

THE REPRESENTATIVE BODIES IN RUSSIA IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

Las asambleas representativas en Rusia durante la primera mitad del siglo XVII

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RESUMEN: El artículo se refiere a la historia de las instituciones representativas en Rusia, los *Zemskie Sobory* (asambleas de la tierra, asambleas nacionales) de los años veinte a cincuenta del siglo XVII. Basándose en los documentos conservados en el Archivo Estatal de Documentos Antiguos de Rusia y en los estudios más importantes de los historiadores rusos, la autora discute las bases de las actividades de los *Sobory*, su conexión con la situación social y económica del país, las elecciones de los participantes y su composición, las opiniones y demandas de los grupos sociales más importantes que participaron en estas asambleas, los temas principales discutidos, los resultados de sus actividades y los decretos que reflejan sus decisiones. También se examinan las peticiones colectivas presentadas a los *Sobory* que reflejan los puntos de vista de los representantes de los dos estamentos principales: la nobleza (los nobles y «*deti boyarskie*») y los mercaderes y ciudadanos. La autora llega a la conclusión sobre el papel significativo de los *Zemskie Sobory* en el proceso de formación del Estado ruso y en la superación de las consecuencias del Período de los Tumultos, así como en las decisiones tomadas acerca de los problemas agudos y vitales con los que se enfrentaba el Estado: la regulación de la política financiera, el rechazo de la amenaza exterior y la elaboración de las bases principales de la política exterior. El *Sobornoe Ulozhenie* (código de leyes) fue aprobado en el *Sobor* de 1649. También se discuten en el artículo las causas de la declinación de las instituciones representativas en Rusia desde los años

cincuenta del siglo XVII: aunque en su tiempo jugaron un papel importante, más tarde no recibieron el apoyo de las capas más elevadas de la sociedad ni de la burocracia.

Palabras clave: *Zemsky Sobor*; Rusia; siglo XVII; elecciones; nobleza; mercaderes; ciudadanos; finanzas; política exterior; guerras.

ABSTRACT: The article is concerned with the history of representative institutions in Russia, the *Zemsky Sobor* (the Assembly of the Land, the National assembly) in the 1620s-50s. On the basis of the documents preserved in the Russian State Archive of Ancient Documents and analyzed in the works of major Russian historians, the article discusses the background to the activities of the *Sobors* and their relationship with the social and economic situation in the country; the elections to the *Sobors* and their composition; viewpoints and demands of the important social groups and strata participating in these *Sobors* and their submitted 'opinions'; the main issues discussed at the *Sobors*, results of their activities and decrees reflecting the decisions of the *Zemsky Sobors*. It also examines collective petitions submitted to the *Sobors* which reflect the points of view of the representatives of two main estates – the nobility (nobles and *deti boyarskie*) and the merchants and townspeople. The author comes to a conclusion about significant role of the *Zemsky Sobors* in shaping of the Russian state and overcoming the consequences of the Time of Troubles, as well as in finding solutions to acute and vital problems facing the state, namely, to regulate the financial policy, to repulse an external threat, and to develop the basic principles of the foreign policy. At the *Sobor* a compilation of a uniform Code of Laws was made, i.e. *Sobornoe Ulozhenie* of 1649. The article also discusses the reasons for the decline of the representative institutions in Russia since the 1650s, where, although being a contributory factor, they found no support of the upper stratum of society and bureaucracy.

Key words: *Zemsky Sobor*; Russia; Seventeenth Century; Elections; Nobility; Merchants; Townspeople; Finance; Foreign Policy; Wars.

The history of representative institutions in Russia has been attracting the attention of historians since the 19th century. And a special emphasis was put on the first half of the 17th century. V. N. Latkin called the reign of Michael Fyodorovich the «apogee of the Old Russian representation», its «golden age»¹. It is during this

1. LATKIN, V. N.: *Materialy dlya istorii zemskikh soborov XVII stoletiya*. Saint Petersburg, 1884, p. 1.

period that the largest number of *Zemsky Sobors* took place, and there is more data on the structure of *Sobors*, the procedure of election and the issues discussed there. The *Zemsky Sobor* was considered as a particular institution, characteristic only of Russia, which signified the unity of the state power and the people, or as an analogue of West-European representative institutions, or as a provisional institution that failed to become ingrained into Russian political system, or as an evidence of the emergence of an estate-representative monarchy². Soviet historians related the existence of *Zemsky Sobors* to the aggravation of class struggle in Russia³. The sources, especially official ones, provide a basis for the statement of facts and some hypotheses.

The overcoming of the «great Moscow devastation» during the Time of Troubles (*Smuta*) necessitated emergency measures of the government, aimed primarily at raising funds to replenish the Treasury, organizing a rebuff to the external aggression and the internal unrest, and settling differences with the neighbouring states which took an active part in the events of the Time of Troubles – Rzeczpospolita (Poland) and Sweden. Addressing these three problems, the government of the first Romanov relied on the *Zemsky Sobors*, and their convocation did not cease after the return of Patriarch Filaret (Feodor Nikitich Romanov), father of the tsar, from the captivity. He became a patriarch soon after his return and was called «the Great Sovereign» (*veliki gosudar'*) and a co-ruler of his son. Upon the arrival of Filaret and the elimination of the external danger, the nature of activity of the *Sobors* changed: they started to bring up domestic issues and issue of legislative measures as means to overcome of the consequences of the Time of Troubles. The Filaret's return to Moscow from the Polish captivity and his enthronement as a patriarch took place in June of 1619. Historian L. V. Tcherepnin, following V. N. Latkin, comes to the conclusion that this enthronement was carried out with assistance of the *Zemsky Sobor*, as people of «various ranks» first approached the tsar, and then the future patriarch. There is evidence about that both in the chronicles and in service books (*razryadnye knigi*): «The officials and boyars came to the tsar and asked him with tears on behalf of all the people of Muscovy to beg his father, Sire Filaret Nikitich to stand up for the Orthodox Christian faith and wield the Moscow patriarchal throne». Furthermore, soon after the Filaret's

2. CHICHERIN, B. N.: *O narodnom predstavitelstve*. Moscow, 1866; SERGEEVICH, V. I.: *Lektsii i issledovaniya po istorii russkogo prava*. Saint Petersburg, 1910; LATKIN, V. N.: *Zemskie sobory drevney Rusi*. Saint Petersburg, 1885; DITIATIN, I. I.: *Rol' chelobitii i zemskikh soborov v upravlenii Moskovskogo gosudarstva*. Rostov-na-Donu, 1905; PLATONOV, S. F.: «Zametki po istorii zemskikh soborov», in PLATONOV, S. F.: *Stat'i po russkoy istorii*. Saint Petersburg, 1912; KLYUCHEVSKY, V. O.: *A Course in Russian History*, vol. 3. The 17th Century. Reprint. Moscow, 1988.

3. SMIRNOV, P. P.: *Posadskie lyudi i ikh klassovaya bor'ba do serediny XVII veka*. 2 vol. Moscow; Leningrad, 1947-1948; TCHEREPNIN, L. V.: *Zemskie sobory Russkogo gosudarstva v XVI-XVII vv.* Moscow, 1978.

enthronement a *Zemsky Sobor* was called, and its participants could have also taken part in his consecration⁴.

The initiative to convoke a new *Sobor*, most likely, belonged to the patriarch, who, after the preliminary consultations with the higher clergy, worked out a series of measures to correct tax collection and overcome the «ruin and desolation» of the state. These measures were submitted for approval of the *Zemsky Sobor* that took place between 24 June and 3 July, 1619. The unsystematic organization of taxation – land tax and *tyaglo* (a direct tax on the urban population) – was to be eradicated. The documents (*knigi*, «books») for the taxation were not clearly determined. In some cases the tax was levied on the basis of old books, in others on the basis of new books – *dozornye knigi*. Therefore, the taxation was uneven: «it was hard for some, and easy for others». The government received many petitions (*chelobitnye*) complaining about the unevenness and corrupt practices of taxation. There were also petitions from the urban population (*posadskie*) with requests for tax relief and complains about mass exodus of population from towns to other towns and villages in order to avoid taxes. All this was mentioned in the preamble to the final decision of the *Sobor*.

The *Sobor* decided to start a new inventory of lands, and, for that, scribes (*pistsy*) were sent to those towns and districts which were not affected by «ruin» and patrols (*dozorschiki*) to those towns and districts «ruined by Lithuanian people and Cherkasy». It was also decided to search for the residents of the Southern towns in Moscow and send them to their former places of residence with the provision of tax relief. It was necessary to uncover the townspeople being in higher clergy's and nobles' service and to collect taxes for the previous years from those whom they lived with. A special department (*prikaz*) was established to deal with complains of abuse from the nobility and bureaucrats (*strong people*).

In order to continue the planned changes, the term of convocation and composition of a new *Sobor* were determined. It was necessary to obtain detailed information on the local state of affairs. Delegates from provincial towns and districts were called to Moscow «to inform and to establish», namely one man from the clergy, two men from *nobles*⁵ and *deti boyarskie* (the lesser rank of nobility), and two men from the townspeople, «those able to relate offences, violence, and devastation». The delegates were also supposed to express their views on the «settlement» of Muscovite state, i.e. a way to replenish the treasury, compensate *ratnye liudi* (warriors), and to return the «dignity» to the state⁶.

4. LATKIN, V. N.: *Zemskie sobory drevney Rusi...*, p. 164; TCHEREPNIN, L. V. *op. cit.*, p. 231.

5. It should be noted that Russian terms *dvoryane*, *dvoryanstvo* that are usually translated as *nobles*, *nobility* does not include aristocracy.

6. *Zakonodatel'nye akty Russkogo gosudarstva. Teksty*. Leningrad, 1986 (hereafter cited as ZARG).

Convocation of a new *Sobor* was initially set to 1 October, 1619. That term was changed, as we know from the tsar's charter to Ustuzhna dated 9 September. It was said that the delegates must arrive to Moscow by the Intercession of the Theotokos, i.e. on 1 October. But due to the tsar's departure on a pilgrimage to a distant monastery (Makariiev Unzhenskiy) the date was moved to Day of St. Nicolas (December 6)⁷. Latkin had no information about the opening of this *Sobor*, but he assumed that the *Sobor* was held and was 'even active during the following years'. Tcherepnin also possessed no knowledge of this *Sobor*. However, there is the «decision of this *Sobor*» of 12 March, 1620 about assignment of manorial and patrimonial lands to the owners according to new *dozornye knigi*. It stated that the government had received information about the boyars, *okol'nichie* (the second rank of higher nobility) and nobles being in the illegal possession of the former tsar's villages and public lands (*volosti*), and some of them, as it was put in the document, «owned vast lands as small tax units (*cheti*)». The *Sobor* prescribed to limit such ownership during the patrols and to reserve to them only legitimate lands (i.e. with their ownership supported by the documents)⁸. The text of this document survived in the book of decrees of *Pomestny prikaz* (Chancellery of Service Lands), but there is no mention of the assembled ranks (*chiny*), and, according to it, the *Sobor* consisted of boyars alone: «And in 128 (1620), on 12 March Great Sovereign Tsar and Grand Duke of all Russia Michael Fyodorovich, by taking counsel with his father, Great Sovereign his Holiness Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia Filaret and *discussing it with all the boyars at the Sobor*, decided...»⁹. There is no analogue to this «*Sobor* of the boyars» in the sources, therefore, it might be supposed that the book of decrees is missing a piece of text where other ranks present at the *Sobor* were mentioned. In addition, in the decree of 1619/20 that permitted the widows and daughters of landowners to reserve the lands on getting married, there is mention of «the *Sobor's* code (*ulozhenie*) of 128 (1620)»¹⁰. So, it is possible that this *Sobor* was still convened and active during the winter. Found by Vladislav Nazarov, a letter of the town governor (*voevoda*) of Beloozero with a report on the election of representatives to the *Sobor*, referring to the fall of 1619, complains about difficulties to choose the representatives of provincial nobility elected by corporations, settled at Beloozero,

7. LATKIN, V. N.: *Materialy dlya istorii Zemskikh soborov...*, p. 5; LATKIN, V. N.: *Zemskie sobory...*, p. 165; ГОТ'Е YU. V. (ed.): *Akty otnosyaschiesya k istorii zemskikh soborov*. Moscow, 1909, pp. 19-20; TCHEREPNIN L. V.: *Zemskie sobory Russkogo gosudarstva v XVI-XVII vv.*, p. 234.

8. ZARG, n. 98, pp. 98-100.

9. *Idem*, p. 98.

10. *Idem*, n. 91, p. 97.

because they were absent from their estates, and only one representative from Smolensk corporation went to the *Sobor*¹¹.

The next *Zemsky Sobor* took place in the Palace of Facets on 12 October, 1621¹². The representation was broad: in addition to the clergy, high ranks and those of Moscow, there were also departmental clerks (*dyaki*), local *nobles and deti boyarskie*, *gosti* (the highest rank of privileged merchants) and merchants, Don atamans and Cossacks, and «men of all ranks» present. The meeting was opened by tsar's and patriarch's speeches on foreign affairs. The *Sobor* had to decide the question of the beginning of the war with Poland in order to return the territories occupied by it in union with Sweden and Turkey. The latter two proposed to the Muscovy tsar an alliance against Poland. The views of each group and rank were submitted in form of a petition. Despite the fact that all strata and population groups were in favor of the war, and the merchants promised to give money to the treasury, the decision on outbreak of hostilities was not made. The local *nobles and deti boyarskie* offered to hold an inspection of military capability at the local level in order to identify escapist¹³. The inspection was carried out in 1622, and its results were disastrous for the state. It was discovered that the majority of local nobility had no means for military service, such as upkeep of horses, weapons and ammunition, «no means to serve»¹⁴. This situation occurred owing to the fact that during the Time of Troubles many provincial landowners lost their peasants who scattered across the country searching for food. Many farmers moved to the lands of boyars and other «strong people», and also to monastic lands, and it was difficult to get them back. It was time when differences between the bulk of servicemen of modest means and the upper ten – «strong people» who deprived lesser nobility of their land workers and easily won lawsuits due to their wealth – distinctly emerged. Under such conditions, it was impossible to start a war with Poland. The documents concerning the status of service people – military muster rolls (*desyatni*) clarified that one or another person cannot go to the service without salary, but the treasury had no money for such major expenses.

It is likely that this fact was stated by the *Zemsky Sobor* which took place, according to Tcherepnin, between 11 February and 14 March, 1622¹⁵. The purport of this *Sobor* is not entirely clear to the historians, as the opinions of estates were not presented any longer, and a letter, with reference to the *Sobor*, sent to Novgorod, prescribes the service people to be ready take the field. But one can assume that the letter refers to the previous *Sobor* of October 1621. The results

11. TCHEREPNIN, L. V.: *Zemskie sobory Russkogo gosudarstva v XVI-XVII vv.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 234-235
12. *Akty otosyachiesya k istorii zemskikh soborov...*, pp. 24-29.
13. *Idem*, p. 27.
14. LAPTEVA, T. A.: *Provintsial'noe dvorianstvo Rossii v XVII veke*. Moscow, 2010, pp. 98-123, 328.
15. TCHEREPNIN, *op. cit.*, p. 239.

of the army inspection had not been yet summed up, and the letters concerning the readiness to serve were usually dispatched in early winter. In March the army would have difficulties, as expected, with spring season of bad roads. It is possible that having learnt the state of affairs, the government of Michael Fyodorovich and Filaret Nikitich cancelled both the *Sobor's* decision and the decree of campaign.

In any event, the last *Zemsky Sobor* of the 1620s dates back to 1622 in the scientific literature. For the next almost ten years, the *Sobors* were not convoked. Historians name several reasons for this termination: the transfer of actual government to the tsar's farther, Patriarch Filaret, the absence of direct external threats, and regulating of treasury revenues, i.e. the elimination of the acute problems which were above all considered by the *Sobors*. As the researchers believe, these representative institutions gave way to collective petitions addressed to the tsar by the representatives of different social groups. Even V. O. Klyuchevsky expressed an opinion that the collective petitions replaced *Zemsky Sobors* with time¹⁶; and Tcherepnin brought out clearly the close connection between the collective petitions and the *Sobors*. At the same time Tcherepnin did not completely reject the idea that the sources proving the existence of the *Sobors* from 1623 to 1631 simply have not been found¹⁷. He drew attention to the petition of the merchants and townspeople of Novgorod of 23 March, 1623, found by P. P. Smirnov, and emphasized the importance of the issues brought up in this petition. Following Smirnov, he came to the conclusion that it could have been presented at the *Zemsky Sobor*¹⁸. Smirnov even believed that pressing social issues discussed at the *Sobors* of the 1620s, including the exposure of ecclesiastical and monastic landowners, could have led Filaret to the decision to suspend the convening of the *Sobors*. The historian also noted the increasing of the number of feasts and receptions by the tsar and the patriarch since 1622, and the expansion of the composition of the invited, as there were the privileged merchants, *gosti*, tradesmen, various craftsmen, icon-painters, Cossacks of Don, and others. According to Smirnov, Filaret Nikitich sought «in these regular meetings at the tsar's table a replacement for the dissolved *Zemsky Sobor* which ceased to gather exactly in 1622»¹⁹.

The next indicative date was the year of 1627, when the number of collective petitions to the tsar increased. Having considered the collective petition to the tsar and the patriarch filed by *gosti* and the tradesmen of all towns in July of 1627, with a request to ban the trade of foreign merchants in the domestic market of Russia and to restrict it to the ports of Arkhangelsk and Kholmogory, Smirnov

16. KLYUCHEVSKY, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

17. TCHEREPNIN, L. V.: *Zemskie sobory Russkogo gosudarstva v XVI-XVII vv.*, p. 239.

18. *Idem*, p. 240; SMIRNOV, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 400.

19. *Idem*, vol. 1, pp. 358-361.

came to the conclusion that this petition «was an act of the *Zemsky Sobor*». He suggested that the arrival of the petitioners representing various towns to Moscow was not accidental, «they had right to petition on behalf of the whole estate, and so they were deputies of the *Zemsky Sobor* or of some special trade and craft commission»²⁰. The total number of signatures under the petition also coincides with the usual number of the representatives of the townspeople at the *Zemsky Sobor*. Tcherepnin did not agree with this assumption of Smirnov, considering this petition «an indication of growing initiative of the third estate»²¹, but one cannot ignore that exactly in 1627 the number of petitions of different social strata and groups increased, and that in turn generated growth in the number of legislative acts. There is no mention of the *Sobor*'s decisions, but the acts refer to the collective and individual petitions that the government had to respond to. It is possible that similar processes related to the activity of the Chancellery of Petitions (*Chelobitny prikaz*), which creation was also initiated at the *Zemsky Sobor* in 1619. So, in January of 1628 so called «code of the year of 136 (1628)», consisting of 8 decrees on legal proceedings, was adopted on the report of Gregory Volkonsky, the head of the Chancellery of Petitions²². One can assume that the Volkonsky's report was a result of petitions about the shortcomings of judicial process presented by plaintiffs and defendants. These petitions were often collective, and, as Tcherepnin noted, this is one of the forms of participation of estate representatives in public life²³.

Summing up the facts concerning the activities of representatives bodies in the early reign of Michael Fyodorovich, it should be noted, that they solved the most important problem that concerned the state at that time – restoration and preservation of the sovereignty. All other problems and tasks were subject to this. For a while, when the external threat was great, the *Sobor* and its members had been working constantly, but it had not been formalized in legislation. The *Zemsky Sobor* had not become an independent legal body and depended heavily on not even the tsar's power, that was still weak at the time, but on higher aristocracy, the *Boyarskaya Duma*. There were no independent projects of the state development, or they have not reached us. The irregularity of activities of *Sobor* was also caused by the sizeable territory of the state. The authority of *Zemsky Sobor* was high at the time and it reinforced the tsar's power, making it possible to conduct financial transactions and regularize taxation. This enabled to suppress the anarchy and manifestations of peasants and lower strata of population, and

20. SMIRNOV, P. P.: *Novoe chelobitie moskovskikh torgovykh ludey o vysylke inozemtsev*. Kiev, 1912, p. 22.

21. TCHEREPNIN, *op. cit.*, p. 241.

22. ZARG. Texts, n. 169, pp. 139-140.

23. TCHEREPNIN, *op. cit.*, p. 241.

return to the previous social hierarchy. The procedure of submitting opinions at the *Sobor* strictly corresponded to ranks. A 5-year term for the recovery of fugitive peasants was restored.

Many questions of organization and functioning of the *Zemsky Sobor* still remain unclear: the composition of the representatives, their terms of office, locations and procedure of meetings. It is only known that *Sobors* generally were opened by the tsar's speech or the speech of a clerk (*dyak*) that put a question for consideration and then the opinions of the estates and social groups were submitted.

A characteristic feature of the *Zemsky Sobors* after the Time of Troubles was a large number of the elected representatives from towns, including *nobles and deti boyarskie*. In the beginning the nobility, engaged on the fields of battle, denoted their position by submitting collective petitions demanding facilitation of the service, for example, by bipartition of towns' service. After the end of hostilities *nobles and deti boyarskie* announced themselves much louder. As a rule each town elected for the *Sobor* two persons from *nobles and deti boyarskie*, «righteous and reasonable». At the beginning of the 1620s the nobility of serving «towns» (The corporations of the service men – landowners in one or another town and its district) achieved a general military inspection and implementation of the principle of equality of service within «town». This inspection clearly showed that the army was not ready for such large-scale task as the war with Poland. In this case the opinion of the local nobility had a direct influence on foreign policy of the state. Ten years later the government made the decision concerning a war with Poland without consulting the *Zemsky Sobor*, but during the war the *Sobor* was revived once more.

A resumption of activity of the *Sobor* is connected with the beginning of a war with Poland and the growth of social contradictions within Russian state: «there was a great strife between people in Muscovy». During this war the peasant and Cossack movement also began under the leadership of Ivan Balash. In 1632, on 11 November, a new *Sobor*, concerned with provision of funds to pay salary to the servicemen, was opened in Kremlin. It should be noted that in the eve of the war the government had spent a lot of money on the organization of regiments of a new formation (originally 4 regiments) to ensure victory over Polish troops and on the hiring of foreign officers to train and command of these regiments as well as ordinary foreign soldiers. However, a growing number of mobilized troops demanded an increase in expenses, and to authorize it, the *Sobor* was convened, where there were «men of all ranks», except for the provincial nobility, occupied at the theatre of war. The meeting was opened by a speech on international situation, specifying causes of war, i.e. «lies» and «offences» made by Poland. Separately an analysis of the military potential of Russia was presented, with a detailed account of the regiments of new formation and hiring of foreigners for the

service. Due to the lack of funds, the government sought assistance from clergy, secular landowners, privileged merchants, and tradesmen for a monetary aid. The landowners were asked for «claimed money» («as one can help»), *gosti* and tradesmen were expected to pay again a «fifth money», i.e. 20% of their property and income. There are only a few documents preserved concerning this *Sobor*, its decisions and consequences, among them there are texts of tsar's and patriarch's speeches and the decree of convocation of the *Sobor*, discovered by Tcherepnin²⁴. In spite of the approval by the *Sobor* of new extraordinary charges and taxes, this collection was often resisted in the provinces, as it can be seen from an act of the next *Sobor*. After the death of the initiator of the war, Patriarch Filaret, the need to provide an immediate assistance to the troops of a boyar and Commander Michael Shein, in defeat by Smolensk, caused the convening of a new *Sobor* by decree of 28 January, 1634. The *Sobor* was already opened in Kremlin on 29 January. This fact allowed historians to assert that so rapid convocation means that the previous *Sobor* of 1632 had not been dissolved and had been working all that time²⁵. Tcherepnin disagreed with this opinion, affirming that there is no data to claim that «the situation of the early reign of Michael Fyodorovich was restored, when the *Zemsky Sobor* was continuously an active body»²⁶. An act of this *Sobor* has survived till the present, although it was edited after the event. The tsar's speech is of the most interest there, as it was mainly repeating the speech at the *Sobor* of 1632, although with addition of an account of military operations and difficulties faced by Shein's army by Smolensk. It was emphasized that the invasion of Tatar troops in the Southern regions of Russia had greatly influenced the situation by Smolensk, as it had caused a departure of the greater part of Southern *nobles and deti boyarskie*. It was necessary to rescue the troops encircled by Smolensk, which required money, but the treasury was empty, «distributed to all sorts of military people»²⁷. The decision of the previous *Sobor* had not been fulfilled, as many people had given the fifth part of their incomes «untruthfully». Even the taxation in 1613, when people were poorer, had given a greater sum²⁸. Consequently, a new collection should be made, and a special order was ready. It was decided to choose local people for money collection. According to the decision of the *Sobor*, charters were sent to towns and the Department of collection. Tcherepnin emphasized the role of the clergy at this *Sobor* and in the coming collection, as at

24. Russian State Archive of Ancient Documents (RGADA), f. 210, Razryadny prikaz [Chancellery of Military Affairs], Stolbtsy raznykh stolov [Scrolls of various Desks], n. 33, ff. 2-37; TCHEREPNIN, *op. cit.*, p. 246.

25. LATKIN, V. N.: *Zemskie sobory...*, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

26. TCHEREPNIN, *op. cit.*, p. 249-250.

27. LATKIN, V. N.: *Zemskie sobory...*, pp. 180-181.

28. Akty odnosyaschiesya k istorii zemskikh soborov..., p. 33.

this point, the government had made an ideological struggle the cornerstone of its policy – «the struggle for the triumph of Orthodox Christian faith of Greek law»²⁹. The final decision of the *Sobor* appeared only on 18 February, and this fact gives a reason to suggest that there was a certain controversy. The decisions of the *Sobor* were not put into practice, due to the surrender of Shein's army by Smolensk and the conclusion of peace without the consent of Moscow; therefore, Shein was sentenced to death in April of 1634.

The collapse of the government's plans in the Smolensk war, as well as the death of Patriarch Filaret, influenced the domestic policy, the *Sobors* were convened more often, and vital issues were discussed with general public. Furthermore, political projects envisaging permanent activities of elected bodies, including the participation of the provincial nobility, appeared. In April of 1634 such proposal was presented by *Stryapchy* (a court rank) Ivan Buturlin, who criticized bureaucratization, corruption, a growing influence of low-born people and foreigners, while protecting primarily the interests of the hereditary Moscow nobility. However, he proposed to give a permanent representation in the national body to other estates and social groups, in particular, to the provincial nobility: «to elect... in towns ... one person from service people ... and one person from humble people... and one person from 2 – 3 small towns, and to make them swear an oath that they would honestly inform the tsar about various injustices, and offences of all people...». But this project was recognized a result of mental disorder³⁰.

It was necessary to analyze the reasons for the defeat in the Smolensk war. One of them referred to the invasions of Crimean Tatars in the southern provinces of the state. In this connection, the government decided to build the Belgorod protective line of fortifications which was supposed to deter Tatar raids. The question arose about the declaration of war to Crimea, dispatching of forces, help to Don Cossacks, having captured the fortress of Azov on June 18, 1637. The question of Azov and the relations with Crimean Khanate was repeatedly raised at *Zemsky Sobors* during the late 1630s and early 1640s.

In February of 1637 there was a collective petition of service people from different towns, first of all from the borderland ones, with requests to cancel the limitations on the recovery of fugitive peasants and to conduct a court reform. Smirnov and then Tcherepnin linked this petition to the activities of the *Zemsky Sobor* that was convoked in the fall of 1636³¹. The *Sobor* was to discuss the conflict with Turkey because of Azov fortress. The decree of elections to this *Sobor* was

29. TCHEREPNIN, *op. cit.*, p. 251.

30. LAPTEVA, T. A. (ed.): «"Что в gosudarsve delayetsa durno": "Gosudarevo delo" I. A. Buturlina. 1634», *Istorichesky Archiv*, 1993, n. 4, p. 184.

31. *Akty otnosyashiesya k istorii zemskikh soborov...*, pp. 35-36.

dated 24 October, and it was ordered to elect 2 men from each three ranks of people in towns, 6 persons in total, and they had to come to Moscow by Christmas, on 25 December. Tcherepnin writes that it is not known, whether this *Sobor* took place, but the above mentioned petition of 1637 is weighted in favour of an active *Sobor*, as many historians believe this petition to be filed precisely at the *Sobor*³². Meanwhile, the deputies could have already arrived in Moscow in December and have presented different petitions. It is possible to suppose this, as a code was passed on 17 December, 1636, containing 14 decrees concerning estates and patrimonial lands, aimed at strengthening the positions of landowners³³. However, it does not mention the collective petition filed by *nobles and deti boyarskie* of the «towns». It is mentioned in the decree of 20 February, 1637, about the limitations on the recovery of fugitive peasants belonging to serving men of southern and out of Moscow towns that were similar to the limitations on the recovery of fugitive peasants of the Trinity monastery of St. Sergius³⁴. The provincial nobility had managed to achieve some economic (extending of the limitations on recovery of fugitive peasants to 9 years) and judicial (lengthy delays in the trials) privileges. But the issue of Azov had not been resolved. Meanwhile, the petitions filed by the representatives of provincial nobility suggest that the *Sobor* of 1637 really took place and the deputies had arrived in Moscow not later than in February of 1637. They took advantage of the visit to the capital and filed petitions with requests for various benefits. These petitions, however, show that some small southern border districts had elected 5, not 6, people. It is most likely that 6 persons were to arrive only from «big towns». Nazar Semenov's Omelyanov, elected from the small town-fortress of Karachev, wrote in his petition to the tsar that it had been ordered «...by your Sovereign charter to elect from the town of Karachev five persons of *nobles and deti boyarskie* for a state case... and we, your serfs, have arrived to you, Sovereign, in Moscow...»³⁵. Another deputy from Karachev, Michael Tsurikov, wrote: «...they elected me from the town Karachev as one of five persons, and my house have been burnt, and so did grain and ammunition, and I have prepared supplies for Moscow by buying the things...»³⁶. He asked to delay his service to the autumn half. According to these petitions, it is possible to conclude that at the time the participation in a *Zemsky Sobor* was not considered as a separate service. It should also be noted that judging by their petitions and marks on them, the deputies from Karachev stayed in Moscow till March of 1637.

32. TCHEREPNIN, *op. cit.*, p. 253-254; SMIRNOV, P.: *Chelobitnye dvoryan i detey boyarskikh v pervoy polovine XVII veka*. [Moscow], 1915, pp. 8-9.

33. ZARG, Texts, n. 234, pp. 171-174.

34. *Idem*, n. 237, p. 176.

35. RGADA, f. 210, Moskovsky stol [Moscow Desk], stolbets [scroll], n. 126, l. 216.

36. *Idem*, l. 368.

In September of 1637 another *Zemsky Sobor* was called. The information about its decision can be found in the tsar's charter to Ustuzhna Zhelezopolskaya of 12 December, 1637. The occasion for the *Sobor* was presented by an attack of the brother of Crimean Khan Safa-Giray on Russia in revenge for the capture of Azov by the Cossacks. The decision of the *Sobor* is dated 28 September, 1637, according to Tcherepnin, and all ranks participated in the *Sobor*. The main issue was an organization of the resistance to Crimean forces. It was decided to gather the recruit people from ecclesiastical and secular landowners and to get money to pay them from towns and public lands. There is no information about the elections to this *Sobor*, its activities, and its connections to the previous *Sobor*. Latkin thought that the composition of the *Sobor* had been the same since the fall of 1636³⁷.

In 1639 a new *Sobor* was called. The deed about this *Sobor* was found by A. A. Novosel'sky among the documents of the Chancellery of Secret Affaires in the 1940s. Before that the *Sobor* was dated to 1634, or it was not mentioned at all³⁸. The delegates discussed the issue of Crimean Tatars who had tortured Russian envoys. After a preliminary meeting of the tsar and boyars, it was decided to receive the responses to this fact from estates and strata. The *Sobor* was opened on 19 July. The same ranks attended: higher nobility, clergy, *nobles and deti boyarskie*, privileged merchants and tradesmen. The statements, as earlier, were given according to ranks. During the discussion they came to the conclusion that it is necessary to submit the written opinions, also according to ranks. The opinions were brought to the necessity to stop paying tribute to Crimea, and the idea that collecting of money for the troops in the Southern borders should be evenly distributed, «...so that no one in the state evaded...»³⁹.

Novosel'sky thought that «the opinions expressed at the *Sobor* had not influenced the government»⁴⁰. The issue of Crimea and Azov had not been resolved; the Tatars did not carry on their threat of a raid to Russia, and Russian diplomats continued to carry the tribute to Crimea, although the Russian government rejected demands to increase it.

At the same time there was an aggravation of social relations in Russia, which, however, were not discussed at *Zemsky Sobors*, but were reflected in the collective petitions. The convocation of the *Sobors* made it possible to develop a collective opinion inside a social stratum and to convey it to the government.

37. LATKIN, V. N.: *Zemskie sobory...*, pp. 183-184; TCHEREPNIN, *op. cit.*, pp. 254-256.

38. NOVOSEL'SKY, A. A.: «Zemsky Sobor 1639 goda», *Istoricheskie Zapiski*, vol. 24. Moscow, 1947, pp. 14-29.

39. *Idem*, p. 27.

40. *Idem*, p. 28.

At the end of 1635 privileged merchants and tradesmen once again submitted a collective petition complaining of harassment by foreign merchants. The Moscow tradesmen also tried to return their people by filing a petition. The complaints against foreign merchants continued to be expressed in the petitions of tradesmen in 1637 and 1639. In 1639 and 1641 the provincial nobility also submitted petitions with requests to protect them legally from the abuse of «the strong people» in relation to ensuring working hands and legal procedure. In the summer of 1641 it came to a threat of an armed rebellion in Moscow; service people «brought rebellion», and burst into the palace «with a great noise», and submitted a petition there⁴¹. There were a lot of *nobles and deti boyarskie* in Moscow at the time because of a Tatars threat. One of them, Prokhor Kolbetsky, described the disturbances in Moscow in a letter to his father of 15 July, 1641. Prokhor Grigori'ev Kolbetsky had served in Nizhny Novgorod since 1635/36 and was listed as a *novick* (joined the service not long ago) with the salary of 250 quarters of land⁴². A few days after this letter, on 19 July, 1641, some members of Nizhny Novgorod corporation, including Prokhor Kolbetsky, submitted a petition with a request to let them go to Nizhny Novgorod for the survey of their lands and fixing of boundary with the land of Clerk Fyodor Likhachev⁴³. One can assume that a conflict between the provincial nobility and a powerful clerk became a subject of proceedings in Moscow, and the government made concessions to the people of Nizhny Novgorod. It was rumored in Moscow that «the boyars should be beaten by people («land»)». The use of the term «land» (*zemlya*) indicates that a meeting in Moscow could be compared in numbers and influence with a *Zemsky Sobor*, although it was not called at the time. Because of the threat of a Crimean invasion, in Moscow there were collected the halves of «service towns» which were not in service in spring and the first half of summer. However, Smirnov believed that this and other petitions of 1637, 1645 and 1648 could have been drafted at the Southern borders, where «thousands of noble military men from the towns of central Russia were sent annually and where they met the nobles from borderland towns»⁴⁴. The demands of the service men, as in 1637, consisted of the repeal of the statute of limitations on the recovery of fugitive peasants and reform of legal procedure. They also asked to prohibit *nobles and deti boyarskie* from entering the slaves' status. The government's response followed on 23 July. As a result of the petition, «articles» or a law code was published, containing 5 decrees about: 1) the restitution of occupied by force lands, fugitive men, and peasants to *nobles and deti boyarskie*; 2) extension of limitation on the recovery of fugitives from five

41. SMIRNOV, P.: *Chelobitnye dvoryan i detey boyarskikh...*, op. cit., pp.16-17.

42. RDAGA, f. 210, Moskovsky stol [Moscow Desk], stolbets [scroll] 161, l. 209.

43. *Idem*, l. 218.

44. ZARG. Comments. Leningrad, 1987, p. 186.

to ten years; 3) introduction of rules for the court of claims by *nobles and deti boyarskie* to the clergy, and the limitation on the recovery of removed peasants to 15 years; 4) the prohibition to toll illegally; 5) return to public service the nobles registered in military muster rolls (*desyatni*), having taken bondage on them before 1641, and henceforth, a prohibition to take into slaves both registered and not registered sons of nobles⁴⁵. Historians suppose that the petition concerning the prohibition of entering the slaves could have been submitted separately. In this law code there is mention of a petition of the nobles of various towns against the higher clergy, monastic authorities, in particular, the authorities of Trinity monastery of St. Sergius, boyars, *okol'nicie*, «Moscow people of all ranks», as well as «their brothers, *nobles and deti boyarskie*, on fugitives and removed men and peasants». It is also said that in accordance with a petition, a tsar's decree and the boyars' sentence were made, and it is possible that this sentence was made under pressure. Many claims of provincial nobility had been satisfied, for example, that one prohibiting landowners from entering the slaves' status, and another one concerning the extension of limitations on the recovery of the fugitive peasants and slaves, up to 15 years for removed people. However, the government hesitated to repeal the statute of limitations.

Thus, in 1641 we can speak again about the influence of the «land», in this case the service men, on legislation through presenting of petitions and, apparently, a threat of rebellion. At the same time there was a decree concerning the election of «fives» (i.e. 5 persons) in each service town to collect information and petitions about the needs and ruin of provincial nobility. According to Smirnov, they «formed an estate commission aimed to collect and present noble claims». He thought that the movement of 1641 had ended for the nobles «sadly, almost fruitlessly», as they were strong only at the time of their congresses, and when they left Moscow, the government calmed. In addition, the service men «were not always in full agreement with each other»⁴⁶.

It is possible that the elected «five men» attended the *Sobor* of 1642 that opened on 3 January, where the statement of the provincial nobility sounded particularly strikingly and strongly. The *Sobor* was attended by 115 *nobles and deti boyarskie* from 42 districts. According to Tcherepnin, those representatives of the provincial nobility who at the time (around Christmas) were staying in Moscow because of judicial and other matters took part in the *Sobor*. The *Sobor* took place in connection with the appeal of Don Cossacks to the government for aid to enable them to hold the fortress of Azov, which they had captured still in 1637. The deed of the *Sobor*, preserved at the Russian State Archive of Ancient

45. ZARG. Texts, n. 287, pp. 195-200.

46. SMIRNOV, P. P.: *Chelobutnyia dvorian...*, pp. 16-17.

Documents (*Rossiyskiy Gosudarstvennyy Arkhiv Drevnikh Aktov, RGADA*), is opened by the report to the sovereign on the circumstances of its convocation. Don Ataman Naum Vasil'ev arrived in Moscow with a letter from the Cossacks on 28 October, 1641. The Cossacks complained of the lack of funds to hold the town and asked to take Azov under Russian protection. On 2 December nobleman Afanasy Zhelyabuzhsky and clerk Orefa Bashmakov were sent to Azov with salary for the Cossacks and a task to examine the town and to send its drawing. The *Boyarskaya Duma* was assigned the task of finding means necessary to protect Azov and the fund for sending troops there. The boyars came to the conclusion that it would cost 221 thousand rubles to send the troops of 10 thousand people. They offered to hand over the issue of the aid to Azov to *Zemsky Sobor*: «...to elect the best people from the ecclesiastical rank and from all ranks of people and to talk to them about the same case, what they think about Azov, if it is worth to hold the fort or not, and who should be sent for to hold it, volunteers or those appointed by the tsar, and how to collect money for the troops, as it needs a lot of money...»⁴⁷. The tsar's decree about the convocation of the *Sobor* arrived on 3 January, 1642. It said that the elections to the *Sobor* from people of «all ranks», not only the best, but also «middle and junior», in particular, «righteous and clever», should be carried out immediately at the *Sobor*. Apparently, it means that many people from the provinces were in Moscow because of the court and other cases at the time. The exact day of the opening of the *Sobor* is unknown; it seems that it took place immediately after the decree. The meeting was opened in the Dining hall (*Stolovaya izba*) in the presence of Sovereign, and Fyodor Likhachev, the Keeper of the Seal and *dyak* (clerk) of the *Boyarskaya Duma*, gave a speech. He told the news about the preparation of a raid by the Sultan to Russia and the siege of Azov. Then, the decree of elections was read out. It was proposed to choose from 20 to 7 men of big towns, and from 5 to 2 men «of not that many people». The list of elected should be brought to the Chancellery of Military Affairs (*Razryadny prikaz*). Then the elected people were given the letter on «the issue of Azov and about war». It happened at the second meeting where the tsar and the clergy were absent. Historians argue about the way the elections to this *Sobor* took place. Tcherepnin came to the conclusion that the list of the deputies was known before the tsar's decree of convocation of the *Sobor* on 3 January, 1642, the elections did not took place at the *Sobor*, and the first meeting was attended not by electorate but the deputies of the future *Sobor*⁴⁸. There were 10 *stol'niki*, 22 men of Moscow nobles, 4 heads of *streletskie* (musketeers) regiments, 12 men of *zbil'tsy* (an intermediate rank between provincial and Moscow ranks), 115

47. *Akty otnosyaschiesya k istorii zemskikh soborov...*, n. XII, p. 37.

48. TCHEREPNIN, *op. cit.*, p. 265.

nobles and deti boyarskie from 42 towns, 3 men of the privileged merchants, 5 privileged tradesmen and 20 townsmen from Moscow districts. As we can see, there were the representatives of provincial nobility at the *Sobor*, but there were no representatives of provincial townspeople, which confirms the view that the participants consisted of the nobles who had already been on business in Moscow at the time, as it is said in the act of the *Sobor*. The answers to the raised questions were received from all listed strata and groups of population, and also from the clergy. Two Moscow nobles answered the questions individually: Nikita Beklemishev and Timofey Zhelyabuzhsky. The clerks collected the answers in the form of «story» (*skazka*; it also can be translated as «speech» or «tale»), and it took them two weeks, from 3 to 17 of January, to collect all the «stories». On the basis of these documents an extract was compiled and reported to the tsar.

The «stories» mentioned in the *Sobor*'s deed are remarkable because they reflect social position of the strata and groups that submitted these «stories», pose acute social questions and show social contradictions in Russian society. Many people preferred to speak neutrally on the issue of naturalization of Azov and entrusted it «to the will of the sovereign». But in some «stories», for example, those submitted by Beklemishev and Zhelyabuzhsky, there was notice of the importance of the fortress to prevent attacks of Tatars on the southern border and to protect the border against Nogay Horde. As for sending the troops to Azov, the Moscow nobles and the provincial nobility preferred to avoid such a campaign, which in its scope could be comparable to future Crimean campaigns of 1687 and 1689 and required significant expenses and would be a ruin for some of them. They were against the recruitment of their peasants, serfs and enslaved people. The nobles proposed to send to Azov volunteers and the troops which were on the direct provision of state – *strel'tsy* and soldiers.

For this purpose the *nobles and deti boyarskie* proposed the collection of money from rich people in order to hire «free eager people», but not serfs and landowner's peasants were allowed to join them. A lengthy «stories» presented by the noble representatives of central Russian towns and those of Novgorod, such as Suzdal, Juriev Polskoy, Pereslavl Zalessky, Belaya, Kostroma, Smolensk, Galich, Arzamas, Veliky Novgorod, Rzheva Volodimerova, Zubtsov, Toropets, Rostov, Poshekhonie, Torzhok, Gorokhovets. It is similar to the petitions of nobility, and presents a publicistic work and is imbued with philosophical, political, and social ideas characteristic for this stratum. The provincial nobility proposed to send to Azov «infantry martial people», *strel'tsy* and the soldiers of the old call, and to pay their salaries and to provide with the supplies of grain. The supplies should be taken from «the real residents indiscriminately of the marginal border towns behind the river Oka and ...from the sovereign's palace's villages». Carts and people should be taken from the Trinity monastery of St. Sergius and

from other monasteries. The nobles turned to the history, having remembered how it was under Tsars Ivan Vasil'evich and Fyodor Ivanovich during the Kazan campaign and «German campaigns». This indicates a rather high level of education of nobles and the existence of strong historical memory. The nobles pointed out the boyars and the people close to the tsar that had been granted a sovereign's salary «on their honor» and had to provide army with recruits, both on foot and horseback, as it allowed them to have the estates and lands that they had received for their service. They pointed to the clerks who had become rich with «great wealth by their unrighteous bribery», had bought estates and built stone houses, «such that under previous sovereigns the most notable people did not have such palaces»⁴⁹. The clerks should be taxed, and recruits, on foot and horseback, should be taken from their estates and patrimonial lands. The ecclesiastical landowners should also put recruits, according to the books of taxes, and it is necessary to take the lists of estates with signatures, as the concealed estates should be forfeited to the state. The *nobles and deti boyarskie* also spoke about people who were recorded in «Moscow list» and in other grades in the service in towns and «at your sovereign's affaires». They «have become heavy and got rich with great wealth ... have bought many lands», so they should also send recruits. The recruits should be taken from the court people who are not in service because of their estates. All these categories of people should either serve with their people, or pay money and send recruits. At the same time the nobles excluded recruiting of soldiers from their old peasants and slaves. They were ready to serve and «work with their heads» for the «true Orthodox faith». It was also proposed in the «story» to make lists, with numbers of peasants of those who had them, and to issue a decree concerning the number of peasant that would allow to serve without salary and to take money from those having peasants in excess of this number. The money could be borrowed from the patriarch, monasteries, privileged merchants and tradesmen. It was suggested that the chancellery clerks and «customs heads» should be under financial control, checking them against books⁵⁰. «The thought and the story» presented by the service men is a striking example of social thought. The «story» is based on the philosophy of «equality», popular among the provincial nobility and it contains the elements of sociological analysis of Russian society in the middle of the 17th century.

The representatives of all strata and groups of urban society – the privileged merchants (*gosti*), tradesmen of *gostinaya* and *sukonnaya* «hundreds», the heads and constables of state (black) hundreds and settlements (*slobody*) – complained of the «impoverishment» and «destitution» by incessant services and collection of

49. *Akty otnosyashchiesya k istorii zemskikh soborov...*, p. 50.

50. *Idem*, pp. 51-52.

emergence taxes («fifth») in their «stories». *Gosti* and other tradesmen wrote about the abuse and bribery of local administration – town governors and clerks, about the difficulties in the law proceedings, also entrusted to the governors, while previously there were local *guba elders* in towns who had not interfered in the trials⁵¹. The complaints against foreign merchants were again repeated. The townspeople complained of ever-increasing state duties: building of fortresses, delivery of carts and various supplies, supply of people in the army, services as public offices⁵². All presented «stories» testified to a high level of state exploitation of the population that had not yet recovered from the effects of the Smolensk war, and to impossibility to increase this level, as was required for a new military campaign.

Historians expressed different views on the form and results of the *Zemsky Sobor* of 1642. B. N. Chicherin considered the holding of this *Sobor* an illustration of the decline of the system of *Sobors*, Latkin, on the contrary, having examined in detail this idea, believed that the *Sobor* openly and honestly reflected the opinions of all sections of the population that did not have to hide their current situation from the tsar⁵³. Tcherepnin, on the whole agreeing with Latkin, did not accept his opinion that «Michael Fyodorovich was a people's tsar and ruled the state for the benefit of all estates of the land and it was not in his nature to go against the popular will». He saw signs of a growing class struggle in the opinions submitted at the *Zemsky Sobor*⁵⁴. A similar opinion was expressed earlier by Smirnov, considering the events of the *Sobor* a continuation of «the summer movement of 1641»⁵⁵. The government of Michael Fyodorovich listened to the *Sobor's* opinion and did not start a new military campaign, which really could have led to a serious social upheaval. The end of the *Sobor's* deed is missing, but the Tsar's decision was clearly based on it, although it was not soon adopted. On 30 April a charter was sent to the Cossacks prescribing them to leave Azov.

On 12 July, 1645 Tsar Michael Fyodorovich died. There is information that immediately after his death or some time later a *Sobor* was called to approve Alexey Mikhailovich's accession to the throne: «... after some time the patriarch and the metropolitans, and bishops, and archimandrites, and abbots, and all of ecclesiastical rank administered extreme unction to him, and after the death of the tsar, boyars, and *okol'nichie*, and people of council, and *nobles and deti boyarskie*, and *gosti*, and tradesmen, and the people of all ranks chose his son, the current Tsar, to accede on the throne, and crowned him in the great cathedral church, and those

51. *Idem*, pp. 55-56.

52. *Idem*, pp. 56-57.

53. LATKIN, V. N.: *Zemskie sobory...*, pp. 197-200.

54. TCHEREPNIN, *op. cit.*, p. 271.

55. SMIRNOV. P. P.: *Posadskie lyudi i ikh klassovaya bor'ba...*, vol. 1, p. 480.

nobles and deti boyarskie and townspeople were presented by two people from a town...»⁵⁶. According to other sources («The Journey» of Adam Olearius) this happened already on 13 July, 1645. On the basis of the evidence of G. Kotoshikhin and A. Olearius, Latkin believed that the *Sobor* really occurred: «We have reason to believe that in 1645 the *Zemsky Sobor* took place in Moscow, electing Alexey Mikhailovich to the throne or, better to say, sanctioning by the will of people his accession to the throne»⁵⁷. Tcherepnin shared this opinion, emphasizing, however, that «it was not an election of one candidate from several ones, but the approval of the legitimate heir by the direct line»⁵⁸. Smirnov denied the fact of this *Sobor*: according to his opinion, Alexey Mikhailovich was confirmed on the throne by the *Boyarskaya Duma* and the official men of Moscow, and Grigory Kotoshikhin, who wrote about it, referred to his coronation, which took place on 28 July, 1645⁵⁹.

By this time the nobles had gathered in Moscow and had taken advantage of the beginning of a new reign to resubmit a petition to repeal the statute of limitations on the recovery of fugitive peasants⁶⁰. Governor J. K. Cherkassky reported from Tula that on 6 August the nobles asked him «to let them go to Moscow, by two men from each town, to ask you, Sovereign, about their affaires». According to this petition, on 19 August Cherkassky sent to Moscow on behalf of the Southern towns V. F. Dyakov and O. U. Sukhotin of Tula, I. S. Likharev and A. I. Khrushhev of Kashira; and on behalf of the central towns F. V. Korobov of Vladimir, F. I. Varaksin and V. A. Berdyayev of Smolensk, M. I. Shipov and V. S. Pereleshin of Galich, F. T. Polozov and P. I. Radilov of Kostroma, G. Z. Nekludov and Yu. O. Sychov of Tver, Torzok, Staritsa and Mozhaysk⁶¹. It is possible that the people sent from the Cherkassky's regiment participated in the submitting of this petition. The solution of the issue was postponed until the appointed general census, but according to Smirnov, on 19 October, 1645 the government agreed in principle to this request of the provincial nobility. In his opinion, there was also a decision about a fundamental cleaning of administration and clerk apparatus. Boyar B. I. Morozov was charged to investigate the accusations against the administration⁶². Soon followed the petition of *gosti* and other privileged merchants (169 men). Smirnov considered this new petition of tradesmen about the expulsion of foreign merchants as submitted at the *Sobor*⁶³ and attributed it to 1646, but there is the

56. SMIRNOV, P. P.: *Chelobutnye dvorian...*, p. 20; TCHEREPNIN, *op. cit.*, pp. 272-274.

57. LATKIN, V. N.: *Zemskie sobory...*, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

58. TCHEREPNIN, *op. cit.*, p. 273.

59. SMIRNOV, P. P.: *Posadskie lyudi i ikh klassovaya bor'ba...*, vol. 2, p. 12.

60. RGADA, f. 141, *Prykaznye dela starych let* [Chancellery Rolls of Ancient Years], 1645, n. 72, l. 1-2; SMIRNOV P. P.: *Chelobutnye dvoryan...*, pp. 47-50.

61. RGADA, f. 210, *Moskovsky stol* [Moscow Desk], stolbets [scroll] n. 199, l. 407.

62. SMIRNOV, P. P.: *Posadskie lyudi i ikh klassovaya bor'ba...*, vol. 1, p. 22.

63. *Idem*, pp. 23-24.

signature of *gost'* Nadeya Sveteshnikov, who died before 9 January, 1646, so the petition must be dated to 1645. In this case, there was a combination of two forms of representation: the elections from towns and filing of petitions.

Rash actions of the new government of B. I. Morozov, under a young Tsar, had led to the growth of popular discontent. A particular indignation was aroused by a new tax on salt, introduced in 1647. Resentment towards the boyars, clerks and rich merchants culminated a number of people's uprisings both in Moscow and in other towns. The uprising in Moscow began on 1 June, 1648. It was led by the townspeople (the people of *posad*) and the humble («black») people. After two failed attempts to present a petition to the Tsar, people rushed into Kremlin. The guard (*strel'tsy*) partly joined the people. The result was execution of several members of the government. The sources emphasize that all the «land», the «community», raised against the boyars and the nobles. Tcherepnin pointed to the connection between people's uprisings of 1648 and a *Zemsky Sobor* as «a body presenting the petitions to the Tsar»⁶⁴. The provincial nobility and part of the merchants joined the uprising. On 2 June «people of all ranks and common people» filed a petition to the tsar, which have reached us in Swedish translation⁶⁵. The petitioners sharply criticized the administration and social system of the state and appealed to the tsar for protection against abuses, pointing at the danger of spontaneous actions. The second petition on behalf of all the people and all Christians, «the people of all ranks», «the land», dates 10 June and contains complaints about the abuses of high nobility and bureaucrats, accusing them of unfair trial, bribery, and violence: «... and we hear among all the people moaning and wailing because of injustice of the strong... of all official clerks there is a great untruth, and all cry to the sovereign, as the sovereign does not intervene on behalf of poor, simple, and helpless, having given his state for plunder...»⁶⁶. The first and the second petitions include a proposal of a court reform, and the second one proposes a convocation of a *Sobor*. The petitions of 1648 (it is possible that it is the same document) are the culmination of development of social and political thought in Russian society of the 17th century.

A threat of the growth of the rebellion forced the government to take a number of measures, not only to suppress the people, but also to comply with its demands: illegal levies were canceled, and there was a distribution of salaries

64. TCHEREPNIN, *op. cit.*, p. 278.

65. BAZILEVICH, K. V. (ed.): *Gorodskie vosstaniya v Moskovskom gosudarstve XVII v. Sbornik dokumentov*. Moscow, Leningrad, 1936, 2, pp. 46-52.

66. SMIRNOV, P. P.: «Neskol'ko dokumentov k istorii Sobornogo Ulozheniya i Zemskogo Sobora 1648-1649 godov», *Chtenya v Obshestve istorii i drevnostey rossiyskikh pri Moskovskom universitete*, 1913, n. 4, mixture, n. 1, p. 5; TCHEREPNIN, *op. cit.*, p. 282. The petition was discovered by M. V. Shakhmatov in the Tartu archives.

and other benefits among the provincial nobility. In the middle of July a *Zemsky Sobor* was opened in Moscow. In addition to the clergy, high and Moscow ranks, the representatives of the provincial nobility and wealthy merchants were also present. There were also Moscow townspeople and foreigners. The *Sobor* was mostly composed of the petitioners to the Tsar⁶⁷. At the *Sobor* a new petition was submitted, with demands to compile a new Code of Laws (*Sudebnik I Ulozhennaya kniga*). For this purpose a special institution was founded – Department (*Prikaz*) headed by Prince N. I. Odoyevsky. In addition, it was decided to convene a new *Sobor* and to urge the deputies («two men of each rank») to arrive by 1 September. All the estates were invited except for the state peasants. Sending out of letters concerning the elections to the *Sobor* began on the second half of July. The elections were held amid continuing insurgencies in towns, both the Northern and the Southern, and political struggle among Moscow higher nobility. In some cases the elections in the provinces dragged on for two months because of procrastination, and the government was forced to send threatening letters to the governors⁶⁸. The representatives of 116 districts came to the *Sobor*, 315 people in total, and most of them came of provincial nobility (157 men) and townspeople (80 men). While working on the Code of Laws, they filed numerous petitions in order to legalize their rights, and their demands were mostly satisfied. Wishes and requests of the common people, namely the nobles and the townspeople, were taken into account during the work on articles of the Code of Laws concerning the limitation of monastic landowning, the expropriation of tax-exempt settlements (*slobody*) in the towns. However, a major victory of the provincial nobility was contained in the first article of Chapter 11 of the Code of Laws (the Court of the peasants), which canceled the limitations on the terms of the recovery of fugitive peasants. The peasants were legally assigned to the owners and were not allowed to leave them. This was a finalization of serfdom in Russia.

After the Odoyevsky's commission had collected the legislative materials of previous years and new articles had been formulated, the new Code of Laws was publicly read out. According to Tcherepnin, the listening was held in two 'chambers': that of the boyars and that of nobles and townspeople⁶⁹. The text of the Code of Laws was signed by all the participants of the *Sobor* (it is extant, and these signatures have allowed to reconstruct the composition of the *Sobor*), then it was supposed to be published and sent to departments and provinces. The Code was finally adopted on 29 January, 1649. On 7 April there was a decree about printing of the text, and on 20 May – about its sale.

67. TCHEREPNIN, *op. cit.*, p. 285.

68. KABANOV, A.: «Organizatsiya vyborov na zemskie sobory xvii v.», *Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosvescheniya*, 1910, September, Part XXIX, p. 102.

69. TCHEREPNIN, *op. cit.*, p. 296.

There is evidence that for the participation in the *Sobors* of 1648–1649, the *nobles and deti boyarskie* received additions to their land and money salaries, so the participation in a *Sobor* was regarded as a public service. In February of 1649 a noble from Meschora, Jacov Semen'ov Moskotiniev submitted a petition, in which he reported that «... according to your sovereign's decree, I, your slave, have been elected from the town of Meschora for your sovereign's public affairs. And for this service, my sovereign, I have received an addition of 100 quarters of the land and 5 roubles of money...»⁷⁰. Then he pointed out that due to his illness he had not got his salary of 14 roubles in time, as it was due to the provincial nobility, and asked to pay it. It was agreed upon in the department and *stol'nik* B. I. Troyekurov was charged to find out from others from the service «town», if Moskotiniev attended the service. Similar petitions concerning grants of benefits for the participation in the work of this *Sobor* (including the townspeople) and the additions to the salaries of the provincial nobility have been published by Latkin and Yu. V. Got'e⁷¹.

The participants of the *Sobor* used their rights and status to put pressure on the government with regard to other issues not connected with the Code. At the beginning of 1649 Moscow and provincial nobles filed a petition with a request for a prohibition of trade in Moscow to foreign merchants and its transfer to Arkhangelsk, as Moscow *gosti* and other merchants had gone broke in competition with the foreigners. The nobles added that «the foreigners in Muscovy state learn all sorts of news and write to their own states about all sorts of things»⁷². The signatures of the provincial nobility under questioning on this petition almost coincide with those under the Code of Laws⁷³. Another petition, with a more detailed description of the «untruths» of Englishmen and other foreigners, was submitted by *gosti* and the tradesmen. After this the tsar ordered to question the elected nobles and the tradesmen and to ask them, whether the measures of restriction on trade would cause an aggravation of international relations and whether Russian people would be able to pay debts to the foreigners. The elected people answered that there would be no aggravation, as only Swedes had the treaty of commerce within Russian territories, and Englishmen and other foreign merchants had been aware of their violation of agreements, and the debts would be paid by

70. RGADA, f. 210, Vladimirsky stol [Vladimir Desk], stolbets [scroll] 128, l. 108

71. LATKIN, V. N.: *Materialy dlya istorii zemskikh soborov...*, pp. 49, 64–65; *Akty otnosyaschiesya k istorii zemskikh soborov...*, pp. 62–64.

72. *Sbornik knyazya Chilkova*. Saint Peterburg, 1872, 82, p. 238.

73. *Sobornoe Ulozhenie 1649 goda. Teksty y kommentarii*. Leningrad, 1987, pp. 403–407.

«community»⁷⁴. The authorities considered the appeals, and already on 1 June, 1649 the trading of English merchants was restricted to the port of Arkhangel'sk⁷⁵.

Three *Zemsky Sobors* took place in the early 1650s. In summer of 1650 a *Sobor* was convened. It examined the situation in Pskov, where on 28 February, 1650 a people's uprising broke out, caused by the merchants' actions towards the selling of grain abroad. In response to the collective petitions from the Pskov townspeople a *Zemsky Sobor* was convoked on 4 July, and it was attended by «the people of all ranks». At the *Sobor* a delegation was approved to send to Pskov to conduct negotiations with the population of the town. The instructions for the delegation were corrected at the next meeting of the *Sobor* on 26 July. In August, as a result of the negotiations, the people of Pskov took an oath to the tsar. It was officially acknowledged that, having submitted a guilty petition, Pskov was forgiven at the third meeting of the *Sobor* on 8 October, 1650⁷⁶. As in 1648, the *Zemsky Sobor* played a role of a peacemaker in achieving of social compliance.

Two *Sobors*, convened in 1651 and 1653, were devoted to the preparation and approval of the act of reunification of Ukraine and Russia. The provinces often avoided the elections to the *Zemsky Sobor* of 1651, initiated by the government⁷⁷. On 28 February the *Sobor* listened to a report of the government concerning the wrongs of Polish kings and the desire of Bogdan Khmelnytsky to get Russian citizenship⁷⁸. Only the affirmative reply of the clergy to joining of Ukraine to Russia has survived. The final decision on the reunification of Ukraine and Russia was made at the *Zemsky Sobor*, which took place in the Palace of Facets in Moscow on 1 October, 1653. The townspeople had not been invited to this *Sobor*, only nobles had been elected in the provinces (two men from each town). The opinions of social groups and strata, submitted according to the ranks, starting with the boyars, approved the reunification of Ukraine and Russia and the beginning of the war with Poland⁷⁹.

Historians have noted a decline in the significance of the *Zemsky Sobors* in the middle of the 17th century. Klyuchevsky believed that 'disintegration of the *Sobor*'s representation' was caused by separation of estates as a consequence of their unequal rights and duties. In his opinion, only Moscow merchants and provincial townspeople supported the idea of the *Sobors*. He came to the conclusion that

74. *Sbornik knyazyia Chilkova...*, p. 249.

75. *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiyskoy Imperii*, vol. 1, Saint Petersburg, 1830, no 9, pp.167-169.

76. ТИХОМИРОВ, М. Н.: *Klassovaya bor'ba v Rossii XVII v. [Class struggle in Russia of 17th Century]*. Moscow, 1969, p. 317, no 30.

77. KABANOV, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

78. *Akty otnosyaschiesya k istorii zemskikh soborov...*, pp. 64-68.

79. *Idem*, pp. 68-76.

Sobors were only auxiliary government bodies⁸⁰. «In the eyes of the population a *Zemsky Sobor* lost its ideological significance, as it had during the Time of Troubles, and the participation in it came to be regarded as an obligation, similar to those duties already lying on the shoulders of the population», wrote A. Kabanov. He saw a reason for this in the fact that «the character of the *Sobors* was strictly consultative in the nature... The evolution of the *Zemsky Sobors* after 1613 should be considered as a process of wretched existence, internal stagnation, with accidental outbreaks (1648)»⁸¹. Kabanov thought, however, that the threats of the uprisings against serfdom forced the landlords to unite and to keep up the fading life of the *Sobors*. Smirnov concurred with this opinion in many respects, asserting that by the 1640s the *Sobors* had lost their significance that had passed to the meetings and conferences of the estates (meaning the collective petitions of the nobility and merchants)⁸².

Tcherepnin, on the contrary, considered the *Zemsky Sobors* «an organic phenomenon of Russian life», which helped to form the state and to transform the society into an estate-representative monarchy, and then to create bourgeois institutions. The contradictions in their activities are connected with the contradictions of the evolution of society and «class forces». The *Sobors* are indissolubly connected with popular movements and class struggle. In his opinion, they played a great role in elaboration of official ideology (speeches and reports), formation of public opinion on foreign policy and the foreign policy itself. A system of international legal notions was developed, among them «the truth», «the sovereign's honor», and others. Comparing the *Zemsky Sobors* with Western European representative institutions, the researcher noted that all of them were formed in conditions of social and political struggle and popular movements. He also put emphasis on the synchronicity of some events, for example, a chronological coincidence of Fronde in Paris, English revolution and the uprising of 1648 in Moscow⁸³.

If we consider all above-mentioned facts and opinions as a group, it should be admitted that the *Zemsky Sobors* played a significant role in the formation of public and legal institutions in Russia in the early reign of the Romanov dynasty. An estate-representative monarchy, unfortunately, have never developed in Russia; strengthening of autocracy and bureaucracy, as well as long wars did not allow the representative institutions to get legislative shape. Nevertheless, an important precedent was established, which, at any moment, could have been used in

80. KLYUCHEVSKY, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

81. KABANOV, *op. cit.*, pp. 110-111.

82. SMIRNOV, P. P.: *Chelobutnye dvorian...*, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

83. TCHEREPNIN, *op. cit.*, p. 387-400.

the political struggle. In the early 19th century the Decembrists recollected the *Zemsky Sobors*, as did both liberals and revolutionaries in the early 20th century.

It is also important to mention the increasing role of the provincial nobility and commercial and industrial population at the *Zemsky Sobors* by the mid-17th century. While at the beginning of the reign of the Romanov dynasty the government convened the *Sobors* on its own initiative, mainly to solve financial and foreign policy matters, in 1648 two *Sobors* were convened under the pressure of the provincial nobility and townspeople primarily for the solution of the social issues.

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