но за отеческое благочестие и за святую обитель мужествовахъ и хотящихъ разорити преподобныхъ отецъ поты не пуцахъ во ограду"². Nikanor also denies ever opposing the Tsar, or even considering such a thing: "научихомся от отецъ къ царемъ чествование паче всего являти, научихомся от апостола бога бояться и царя почитати, научихомся от самого Христа воздавати кесареви кесарева, а божия богови."³ It is for God's unchanging laws, he states, that they cannot accept Nikon's innovations.

This reference to the biblical quote is also interesting because it was first used by Andrei in the *Pomorskie otvety*

¹Ponyrko, N.V. "Kirillo-Epifanevskii zhiitny tsikl i zhiitnaya traditsiya v Vygovskoi staroobryadcheskoi literature", *Trudy otdela drevnerusskoi literatury*, Leningrad, 1974, vol. 29. p.155.

²*Istoria*, "'I did not oppose the Tsar, but for the sake of the piety of my forefathers and for my sacred cloister I took courage, and did not allow through the gates those who wished to bring to ruin the blood of the venerable fathers". p. 171.

³ibid. "we have learned from our fathers to show honour to the Tsar above all, we have learned from the apostle to fear God and honour the Tsar, and we have learned from Christ himself to render unto Caesar what is Caesar's, and unto God what is God's". p.171

when he was asked about prayers for the royal family. Moderates like the Denisovs were willing to compromise with the government to avoid persecution and to survive, but this naturally raised the question of whether in doing so they had compromised the faith for which they fought. Two attempts at introducing prayers for the royal family had already been rejected. Simeon, however, uses the *Istoria* to affirm their loyalty to the Tsar, acknowledging no real conflict between their religious beliefs and their duty to their ruler. The argument clearly did not convince all the Old Believers, even those at Vyg. Although prayers were finally accepted several years later, this decision had only been taken when the Filippovtsy were absent and the circumstances desperate.

Certain actions are typical of Old Believer literature, such as the man who is almost led astray, but finds his resolve in time. In his biography, Avvakum describes how he at one time wonders if he should continue his fight when it means such hardship to his family. His wife replies that he has no choice but to go on, and they must simply follow him wherever God leads. This wavering, and near fall, which in fact results in a stronger and surer affirmation of faith is very reminiscent of the story of Nikanor. Here too was a staunch leader of Old Belief, and the Solovki monks' own choice to head their monastery. On a visit to Moscow, however, he allows himself through argument, flattery, and threat to be persuaded to change sides, and to help the innovators convince the monks to accept the new books and ritual. But once back in Solovki, Nikanor remembers the true faith and repents. From then on

he becomes the most zealous of the rebels and their leader in the battle against the Tsar's troops.

Another point of similarity among Vyg writers that Ponyrko notes is the type of hero that is chosen. That is, the humble monk, living quietly in his hermitage, whose aim is merely to preserve his faith in a hostile world. This is chosen as opposed to heroes who openly fight against the apostates. Such an example did not suit the more passive, conciliatory stance of the Denisov brothers in the changed conditions in Russia. The monks in the *Istoria* are therefore somewhat less live individuals than, for example, the characters in Avvakum's *Zhitie*, and more typified "examples", which brings this work closer to the more traditional hagiographical style.

As an historical document, Simeon Denisov's *Istoria* is interesting not only for what it does tell, but also for what it leaves out. There are a number of factual errors, omissions and misrepresentations which serve the hagiographical purpose, but which obscure the true story. Some of the dates, for example, were changed. Some of these are not significant, such as Denisov's assertion that the monks locked themselves in the monastery in 1670, whereas in fact troops were sent out in late 1668, and the revolt started in the Spring of 1669. Some differences are important, however, because they affect the side on which culpability seems to lie. In Denisov's version, the fifth petition ultimatum was sent in 1666, at the same time the Tsar sends for Archimandrite Varfolomei. In fact, this letter was not sent until October 1667. In September of that

year Iosif - a supporter of both Varfolomei and Nikon's reforms - had been sent by the Tsar to replace Varfolomei, and had been rejected by the monks. Thus Solovki had already stopped obeying the Tsar before setting their position before him, and before all the monks had agreed upon it and signed their names.

The most important confusion of dates, however, concerns the "simultaneous" sack of Solovki and death of Alexei. This in part may be for stylistic reasons. By juxtaposing the two events, Denisov achieves a good dramatic effect. Just as the troops enter the monastery walls, the Tsar is gripped by illness; as Solovki is cut down, so too does the Tsar's condition worsen. Alexei is said to die at 8:00 a.m. on 29 January - the same morning the monastery is invaded and taken by Meshcherinov. In fact, the monastery fell on 22 January, 1676, and the Tsar died one week later on January 30. There were more important reasons than drama for Denisov's inaccuracy. One is that by linking the two occurrences so closely and definitively together, the obvious conclusion that his death is punishment from God would seem irrefutable. Also, because Simeon Denisov was among those Old Believers who remained loyal to the Tsar and royal family, he interjects here an unsubstantiated account of Alexei's last minute repentance and decision to recall the troops, and to allow those at Solovki to serve according to the old books. Patriarch Ioakim is portrayed standing firm in his resolve to see the monastery destroyed - caring less for the Tsar and the kingdom than for this goal. He is a hypocrite too. He promises

kindness to the monks, while the sacred cloister is flooded with blood. The blame for its destruction thus is lifted from the shoulders of the Tsar and placed squarely on those of the patriarch and church hierarchs - the original "villains" in the schism.

Numbers in general tend to be uncertain and exaggerated. Denisov remarks that people heard of Solovki's determination not to use the new ritual, and came from all over knocking on their doors. He claims that numbers in the monastery were rising to 1,500.¹ In fact, it is known that there were only about five hundred inhabitants.² On the other side, troop numbers are also considerably enlarged: Ievlev is said to have appeared with a thousand extra soldiers; in fact, he was given five hundred in addition to the not quite three hundred strel'tsy already sent there under Volokhov. Under Meshcherinov, finally, Denisov claims 1,300 new troops were dispatched. In fact, the voevoda came with only an extra seven hundred, and many of Ievlev's troops had died of illness. The inclination to raise the numbers is understandable - it makes the entire event appear even larger and more worthy of glorification than it was. Also, it must be remembered that many of Simeon's sources came from eye-witness accounts, or those near to them. Memories of such an event are very likely to be vague and exaggerated, especially where a battle is concerned. And by the time the *Istoria* was written, the Solovki legend had already grown and spread; like the fish

¹*Istoria*, p.164.

²Syrtsov, I., op. cit., p. 114.

that got away, numbers of people involved would tend to get larger with the telling. What is also interesting here, is that the numbers seem to grow in proportion not to actual increases, but to the cruelty and damage that was seen to occur under their commanders. For Volokhov, who accomplished very little, the numbers are fairly accurate ("hundreds" for about 280), whereas for Meshcherinov, who became by far the most reviled, the number of troops is overestimated the most. Perhaps the best demonstration of how confused the numbers had become even by Denisov's time is the account of those who were executed under Meshcherinov: "ихъ же число вѣщше трёхъ сотъ и к четыремъ стомъ приближайшеся, или до пятихъ сотъ, яко глаголаша..."¹ No one seems to really know, but the higher numbers are more impressive. What Denisov also does not mention is that those who had opposed the revolt, and were prepared to accept the reforms, Meshcherinov spared.

One goal of writing the history of the Solovki uprising is for propaganda and self-justification. Denisov must prove the legitimacy both of the cause of Old Belief, as well as the tradition of the Solovki monks which Vyg tries so assiduously to emulate. Thus it is clearly important to put the monks in the best light possible, to make them appear as pious and saintly as their enemies are evil and cruel. Some of the more important personages at Solovki are therefore shown as models of piety, whatever their actual character may have been. For example,

¹*Istoria*, "their number is more than three hundred or nearing four hundred, or as some say, as many as five hundred..." p.174.

the fate of Gerasim Firsov in the *Istoria* differs slightly from reality. In the early years of the schism Firsov was a staunch defender of the old faith and wrote one of the first Old Believer tracts, on the two-fingered sign of the cross. According to the *Istoria*, Firsov was sent to Moscow in place of Nikanor (who had been recalled there) to beg the Tsar to lighten the siege. Denisov explains that he was never allowed to see the Tsar, but "it is said he died on the path". In fact, Firsov was persuaded to accept the reforms and repented for his early defence of Old Belief. He promised to write a denial of his earlier works, although this he never did.¹ Firsov died of sickness in 1667 at the Iosifo-Volokolamsky monastery where he was imprisoned.

Another such incident is that of Ignatii's takeover of the Paleostrov monastery. After first describing Ignatii's personal wisdom and the good he has done in many places - not least of all Vyg - Denisov says that he "В Пальеостровъстемъ монастыри со двема тысящъма и седьмистами собравшихся за древнее отецъ благочестие от присланныхъ воиновъ сожженъ..."² It could be inferred from this that it was the troops who had caused the monastery to burn. It also does not mention that in fact Ignatii had raided the monastery and taken over control of it by force. When troops were sent to stop him, Ignatii and his followers coerced the Paleostrov monks into gathering in the chapel and then

¹Commentary, *Pamyatniki literatury drevnei Rusi*, Moscow 1988. p. 631.

²*Istoria*, "They assembled in the Paleostrov monastery together with 2,700 others and burned to save the ancient piety of the fathers from the troops that had been sent." p. 186.

setting it alight. One of the most ardent of the Solovki monks, Ignatii was, as Crummey explains, one of those who deliberately provoked government reaction in his quest for martyrdom.¹

Denisov describes Il'ya as a man of great abstinence, who would eat only bread and water. Since Il'ya was the archimandrite at Solovki at the beginning of the rebellion, Denisov wants to stress his humility. Nevertheless, this was the same Il'ya who had been admonished by the Tsar for letting drunkenness go unchecked and was accused by Metropolitan Makarii of Novgorod of dishonouring the cloister. Simeon also remarks that many of the Solovki fathers were well-educated, and although he gives examples of Gerasim Firsov and Ignatii, the vast majority of monks were in fact illiterate.

A little further on he describes the receipt of the new books by the monastery - which Il'ya kept secret as long as possible. In the *Istoria*, however, Il'ya immediately shows them to the brothers, who inspect them and judge the innovations to be in disagreement with the laws set down by God and so refuse to serve by them. This makes the Solovki monks seem much more unanimous in their attitude, and decisions taken at the monastery much more democratic, than in fact they were. Particularly so, since the passage immediately before describes how Nikon exhorted, flattered

¹Crummey, R., op. cit., p. 46.

and threatened the Tsar and Council of bishops to accept his reforms, and those who did not agree were tortured with the knout, imprisoned, or burnt to death. Similar methods were used to ensure the "unanimity" of the monks at Solovki.

Concerning the signing of the fifth petition, in Denisov's account a council was called of all the inhabitants of Solovki. Those of strong heart who wished for death and sainthood were urged to stay; those who were afraid were advised to leave - no one did.¹ No one, however, was permitted to leave. Those who wished to accept the new books, or who did not wish to oppose the Tsar, were imprisoned, beaten and starved.² Some of the more influential of the brothers in the monastery did try to stop this. Vitalii, Spiridon Potemkin, and German wrote a letter to Nikon in 1658 denouncing Il'ya and begging him to help them get rid of their tormentor. Before it reached him, though, Nikon had left the patriarchal throne and entered the Voskresensky monastery. The complaints went unheeded.

Some of the worst aspects of the siege occurred within the monastery itself, where factions among the monks grew increasingly fierce and radical. There were some who objected to using force against the troops, but these were imprisoned or beaten. Originally, prayers were still said for the Tsar and royal family out of tradition, but soon this began to be questioned. Again, fierce infighting took place between parties on both sides. The losers were generally subjected to torture

¹*Istoria*, p.164.

²Syrtsov, I., op. cit., p. 51.

and imprisonment; those who died would have their bodies simply thrown into the courtyard, left to rot without proper burial. Hunger and scurvy took their toll, and some monks began to leave secretly. Part of the reason for such a degeneration of religious and moral standards was the extreme pressure under which they were living, but also, many of those at Solovki were not monks. Peasants had joined in the fight against the state, and in particular refugees from the Stenka Razin revolt had made their way to the monastery. Two of these, Fadei Borozin and Ivan Sarafanov, became leaders of the armed campaign.

The use of arms is not compatible with the vision of the humble and meditative monk, although it was they who were the first to open fire. Denisov claims that the government troops came "...подъ киновию со многими стеннобитными хитростями, всяку кознь, всяко умышление к разорению киновии...показа" ¹ In fact, Mescherinov's troops never had nearly the number of cannons and armaments as did the monks in their fortress. Meshcherinov had only three regimental cannons, several old Sumsy cannons, and several new ones made there or sent from Dvina, and a few hundred poods of gunpowder.² Denisov however glides over the use of armed resistance, explaining first that they only fought with arms to keep the troops from entering the monastery gates. Their main defence, he claims, was prayer, "Болше же

¹*Istoria*, "he came to the cloister with many wall-battering mechanisms, and every sort of snare, with every intention of destroying the cloister..."p. 166.

²Commentary, *Pamyatniki literatury drevnei Rusi*. p. 633.

молитвами, и слезами, и днещными богостоянии противу вооружахуся и молитвеными противу стреляху стрелами."¹ It was God who protected them, and thus, he infers, defended their cause as well.

Simeon Denisov was a teacher as well as a writer, and in the *Istoria* he expresses his own beliefs and opinions on many issues facing Old Believers. For example, piety and prayer are clearly virtues Denisov wishes to inculcate in his readers. The great humility of the monks is contrasted to the immorality of their enemies, both the soldiers who attacked the cloister, and the new "official" monks who took it over. If they are fighting for their faith, for God, then they must first be pure and worthy defenders of Him themselves. Old Believer hermitages and communities were not immune from corruption and immorality, and Denisov may have hoped the saintliness of the Solovki monks would inspire greater piety. Some of the ideas are clearly relevant specifically to conditions that faced the Old Believers at the time the *Istoria* was written: for example, their loyalty to the Tsar. In his choice of answers for his heroes to questions posed by the commander - and which Old Believers in the 1720's were likely to face also - Denisov makes it clear that their fight is not against the state, but against the new ritual alone. Only when the Tsar comes in direct conflict with the laws of God will they refuse to bow to his will. Most

¹*Istoria*, "More with prayer and tears and daily services did they arm themselves against the enemy, and shot arrows of prayer against them." p. 166.

of the general ideas expressed, however, are meant for Old Believers of any time, facing any situation.

The idea of continuity - expressed as the growth of a tree into a whole garden - is one of the most important. Martyrdom is glorious and rewarded by God, but, especially to Denisov, continuing the old faith on earth was imperative. In his life and teachings Denisov's efforts were aimed always at continuity, rather than the idea of a last desperate stand. If the old ritual was to survive, then the Old Believers had to keep living, to practise it and teach it to the future generations.

Also partly connected to the ideal of continuity is that of unanimity. With episodes such as the signing of the fifth petition Denisov praises and holds as a model the group who stands as one, with no dissenters or deserters. For one thing, when the reader sees this he is left with the impression that not just those few mentioned by Denisov, but *all* the Solovki monks and supporters acted as heroes and martyrs. Such complete dedication, faith, and lack of doubt also seems to lend support to the cause. And though Old Belief had a considerable following among the Russian population, they were generally spread out, and had much to fear from government authorities if they were discovered. By the early eighteenth century several separate sects of Old Belief had developed, but the need to stand together was great. The struggle at Solovki served both as a reminder of this and an example to all.

CONCLUSION

It is almost certain that neither Tsar Alexei nor Patriarch Nikon realized the extent of the impact reforms to the church service would have on the Russian people. Their conviction that it was the Old Believers' ignorance which exaggerated the importance of relatively minor changes, rather than their own misunderstanding of the actual significance of such changes, blinded them to the full strength of the opposition until it was too late. Much of this opposition became concentrated on the isolated island of Solovki long before the outside authorities were aware of it. Personal enmity toward Nikon combined with a long tradition of independent thinking in a monastery renowned for its religious devotion gradually evolved into a smouldering hot bed of zealots of the old faith, which would burst into flame at the slightest provocation. This came in the form of direct orders from Moscow to take up the new service, blatant and public opposition to which could not be left unpunished. Armed government forces met with armed resistance in a conflict which lasted eight years. After such long and unwavering battle, doomed to defeat from the start,

the monks of Solovki were extinguished and became, in the eyes of many of the Russian people, glorious martyrs of the faith.

After the destruction of Solovki, however, real desperation set in. Fear of the apocalypse led to a wave of self-immolation. The panic eventually died down, but the determination to reject this world, which was now ruled by Antichrist, did not. There seemed only one other viable solution: retreat to a life as a hermit. This led to the creation of the Vyg community, where the traditions of Solovki were continued by new generations of Old Believers. In this strict bespopovtsy community, the ideals of independence and *sobornost'*, and of a pious monastic life, were carefully preserved, as was the tradition of education and scholarship.

The Vyg holds an important place in the development of Russian literature. Its writers employed both old and new aspects of literary styles, forming a transitional period from the seventeenth to the mid-eighteenth century. Simeon Denisov's *Istoria o otsekh i stradal'tsekh solovetskikh* is representative of this literature. He uses both hagiographical and early literary conventions alongside the more recently introduced Baroque forms of rhetoric and poetics.

The Old Believers at Vyg collected, produced and copied an enormous amount of literature to serve their cause. Their works acted as propaganda, spreading the sermons of respected leaders to convert apostates or strengthen followers

in their faith. Literature was used to defend and justify the position of the Old Believers in their isolation from the world, and in their opposition to the Church and, where necessary, to the state. Simeon Denisov's *Istoria* is one of the major works written at the Vyg. It praises the monks for their brave resistance to the reforms, and glorifies their great suffering and death for the old ritual. The legend of Solovki is used as a shining example to Old Believers of piety and firmness in faith, even when facing great adversity. The long history of the monastery, with its list of former monks and fathers famous for their humility and devotion, is contrasted to the immorality and great cruelty of the defenders of the reforms. Denisov leaves no doubt of the justice of the rebellion and the tragedy of its defeat.

The *Istoria* is also Denisov's first major work, and is an important document in the evolution of his own literary style. It is a forerunner of much of what is said in the *Vinograd Rossiiskii*, and can be looked on in part as preparation for the later martyrology. Stylistic techniques, such as versification, which are used widely in the *Vinograd*, are first "tested" in the *Istoria*. The enormous popularity of the work - there are hundreds of manuscript copies of it still in existence - is witness both to its success and its influence.

The importance of the *Istoria* as an historical document must not be overlooked. According to Bishop Makarov "the reason for the strength of the roots of the schism in these localities (Archangel, Kholmogory, Shenkursk, and Pinega), as I

have remarked in conversation, was, and is to this day, the work of Simeon Denisov *Istoria o otsekh i stradal'tsekh solovetskikh*, along with the Solovki petition to Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich..."¹ Denisov's *Istoria* became the basic history of the Solovki uprising, and until Syrtsov made a study of the work in the nineteenth century no other book or article had been specially devoted to research of this event, despite its significance both to the Old Believer movement and the history of the Russian church.

¹Syrtsov, I., op. cit., p. 7.

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