

EVALUATING PETER'S ARMY: THE IMPACT OF INTERNAL ORGANIZATION

Carol B. Stevens

When Peter the Great inherited the Russian throne, he also inherited its military establishment. As he came to power, the army's earlier record of quite impressive accomplishments had been marred by defeats and retreats. A quarter century later, Russia's military forces were transformed, and, having defeated the Swedish Empire, were now viewed with increasing alarm by their European neighbors.

By many accounts, Peter's reforms were sweeping and profound, dispatching the complexities and hesitations of the pre-Petrine era and beginning anew to create permanent, standing forces worthy of a European empire. To some degree, the tsar himself was the source of this perspective, which included attempts to influence the interpretation of changes that were underway. His activities in this respect ranged from his sponsorship of military engravings intended to promote a Europeanized military ethos at home, to his hiring individuals in European capitals who, in another age, could only have been called his public relations agents.¹ Many a scholarly study has concluded, relying heavily on the innumerable decrees and letters written by the royal reformer, that Peter was engaged in thoroughgoing reform. Comparisons to west European armies have suggested ways in which the Russian military matched, or even surpassed, its models.²

Not that this perspective on Peter the Great has gone unchallenged. Scholars have long disputed the perspective of radical and systematic transformation.³ Recently, in particular, it has been noted

¹ James Cracraft, *The Petrine Revolution in Russian Imagery* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997) with O. G. Ageeva, "Severnaia voina i isskustvo graviury," in *Russkaia kul'tura v usloviakh inozemnykh nashestvii i voim*, ed. A. N. Kopylov (Moscow: AN SSSR, 1990), 154, 164; Peter Petschauer, "In Search of Competent Aides: Heinrich van Huyssen and Peter the Great," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 26 (1978), 492.

² See, inter alia, Pavel O. Bobrovskii, *Perekhod Rossii k reguliarnoi armii* (St. Petersburg: Tip. V. S. Balasheva, 1885); Liubomir G. Beskrovnyi, *Russkaia armiiia i flot v XVIII veke* (Moscow: Nauka, 1958) and *Voennaia istoriia otechestva s drevnykh vremen do nashikh dnei* 3 vols. (Moscow: Mosgorarkhiv, 1995), vol. 1, chapter 7 (hereafter VOI).

³ For example, various works by Nikolai I. Pavlenko, most recently, *Petr velikii* (Moscow: Mysl', 1990).

that the Petrine efforts in some ways bore a striking resemblance to the military reform projects of the seventeenth century. Others have pointed out that early eighteenth-century reforms were carried out unevenly and with unpredictable results,⁴ and perhaps failed to create a standing, regular army at all, notwithstanding the victory over Sweden.⁵ Still others cite the enormous costs paid by Russia for its victory: greater centralization, the soul tax, and social rigidity.⁶

In the telling and retelling of the Petrine military transformation, there has been relatively little analysis of the army's basic organization: the distribution of its forces, regimental size, membership, composition, and stability.⁷ Such issues arguably helped to define the character of the Russian land forces and some of its capabilities. These choices had very broad implications because they became the context within which a new social integration took place. They also reflected significant fiscal and organizational pressures.

The evolution of Russian military organization can be divided into quite distinct periods under Peter I. Abrupt modifications to army organization and force distribution suggest that Peter seriously reconsidered the nature of his army at several points during his reign. The first stage occurred prior to 1705, when national-level conscription resumed. The focus of organizational change was to bring Russia's military population back into the campaign army in massive numbers. The new regiments differed little from the Muscovite new-formation regiments in structure; their emphasis on infantry reflected standard west-European practice. It was a period of almost constant organizational flux. There was no target number of regi-

⁴ Lindsey Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), especially chapter 3; Brian Davies, "The Development of Russian Military Power, 1453–1815," in *European Warfare, 1453–1815*, ed. Jeremy Black (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 168–70; Anatolii V. Chernov, *Vooruzhennye sily Russkogo gosudarstva* (Moscow: Voennoe izd-vo Ministerstva oborony Soiuza SSR, 1954), 223; Moishe Davidovich Rabinovich, "Formirovanie reguliarnoi armii nakanune severnoi voiny," in *Voprosy voennoi istorii Rossii*, ed. Viktor I. Shunkov (Moscow: Nauka, 1969), 221–33, and many others.

⁵ William C. Fuller, *Strategy and Power in Russia, 1600–1914* (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 44.

⁶ Evgenii V. Anisimov, *Vremia Petrovskikh reform* (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1989), for example.

⁷ See, however, Nikolai I. Solov'ev, *Istoricheskie ocherki ustroistva i dovol'stviia Russkikh regul'iarnykh voisk*, vyp. 1 (St. Petersburg, Trenka & Fiusno, 1900), 1–62; Richard Hellie, "The Petrine Army," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 8 (1974), 243–45; Beskrovnyi, *Russkaia armia i flot*, 33–73.

ments in the army, for example,⁸ and troops were formed where possible. A second stage in the evolution of Russian military organization occurred in 1704–05. The exclusive focus of these new plans was the regular field army, whose role was defined overwhelmingly by the Swedish war. The new plans called for regular campaign troops to grow in number, with particularly rapid expansion in the regular cavalry. In a third stage, the army faced the threat of Ottoman and Tatar invasion in 1711, and regular defense regiments were added to the army along the southern frontier, even as the Swedish war continued. This defensive element of the armed forces continued to grow after 1713, as the army entered a period of slower change and organizational consolidation. By 1727, the institutional structure of the army had stabilized. Throughout, the same driving effort at transformation—and the same inconsistent and often contradictory reform initiatives—are identifiable in army organization as they are in Peter's efforts to centralize the government apparatus, create military support systems, or even promote cultural Europeanization.⁹

To elaborate somewhat: The first systematic, large-scale efforts at army reorganization followed Peter's return from the Grand Embassy to western and central Europe (1698).¹⁰ The army subsequently defeated by the Swedes at Narva in 1700 was made up of two infantry Guards' regiments (whose individual histories have been quite carefully studied),¹¹ two supporting Preobrazhenskii dragoon regiments, and another 27 infantry regiments made up of volunteers and *datochnye*.¹² These units, temporarily organized into three divisions, reflected Peter's hopes for a new field army. Notably, they were overwhelmingly infantry regiments, and they contained most of the army's remaining foreign officers. These were far from the only men under arms, however. In addition, another 10 infantry regiments of conscripts and volunteers and nine more regiments of cavalry were

⁸ Solov'ev, *Istoricheskii ocherk ustroistva*, 5.

⁹ See, for example, V. N. Avtokratov, "Pervye komissariatskie organy Russkoi reguliarnoi armii (1700–1710)," *Istroicheskie zapiski* 68 (1961), 163–88.

¹⁰ Although not always acknowledged, reorganization began prior to Narva: VOI, vol. 1, 248.

¹¹ Petr Osipovich Bobrovskii, *Istoriia Leib" Gvardii Preobrazhenskago polka* (St. Petersburg, 1900), inter alia.

¹² *Datochnye* were technically men 'on loan' to the state. In 1700, the possibility that conscripted peasants would remain in the army as full-time, life-long soldiers rather than returning to their owners after a season's campaigning, as previously, was not even mentioned beforehand. Rabinovich, "Formirovanie," 231–32.

formed during 1700–01.¹³ A few more units were still defined by their seventeenth-century landholding bases, including 13 regiments of landholding infantrymen and 14 regiments of reiters and lancers. Finally, despite their 1699 rebellion, the execution of their leaders, and the cashiering of their Moscow units, about 60 regiments of *stre'tsy* (musketeers) remained. Notwithstanding the variety of their composition, all of these units (except possibly some *strel'tsy* and a single cavalry regiment) shared the then-standard hierarchical command structure of a European army. Together with Kalmyk and Cossack cavalry, all of these forces were used during the early campaigns of the Great Northern War both on the northwestern front and in garrison defense. While the infantry had proven disappointing at Narva, the size and deployment of cavalry forces especially proved key to early Russian victories such as Erastfer.¹⁴

The second stage in Russian military organizational evolution began with further regimental reorganization (developed partially in consultation with Lieutenant General Oglivy, recently of the Habsburg army). This was announced in 1704, the year Narva was finally captured from the Swedes. It established new and quite different goals for the next five to six years, based upon the experience of the war to date. First, the size of the regular infantry was increased by two-thirds. That is, based upon national-level conscription, 20 new regiments of foot soldiers were to be added to the existing Guards' and other regular infantry regiments. Although it was unclear that Russia could afford to support these units, infantry expansion was predictable, given west European practice and the example of seventeenth-century Russian reform. Most spectacular and rapid growth, however, was reserved for the dragoons, which leapt from two to 33 regular regiments. The enormous expansion in cavalry was less conventional, and the final dispositions certainly differed quite sharply from the proposals of Peter's Habsburg General.¹⁵ Finally, field artillery

¹³ Unanalyzed outline histories of all Petrine army regiments deriving from both archival and printed sources are in Moisei Davidovich Rabinovich, *Polki Petrovskii armii* (Moscow: Nauka, 1977) (henceforth R: #).

¹⁴ Beskrovnyi, *Russkaia armia*, 111–113; Davies, "Development," 170; Robert Frost, *Northern Wars* (Harrow: Pearson, 2000), 242; Theodore Mackiw, *English Reports on Mazepa* (New York: Ukrainian Historical Association, 1983), 29.

¹⁵ Christopher Duffy, *Russia's Military Way to the West. The Origins and Nature of Russian Military Power, 1700–1800* (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1985), 18, notes that Peter exceeded Oglivy's recommendations for army size; the change in proportions, although greater, here passes without comment.

and gunners, assigned to each regiment individually in the seventeenth century, had been united into a separate specialized unit in 1701, the continuation of which was affirmed in 1704.¹⁶ Organizational remnants of the preceding century persisted: 31 units of *strel'tsy* and several landholding infantry troops remained. Five lancer and reiter troops outlasted this reorganization, as did five regiments ambiguously described as "cavalry."

This ambitious project was not fulfilled exactly as planned. By 1708, eight grenadier regiments (five infantry and three dragoon) amalgamated the grenadier companies previously attached to each regiment. The number of regular infantry units declined to 42 after Russia's great victory against Sweden at Poltava (1709), leaving the two Guards, five grenadier, and 35 fusilier regiments. Although the dragoons grew dramatically in numbers, they did not attain the anticipated totals. As late as 1706, only 28 of the projected 33 regiments existed. Meanwhile, other major military reforms were undertaken, such as the effort to consolidate the army's financial and administrative direction. By 1706, for example, the accounts for nearly all the infantry and about half the dragoon regiments were housed in the same institution, the Ratusha.¹⁷

The third major reorganization, which began in 1711, represented another sharp departure, this time from the pattern of regularization and expansion of campaign regiments. Indeed, the numbers of Russian field forces remained relatively untouched: 49 infantry regiments, 33 cavalry regiments, and an artillery unit. The new element was the creation of regular defense forces, to respond to the Ottoman and Tatar threats from the south.¹⁸ Such defensive concerns reflected a return to and a renewal of an important military orientation of the seventeenth-century. The reappearance on the Russian scene of a defense orientation is rarely discussed with Peter's other military reforms. Russia's many frontier and internal garrisons were no longer manned by campaign troops rotated in at need and

¹⁶ Beskrovnyi, *Russkaia armia*, 42-43; Hellie, "Petrine Army," 242.

¹⁷ Avtokratov, "Pervye komissariatskie," 167, 171; Beskrovnyi, *Russkaia armia*, 40-42.

¹⁸ The lands along the southern Russian frontier were particularly hard hit by raids during the early Petrine period, as the army focused on the Northern War. Although the outcome of the war with Sweden was less doubtful after Poltava (1709), the timing of military reform here suggests that it nonetheless took the organized military threat of the Ottoman Empire to produce major military changes in the south.

bolstered by older-style, irregular troops. Instead, regular garrison regiments were created explicitly for defensive purposes: 30 infantry and two dragoons. They were less expensive to maintain than field regiments of the same kind. All but one of the earlier cavalry regiments and the three or four remaining *strel'tsy* were similarly disposed in practice, if not in name.

The focus on defense forces and on the southern frontier was not temporary; it continued to grow toward the end of Peter's reign. In a further less dramatic reorganization that occurred in 1713–14, garrison troops were augmented by new resident *landmilitsiia* regiments. After these were dismissed, five or six *landmilitsiias*, created in 1723, became a durable part of the Russian military scene, guarding the southern frontier. In the 1720s, the garrison forces were further augmented to 48.5 infantry regiments and 4.25 dragoons. At the same time, a separate southern army corps (*nizovoi korpus*) was created largely from existing field units, expressly for the Persian campaign.¹⁹ The accompanying chart roughly tabulates the pace of change and intended character of the Petrine army, illustrating its non-linear development.

Two important points should be made about this changing regimental distribution. Firstly, the new campaign regiments of Peter's field army maintained an unusually high proportion of cavalry after

Summary of regiments of the Russian army, 1700–1725

	1700	1704	1711	1713–20
guards	2	2	2	2
infantry	27	47	42 + 5g	42 + 5g
artillery		1	1	1
dragoons	2	33	30 + 3g	30 + 3g
garrison forces			30 infantry 2 dragoon	48.5 infantry 4.25 dragoon
other	(10 infantry)			5–6 <i>landmilitsiä</i>
strel'tsy	73	31	3–4	
17th c. cavalry	25	10	4	

g = grenadier regiments. Sources: L. G. Beskrovnyi, *Russiakaia armiia i flot v XVIII veke* (Moscow, 1958), 22, 40–46; N. I. Solov'ev, *Istoricheskie ocherki ustroistva i dovol'stviia Russkikh regul'iarnykh voisk* (St. Petersburg, 1900), 3–9.

¹⁹ Beskrovnyi, *Ruskaia armiia*, 42, 45.

1704. 'The eclipse of the cavalry by infantry,' and, in particular, the creation of large numbers of infantry troops, was for many armies a major element in the transformation of early modern European warfare.²⁰ Indeed, by Peter's time, western European armies were often 75% infantry.²¹ Peter's first efforts at reform in 1700 suggested that the Russian army would replicate that infantry-heavy pattern. The inclination to generate an overwhelming proportion of regular infantry was, however, abruptly arrested in 1704–05. While the number of Russian foot soldiers grew from 27 to nearly 80 regiments by 1725, the Petrine forces thereafter remained unusually cavalry-heavy from a western European perspective. In fact, a significant percentage of the Russian infantry was concentrated in the garrison regiments, where it made up 90% of the defensive forces. The military expectations of these garrison regiments, many of which were based in southern fortresses, remained institutionally different from the rest of the army. After bearing this in mind, the field army on campaign presented a particularly high cavalry profile within its regular regiments. On the face of it, these troops were about 40% cavalry. However, the regular army was often supported by Cossack and Kalmyk irregulars while on campaign; in this case, of course, the functional percentage of infantry dropped well below 60%.

The high rate of cavalry to infantry in the Petrine forces did not occur by happenstance.²² The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth had successfully used plentiful cavalry in the late sixteenth century and had painfully taught both Sweden and Russia its advantages early in the seventeenth century (Kircholm, 1605; Smolensk, 1632–34). The Swedish army adopted similar cavalry usage, particularly quickly and successfully.²³ By the late seventeenth-century, the armies of Sweden, the Ottoman Empire, and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth all shared this feature.²⁴ The same troop distribution was to

²⁰ Geoffrey Parker, *The Military Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 2nd ed., 24.

²¹ Peter Wilson, "Warfare in the Old Regime, 1648–1815," in *European Warfare, 1453–1815*, 85; Angus Konstam, *Poltava 1709* (London: Osprey, 1994), 18.

²² Duffy, *Russia's Military Way*, 18.

²³ Frost, *Northern Wars*, 64, 147, 235. German armies soon followed suit: Ronald G. Asch, "The Thirty Years' War," in *European Warfare, 1453–1815*, 57. On the Habsburgs: Jeremy Black, *European Warfare, 1660–1815* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 104.

²⁴ Konstam, *Poltava*, 18; Frost, *Northern Wars*, 246; Rhoades Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare* (New Brunswick: Rutgers Press, 1999), 35–49.

be found in the seventeenth-century Russian army, whose troops were 49% cavalry in 1681 and 46% on the second Crimean campaign of 1689.²⁵ In the early 1700s, the Swedish army was still nearly half cavalry.²⁶ It is hardly surprising that the Russians resumed similar cavalry proportions to fight the formidable Swedish army, particularly after their experiences fighting in the Baltic.

These arrangements were not, as has been suggested, a relic of outmoded military practice on Europe's eastern edge. Robert Frost has recently emphasized both the tactical and strategic effectiveness in the east European theater of numerous and well-trained cavalry, operating in conjunction with infantry. That is, these horsemen certainly played a battlefield role that resembled their counterparts further west: charging battle lines, supporting the infantry, and mounting flanking attacks. Officers' accounts from the early eighteenth century make it dramatically clear, however, that in between such encounters, and during siege warfare, the Petrine cavalry played another set of strategic and tactical roles: constantly on the move, reconnoitering, skirmishing, gathering information and supplies.²⁷ With long distances, sparse population and often harsh terrain, plentiful cavalry offered an advantage over more conventionally-proportioned west-European troops in this theater.²⁸ Russian troop distribution thus reflected not only the requirements of the Northern War, but also a selective approach toward European military models from further west.

The cavalry shared with the infantry a second feature of the Petrine army: the overall uniformity and absence of specialization among its troops. At least on paper, this represented a major change from the seventeenth century. The pre-Petrine army had had a variety of different kinds of troops. The infantry included new-formation foot soldiers and *strel'tsy*; the cavalry was particularly diverse, including mounted *strel'tsy*, service cavalry hundreds, cossacks and other irregulars. In addition, the new-formation cavalry at various times had

²⁵ Richard Hellie, *Enserfment and Military Change* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1971), 270–72.

²⁶ Konstam, *Poltava*, 18.

²⁷ See, for example, Russkii gosudarstvennyi voenno-istoricheskii arkhiv (hereafter RGVIA), fond 489, opis 1, ed. khran. 2451, ll. 95–98ob.: "Iakov Grigor'ev syn Sytin." My thanks to IREX for funding this archival visit.

²⁸ See Parker, *Military Revolution*, 169, for other armies' adaptation to specific kinds of terrain.

included lancers, hussars, reiters, and dragoons. These distinctions were only partly based upon troop specialization; they also reflected some of the social distinctions of Muscovite society. The regular Petrine army was, by contrast, overwhelmingly simple: infantry and dragoons. A regiment of Serbian hussars was an isolated experiment; the surviving heavier cavalry saw limited battlefield use. Infantry units contained a mix of pikemen and fusiliers, but were otherwise also quite uniform. Grenadier units existed on horseback and on foot. A minimal amount of specialization remained the general rule in the Russian army to the end of Peter's reign.

Such lack of specialization extended even to the distinction between cavalry and infantry. The Guards regiments, in particular, were universal troops and could be mounted as cavalry.²⁹ Russian infantry troops generally were unusually flexible in this respect. Mounted infantry were part of the *corps volant* that helped to defeat General Leuvenhaupt at the battle of Lesnaia (1708). As the defeated Swedes retreated to the Ottoman border after Poltava, Russian troops successfully pursued them to Perevolochna (1709), the infantry, mounted two to a horse, keeping pace with the dragoons. Dragoons, by definition, could be used mounted or dismounted.³⁰

If Russian army units were generally unspecialized, they were also employed in quite undifferentiated ways. Until at least 1711, regiments undertook a variety of military activities quite indiscriminately. Thus, active field regiments were used to reinforce garrisons along the Swedish frontier (altogether unsurprisingly). They also served in anti-Tatar garrisons along the southern frontier, an activity that would later be associated with lesser military preparedness.³¹ Fortress garrisons were also informal proving-grounds for fresh recruits, until garrison units were formally assigned that role in 1716. The activities of the Moscow infantry regiment read like a laundry list of every possible kind of military assignment. The regiment did hard labor in building St. Petersburg and guarded the Olonets wharf (more to keep other labor from escaping, than to protect the wharf from attack), before fighting major battles at Poltava and on the Pruth campaign.³²

²⁹ O. Leonov and I. Ul'ianov, *Reguliarnaia pekhota, 1698-1801* (Moscow: AST, 1995), 13.

³⁰ VOI, 259, 269-270; Konstam, *Poltava*, 86.

³¹ R: ## 119-141.

³² Leonov, *Reguliarnaia pekhota*, 18; R: # 117; see also RGVIA, fond 490, opis 2, delo 59, l. 56ob: 'Maior Iakov Iakovlev.'

Infantry troops also served on shipboard, and, particularly prior to the separation of garrison troops and *landmilitsiia*, did internal police duty and suppressed the Bulavin and Bashkir rebellions.³³ The dragoon regiments also undertook a patchwork of military responsibilities. One unit was active in the field army through Pruth before moving to guard the Tsaritsyn defensive line. Another fought at Poltava and then helped to build the Ladoga canal.³⁴ Some dragoon regiments appear to have been used almost exclusively as infantry troops.³⁵ Only a few mounted artillery and grenadier troops were treated distinctively. The economic and administrative advantages of maintaining an unspecialized and undifferentiated army in a large, undergoverned area with a relatively poor agricultural economy have been elaborated elsewhere.³⁶

There were, however, implied political and social questions involved in the accomplishment of both of these changes. That is, a large Russian military force that was only minimally differentiated by training, specialization, command structure, or other organizational format threatened to eliminate the kinds of social segregation that had persisted in the pre-Petrine army: segregation that acknowledged some differences among Cossacks, serfs, small freeholders, the often urban contract servicemen who constituted the *strelets* forces, and hereditary service. Perhaps more importantly, an army in which the cavalry, not just the infantry, required large numbers of men challenged the traditional understanding that cavalry was the preserve of the "nobly born," who had a family history of service to the crown.³⁷

Neither the high percentage of cavalry nor a lack of differentiation among the troops in the Russian army and navy were achieved instantaneously, of course. In each case, similar seventeenth-century

³³ The Moscow infantry regiment also served in the fleet. R: ## 117, 119, 160, 168, 186, 199.

³⁴ R: ## 574, 604, 623.

³⁵ R: # 513.

³⁶ Walter Pintner, "The Burden of Defense, 1725-1914," *Russian Review* 43 (1984), 231-49.

³⁷ The issue of year-round service in the army by both conscripts and landholders was another touchy one. The tension between state military requirements and private agricultural arrangements had been successfully accommodated in the seventeenth century. Serfs conscripted into the infantry returned home after a campaign or a season, and their landlords regained their labor. Meanwhile, although the army could not claim the benefits of permanence, neither did it have to supply winter quarters.

efforts played a role. Some Petrine reforms were initiated wholesale, by royal command, especially in the early years of war. In the long run, however, a principal vehicle for these changes lay in military organization: the rapid creation of new regiments and the almost equally rapid dividing, disbanding, cashiering, and dismissal of others.

Among infantry troops, for example, some 272 new regular regiments of foot were formed between 1699 and 1725. Since there were supposed to be only about 90 infantry regiments in the entire army in the 1720s, many of these regiments clearly did not last. In fact, the regimental survival rate for the infantry was even lower than the one in three that these numbers suggest. The total number of foot regiments available in the early eighteenth century was much greater than those created by Peter himself. About 70 regiments of *strel'tsy* existed when Peter took power; although most of these were soon disbanded, a few even fought on the Pruth in 1711. The Butyrskii and Lefortovskii infantry regiments, which began as select Muscovite units in 1642, still existed in 1725. Finally, there were ephemeral regiments before 1711 whose purpose was exclusively to train recruits or to transfer them to their permanent regiments at the front.³⁸ Regimental disappearance from the infantry rosters was thus even higher than two out of three.

The causes of such turnover were diverse. New regiments were frequently created simply because infantrymen were needed at the front and in garrison forces. As the war with Sweden began (1699–1700), as Russia occupied more of Sweden's Baltic provinces (1703–04), as Russia tried to prolong the war in Poland (1706), and as the Swedes invaded Russia (1708), new regiments were formed under intense military pressure. Threats to the southern border from the Ottoman Empire and the Tatars led to the formation of garrison troops (1711), the first *landmilitsiias* (1713), and the second *landmilitsiia* units (1723–24).

After the opening salvos of war, however, military need ceased to be the sole and primary cause for the appearance of new regiments. Although naturally driven by military demand, the need to maintain regiments at an appropriate size and level of training also led to the creation of new troops and disappearance of older ones. That is, calls for volunteers (before 1705) and conscription drives routinely

³⁸ R: ## 21–23, 75–76, 386–511. See Moisei Davidovich Rabinovich, "Strel'tsy rannoi 18oi vek," *Istoricheskie zapiski* 59 (1956), 273–305 on the fate of the *strel'tsy*.

failed to yield the anticipated numbers. Desertions among conscripts and from the ranks, as well as deaths from disease and decimation in battle frequently resulted in regiments that were far below their statutory size, too. Units were, of course, brought up to size with new recruits (who were bolstered by the presence of veteran troops) and with individual transfers. Sometimes, however, frontline regiments were replenished from the garrison forces. Very shorthanded regiments could be disbanded, and the men transferred (*vlity*) into other undersized units to make up a full (new) regiment.³⁹ Finally, the existence of already trained military men could hardly be disregarded, particularly in the early years of the war. *Strel'tsy*, even from disloyal regiments, were 'recycled,' by using them to fill up shorthanded units or by dividing them amongst loyal troops. Other regiments of *strel'tsy* who had not rebelled were not disbanded so much as reconstructed into new infantry regiments 'of the same name.' Under Peter, as when performed in the seventeenth century, the result of this maneuver was to give the *strel'tsy* the same command structure as other infantry units, while effectively diluting the old command. Thus, the Kazan' district *strel'tsy* fought as infantrymen under Colonels Sharf and Tolbukhin in Ingermanland and Estland, before they were assigned to garrison duty in St. Petersburg and on Kotlin Island. Under Catherine I, they became the Kronshlots garrison infantry regiment.⁴⁰

Political and administrative reasons for the disappearance of infantry regiments could also be identified. Units were cashiered for active participation (against the government) in the Astrakhan or Bulavin rebellions.⁴¹ The men of the first *landmilitsiia* units were sent home in 1714 and disbanded five years later, presumably because attack from the south was politically unlikely. Administrative issues were key in other cases. Men of two different infantry units who had been stationed together in the fortresses of Dinament and Riga were joined into a single regiment in 1710; the new regiment's duties lay (unsurprisingly) in garrisoning Riga area fortresses.⁴² By 1711, the War Chancellery bore financial responsibility for most, but still not all, regiments. An inspection was held to identify and allocate the miss-

³⁹ R: ## 121, 172, 250.

⁴⁰ R: ## 1-5, 8, 17, 57, 61, and others; ## 94, 95.

⁴¹ R: # 15.

⁴² R: # 304.

ing regiments to appropriate administrative units. The process revealed the existence of seventeen infantry regiments in excess of means and expectation; most of these were disbanded in 1712.⁴³ For the vast majority of cases, however, the record is incomplete, and the appearance and disappearance of regiments is unexplained.

Such rapid regimental turnover proved to have advantageous long-term effects. It helped to mould military unity out of social heterogeneity and emphasized the continuities of Petrine military life over the social disparities of the pre-Petrine military. It has become a truism to identify the eighteenth-century military with the peasantry from which it was so largely drawn. This can mislead, however, since all conscripts were not serfs. Conscripts, volunteers, and recruits included some poor landholders, free craftsmen and other urban residents, as well as men of the former lower service class such as *strel'tsy* and service cossacks. The Petrine army placed all these men together in the infantry.

On the face of it, this was not obviously different from the preceding century, when the need to keep large numbers of foot soldiers in the field had already made soldiers of all these groups. The seventeenth-century army had been cautious about issues of social status, however, and efforts had been made to retain social parity within individual regiments. Thus, former musketeers served in one unit, peasants in another. Hereditary servicemen who were too poor for cavalry service were individually demoted to particular infantry units and granted the right to return to cavalry should their circumstances change. Since few of these regiments were permanent or standing, and since they were disbanded at the end of a season (or at the end of the war), social distinctions were maintained in a somewhat diluted form.⁴⁴

The Petrine infantry at first acknowledged this older social hierarchy. The vast majority of units formed prior to 1703 were homogeneous in internal social composition. The largest single group of regiments was formed from *datochnye*, volunteers (whose social status was often ambiguous) made up another significant group. Other regiments were based on former service categories: former infantrymen, or *strel'tsy*, or Cossacks. Free urban taxpayers were sometimes mixed

⁴³ Avtokratov, "Pervye komissariatskie," 170–71; R: # 187, for example.

⁴⁴ Carol B. Stevens, *Soldiers on the Steppe* (DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 1995), 82.

with volunteers, but few early regiments were of diverse social origin. This observance of social distinctions, very likely, was partially an administrative artifact. That is, military call-ups and conscriptions would necessarily have used extant seventeenth-century records for at least a decade.⁴⁵ A draft based upon old lists of taxpaying peasant households produced regiments of peasant conscripts, while levies based on old service lists would gather *strel'tsy*, or Cossacks, or former infantrymen, but few peasants.

Social parity within the permanent Petrine regiments did not last long, especially in wartime conditions. Later regiments were made up from new or conjoined lists, as the old categories ceased to yield adequate recruits. Occasionally regiments would still be manned largely by Cossacks (1706), exclusively by slaves (1709) and certainly by peasant recruits.⁴⁶ After 1702, regiments were more often composed of men from a variety of social, military, and geographic origins. Soldiers, soldiers' sons, and churchmen were enrolled together in 1704 into what became the Galich infantry troop, for example.⁴⁷ Churchmen were only one of the new groups to become eligible for infantry service. In ever-larger numbers, poorer hereditary servicemen became foot soldiers. Not only those whose families had been demoted to the infantry in the seventeenth century, but even those who had served as new formation cavalymen, were enrolled into the Petrine infantry with others from their districts.⁴⁸

Social mixing did not take place only in the formation of new regiments, but in the mixing of men from existing regiments. The Ingermanland infantry regiment was formed in 1703 by Field Marshall Alexander Menshikov from "the strongest and best-trained soldiers" of various regiments.⁴⁹ A more ordinary infantry regiment, commanded by N. A. Neitert (Neidgart), was made up in 1703 of "officers and men of various regiments, at their will."⁵⁰ More typically, kniaz' Shakhovskii's unit was made up in Kazan' in 1708 from infantry-

⁴⁵ RGADA f. 210 Belgorodskii stol kn. 199 (1706), ll. 4ff. and 590ff.; V. N. Avtokratov, "Voennyi prikaz," in *Poltava*, ed. L. G. Beskrovnyi et al. (Moscow: Nauka, 1959), 232.

⁴⁶ RGADA f. 210 Belgorodskii stol kn. 192 ll. 16 and 29 for the mixing of service lists in 1705; R: ## 237, 243, 292, 311.

⁴⁷ R: # 209.

⁴⁸ R: ## 181, 185, 200, 202, 218-221, 233, 234, 240-241, 246-248 from the years 1703-1706.

⁴⁹ R: # 209, 171 (also see note 38). This was hardly a typical regiment, however.

⁵⁰ R: # 174.

men of the Verkhnyi Lomov district. It took part in the battle of Poltava but was disbanded after the taking of Vyborg in 1710. Its men helped make up a garrison regiment for Lubnyi. By 1713, these soldiers had been further dispersed 'to various regiments' presumably to make up inadequate numbers, without regard to the social composition of their new units.⁵¹

In addition to transfers among existing regiments, of course, recruits from nearly annual levies were also added to field and garrison units to make up numbers; such recruits could be of a variety of backgrounds, but by definition were mostly peasants. Furthermore, after 1708, most infantry regiments were eventually assigned to a particular *guberniia* upon whose revenues and support they were dependent. Recruits from that region replaced missing rank-and-file soldiers, gradually creating more geographically homogeneous regiments overwhelmingly (but not exclusively) from peasant backgrounds.⁵²

In short, social intermixing in the regiments acted powerfully against the remaining links between social rank and varying conditions of infantry service. In wartime conditions, the transition was achieved with relatively little reaction or comment.⁵³ The imposition of a more rigid but broader segmentation of Russian society, institutionalized in the soul tax, for example, could only have been advanced by this leveling within the military. In army life, however, once socially disparate groups of men may well have been drawn into a distinctive military ethos and lifestyle by daily experience: troop maneuvers, training exercises, the wearing of uniforms, granting of medals, and, above all, survival on the battlefield.

Loyalty to and affinity with the men with whom one fights is widely acknowledged to be a militarily desirable characteristic of army culture. Although regiments themselves were often short-lived in Petrine Russia, the constituent parts of regiments were comparatively stable. When men were absent from home and family for long

⁵¹ R: ## 283, 300.

⁵² PSZ # 2319; Solov'ev, *Istoricheskii ocherk ustroistva*, 6-7. The regiments were not named after these areas however, but after other gubernii. N. Zeziulinskii, *K rodistoviiu 34-kh pekhotnykh polkov Petra I* (Petrograd: tipografiia P. Usova, 1915), 10.

⁵³ The issue of permanent, year-round service proved much more immediately troublesome. The *streltsy* complained of the hardship involved as early as the Azov campaigns. Serfholders, whose serfs unexpectedly became lifetime recruits rather than returning to agricultural labor and the support of their masters after seasonal campaigns, complained bitterly. Graeme P. Herd, "The Azov Campaigns, 1695-1696" typescript page 8; Rabinovich, "Formirovanie," 233.

periods, this helped to foster stronger internal loyalties. Initially, infantry troops had two battalions, each of which contained five companies (*roty*) of more than 100 men apiece. In 1704, it took nine companies (including one of grenadiers) to make a regiment. By 1708, each regiment had eight companies with 1487 men, including officers. The Guards and other select regiments were larger, with three battalions each. Changes thereafter were minor, such as the addition of 10 men and an officer. These smaller entities, the company and the battalion, were much more stable than the regiment itself. A regiment did not necessarily serve in one place, nor was it necessarily kept together when it was away from the front, especially prior to 1715.⁵⁴ The unit of choice within the regiment seems to have been a battalion ideally numbering 500–600 men. Training was conducted by battalion, and military statistics were generally recorded by battalion.⁵⁵ When regiments were posted or even disbanded, the smaller units were sometimes preserved. The infantry appears to have been posted to the navy in companies, for example.⁵⁶ Transfers to new regiments were often by company, thus keeping men who had fought together with their field commander, a captain.⁵⁷ When regiments were quartered on the population, this level of organization remained key. That is, quartering instructions insisted primarily on the proximity of companies. (As troops were quartered for longer periods on the peasantry, the equation of peasant life and the social condition of the infantry soldier, as discussed by Bushnell and others, may have been reinforced, however.)⁵⁸ Local recruitment and training appear likewise to have gradually encouraged company loyalty. Although recruits went to their regiments from a training station in 1706, they trained with local garrison troops after 1716, and briefly (1718–20) with officers from their future

⁵⁴ Solov'ev, *Ustroistva*, 14, 19–20; Hellie, "Petrine," 244.

⁵⁵ Beskrovnyi, *Russkaia armia*, 113; A. Z. Myshlaevskii, ed., *Sievernaia voina na Ingermanlandskom i Finliandskom teatrakh v 1708–1714. Dokumenty gos. arkhiva* (St. Petersburg: Voenno-uchenyi komitet glavnogo shtaba, 1893), 402, 426, 440; D. F. Maslovskii, *Sievernaia voina. Dokumenty 1705–1708 gg.* (St. Petersburg: Voenno-uchenyi komitet glavnogo shtaba, 1892), 363 and others.

⁵⁶ Myshlaevskii, *Sievernaia*, 462–63.

⁵⁷ For example, the Narva infantry regiment was brought up to strength after the battle of Poltava by the infusion of whole companies from the Kiev infantry regiment. RGVIA f. 490, op. 2, delo 49, ll. 13–22.

⁵⁸ John Bushnell, "The Russian Soldiers' *Artel*, 1700–1900," in *Land, Commune, and Peasant Community in Russia*, ed. Roger Bartlett (New York: St. Martins, 1990), 376, 391.

field regiments.⁵⁹ Loyalty and affiliation were also encouraged by awarding distinctive names to the regiments.⁶⁰

Despite the emphasis on numerous cavalry, the training and use of infantry always remained a key element in the Petrine military effort. Less social disparity and greater military loyalty were part and parcel of its increasing effectiveness, its greater tactical efficiency, and its growing similarity to west-European regiments, which were the subject of extensive contemporary and historical comment.⁶¹

The replacement of the seventeenth-century's cavalry by dragoon regiments in the Petrine army appeared to be institutionally parallel to the infantry—the creation and cashiering of regiments to help implement change. There were very important military and political differences, however. First, the comparatively slow turnover among dragoon regiments concealed a much greater change in military character than that experienced by the infantry. About 100 new dragoon regiments were created from 1698 to the 1720s. Most of these were added early in the reign, as the army dramatically increased its cavalry wing (1701, 1704–08). Regimental creation (and cashiering) were not, on the whole, complicated by large numbers of older-style troops, nor by questions of political loyalty. In fact, relatively few older cavalry regiments were called up at all in the eighteenth century (14 reiters, seven Cossack, and one hundreds regiment). Only very few of these were unquestionably restructured into Petrine regular-army units.⁶² More frequently, since the seventeenth-century cavalry was by definition not standing troops, cavalymen from these regiments were dispersed to their homes when the early and immediate need for any cavalry at all had passed. Very quickly, these and other experienced reiters were called up into new dragoon regiments, but they were enrolled anew as individuals, not in their old regimental groups. Of the dragoon regiments so created, about 40% remained at the end of the reign. The dismissal of the other regiments took place slowly and regularly, a few per year, without any particularly large turnover in a given year, apparently for practical military reasons such as shorthandedness. Recruit and training regiments were particularly short-lived.

⁵⁹ Leonov, *Reguliarnaia*, 18; Beskrovnyi, *Russkaia armia*, 134.

⁶⁰ Zeziulinskii, *K rodslouiiu*, 10.

⁶¹ VOI, 264, 292, for example.

⁶² R: ## 512–34.

The slower pace of regimental turnover, however, concealed military reconfiguration. Militarily, the best cavalry troops in the seventeenth century had also been the most numerous, the reiters. They shared with other new formation troops considerable advantages over the older-style cavalry: the discipline of a month's training annually in the fall, a numerous and hierarchical command structure, some access to state salaries and support to provide weapons, equipment, and the replenishing of manpower. However, infantry, not cavalry, had been the focus of seventeenth-century reform, and reiters were a low priority with limited access to resources and information. They were not the seventeenth-century's best troops; contemporary comment also suggests that reiters may have been too heavy and slow for rapid steppe deployment.⁶³ It is not surprising that, after 1700, Peter's army had only two squadrons of this cavalry, outfitted by and escorting Marshall Sheremet'ev. As noted above, some reiter regiments lasted past 1705, although most disbanded or became enduring elements of the garrison service; one sole troop of prestigious cavalry hundreds lasted until 1725. Otherwise, of course, the Petrine cavalry was almost exclusively made up of light cavalry—dragoons who were equipped for skirmishing and could also function as infantry.

The exceptional flexibility and mobility of these dragoons made them strategically valuable both on and off the battlefield (and there were few decisive battles in the Great Northern War). Their presence in the Russian army was so overwhelming that the Military Commission of 1730 averred, with remarkable amnesia, that "the Russian army has never possessed any other category of horse . . . than dragoons."⁶⁴ Dragoon cavalry emphasized the overall uniformity of the Petrine army, by minimizing the differences between cavalry and infantry. Dragoon arms and uniforms were similar to those of the infantry, and they could be used both mounted and dismounted.⁶⁵ The choice to convert to unarmored light cavalry also carried important fiscal advantages. Because the dragoons were surprisingly similar in uniform and armament to the infantry, the task of arming and outfitting them was somewhat simplified. Light

⁶³ Hellie, *Enserfment*, 199, 361.

⁶⁴ Baiov, 1906, vol. I, 10, quoted in Duffy, *Russia's Military Way*, 46.

⁶⁵ Dragoon regiments had appeared briefly in the seventeenth-century army; these men had had to dismount to fire (Hellie, *Enserfment*, 200).

cavalry, furthermore, could use the kinds of mounts that the Russians found it easiest to supply.⁶⁶

New social understandings about cavalry service also emerged from the relatively measured creation and dismissal of new dragoon regiments; this was perhaps as important an effect as the implementation of the military and fiscal decisions already discussed. Cavalrymen, as mentioned earlier, were traditionally associated with high social and political standing—in a variety of locations and cultures. The idea that the cavalry was the preserve of the hereditary service élite had certainly informed Russian military thinking well past 1650. When hereditary servicemen were too poor to support themselves in the prestigious cavalry hundreds, they were moved into the new-formation reiter regiments. That service too became socially protected. Cavalry service could not be limited to hereditary servicemen for long, however. The hereditary service was hard put to fill the 27,000-man cavalry of the 1630s, and Russian cavalry totals doubled and tripled after mid-century. From the 1660s on, Cossacks, soldiers, and even peasant conscripts were necessarily formed into separate reiter regiments in order to maintain the size of Russia's cavalry. When the wars were over, however, every effort was made to cleanse the reiters of such men and send them back to serve among others of their own social status. The number of reiters even dropped between 1681 and 1689.⁶⁷ Notwithstanding these policies, the high demand for servicemen along the frontiers, coupled with the field army's need for cavalrymen, served quite dramatically to inflate the numbers of poor servicemen with claims to hereditary social status (as well as laying those claims open to suspicion).⁶⁸ Army reform in the Russian context, in other words, required that cavalry should be a mass, not an élite, service. But in the seventeenth century, army reformers had moved only cautiously toward that goal. The political acceptance of reform, with this and other attendant consequences, was nonetheless signaled in 1682, with the agreement that the highest-born young noblemen should begin their service careers as junior officers in the modern regiments, rather than in the rank-and-file of the cavalry hundreds.

⁶⁶ N. Zeziulinskii, *O konozavodskom dele*, Part II, 15–27; N. Ustrialov, *Istoriia tsarstvovaniia Petra velikago* (St. Petersburg, 1863), IV, 236, also cited by Fuller, *Strategy and Power*, 67. On uniforms: Angus Konstam, *Peter the Great's Army 2: Cavalry* (London: Osprey, 1993), 13–18.

⁶⁷ Hellie, *Enserfment*, 271–72.

⁶⁸ Stevens, *Soldiers*, 142ff.

The social reconfiguration of the Petrine cavalry built directly on this acknowledgment, redirecting the *shliakhetstvo* to serve in the officer corps and reducing the pool of claimants to hereditary service status. The dragoon regiments, meanwhile, more and more visibly came to include a significant plebeian element. Granted, Peter initially drew heavily upon the *shliakhetstvo* for the cavalry regiments. The two dragoon units at Narva, for example, were drawn from men with court duties (*tsaredvortsy*), as were nine more dragoon regiments formed in 1701.⁶⁹ Indeed, Peter insisted, in person if necessary, that the *shliakhetstvo* should serve, and as a matter of some priority, serve in the cavalry. As in the past, hereditary servicemen had joined the military by presenting themselves, their horses and weaponry at enrollments and inspections. At such events in the early eighteenth century (1699, 1701–02, 1704, 1706, 1711–14, 1716, 1718, and 1720), likely young noblemen were selected for dragoon service. As before, young men who lacked the requisite financial and physical attributes were sent into the ranks of the infantry or other less prestigious service. In 1702, Peter attended an inspection himself. In 1703, he checked the enrollment age of minors at another. As in the preceding century, horrible fates were predicted for those who failed to appear, including the traditional threat to confiscate estates.⁷⁰ Thus, the cavalry remained an important, but not longer an exclusive, framework of service for men who claimed hereditary service rank.

What was new in this process was the absence of any systematic segregation of the *shliakhetstvo* into a special kind of cavalry or even in isolated regiments. Instead, upper- and middle-level servicemen were assigned to brand-new dragoon regiments. (Dragoon service had, in the past, been considered a rather *déclassé* branch of cavalry.)⁷¹ Their assignments as rank-and-file dragoons acknowledged that they were collectively an experienced group of cavalymen, or at least had a tradition of military service. But, such assignments paid only limited attention to their social status. For example, two dragoon regiments were created in 1701 from former reiters, lancers and servicemen from both the cavalry hundreds and the ‘new-formation’ army corps of the Novgorod military district. These two reg-

⁶⁹ R: ## 541–542, 543–552; Moisei Davidovich Rabinovich, “Sotsial’noe proiskhozhdenie i imushchestvennoe polozhenie ofitserov regul’iarnoi Russkoi armii v kontse Severnoi voiny,” *Rossia v period reform Petra I*, ed. N. I. Pavlenko (Moscow, 1973), 140.

⁷⁰ Hughes, *Peter the Great*, 173; Beskrovnyi, *Russkaia armia*, 23–24; PSZ, no. 2065.

⁷¹ Hellie, *Enserfment*, 215.

iments thus mixed the social élite of the cavalry hundreds with less exalted servitors. All of their names appear to have been drawn from the military records of the Novgorod regional command.⁷² In the Smolensk district, similar regiments explicitly included cossacks.⁷³ In Muscovite terms, this mixed hereditary servicemen with the lowly, if freeborn. Servicemen from the Belgorod and Sevsk military districts also became dragoons; the service rosters from these areas listed an economically quite homogeneous group, but one that included both hereditary and lower-level servicemen.⁷⁴ Such mixtures became quite common, taking men from a variety of walks of life, after they had had some experience of military life, and placing them in the dragoons with the more nobly born. Thus, in a particularly clear example from 1712, a regular infantry regiment was redesignated as the Kazan' garrison dragoons.⁷⁵ By the latter part of Peter's reign, this idea was explicitly stated at military inspections. In 1720, orders for a dragoon review indicated: "that the relatives of Belgorod area *dvoriane* (who had served as lancers, reiters or soldiers) could be substituted for old, infirm and incapable dragoons. However, outside of the Belgorod area, in the place of the old, infirm and incapable, recruits from the common people (*muzhiki*) should be substituted: gunners, sentries, Cossacks . . . and others without lands."⁷⁶

Social mixing in the dragoons included men from even further down the Russian social pyramid. That is, national conscription (which resumed in 1705) drew one recruit from every 80 peasant households for cavalry service. At least 12 dragoon regiments were made up of just such conscripts.⁷⁷ Still other units were predominantly former slaves. It is unclear how frequent or lasting such regiments proved.⁷⁸ After 1711, members of the *shliakhetstvo*, former servicemen, volunteers and peasant recruits also served side-by-side in the same regiments. Recruits filled the empty slots left in established regiments by casualties, desertions, and other calamities. And,

⁷² R: ## 553, 554; parallels, from outside Novgorod: R: ## 562, 563.

⁷³ R: ## 569–570.

⁷⁴ R: ## 575–577; Stevens, *Soldiers*, 79–80.

⁷⁵ R: # 625.

⁷⁶ Myshlaevskii, *Sievernaiia*, 308–314, is an early *smotr*; "Viedomost' iz voennoi kollegii," in *Sbornik voenno-istoricheskikh materialov*, ed. N. F. Dubrovin, vyp. 3 (St. Petersburg, 1893), 3–4.

⁷⁷ R: ## 593–594, 611–612; PSZ no. 2065.

⁷⁸ R: ## 601–603.

recruits and volunteers “completed” shorthanded new regiments as they were formed.⁷⁹

The process by which dragoon regiments were created and disbanded thus clearly demonstrated that the *shliakhetstvo* had no exclusive claim on the cavalry. Until the end of Peter’s reign, the nobly born may have been distinguished by an enrollment ceremony that was uniquely theirs, and many of their number were not only encouraged, but preferred, to serve as dragoons. But these distinctions could not conceal the shift to a mass-based Russian cavalry. Final acquiescence in this major military and political shift by the *shliakhetstvo* after seventy years of reform was abetted by two further Petrine military changes.

The most immediate of these was the existence of the Guards—two regiments of infantry and, after 1719, one of cavalry. Many of the first Guardsmen had been courtiers. Later, even rank-and-file service in these units could imply high social status, proximity to the tsar, and, in subsequent reigns, great political clout. That the Guards regiments were initially intended as training regiments for officers did little to depress their social pretensions, whatever Peter’s own motives may have been.⁸⁰

Beyond the Guards, however, it was the officer corps as a whole that became increasingly definitive for the élite, helping to limit the size of the *shliakhetstvo* and clearly to distinguish it in law. The creation of a largely Russian and mostly noble officer corps in Russia was quite a slow process. In the seventeenth century, Russians of a variety of backgrounds had become officers in the new-formation regiments, alongside Europeans whose military knowledge was valued, but who stood outside elaborate élite political interactions. Becoming an officer offered considerable advantages to Russians of hereditary service rank who were neither wealthy nor particularly well-connected: officers received salaries and had an opportunity for advancement outside the complex network of service families. Before the reforms of 1682, however, the structure of command above the regimental level and promotion generally were ill defined.⁸¹ Even

⁷⁹ R: ## 586, 609; Rabinovich, “Sotsial’noe,” 140; Avtokratov, “Voennyi prikaz,” 237.

⁸⁰ John H. L. Keep, *Soldiers of the Tsar. Army and Society in Russia, 1462–1874* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 122.

⁸¹ Hughes, *Russia*, 66; William M. Reger III, “In the Service of the Tsar,” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois, 1990), 188–91; Avtokratov, “Pervyc,” 186–87.

when the reforms were complete, there was a shortage of qualified individuals to fill officers' positions.

The Petrine officer corps in turn suffered sharply from a shortage of suitable officers, especially at the beginning of the reign. In 1700, officers were drafted from among Russians of hereditary service status; at general inspections, not only cavalrymen but potential officers were identified. Not just men of the *shliakhetstvo*, but also their sons, were drawn into the officer corps in growing numbers. In 1708, a reserve corps of officers was created from minors of high-ranking service families; in 1711, highborn youngsters again were enrolled as officers. Given the high casualty rates among line officers, these and other Russians rose quite rapidly through the ranks, given minimal competence.⁸²

Although these efforts, the Guards' regiments, and even Peter's personal inclinations helped to create an officer corps that was largely noble in origin, it was not socially exclusive. Instead, non-nobles were recruited and promoted as officers. Menshikov's Ingermanland regiment was an important source of such non-noble officers. For most of Peter's reign, improvements to the officer corps did not change the roster of officers commanding individual regiments very much. Petrine officer positions (40 staff and upper-, 80 under-officers) were mostly familiar from seventeenth-century new-formation troops, although their responsibilities and the requirements for promotion were better defined.⁸³ Later in the reign, a certain amount of attention was also paid to the appointment, presence, and activities of support staff and officers.⁸⁴ In 1720, for example, a financial overseer was assigned to every regiment. His position shifted administrative responsibility to the military at a time when the civilian bureaucracy was declining in size.⁸⁵ Positions like this one provided

⁸² Keep, *Soldiers*, 104, 122; Bobrovskii, *Perekhod*, 152–53; Leonov, *Reguliarnaia*, 22–23.

⁸³ A. Z. Myshlaevskii, "Ofitserskii vopros v XVII veka," *Voennyi sbornik* (1889) nos. 5–6 (vols. 246–47), 27–28; VIO, 269; Claes Peterson, "Der Morskoj Ustav Peters des Grossen," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 24 (1976), 355–56.

⁸⁴ Myshlaevskii, *Sievernaia*, 386–91; Avtokratov, "Pervye komissariatskie," 177, 186; Rabinovich, "Sotsial'noe," 153; Keep, *Soldiers*, 127.

⁸⁵ Solov'ev, *Istoricheskii ocherk ustroistva*, 33, lists regimental (non-command) functions added in 1711 and 1720; A. N. Medushevskii, "Petrovskaia reforma gosudarstvennogo apparata," in *Reformy utoroj polovine XVII–XX vv.*, ed. F. Shelov-Kovediaev (Moscow, 1989), 76–77; Rabinovich, "Sotsial'noe," 133–71.

important access to officer status for at least some non-nobles.⁸⁶ On the other hand, a specific officer rank—*vakhmistr* in cavalry regiments—helped to identify commoners in the eighteenth century.⁸⁷

By 1720, the Russian officer corps had taken new shape. While officer shortages persisted (about 20% of positions were unfilled), a very large proportion of those serving were Russian (88%), and nearly two-thirds (62%) of all officers were of noble background, without even including the Guards regiments. A disproportionate number of these noblemen served as officers in the cavalry regiments, a fact that reflects their initial service assignments as well as their social preferences. More than one-third of officers, however, were not of hereditary service background. The Table of Ranks, introduced several years later, would include such experienced professionals into the ranks of the nobility. The *shliakhetstvo* itself, however, had obviously responded with some success to the challenge of the new officer's role. The Table of Ranks thereafter provided new definition to the service nobility, limited its size without offering a socially exclusive relationship with military rank.⁸⁸

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This brief snapshot of organizational change in the Petrine army characterizes regimental formation and links it to with important military, economic, and social changes in the early eighteenth-century military. First, the distribution of forces within the Petrine military developed in a non-linear fashion, quite abruptly changing in the focus of army organization. Further, the Petrine army was, by and large, a mass of undifferentiated troops, respectively soldiers and dragoons. Particularly in the opening years of the Northern War, these men were used indiscriminately as labor power, internal police, garrison forces, and front-line regiments. There were also resemblances between dragoons and the infantry. This absence of differentiation carried not only military but economic and administrative advantages.

⁸⁶ Rabinovich, "Sotsial'noe," 152–53. See the extraordinary example of a 'mountain Cherkess' taken into the Shcherb(atov) family, described by himself in RGVIA f. 490 op. 2 del. 49, ll. 112ob.–113.

⁸⁷ John LeDonne, *Absolutism and the Ruling Class* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 44.

⁸⁸ Rabinovich, "Sotsial'noe," 170–71, 138–39; Keep, *Soldiers*, 126–27; S. M. Troiskii, *Russkii absolutizm i shliakhetstvo v XVIII v.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1974), 96–7.

The transition to light-cavalry dragoons, in particular, helped create a military force that was both flexible and mobile in the field, traits that echoed not only the opposing Swedish army but also armies generally operating in the sparse and little populated territories of eastern Europe. These characteristics became a pronounced element in Russian military behavior under Peter, the result of experience, and an increasing independence from the west European model with which Peter himself had initially been deeply impressed.

Peter's reign also saw a quite steep decline in the diversity of social distinctions that had been acknowledged by military rank in the pre-Petrine army. Regimental turnover, for example, quickly produced a socially mixed, but militarily cohesive, infantry. Almost as rapidly, the cavalry ceased to be socially exclusive, and it too became a part of the mass army. For the *shliakhetstvo*, social exclusivity instead came with service in the Guards and the officer corps. Military position itself, it is suggested here, generated loyalty and gained importance in the face of changing social realities. Such ideas, however, coexisted with rather than eradicating older social and military categories. While much remains to be evaluated about the Petrine legacy, further examination of organizational change within the army seems likely to yield a greater understanding of the methods by which the social relationships within the military were reconstructed.