



The Moscovia of Antonio Possevino, S.J.

Translated with a
Critical Introduction and
Notes by HUGH F. GRAHAM

the
MOSCOVIA
of
Antonio Possevino, S.J.



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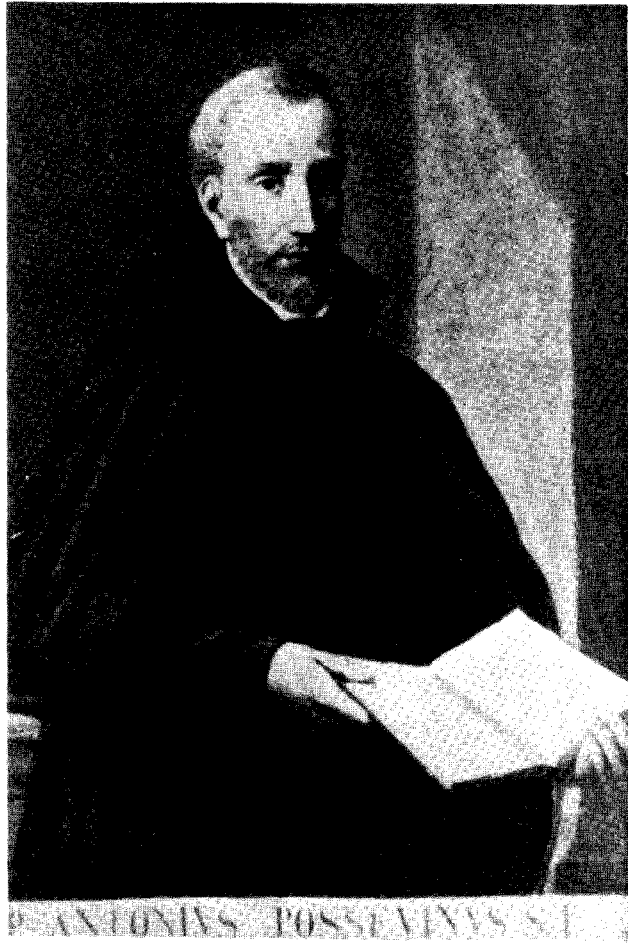
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MOSCOVIA
ANTONII
POSSEVINI
SOCIETATIS IESV.



ANTVERPIA,
Ex Officina Christophori Plantini,
Architypographi Regij.
M. D. LXXXVII.

Original Frontispiece to the Antwerp edition of *Moscovia*, 1587.



P. Antonius Possevinus, S. J., from *Galerie illustrée de la Compagnie de Jésus*, Vol. VI, by A. Hamy, S. J., Paris, 1893.

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INTRODUCTION

The *Moscovia* is a narrative composed by Antonio Possevino, S. J. relating his experiences in Muscovy in the years 1581-1582, where he was sent as the personal emissary of Pope Gregory XIII to arrange a truce between Ivan the Terrible, the Grand Prince, or Tsar, of Muscovy and Stefan Batory, the King of Poland. Since Possevino was instrumental in achieving the truce, the *Moscovia* recounts a considerable success for Papal diplomacy in a region to which the Papacy had heretofore failed to penetrate. However, the Pope had expected much more to emerge from Possevino's mission. When Ivan the Terrible sent a courier, Istoma Shevrigin, to Rome in February, 1581 to ask for Papal assistance in bringing the war between Poland and Muscovy to a conclusion, the Pope and his chief advisors hoped that their intervention might lead to the establishment of regular diplomatic relations between Rome and Moscow, the adherence of Muscovy to a "League of Christian Princes" to attack the Turks, which was a dream cherished by all sixteenth-century Popes, and, above all, to the creation of channels of communication which would open the way to uniting the Muscovite church with Rome on the Pope's terms. Since none of these objectives was accomplished, the *Moscovia* is also a chronicle of developments symptomatic of the declining ability of the Holy See to control the course of events in Europe. It may be well to sketch the background to the dispatch of Possevino to Poland and Muscovy.

Many of the profound changes that were taking place in Europe during the sixteenth century were caused by the rise and spread of Protestantism and the corrosive effect it was exercising upon traditional institutions and loyalties. The Holy See had initially been slow to react to Luther's challenge and had underestimated the danger to the Church's position posed by the explosive forces which Protestantism was releasing into society. Its failure had allowed Protestantism to make rapid and substantial gains; only gradually had the Papacy become aware of the need to combat the diffusion of the new religious movement. The Church's response assumed a variety of forms: the Conciliar movement, regeneration, and reform of clerical morals, restructuring the educational apparatus at all levels, revitalization of existing religious orders, and the appearance of a new one, the Society of Jesus. Catholic rulers, conspicuously the Habsburgs, were exhorted to oppose the spread of Protestantism in the lands under their jurisdiction. All these activities were known collectively as the Counterreformation.

Another danger to Papal hegemony came from the militant presence of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkan peninsula and Hungary. To combat it the Popes strove sedulously to create an alliance involving all or most of the European rulers, but their plans were continually

frustrated by the increasing atomization of the European community. A growing awareness of the extent of these two dangers aroused Papal curiosity concerning Muscovy, in which the Popes had maintained a sporadic and unproductive interest for a number of years. Pope Gregory came to believe that one way the Papacy might recoup some of the losses it had recently sustained through defections to the Protestant cause was to extend its religious dominion to regions which had not previously been under the Church's jurisdiction, an idea which had been given fresh impetus by the gains the Jesuits had scored in America. The Pope further calculated that the adhesion of Muscovy, about the extent of whose power and resources he had formed inflated and inaccurate views, to the alliance against the Turks would appreciably increase the prospects for the expulsion of the latter from Europe. In the sixteenth century Muscovy had emerged from the isolation which had formerly surrounded it: the moment was opportune; only a suitable pretext was required.

Muscovy was known to possess a large Christian population communicant with the Greek rite. Lacking concrete information, the Pope and his advisors confidently assumed that its rulers had accepted the mandates of the Council of Florence, which in 1438, in ordaining the reunion of the Greek and Latin churches, had compelled the former to recognize and acknowledge the Pope as the Leader of all Christendom. The Muscovites, however, had decisively rejected the Florentine Union; the *Moscovia* is filled with instances of the difficulties Possevino encountered because he was laboring under the erroneous assumption that they subscribed to it. The prospect of bringing millions of Muscovites formally into the Catholic fold was tantalizing. Poland, now a bastion of the Counterreformation, had since 1578 been waging a highly successful war against Muscovy, yet Ivan's overture to the Pope, which ignored the Polish king, a firm supporter of the Jesuits, met with a quick and positive response. No assertion that the Pope and his advisors were fully aware of the political motives that underlay the Tsar's action can obscure the fact that they were prepared to sacrifice the gains for the Catholic cause made by the Polish king to the dream of converting the Muscovites. The Pope's interpretation of what constituted the Church's true interests illuminated a further and more fundamental problem. Simply stated, Grand Prince Ivan and the other rulers of the sixteenth century, as they felt their way towards the new concept of a sovereign independent nation-state functioning as the basic unit in the organization of Europe, were more in tune with contemporary developments (however much they might differ from one another in outlook, approach and method) than the Papacy, which continued to be indissolubly wedded to the mediaeval principle of ecumenicism. Possevino fully shared the Pope's views; perhaps that was among

the reasons why he was chosen as his emissary. Possevino had, however, other qualifications to recommend him.

Antonio Possevino was a splendid example of the zeal and devotion the Society of Jesus could inspire in its members. In view of his prominence during the early years of the Order, it is surprising that no recent biography of him has appeared.¹ His mission to Muscovy has fared somewhat better.² Possevino was born in modest circumstances at Mantua in 1533 or 1534. Early manifesting his scholarly capacities and his religious calling, in 1550 he was sent to Rome, where he attracted the attention of Cardinal Ercole Gonzaga, who made him his secretary and tutor to his nephews. Entering the Jesuit Order in 1559, he rose rapidly. He embarked upon further studies in Rome, but his skill as a diplomat had become known, and such talents were precisely what the Church needed as it sought to intensify the Counterreformation. In 1560 Possevino was sent to Piedmont and Savoy, where he vigorously upheld the cause of the Church as he refined and sharpened his abilities as a debater in contests with Protestant leaders. Ordained priest in the Order in 1561, he was immediately sent to France, a major theater of religious controversy, where he worked for the Church loyally and devotedly in a variety of capacities for the next 12 years. In 1573 he was recalled to Rome to serve as the General Secretary of the Order, a post he held until 1577, when a situation developed calling for his delicacy as a negotiator. The Church had become convinced that King John III could be influenced by his Catholic wife to bring Sweden back to the fold. Possevino was sent to Sweden, and his sojourn at the Swedish court constituted his initiation into the complex politics of the Baltic area. He made two journeys to Sweden, in 1577 and 1579, and although he acquitted himself ably, it proved impossible to restore Catholicism there. The next year Possevino was selected to undertake the challenging and responsible assignment of mediating between Poland and Muscovy. The proximate cause of his mission was the Livonian War, about which it will be necessary to say a few words.

Muscovy's quest for security and a maritime outlet permitting sustained and greater contact with the rest of Europe had drawn the attention of her Grand Princes to Livonia, a territory which roughly comprised that of modern Latvia and Estonia. The formidable band of military zealots known as the Livonian Order, affiliated with their more powerful counterparts to the southwest, the Knights of the Cross, had long proved capable of maintaining Livonia's autonomy under the nominal suzerainty of the Holy Roman Empire, but in the sixteenth century the situation began to change. The knights, no longer infused with religious enthusiasm, had grown luxury-loving and unwarlike. They were increasingly at odds with the townsmen, who were jealous of their commercial privileges; Protestantism was making substantial headway among all segments of the population, and the native peasants were growing restive under the increasingly heavy exactions demanded from them.

Muscovy had long enjoyed regular trading relations with Riga, the chief city and port of Livonia, and thus Ivan was fully informed of these developments. He came to the conclusion that a propitious moment now existed for Muscovy to annex Livonia, although he realized that such a move on his part was bound to provoke a response from Poland, Sweden and Denmark. Having decided to use force and aware of the seriousness of the step he was contemplating, he undertook systematic preparations to strengthen his own position. He captured the Khanates of Kazan' and Astrakhan' in order to secure his eastern flank and, not daring to attack their enclave, he employed every means at his disposal to establish good relations with the Crimean Tatars, who were vassals of the Ottoman Sultan. After these preparations had been made, Ivan invaded Livonia in 1558. The invasion was initially successful and Muscovy acquired control of much of the countryside, but Ivan failed to take the chief towns, and the attack soon aroused the other Baltic powers against him. The struggle continued in a desultory fashion until 1577, when Ivan launched a major drive to bring the prize firmly within his grasp. He almost succeeded, but developments in Poland which he could neither have foreseen nor forestalled were to have a disastrous impact upon his fortunes.

The death of King Sigismund-Augustus in 1572 brought about an interregnum, while various forces vied for the Polish throne, but by 1576 Stefan Batory, Prince of Transylvania, had prevailed over all his rivals. In his person Poland acquired a ruler of energy, resourcefulness, daring and proven military capacities. Batory's policy was to drive Muscovy from Livonia and carry the war into the enemy's territory. He lost no time putting his plans into operation and invaded Muscovy on a broad front in 1578. Severely weakened by the long struggle in Livonia, protracted internal disturbances, and ceaseless Tatar raids, Ivan was unable to resist Batory's onslaught, which portended final disaster for Muscovy. His situation was desperate, but Ivan showed himself equal to the challenge when he appealed for Papal mediation.

Ivan knew that the Pope could not resist the possibility of obtaining Muscovite participation in a crusade against the Turks, and as a careful student of Byzantine history he was aware that former Popes had on occasion sacrificed their best interests in the hope of achieving Church Union. He thought that Pope Gregory might be even more willing than his predecessors to respond because of his alarm at the inroads Protestantism had made among the ranks of the faithful. He dispatched Shevigin to Rome bearing a carefully-worded

message. He made no promises, but he knew that the mere appearance of a Muscovite in Italy would arouse old enthusiasms. The alacrity of the Pope's response proved that the Tsar had calculated correctly.

The first task that Possevino was obliged to perform once he had started on his mission was to mollify ruffled feelings in Poland, where some took the view that the Pope had betrayed them. The diplomat proved more than equal to the occasion, for in a series of conversations he succeeded in making a very favorable impression on Batory and winning the King's support for his undertaking. Possevino's position at the Polish court might have been more awkward if the people of Pskov had not rendered him unexpected assistance. In August, 1581, following up his series of successful campaigns, Batory decided to take Pskov, the gateway to the rest of Muscovy. He ordered Chancellor Zamojski, the Commander-in-Chief of the Polish armies, to invest the city, confident that it would quickly surrender. Matters turned out otherwise, for the fortifications were very strong and the besieged put up a determined resistance. Ivan was sufficiently encouraged by this check to the enemy's ambitions to quibble over the Polish demands which Possevino brought with him to the Muscovite command post at Staritsa, a fortress on the upper Volga, which he reached in late August. Returning to the Polish camp in early October after lengthy discussions with the Tsar, Possevino informed the King and the Chancellor of the stance their opponent had adopted. They indicated their intention to continue the siege of Pskov throughout the winter if necessary, although, as Possevino himself discerned, the difficulties of conducting it were steadily mounting. Possevino was told to inform Ivan of their determination in his request for further negotiations. Ivan decided to send delegates to a neutral place, and thus the way was prepared for Possevino to undertake the mediation which was the ostensible purpose of his journey.

The *Moscovia* is Possevino's version of the activities he engaged in while on his mission to Muscovy. He understandably tried to stress the importance of the role played by the Pope in making peace and to emphasize his own contributions to the negotiations. He glossed over or omitted incidents that would present him in a bad light, for beneath the calm and controlled exterior that many years of diplomatic experience had taught him to display lay a proud, hot-tempered and passionate nature. Unlike many other visitors Possevino was not content with merely reporting a mass of undigested facts; he was a trained and discriminating observer, possessed of a curious and inquiring mind, who subjected the data he accumulated to scrutiny and analysis and drew conclusions from them. His natural abilities were favored by the position he occupied; he enjoyed access to leading men in Muscovy, including the Grand Prince, and thus his account constitutes

an important source for sixteenth-century Russian history. Possevino's religious prejudices may be anticipated and discounted; what remains is the perceptive analysis of a mature and experienced man of affairs, who was endowed with a considerable degree of tolerance on all matters save dogma. Possevino's delineation of Ivan deserves special mention. He presented a rich composite portrait of the Grand Prince, and even in the religious disputations he held with the Tsar, he was willing to give his opponent a measure of his due. It is no madman that appears in these pages, but an antagonist worthy of the best efforts of one of the most able diplomats in Europe. Possevino's lack of command of the Russian language is not important; his narrative provides valuable insights into the character of the complex and enigmatic Tsar. To illustrate these points it will be appropriate to comment on some salient features of the *Moscovia*.

Chapter I contains Possevino's observations on the extent of the devastation and depopulation that had taken place in the parts of Muscovy through which he travelled. It is compelling testimony to the country's lack of recuperative powers, one reason why Ivan had to bring the Livonian War to an end. Possevino showed considerable interest in the types of fortifications found in Muscovy, and displayed a real grasp of tactics and strategy. His description of the fortifications of Pskov helps to explain why the city was able to resist the Poles. In commenting upon the attractive appearance presented by the Kremlin in Moscow Possevino unconsciously revealed his pride in his native land. An Italian architect had designed, and Italian workmen had helped build the Moscow Kremlin; it reminded him of home.

Possevino saw how the Tsar's authority ran unchecked and unchallenged throughout Muscovy. He believed that the principal ingredient Ivan had employed to achieve his uncontrolled dominion was fear, an emotion he found ubiquitous, produced by the application of capricious terrorism directed against individuals and entire families alike. He substantiated his conclusion with examples, drawn from his own knowledge, of the hypersensitively suspicious nature possessed by the Grand Prince. In short, he was describing the state of mind pervading Muscovy in the wake of the *Oprichnina*, although he did not allude to it specifically, nor can it be determined whether he was familiar with the details of its organization. *Oprichnina* was the term used to designate Ivan's device of dividing Muscovy into two separate territorial units, one administered by leading members of the old Boyar aristocracy with which Ivan was often in conflict, and the other under the direct control of himself and his chosen lieutenants. In the latter, acts of violence were frequently perpetrated against those whom Ivan deemed to be his enemies. Completing this portion of his commentary Possevino provided a list of the Tsar's chief advisors; with

certain exceptions they were all individuals whose rise to prominence coincided with the existence of the *Oprichnina*.

Possevino furnished information on the new system of land tenure instituted during Ivan's reign. The Grand Prince desired to create a new class of serving-men (*Pomeshchiki*) to counterbalance the influence of the hereditary nobility, and he needed many men to fight in the army as the result of his ambitious foreign policy. He rewarded the members of this new group with grants of land, but he saw to it that they could never aspire to the independence the older nobility had enjoyed by instituting a system of life-tenure based on the satisfactory performance of military service, reserving his right to approve the transmission of allotments within a family, and prohibiting the alienation of holdings. Possevino also noted the rapidity with which the institution of serfdom was spreading in Muscovy. The system had been in the process of development for some time, but it too received powerful impetus as the result of Ivan's policies. The Crown was obliged to place increasingly severe restrictions upon the free movement of the peasantry because its greater need for revenue compelled it to increase the number and extent of the exactions made upon the peasants and because the government had to guarantee a dependable supply of labor to satisfy the wants of the new class of serving-men and free its members for continuous military service. This was the beginning of a system that was to have profound economic, social and political consequences in later Russian history. Among the further observations found in this section are allusions to the effect that the Grand Prince continued to be the chief merchant and trader in the country, that no clear line of demarcation between the Privy Purse and the Public Fisc had yet appeared, and that Ivan had enjoyed success with the reforms he had initiated in the 1550's to increase the accountability of provincial officials to the central government. The version Possevino obtained from an eye-witness as to the reasons why Ivan killed his own son possesses a certain psychological verisimilitude that commands respect.

Possevino could not refrain from quoting in full the grandiloquent speech he made to the Tsar on the achievements of the Jesuit Order. It contained an odd play on words, perhaps unintentional: refusing the sable skins (*pelles*) Ivan had given him on his departure the priest declared that he and all the other members of the Order would gladly sacrifice their skins (*pelles*) for the glory of God. Ignoring the speech (not the only occasion on which he showed a nice ability to discriminate between the significant and the irrelevant) Ivan intimated that he would be highly offended if the envoy scorned his gifts. His feelings were dictated by his strongly-developed sense of protocol. Possevino described the elaborate ceremonies performed at the reception of foreign dignitaries and was shrewd enough to

recognize the great importance the Muscovites attached to protocol. He advised the Pope to instruct future delegations scrupulously to discharge all ceremonial functions in which they were invited to participate.

In the concluding portion of Chapter I Possevino began his assessment of the chances for successfully disseminating Catholicism in Muscovy. His survey reveals two divergent strains in his makeup, that contributed to the ambivalence characteristic of his approach to many of the problems which confronted him on his mission to Muscovy. He combined within himself the visionary idealist, who was in constant danger of overreaching himself in his enthusiasm, and the practical man, who offered sensible suggestions concerning details, attention to which might spell the difference between success and failure in a strange and foreign environment. They included such items as the proper equipment and clothing to take on the journey, how to avoid being bitten by bedbugs, and what tip should be given to the attendants who saw to an envoy's needs.

Chapter II is addressed directly to the problem of disseminating Catholicism in Muscovy. Possevino made a careful assessment of the difficulties involved, which he recognized were very substantial. His description of the structure of the Muscovite Church was sober and factual, and if certain stock remarks (references to Orthodox priests are usually followed by such statements as "if priests indeed they be") are left aside, reasonably free from animosity. His strictures on the lack of educational institutions in Muscovy were no more than a reflection of the prevailing reality. Possevino was virtually the only Western visitor who liked Muscovite ikons. He found them attractive and reverent, and regarded them as overt expressions of the deep religiosity he believed he saw in the common Muscovite people, to which he more than once paid a sincere tribute.

In this chapter Possevino manifested an ambivalent attitude towards the Greeks, the confusing implications of which he did not seem to be aware. At one moment he would harshly attack them; once he went so far as to exult that such traducers of the Truth had fallen into Turkish servitude, but immediately afterwards he would call upon Ivan to maintain the proper Greek form of worship in the Muscovite church. He did not differentiate clearly between the Greeks of antiquity who, he believed, had practised a pure form of Christian worship and their degenerate successors who had, in his opinion, fallen away from their model. Assuming Muscovite acceptance of the Council of Florence he failed to heed Ivan's categorical statement: "I do not believe in the Greeks; I believe in Christ" (p. 69).

After observing the Tsar on numerous state occasions Possevino came to the conclusion that Ivan was consciously striving to create the image of a potentate who combined in his own person the attributes of both king and high priest. Such a concept, however meaningful to inheritors of the Byzantine tradition, was foreign and repugnant to one of Possevino's background. This led him to believe that the Tsar was deliberately indulging in all the ceremonial pomp the envoy witnessed in order to enhance his authority and deceive the people. Possevino had once written a refutation of the arguments advanced by Macchiavelli in *The Prince* and thus he can scarcely be blamed for having acquired a certain cynicism, but in this case his sophistication misled him; a genuine, if somewhat hysterical, strain of religiosity formed an essential part of Ivan's temperament.

On undertaking his mission Possevino, in his lack of information on the actual state of affairs in Ivan's realm together with his burning zeal to spread the faith, was led to entertain the most sanguine and optimistic fancies of a successful outcome, but upon his arrival he soon began to appreciate the nature, extent and complexities of the problem. He was not afraid to criticize previous Popes for failing to investigate matters more closely. Passing the problems in review, he noted (with grudging approval) the strong attachment the Orthodox felt for their ritual, and the influence of the Protestant colony in Moscow. Next, indulging in a flight of wishful thinking, he speculated that Ivan might be moved to grant Catholics full freedom of worship and religious activity in Muscovy. Ivan was never prepared to do more than allow Catholic priests to attend to the religious needs of their foreign communicants. They would never have been permitted to proselytize among the Muscovites. This section again illustrates the blend of the visionary and the practical man in Possevino. He dreamed of the vast increase in the numbers of the faithful that would result from "reuniting" the Muscovites with the Church, while at the same time making the logical deduction from what he had observed that the Church should not try to labor in Muscovy, which (in the military parlance Possevino sometimes affected) was not likely to succumb to a frontal attack, to the neglect of Lithuania, as it contained a large population with close ethnic and religious ties with the Muscovites, upon which much more persuasive influences could be brought to bear since the country was under the control of the Polish king.

Possevino chose to interpret the cordial reception the Tsar gave him as a sign that God had inclined Ivan towards a more favorable view of Catholicism, although he knew perfectly well that political considerations had occasioned it. He drew attention to the difficulties of language and communication, and he was one of the very few to comment upon the ramifications of this problem. His remarks illustrate how little was known or understood

concerning Muscovy elsewhere in Europe, for Possevino was obliged to explain that all books and pamphlets which anyone might wish to present to the Muscovites should be in their language and printed in the Cyrillic characters of the alphabet the Muscovites used. He reported the ludicrous and pathetic fact that no Muscovites could profit from the copy of the Confession of the Faith composed by Pope Pius IV he had brought with him for their edification because it had been translated into a mixture of South-Slavic languages and written in Latin letters, which the Muscovites were unable to read. The incessant difficulty Possevino had with interpreters, which he vividly described, undoubtedly was one of the reasons why he observed somewhat testily that Seminary curricula should include study of living languages. The foregoing considerations led Possevino to devote his concluding remarks in Chapter II to the effectiveness of education as a means for disseminating Catholicism in Muscovy. It was a subject he understood well, and he strongly believed it was the best way to achieve his objective.

Chapter III is Possevino's version of the disputations he held with the Tsar in Moscow, after the conclusion of the Truce of Iam Zapol'skii, on the subject of religion. It was the moment he had long been waiting for; he regarded his other activities as preliminary or contributory to it. He had made elaborate preparations for the confrontation, and he hoped that the role he had played in bringing about the peace settlement would dispose the Tsar favorably to the substance of what he intended to say. Ivan, on the other hand, would just as soon have avoided the discussion. However necessary he had considered it to accept the Truce of Iam Zapol'skii, he could not regard the loss of Livonia with equanimity, since he had devoted so large an expenditure of time and resources to acquiring it, nor could he view Possevino's mediation as a triumph for his cause. He had not the slightest intention of taking anything Possevino might say on the subject of religion seriously, but he felt obliged to accord the Pope's envoy a hearing on the topic, if only to avoid criticism from neighboring Catholic rulers, with whom he was anxious to maintain good relations, who might interpret his refusal as a discourtesy to the Pope. Here was Ivan's motive for permitting the disputations to proceed, but it is fascinating to observe, as the debate progressed, how the Tsar yielded to his instinctive love of theological controversy and became a passionate participant in the encounter.

Possevino's narrative can be compared with the official Muscovite version. The two are completely independent of one another, but their content displays many striking similarities, as well as the expected differences. In the Muscovite version Possevino appears clumsy and inept; sometimes stubborn and rash, sometimes timid and deferential, he was easily bested in argument by the Tsar, who exposed him as a man who did not know

his Bible or even simple matters of liturgy. Possevino's own account portrays him as an imposing and dignified figure, always in full control of himself whatever the provocation, as he made a measured and orderly presentation of significant major issues. Such divergences as these were, of course, to be anticipated; of interest is the comparative agreement between the two versions concerning the Tsar. Ivan was depicted as a man with a passion for quoting Scripture and an intense lover of argument, who would lose his temper and get so carried away as to become at moments incoherent, but with equal suddenness resume a calm and courteous demeanor.

The fundamental point that immediately appeared from the disputations was that each participant was equally sincere and fully convinced of the correctness of his position but neither one could enter into a genuine exchange of opinion with the other. In these circumstances no progress was possible. In the first (and liveliest) debate Possevino devised what he thought was an ingenious way to put forward his case for the primacy of the Pope without offending the Tsar. He asked Ivan whether he considered himself entitled to obedience from his subjects because he was the legitimate successor of St. Vladimir of Kiev, who had introduced Christianity (adopted from "schismatic heretics," as Possevino never tired of pointing out) into Kiev in 988 A.D. In previous interviews with the Tsar's advisors Possevino had tactlessly gone out of his way to emphasize that Italy had known Christianity 1200 years (an exaggeration) before Muscovy; here he incorrectly referred to St. Vladimir as Vladimir of Muscovy; Ivan thought he meant Vladimir Monomakh. Possevino intended to take advantage of Ivan's assent to this proposition and declare that the Pope was far more deserving of obedience because he was the Successor of St. Peter, who was in turn the Successor of Christ. However, his ploy succeeded only in arousing the Grand Prince's wrath, for Possevino had failed to realize sufficiently that one of the major causes of the severe internal disturbances that had afflicted Muscovy during Ivan's reign was the Tsar's abiding conviction that his authority was under attack and his person in danger from his own subjects, for none of whom a claim to preeminence such as Possevino was trying to advance for the Pope could conceivably be made.

Possevino had expected the kind of reasoned and systematic exposition of theoretical positions he was accustomed to engage in with opponents who were, like himself, trained in theology, homiletics and dialectics. He had planned to proceed in an orderly way from the minor to the great central propositions of the faith, and to crown his presentation with a careful, intellectually-wrought appeal to Ivan to submit to the authority of the Pope, both because it was intrinsically right and because Metropolitan Isidor, by accepting the canons of the Council of Florence, had bound the Tsar to do so. Ivan would then

state his reservations; Possevino would dispose of his objections, and agreement would amicably be reached. He was thus totally unprepared for Ivan's colorful and slashing style of debate, and for the nature of his rejoinder. He regarded the four questions concerning the appearance and the habits of the Pope, to which Ivan suddenly diverted the conversation, as irrelevant trifling, unrelated to the important issues. He assumed that the Tsar had been tricked into bringing them up by the local Protestants. No matter how useful the questions may have proved to turn the argument away from potentially embarrassing subjects, Ivan had not submitted to the dictation of the foreign commercial colony in Moscow and he had not raised them idly. The questions he asked were based on the report Shevrigin had made on what he saw in Rome and they were addressed to issues of vital concern to the Muscovites. Possevino, as has been seen, had himself noticed the very high regard the Muscovites entertained for details of ritual observance, but his commitment to his cause prevented him from making proper allowance for their attitude in formulating his presentation. For example, shaving beards was expressly prohibited by the highly authoritative Church Council (the *Stoglav*, or Hundred Chapters) which Ivan had convoked in 1551. Carrying a Pope who wore a cross on his feet in a chair for the people to reverence was likewise genuinely offensive to Muscovite religious sensibilities; the astonishment expressed by the assembled courtiers was unfeigned. Possevino was resourceful enough to return clever answers to the Tsar's questions, but they failed to have any effect. He further complicated matters by seeking to use these answers as a means to insinuate his demand that Ivan acknowledge the primacy of the Pope. By doing so he was in effect asking the Tsar to surrender a portion of the complete control Possevino himself had recognized Ivan possessed over the Muscovite church, and to confess he was not fully sovereign in his own land. This was the equivalent of requesting Ivan voluntarily to compromise the autocratic power he had devoted his whole lifetime to acquiring. It is small wonder that he failed in his objective.

According to Possevino, at the brief second meeting between the two contestants Ivan tendered the priest an apology for any offense he might have given him. The Muscovite version contains no allusion to an apology. It has the Tsar tell Possevino with a kind of grim satisfaction that he had warned the priest any discussion of the faith between them was bound to lead to rancor and animosity. At their third meeting Possevino professed to be startled when Ivan suddenly told him he had decided to grant his request to attend service at the Cathedral of the Virgin Mary, because he thought he had made it abundantly clear that he would refuse to do so. Possevino had often visited Muscovite churches and monasteries; he objected solely to being present at a service, because it would be celebrated by those who, in his opinion, held their office unlawfully since they had not been confirmed

by the Pope. Not understanding Possevino's distinction between visiting a church and attending a service, Ivan might have made an honest mistake. Possevino declared that by refusing to enter the Cathedral he had outwitted the Tsar, who had deliberately contrived the whole scheme in order to humiliate the Pope's representative. The Muscovite version of the incident states that Possevino had formally expressed a wish to attend service, but when he was told, on arriving at the Cathedral, that he must wait for the Tsar, he lost his temper and walked away in a huff. It is impossible to determine the truth of the matter. Ivan might well have enjoyed taking advantage of the opportunity to have Possevino hear the Metropolitan, following the custom of the Easter service, pronounce anathema against the "Latins," as one of the enemies of Orthodoxy, prior to offering prayers for the conversion of such people, but it is also entirely possible that Possevino's resentment at what he took to be an affront to his dignity got the better of him.

Chapter IV consists of a treatise which Possevino states he conveyed to the Tsar at the latter's request. It was written in Latin, and it is uncertain whether Ivan had it translated, but if he did so, the material he found in it would not be calculated to advance the Catholic cause in Muscovy. Entitled "The Chief Points on which the Greeks and the Muscovites differ from the Latins in the Faith," it stubbornly insisted that the Greeks and Muscovites were one, in spite of all the efforts Ivan had made to disabuse Possevino of that notion. Possevino had the same purpose in mind in composing the treatise that he had at the disputations,—to persuade the Grand Prince to accept church union and acknowledge the primacy of the Pope. If Ivan took the trouble to look up the citations Possevino had given from the Church Fathers to buttress his arguments, he would have experienced difficulty in identifying some and would have discovered that others failed to substantiate the positions they were supposed to support. Possevino hoped that he would please the Tsar with his willingness to be accommodating on items of liturgical practice, to compensate for the rigidity he was obliged to display on matters of dogma.

The second part of this chapter consists of a catalog of "Errors" in belief of which Possevino judged the Greeks and Muscovites to be guilty. They ranged from the assertion that the Greeks (the ringleaders whom the Muscovites uncritically followed) did not consider fornication and usury to be sins, to the stark statement: "The most egregious and palpable error held by Greeks and Muscovites alike is their assumption that they can achieve eternal salvation outside the Roman Catholic Church" (p. 92). This contention is, of course, a matter of opinion; the previous allegations were simply not true. In 1592 Gabriel Severos, a Greek in charge of the Orthodox church in Venice, assailed Possevino for the serious and unfounded charges he had made against Orthodoxy. Possevino wrote Severos a