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Prokopovich, *Pravda* and Proof: Some Myths about *Pravda Voli Monarshei*

Abstract: Revisiting some conclusions advanced in his 1996 edition of *Pravda Voli Monarshei*, the author first considers the meaning of ‘*pravda*’ in the title of the work. He then reconsiders the doubts as to its authorship raised by James Cracraft in 1981 in his influential article ‘Did Feofan Prokopovich really write *Pravda Voli Monarshei*?’ (*Slavic Review*, vol. 40, No. 2, pp.173-93). Finally he examines the accepted belief, now current for almost a century, that Hobbes is a source of *Pravda Voli Monarshei*.

Key words: authorship and meaning of *Pravda Voli Monarshei*, Feofan Prokopovich, Statute on the succession (1722), Afanasy Condoidi, James Cracraft, Peter the Great, Peter II, Thomas Hobbes, Supreme Privy Council



The booklet (‘*knizhitsa*’)¹ of some 90 pages entitled *Pravda Voli Monarshei* is well known as the principal apologia of petrine absolutism. It was commissioned by Peter the Great and published at his order in December 1722 as a commentary on his imperial succession law promulgated in February of the same year. In this controversial edict Peter proclaimed the monarch’s right to bypass the customary line of succession by male primogeniture and to appoint as his successor whoever he thought fit, whether male or female, within or even outside the imperial family. Ironically, as we know, Peter himself never made use of the statute; but its immediate implications in terms of

¹ Earlier versions of this paper were given at the annual conference of the British Association of Slavonic and East European Studies at Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge, on 29 March and at the 8th International Conference of the Study Group on Eighteenth-Century Russia at Durham University, on 8 July, 2009. I am grateful to Professor Maureen Perrie for her comments.

¹ *Peter the Great. His Law on the Imperial Succession. The Official Commentary. Pravda Voli Monarshei vo opredelenii naslednika derzhavy svoei*, edited and translated with an introduction and notes by A. LENTIN, Oxford, 1996. (hereafter: PVM), p. 124.

his radical extension of the imperial prerogative, and its repercussions across the eighteenth century, are undoubted, particularly in the years immediately after his death – under Catherine I in 1726, when *Pravda Voli Monarshei* was republished, and a year later under Peter II, when it was called in and proscribed.

In 1996, in an edition and translation of *Pravda Voli Monarshei*, I first raised the issues to be revisited here. A dozen years later, it seems a good idea to test my conclusions and see whether they still stand scrutiny. I re-address three vexed questions: (1) first, the question of authorship: who wrote *Pravda Voli Monarshei*? (2) second, a question of sources: did these, or did they not, include Thomas Hobbes? (3) third, what does the title mean, and more particularly what is the meaning of *Pravda*? Let us begin at the beginning with this question, troublesome but fundamental.

1. What does the title mean?

Pravda Voli Monarshei is an elusive title even in Russian, because of the wide ambit and ambiguity of the word ‘pravda’, meaning, variously, truth, law, right and justice.² What exactly is the word ‘pravda’ intended to convey here? The meaning of ‘pravda’ as law is familiar from such legal documents as *Russkaia Pravda*, the classic legal codex of Kievan Rus’. Hence Richard Wortman in *Scenarios of Power* (1995) calls *Pravda Voli Monarshei* ‘The Law of the Monarch’s Will’.³ The latest rendering, by Gary Hamburg in *The Cambridge History of Russia* (2006), is ‘Truth Concerning the Monarch’s Will’.⁴ James Cracraft, who knows more about the book than most, calls it ‘The Right [or Legitimacy] of the Monarch’s Will’.⁵ On the other hand, Nicholas Riasanovsky in *The Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought* (1992) translates it as ‘Justice of the Monarch’s Will’. So too do Jay Alexander and Hugh Ragsdale.⁶ Other modern references by English-speaking authors,

² See *Slovar’ russkogo iazyka XI–XVII vv*, Moscow, 1992.

³ R. WORTMAN, *Scenarios of Power in Russia from Peter the Great to the Abdication of Nicholas II*, Princeton, N. J., 1995, (hereafter: WORTMAN, *Scenarios of Power in Russia*) p. 66.

⁴ Professor Hamburg understandably but inaccurately gives the title as ‘Pravda o voli monarshei’. *The Cambridge History of Russia*, vol. 2, *Imperial Russia, 1689–1917*, ed. D. LIEVEN, Cambridge, 2006, p. 118.

⁵ J. CRACRAFT, *The Petrine Revolution in Russian Culture*, Cambridge, N. J., 2004. (hereafter: CRACRAFT 2004) p. 66.

⁶ N. RIASANOVSKY, *The Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought*, New York, 1985, p. 8. J. T. Alexander renders ‘pravda’ as ‘justice’ in his translation of E.V. Anisimov, *The Reforms of Peter the Great. Progress through Coercion in Russia*, New York, 1993, p. 32. Cf. H. RAGSDALE, *The Russian Tragedy. The Burden of History*, New York, 1996, p. 54.

my own included, oscillate between 'truth' and justice'. In 1973 I called it *The True Law of the Monarch's Will*,⁷ and in 1996 – *The Justice of the Monarch's Will*.⁸

Can we be more precise, and pinpoint which of the overlapping variety of meanings is intended? An examination of contemporary renderings of the title would seem likely to be more material and more illuminating than modern versions. Western courts were acutely concerned about Peter's plans for the succession and their implications for western Europe, and western envoys in Russia were astute to inform their masters about the publication or republication of *Pravda Voli Monarshei*. Thus an unpublished diplomatic report of 1727 in the French archives renders *Pravda Voli Monarshei* as – *Le Droit de la Volonté du Monarque*.⁹ Another French source paraphrases it as *le droit du souverain à la nomination de son successeur*.¹⁰ Also in 1727, the British Resident at St Petersburg, Thomas Consett, who rightly refers to it as 'that special book',¹¹ translates it as *The Right of the Sovereign's Will to appoint the successor to his throne*.¹² The authorised German translation, published in 1724 by Ambrosius Haude, official publisher to the Prussian Academy of Sciences, is entitled *Das Recht der Monarchen in willkühriger Bestellung der Reichsfolge* – the legal right or entitlement of monarchs to dispose of the succession at their own freewill. The German title neatly encapsulates the idea of the sovereign right of monarchs to settle the succession, but it too is as much paraphrase as translation, relocating the force of 'volia' in the adjective *willkührig*. Contemporary versions, then, render 'pravda' as 'right' or 'law'. There is one known exception. In August 1723, eight months after the book's appearance in Russia, a close and accurate epitome of *Pravda Voli Monarshei* in Latin appeared in the monthly scholarly periodical *Acta Eruditorum*, published at Leipzig. The anonymous reviewer renders 'pravda' as 'justice', and the full

⁷ A. LENTIN, *Russia in the Eighteenth Century. From Peter the Great to Catherine the Great*, London, 1973, p. 42

⁸ PVM, pp. 5–6.

⁹ Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Paris, Correspondance Politique, Russie, vol. 20/193 (1727).

¹⁰ *La Première Catherine. Seconde Femme de Pierre le Grand. Notes et anecdotes sur Catherine I d'après un manuscrit inédit du 18^e siècle*, ed. C. ZIEGLER, Paris, 1958, p. 79.

¹¹ *The Present State and Regulations of the Church of Russia*, translated by Thomas CONSETT, London, 1729, reproduced in *For God and Peter the Great. The Works of Thomas Consett*, ed. J. CRACRAFT, New York, 1982. (hereafter: *The Present State*) p. lii.

¹² *The Present State*, (see: note 11.) p. lii. Consett also describes the book as 'The Pravda or the Right of a Monarch to appoint a successor.' Consett to Lord Townshend, 17 July 1725. National Archives, Kew, State Papers 91/9/407–10. Cf. *The Present State*, p. 8.

title as *Justitia voluntatis monarchicae de successore constituendo* – ‘the justice of the monarch’s will in the appointment of his successor’.¹³

Which is it, then – truth, right, law or justice? To address this problem squarely, we should remember the work’s full title – *Pravda Voli Monarshei vo opredelenii naslednika derzhavy svoei* – i.e. literally, ‘The Truth (or law, or right or justice, or whatever it is) of the Monarch’s Will in the designation of the successor to his power, or his state, realm or throne’. I maintain that the particular connotation which ‘pravda’ is meant to convey is that of ‘justice’. The case for this is based on the internal evidence of *Pravda Voli Monarshei*. In the Foreword, or, as it is called, ‘Foreword to the Honest Reader’, we are told, paradoxically and somewhat disingenuously, that the book is not intended to serve as an apologia of Peter’s edict, because, so it says, the edict needs no defence. There is no doubt among jurists, it claims, either as to a monarch’s absolute right as a father to appoint his heir or as to his right as a monarch to the God-given unconditional obedience of his subjects by virtue of *Romans*, 13 – *The powers that be are ordained of God*. ‘A monarch’s statutes and laws’, the Foreword declares, ‘require no aid from scholarly arguments’.¹⁴ I call this disingenuous because, while ostensibly an exegesis or commentary on Peter’s statute, *Pravda Voli Monarshei* is in fact nothing less than a closely argued and exhaustive vindication of it. That indeed is its real and only purpose.

The fact is that Peter’s succession law, which overturned customary law as generally understood both in Muscovy and the west and put a startling new gloss on accepted notions of the divine right of monarchs, was highly political and highly controversial. It originated in Peter’s notorious exclusion of his eldest son, tsarevich Alexei, from the succession in 1718, followed by his trial for treason and his subsequent death in dubious circumstances. After 1718, traditionalists, who believed in God-given hereditary succession by primogeniture, looked to Peter Alekseevich, the young son of the late tsarevich, as the natural heir to the throne. By his succession law, Peter roundly informed his subjects that this was not so, that as absolute ruler (‘samoderzhets’) he was free to designate as his successor whoever he thought fit – that is, by implication, such other candidates as his nephew, the Duke of Holstein, or Peter’s own wife, Catherine, or anyone else in or outside

¹³ 50 years after the first publication of *Pravda Voli Monarshei*, the editor of Theophanis Procopowicz, *Tractatus de Processione Spiritus Sancti*, Gotha, 1772., translates *Pravda Voli Monarshei* as *Aequitas voluntatis monarchicae*. J. CRACRAFT, ‘Did Feofan Prokopovich really write *Pravda Voli Monarshei*?’, *Slavic Review* 40:2 (Summer 1981), pp. 173–193, (hereafter: CRACRAFT 1981) p. 182.

¹⁴ PVM, (see: note 1.) p. 125.

the imperial family, and that he was free to do so regardless of primogeniture, sex, or royal birth, but purely on grounds of merit as he saw it.

The new succession-law confounded the expectations and dashed the hopes of the traditionalists; and the obligatory oath of allegiance to it was, wrote one, 'complied with by many with a heavy heart'.¹⁵ The edict aroused criticism and complaint, albeit muted or anonymous, from the traditionalists, who disapproved of it in principle, did not regard Catherine as a legitimate candidate for the succession, and considered Peter's grandson to be the only rightful heir. It is significant that when Catherine succeeded to the throne in 1725, she was proclaimed empress by virtue of the Statute of 1722, and the Supreme Privy Council ordered the republication of *Pravda Voli Monarshei* with an enormous print-run of 19,000, in order to counter anonymous complaints that she was a usurper; and conversely that when Peter Alexeevich succeeded Catherine as Peter II in 1727, the Supreme Privy Council proscribed the book and ordered all copies to be called in and destroyed. The aim of those who really ruled Russia in 1726, that is, the Supreme Privy Council, was to uphold Peter's statute, for without it Catherine had no title to the throne. Their aim in 1727, when the traditionalists were in a majority on the Supreme Privy Council, was to repeal the statute and restore the customary line of succession. On both occasions the function of *Pravda Voli Monarshei* as an apologia of the succession law was crucial and on both occasions it was clear. The book's purpose was explicit in the Foreword, and that purpose was to refute the traditionalists and indeed, in the work's more graphic phrase, 'to shut their mouths' ('usta zagradi').¹⁶

In the body of the text, we are told that there may be those who question Peter's repeal of the automatic right of succession by primogeniture and who 'will wonder' не противно ли се сущеи правде¹⁷ – in the German version *ob es nicht gegen die Rechte sey*¹⁸ – 'whether it is not contrary to right or justice'. The text goes on to insist that Peter's edict никоему же о неправде подозрению не подлежит¹⁹ – in the German version – *keinen Verdacht einiges Unrechts auf sich habe*²⁰ – 'admits of no suspicion of any injustice'.

¹⁵ *Memoirs of Peter Henry Bruce, Esq. A Military Officer in the services of Prussia, Russia and Great Britain*, Dublin, 1783. p. 267.

¹⁶ PVM, (see: note 1.) p. 126.

¹⁷ PVM, (see: note 1.) p. 136.

¹⁸ *Das Recht der Monarchen, in willkürlicher Bestellung der Reichs-Folge*, Berlin, bey Ambrosius Haude, Kön. Preuß. Und der Societät der Wissenschaften privilegirten Buchhändler, 1724. (hereafter: *Das Recht der Monarchen*) p. 3.

¹⁹ PVM, (see: note 1.) p. 136.

²⁰ *Das Recht der Monarchen*, (see: note 18.) p. 3.

The Foreword, in a key passage, explains the book's purpose, referring to it as 'сию книжицу, в которой сущая в помянутом уставе монаршем правда, хотя и в самом том уставе довольно показана, яснее нечто и пространнее показуется'.²¹ From the context, I suggest, it is clear that 'pravda' here means justice, and the passage should be rendered: 'this booklet, in which the justice of the Monarch's statute, though amply demonstrated in the statute itself, is expounded somewhat more clearly and at greater length'. The next paragraph repeats that 'в сочинении слова сего [...] правда устава монаршего показуется',²² 'the justice of the Monarch's statute is demonstrated in this work'. I am again supported in this interpretation of 'pravda' as justice by the German version, where the phrase 'сущая в помянутом уставе монаршем правда' and the phrase 'правда устава монаршего' are both translated as '*die Gerechtigkeit der Verordnung Unsers Monarchen*'.²³ I conclude that the intended meaning of 'pravda' in *Pravda Voli Monarshei* is 'justice'.²⁴

2. Who wrote *Pravda Voli Monarshei*? A tale of two clerics

Who wrote *Pravda Voli Monarshei*? Until 1981 no-one ever expressed any doubt that it was Feofan Prokopovich. Prokopovich himself said that he had written it. In a letter to Peter of 24 August 1722, enclosing a proof of the book, he refers to it as 'книжица, мною сочиненная'.²⁵ Four years later, in 1726, he again includes it among his works.²⁶ On neither occasion does he mention his authorship in any tendentious way, but treats it as a matter of common knowledge. Nor is there any reason to doubt Peter's choice of Prokopovich, his principal propagandist, to write the official commentary on what he considered one of his most important statutes. From Kantemir, Novikov and Shcherbatov in the eighteenth century to Pekarskii and Solov'ev in the nineteenth, and Verkhovskoi in the early twentieth century, Prokopovich's

²¹ PVM, pp. 124, 126.

²² PVM, p. 126.

²³ *Das Recht der Monarchen*, p. 4.

²⁴ Professor Viktor Zhivov observed that by the eighteenth century 'pravda' had long ceased to mean 'law'. Professor Emmanuel Waegemans suggested to me that the modern Russian equivalent of 'pravda' would be 'pravota'. Professor Maureen Perrie suggested a modern equivalent of 'spravedlivost'' and, in English, 'justness'.

²⁵ N. A. VOSKRESENSKII, *Zakonodatel'nye Acty Petra I*, ed. B. I. SYROMIATNIKOV, Moscow – Leningrad, 1945. pp. 113–114.

²⁶ S. M. SOLOV'EV, *Istoriia Rossii s drevneishikh vremen*, book 10 (vols. 19–20), Moscow, 1963. p. 104.

authorship was never questioned. Shcherbatov, for example, discussing Prokopovich, refers to 'его собственное сочинение правда воли монаршей'.²⁷

In 1981, however, Professor James Cracraft, in a learned article in the *Slavic Review*, posed the provocative question: 'Did Feofan Prokopovich really write *Pravda Voli Monarshei*?'²⁸ It was, as grammarians say, a question expecting the answer 'no'. My own view remains that it would take compelling evidence to upset a presumption stretching back almost 300 years. The probabilities would need to be strong and the onus is on Professor Cracraft to rebut that presumption. What, then, is the evidence against Prokopovich's authorship?

It would be otiose to repeat here at length Cracraft's arguments or my counter-arguments,²⁹ since both have been published; but a brief recapitulation is necessary. Cracraft's case boils down to the contention that Prokopovich wrote the Foreword and concluding section, and took overall responsibility for a work produced by more than one contributor, and notably by a Greek archimandrite in Russian service, Anastasios or Afanasii Kondoidi. In a letter of July 1725, now in the National Archives, from Thomas Consett to the British Foreign Secretary, Consett reported that Kondoidi claimed in conversation with Consett that he [Kondoidi] 'had a principal hand in composing' *Pravda Voli Monarshei*, while Prokopovich's role 'was only to peruse and dispose the matter of it',³⁰ in other words, to edit it. Largely on the strength of this letter, Cracraft concludes that the case for Prokopovich's authorship 'rests on sand'.³¹

My counter-argument, in brief, is, first: assuming that Consett reports Kondoidi accurately, why believe Kondoidi, who was by Consett's own account a known intriguer and enemy of Prokopovich, rather than Prokopovich? Second, that a stylistic comparison of the book with other known works of Prokopovich confirms that Prokopovich certainly wrote the Foreword and conclusion. Third, that the ideological and theological content of *Pravda Voli Monarshei* is consistent with that of other known works by Prokopovich, as Prokopovich himself pointed out when answering charges

²⁷ Prince M. M. SHCHERBATOV, *On the Corruption of Morals in Russia*, edited and translated by A. LENTIN, Cambridge, 1969, p. 152.

²⁸ CRACRAFT 1981. (see: note 13.)

²⁹ PVM, (see: note 1.) pp. 57–62; and 'AVTORSTVO "Pravda Voli Monarshei": Feofan Prokopovich, Afanasii Kondoidi, i Petr Velikii', in *XVIII VEK. Sbornik* 21 (1999), pp. 33–39.

³⁰ PVM, p. 58.

³¹ CRACRAFT 1981, p. 173.

of heresy in 1726.³² Fourth, that it is significant that nearly all the authorities cited in the book, including in particular 17th and 16th-century editions of unusual items, appear in the catalogue to Prokopovich's own unique library. Fifth, that the thematic unity, close-knit structure and careful interconnections throughout the work demonstrate that if Prokopovich's main role was indeed 'merely' editorial, such editorship was far from superficial.

Cracraft's thesis in essence, is that the book was 'probably written' by Prokopovich, 'in collaboration with one or more persons'.³³ With this one can certainly agree. There is nothing unlikely about more than one contributor taking part in the production by the Synod of a book of the highest importance urgently required by the tsar. At the same time, that very urgency and importance strongly suggest Prokopovich's overriding personal responsibility. At the very least, Prokopovich masterminded and closely edited the book, while perhaps Condoidi looked up references in Prokopovich's library, or in academic language, acted as his research assistant. This, in my judgment, entitles us to describe Prokopovich as the author in the broadest sense.

Professor Cracraft makes no direct reference to my counter-arguments as to the authorship of *Pravda Voli Monarshei*. True, in his *The Petrine Revolution in Russian* (2004), Cracraft does cite from the introduction to my edition of *Pravda Voli Monarchei*, but not in respect of the authorship question. As far as that is concerned, he concedes, without reference to my introduction, that the work 'was written, at least in part, by Feofan Prokopovich'.³⁴ I find this an interesting sentence, richly ambiguous. What does it mean? What is it intended to mean? On the face of it Cracraft concedes that the work was written by Prokopovich. But the devil is in the adverbial clause 'at least in part'. In what part? In large part or in small part? We are not told. Does Cracraft qualify or merely reiterate his original claim that Prokopovich was not necessarily the sole contributor? In February 2009 I tried to flush out Professor Cracraft himself and invited him to expand on the subject. His answer is delphic: 'I have indeed nothing more to say [...] beyond what I said in [...] *The Petrine Revolution in Russian Culture*'.³⁵ Does silence betoken assent to my view? Or the opposite? We know not. The rest, as they say, is silence, until a future scholar re-examines the question. Meanwhile I stick to my guns:

³² *Chtenüia v imperatorskom obshchestve istorii i drevnostei rossiiskikh*, Moscow, 1862. Book 1, part 2, p. 21.

³³ CRACRAFT 1981, p. 192.

³⁴ CRACRAFT 2004, (see note 5.) p. 181.

³⁵ John Cracraft, e-mail to the author, 24 February 2009.

Prokopovich, if not the sole contributor, was the principal author of *Pravda Voli Monarshei*.

3. Hobbes and *Pravda Voli Monarshei*

In the secondary literature on petrine Russia, the names of Grotius and Hobbes are routinely trotted out as key sources of *Pravda Voli Monarshei*. Like Romulus and Remus, Grotius and Hobbes have become its legendary sources. Now in the case of Grotius there is no doubt about the matter. His *De jure belli ac pacis* is cited verbatim in the work and is referenced chapter and verse as an authority on the nature of *majestas* or sovereign power. But Hobbes? Hobbes is repeatedly and sometimes emphatically mentioned by the experts, beginning with A. Lappo-Danilevskii in an essay on the idea of the state in Russia, published in 1913 in Paul Vinogradoff's *Essays in Legal History*.³⁶ Sixty years later, in 1973, James Cracraft claims Prokopovich's particular interest in Hobbes in what he calls, though without specifying *Pravda Voli Monarshei*, 'his later work'.³⁷ 25 years on, in 1998, Lindsey Hughes, in her *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great*, also cited Hobbes as an influence on Prokopovich, though without attributing it to any one particular work of Prokopovich.³⁸ Paul Bushkovitch, in his *Peter the Great. The Struggle for Power* (2001) makes a similar claim, this time apparently in relation to *Pravda Voli Monarshei* itself, and states that Prokopovich 'certainly read Hobbes'.³⁹ Likewise both Richard Wortman in 1995,⁴⁰ and Gary Hamburg in *The Cambridge History of Russia* (2006)⁴¹ maintain that Hobbes was definitely an influence on *Pravda Voli Monarshei*. That is how matters currently stand.

The principal Russian study of *Pravda Voli Monarshei*, published in 1915 by Georgii Gurvich, is concerned, as its title states, with the work's western sources – '*Pravda Voli monarshei*' Feofana Prokopovicha i ee zapadnoevropeiskie istochniki.⁴² In his introduction to this monograph, F. Taranovskii, who was in fact Gurvich's supervisor, insists on Hobbes's 'influence' on Prokopovich, al-

³⁶ A. LAPPO-DANILEVSKII, 'L'idée de l'état et son évolution en Russie depuis les troubles du XVII^e siècle jusqu'au réformes du XVIII^e', in: *Essays in Legal History*, ed. P. VINOGRADOFF, Oxford, 1913. p. 374.

³⁷ J. CRACRAFT, 'Feofan Prokopovich', in *The Eighteenth Century in Russia*, ed. J. G. GARRARD, Oxford, 1973. p. 90, 93.

³⁸ L. HUGHES, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great*, New Haven, Conn., 1998. p. 95.

³⁹ P. BUSHKOVITCH, *Peter the Great. The Struggle for Power, 1671–1725*, Cambridge, 2001. p. 441.

⁴⁰ WORTMAN, *Scenarios of Power*, (see note 3) p.66.

⁴¹ *The Cambridge History of Russia*, vol. 2., p. 118.

⁴² G. GURVICH, "*Pravda Voli Monarshei*" Feofana Prokopovicha i ee zapadnoevropeiskie istochniki, Iur'ev, 1915. (hereafter: GURVICH 1915)

beit indirect.⁴³ Likewise Verkhovskoi refers in 1916 to Prokopovich writing 'no doubt in the spirit of Hobbes'.⁴⁴ Gurvich himself draws learned and indeed laborious comparisons between the arguments of Prokopovich and those of western natural law theorists such as Pufendorf, Thomasius, Budaeus, Bodin, Wolff and Hobbes in relation to his treatise *On the Citizen*. What do these comparisons add up to in the case of Hobbes? While drawing attention to common elements in the thinking of Hobbes and Prokopovich, Gurvich concludes, soundly in my opinion, both that Prokopovich could have argued as he did without any knowledge of Hobbes and that there is 'insufficient evidence' to assume that he was familiar with Hobbes's works.⁴⁵

We may in my submission go further. There are other good reasons for scepticism about Hobbes and *Pravda Voli Monarshei*. First and foremost, there is no evidence of Hobbes on the face of the record. Whoever wrote *Pravda Voli Monarshei* supplies a reference for all his quotations. The work contains numerous quotations, but none from Hobbes, and numerous references to other authorities, but not one reference to Hobbes. Assuming, as I do, that the author, or principle author of the work was Prokopovich, we can assume that he would certainly have named Hobbes if he had referred to him. I make this assertion with some assurance. Prokopovich was a great name-dropper in *Pravda Voli Monarshei*, not merely in order to display his undoubted wealth of erudition but for the more pertinent reason that the book was a public document, written at Peter's behest for a particular purpose on a theme uppermost in Peter's mind – the future fate of his reforms through the succession to his throne. So when Prokopovich quotes Grotius, he emphasizes that his argument is borne out by 'the most eminent jurists, including Hugo Grotius, who says as follows [...]'.⁴⁶ Prokopovich was at pains to adduce as many authorities as he could lay hands on in support of the central tenet which the book was written to demonstrate and which is spelled out in its title: 'the justice of the monarch's right to appoint the heir to his throne', which right also included the right to disinherit, a point which Peter also wished to see emphasised. Referring to the 'innumerable' juridical authorities on the subject of disinheritance, Prokopovich states:

⁴³ GURVICH 1915. (see note 42) pp. viii–ix.

⁴⁴ P. V. VERKHOVSKOI, 'Feofan Prokopovich kak avtor Dukhovnogo Reglamenta I glavnyi sotrudnik Petra v dukhovnoi reforme', *Uchrezhdenie dukhovnoi Kollegii i dukhovnyi reglament*, Rostov, 1916. (hereafter: VERKHOVSKOI 1916) vol 1, p.127.

⁴⁵ GURVICH 1915. (see note 42) p. 110.

⁴⁶ PVM, (see note 1.) p. 187.

'Should anyone doubt the existence of so many jurists and legislators, one can show him, even here in Russia, and in particular at the capital, St Petersburg, some three hundred or more law books, in which are discussed the reasons and circumstances relating to the disinheriting of unworthy sons; what should we find, then, if we could enter the great and famous libraries of Europe?'⁴⁷

Now Hobbes, that eloquent advocate of unconditional obedience to absolute power, who held that Charles I should have crushed the parliamentary opposition, would surely have been a most valuable authority to cite in justification of Peter's absolute power in the disposition of the succession. Indeed *Pravda Voli Monarshei* itself, in stressing the duty of obedience, describes the trial and execution of Charles I by the parliamentarians as 'a deed cursed by all men and abhorred by the English themselves'.⁴⁸ So the fact that Hobbes is *not* mentioned in the work is in itself a powerful reason for concluding that he was not a source. Hobbes is the dog that did not bark in the night. Also significant is the fact that all the titles quoted in *Pravda Voli Monarshei* were books which we know to have formed part of Prokopovich's library. Hobbes is not among the 3000 titles listed in the catalogue of that library.⁴⁹

Implicitly conceding that Hobbes is not a direct source of *Pravda Voli Monarshei*, some scholars cite it as an 'influence', to my mind a vague and imprecise field for speculation. I have mentioned Bushkovich, for example, who claims, though without offering any evidence, that Prokopovich 'certainly read Hobbes'. How does he know? I would stress the vital distinction between demonstrable 'sources' and possible 'influences', the difficulty of establishing clear links between alleged 'influences' and any particular work, and the dangerous temptation of begging the question. What is most striking about Gurvich in this connection is that he argues at length and insistently against the influence of Hobbes. All the more remarkable, then, that later scholars have consistently ignored Gurvich's careful conclusions and continue to repeat uncritically the old mantra.

Let us stick to known fact and legitimate inference and not venture onto the dangerous marshland of speculation. The alleged role of Hobbes in *Pravda Voli Monarshei* has become an *idée fixe*. There is no solid evidence for it, the evidence is in my opinion overwhelmingly against it and it is high time to knock it on the head.

⁴⁷ PVM, p. 145.

⁴⁸ PVM, p. 211.

⁴⁹ VERKHOVSKOI 1916. (see note 44) p. 121.