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## CHAPTER II

### THE MUSCOVITE KURANTY

The publication and spread of pamphlets in Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is closely tied with the development of newspapers;<sup>1</sup> there is no better example of this connection than that of pamphlets about the Turks. The earliest newspapers date from the beginning of the seventeenth century. Most of them were compilations made by postmasters from newspapers and pamphlets sent by agents and postmasters in other cities through the well-developed European postal-relay system. The newspapers compiled using such sources were spread likewise through the post, and their regular appearance once or twice a week may even have increased interest in the irregular "extras" that the Flugblätter represented. Pamphlets and newspapers alike included, of course, a wide variety of material, not simply information on real occurrences. It was not unusual to find along with the news astrological prophecies, accounts of miracles and other tales of the unusual, often printed as propaganda.

In the connection between newspapers, pamphlets and the postal service, the picture which emerges for Muscovy in the seventeenth century resembles that in other areas. During the sixteenth century, it appears that the Muscovite government's needs for information about other countries had been satisfied by ambassadorial reports, letters from abroad--in particular from the Orthodox clergy in the Near East--and depositions of merchants, pilgrims and others arriving in Moscow from foreign parts.<sup>2</sup> At some point, probably right after the Time of Troubles (1605-1613), the Muscovite Diplomatic Chancellery (Posol'skii prikaz) began to compile the information from the full range of available sources into manuscript "newspapers," the so-called kuranty.<sup>3</sup> Along with the systematic compilation of information came the introduction of new sources, the printed pamphlets and newspapers of the rest of Europe; in fact it is from these--the Dutch newspapers often bore in their titles the word "Courant(e)"--that the name of the Muscovite compilations derives.<sup>4</sup> The kuranty, which were produced in only two or three copies and intended solely for the Tsar and the highest court circles, at first appear to have been compiled somewhat irregularly. As the supply of printed sources received from the West increased in the second half of the century, the compilations became more regular and the translators in the chancellery were able to select from

a wide range of material a relatively small percentage of items that were of particular interest. The kuranty continued to be produced in Muscovy right into the first years of the eighteenth century, when Peter the Great had them published in slightly altered form as what can be considered the first real Russian newspapers.

It is important here to discuss the form, content and sources of Muscovite kuranty and to examine the milieu in which they were produced, since the nature and most probable origins of much of the Muscovite literature with Turkish themes to be discussed in subsequent chapters cannot otherwise be understood. Some examples of pamphlets with Turkish themes encountered among the kuranty will provide a good idea of the nature of these Russian compilations. I shall then examine the apparatus and some of the individuals involved in the production of kuranty and finally consider cases in which these materials of the chancellery leaked from that rather carefully-protected preserve into broader circulation in Muscovy.

#### I. The Nature of the Kuranty: Some Examples.

The first kuranty that have been preserved in Muscovite archives date from 1621. Not surprisingly, in that year of the Polish war in the Ukraine against the Turks, we find among the kuranty a striking example of a translated pamphlet with Turkish themes. The kuranty of 1621 contain what purports to be a threatening letter of the



sultan to the Polish king--a letter that is in fact apocryphal and is, as we shall demonstrate in the next chapter, one of a whole series of apocryphal letters that circulated widely in print and in manuscript in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

At the beginning of the letter is a two-part formula identifying the source and nature of the work that follows:

Translations from news sent from Poland about various military actions and peaces in Europe, but from whom they were sent is not indicated.

It is written in letters from the city of Gdańsk that the Turkish emperor sent to the Polish king such a reply.<sup>5</sup>

Formulae such as these--but often ones that are much more specific in that they identify the language of the original, the name of the person who brought it to Moscow, and the date of the translation--are common to most of the Muscovite kuranty.<sup>6</sup> It was part of the standard chancellery practice to identify the kuranty or similar materials in such fashion; likewise, the chancellery clerks used certain notations on the back of the documents that provide essential information for their study. In the example here, we have no such indication on the reverse, but the most common formulae that might be encountered there tell that the given item was read to the tsar on a certain date.<sup>7</sup> From this one can determine the time lag between the receipt of the originals and the completion of their editing; that interval generally was no longer than two days. These formulae are important both for the study

of the kuranty and for the identification of other translations from foreign pamphlets produced in the Diplomatic Chancellery.

Even though the formula in the case of this apocryphal letter of 1621 leaves us uncertain about the language of the original, we have a pamphlet in Dutch that textually brings us very close to the source used by the Muscovite translator.<sup>8</sup> Presumably in Danzig a Dutch or German source for newsletters sent to Muscovy would have been quite common; the Dutch pamphlet we have--a typical example of seventeenth-century European turcica--is representative of one type of source on which the Muscovite translators relied for their compilations. A comparison of the Dutch and Russian texts of 1621 reveals the two to be so close that one can at least conclude that the Muscovite translators followed their original quite literally--even though the Dutch copy we have is not precisely that text.<sup>9</sup>

A different genre of literature about the Turk is represented in a portion of the kuranty compiled early in 1666. A "Translation from a letter which was sent from Germany concerning stars" begins, "in the present year 173 [1665/1666] in the winter, two stars with rays appeared."<sup>10</sup> German astrologers interpreted the first of these to mean that war was coming; the second indicated hunger, pestilence, and high prices. Regarding the heavenly phenomena as they appeared over Vienna, the text reads:

And they write from the Empire that on December 19 a myriad of stars appeared over the city of Vienna and moved rapidly toward the west in columns of four from evening to midnight and disappeared after noontime. And after that a large star with a ray appeared from the west. And the ray from it extended to the south and was black in appearance.

And the astronomers said in accordance with their judgment that the great number of small stars revealed: the Turks would begin to lay waste to many German lands. And regarding the large star, they declared that in the year 174 [1666] in the month of June at noon would be a great eclipse of the sun such as never occurred before. And then the Turks and Tatars would be defeated and driven out of the German lands and the Turk and all his army would be frightened and cut down until annihilated.<sup>11</sup>

The account of heavenly signs then proceeds to various parts of Europe. In Rome the signs in the heavens predict the death of the Pope and various calamities; in Warsaw, civil strife threatens; in Riga and Moscow, poor trade and famine are bound to come.

Since both of the final entries in the "Translation of a Letter" are datelined Riga, it is possible that the pamphlet originated in Riga or the Baltic region. The content is typical of what is found in any number of almanacs and pamphlets of the period; as we shall see in Chapter VII, a number of prophecies concerning the fate of the Ottoman Empire were known in Muscovy and represent examples of an extensive European-wide literature of such prophecies. Not unexpectedly, prophecies generally may be connected with concrete historical events. In the case of the translation discussed here, two of the events the author had in mind are quite obvious: the Ottoman-Habsburg

war of the 1660's and a civil war in Poland in which the Crown Hetman Lubomirski seriously threatened the Polish throne. Both of these wars were extensively reported in the kuranty.<sup>12</sup>

The literature about the Turk in the 1660's went further than merely predicting military victory over the Ottomans. All signs seemed to point to the ultimate downfall of the Turk, and the pamphlet literature of the time was filled not only with prophecies regarding this but also with accounts of internal disorders in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>13</sup> Such disorders both confirmed the prophecies and inspired them; the Muscovite kuranty contain considerable material on the signs of Ottoman decay.

In the series of kuranty beginning with those received in Moscow in the autumn of 1665 and continuing with some regularity from the beginning of 1666 to the end of August in the same year, the first major item regarding Ottoman difficulties bears the title:

Translation from a printed German leaflet (list) which the Hamburger, the foreign merchant Ivan Plius presented in the Diplomatic Chancellery January 5[/15] in the present year 174 [1666]. Explanation of how the great and famous city Mecca was besieged, taken, and captured as well as how the grave of the false prophet Mohammed with the whole treasury and with precious stones and with the mosque of the Turkish sultan, how it was taken by rebels, by Arabs and Turks is described. [From] Smirna, October 3, 1665.<sup>14</sup>

The account begins appropriately with reference to a recent comet, the author wondering what the fate of

the Ottomans is to be and then suggesting that the comet had predicted the events he proceeds to describe.<sup>15</sup> On October 3, one Karamazet Pasha gathered an army along with the Pashas of Cairo and Babylonia and set out to quell a revolt by the Arabs in the Holy Cities. The pamphlet describes the various divisions of the army, which banners they marched under, and the events of the successful siege of Mecca, in which Jewish sections of the army supposedly played some role. Upon entering the city in triumph, Karamazet Pasha and his suite proceeded to the tomb of Mohammed:

...They went to the mosque of Mohammed where he is to be found in an iron grave. Since in the vaults of that mosque where he lay a magnet, a stone which attracts iron to itself, had been placed, the tomb of Mohammed hung suspended under this vault and this was considered among the Turks a great miracle. And when Karamazet at the time of that rejoicing prayed in the mosque, by God's will a ball from a large cannon struck the vaults of that mosque so that a large part of the stones was shattered and the grave of Mohammed fell to the ground. However, none of those who were in the mosque were struck, but the Arabs considered it a great miracle and they say that they have a prophecy that when that grave of Mohammed should fall to the ground, at that time the Turkish people will be visited by great punishment from God and that Mohammed will already have abandoned the place and will go to another in Arabia. And after all that, the soldiers made Karamazet emperor and he was confirmed by all....<sup>16</sup>

The account then tells how Karamazet Pasha undertook to build a new tomb for Mohammed in another spot; according to the last information the writer of the account possessed, the Shah of Persia had sent Karamazet large gifts to cement an alliance with him against the Ottomans.

If the events described in the pamphlet in part actually occurred, they remain obscure. Of some interest is the passage regarding the tomb of Mohammed--who was buried in Medina, not Mecca--since the legend about its having been suspended by a magnet had long been known in Europe and had appeared in Muscovy in an earlier translated work. Moreover, the prediction about the fall of the Ottoman Empire if something happened to the tomb appeared in other variants, at least one of which also found its way into Muscovy.<sup>17</sup>

In contrast to the events in Arabia, the nearly simultaneous upheaval among the Jews in the Empire has been amply documented. In late 1665 one Shabbetai Zevi declared that he was the Messiah; his declaration evoked a response among Jews that shook the Ottoman Empire to its foundations and sent shock waves all over Europe before the movement subsided. Since the Jews in Eastern Europe responded to the news of the new Messiah, it is natural that Muscovy should have received information about the movement and that some of this information came in through Poland.<sup>18</sup> In the Ukraine, one of the most learned polemicists of his day, whom we shall deal with in Chapter IV, Ioannikii Galiatovs'kyi, responded to the Jewish upheaval with a book against the Jews.<sup>19</sup> Yet it is still surprising to learn that the Shabbetaist movement attracted as much attention as it did in Muscovy, or so

the kuranty would seem to indicate. Along with short news reports in the kuranty of 1666 relating the progress of the movement, one finds several long accounts--much longer in fact than almost any other items during the same period.

Of particular interest are the reports about the false Messiah found in the kuranty translated in Moscow on April 23/May 3 and on June 15/25, 1666. These two collections of news items give an insight into the sources and composition of the kuranty and the completeness and accuracy of the translations. The portion of the kuranty based on Dutch sources is the one I shall examine most closely here, partly because it contains more entries about the false Messiah than does the remainder of the material and partly because I have managed to locate some of the original Dutch sources. Presumably the pattern of selection and translation found for the Dutch material holds true for the material based on German sources.

On April 23/May 3, the Privy Chancellery sent to the Diplomatic Chancellery for translation the foreign newsletters and newspapers that had just been received through the mail; on the same day, the kuranty were compiled from these fresh sources. The section of the kuranty entitled "Translation from Dutch printed and written kuranty" includes sixteen entries with the following datelines:<sup>20</sup>

1. Madrid, February 18
2. Venice, February 24
3. Paris, March 5
4. London, March 8
5. Hamburg, March 12
6. Smirna, January 16
7. \*Madrid, February 24
8. \*London, March 12
9. \*Vienna, March 6
10. \*Amsterdam, March 19
11. \*London, March 19
12. Königsberg, March 24
13. Riga, April 5
14. London, March 8
15. Amsterdam
16. (from Turkey)

The items marked with an asterisk derived from articles in the Oprechte Haerlemse Courant, possibly the most important Dutch newspaper of the second half of the seventeenth century and one which had been received in Moscow as early as 1660.<sup>21</sup> On the basis of comparisons I have made for other kuranty, it is reasonable to assume that the items preceding the marked ones came from a different printed Dutch paper and that the items following came from handwritten newsletters (probably compiled in Riga).<sup>22</sup>

The information in the April 23/May 3 kuranty is quite varied, touching on most of the important events going on in Europe at the time: the Anglo-Dutch war (items 4 and 14, with a reference in 5), the Venetian war against the Turks (items 2 and 5), Polish affairs, both internal and external (especially the negotiations with Muscovy) (items 5 and 12), preliminary indications regarding the approaching War of Devolution (item 3), the Swedish war against Bremen (item 13), but above all the false Messiah's



rise and activity (mentioned in items 1 and 2; prominent in 6, 8, 9, 10 and 16).

At the very end of 1665, Shabbetai Zevi, who had arrived in Smirna from Jerusalem in the autumn, publically declared himself the Messiah and "the delirious joy of his followers knew no bounds."<sup>23</sup> The first item of the April 23/May 3 kuranty devoted solely to the self-styled Messiah refers to this event: "From Asia, from the city of Smirna, January 16. The Jews here are overjoyed about their newly-arrived emperor and also about the new prophet about whom they have told many miraculous things."<sup>24</sup> The account goes on to relate how a band of his followers would fall to the ground in religious trances and upon regaining their senses relate miraculous visions. The lead article in the Oprechte Haerlemse Dingsdaegse Courant, 1666, No. 11 (March 16), contains almost identical information but in a more detailed and longer version. Conceivably the item in the kuranty is a contraction of this, but the difference in date (an error in dateline copying is rare) and the fact that there are no other items taken from that paper suggest that probably the nearly identical story appeared in a different one of the Dutch newspapers at the same time.

The next four items in the April 23/May 3 kuranty are clearly from the Oprechte Haerlemse Saterdagse Courant, 1666, No. 12 (March 20). While condensing the news from Madrid of February 24, significantly the translator retained information in that article about astronomical

wonders seen in the skies over Catalonia, information that must have seemed complementary to the discussion of the Messiah in the next three articles.<sup>25</sup> The first of these relates the effect of the Jewish unrest in Arabia. Since the Russian item is only about half of the original Dutch one and in the process of translation some slight but significant changes occurred in the portions of the original that were retained, I reproduce the texts in parallel.

The comparison illustrates an approach to the originals that is common for the rest of the kuranty I have examined:<sup>26</sup>

Oprechte Haerlemse Saterdagse Courant, 1666, No. 12 (March 20), fol. lv.

MS TsGADA, f. 155, 1665-1666, No. 11, fols. 106, 105.

London den 12 Maert. Dese Weecke zijn hier gheweest 237 Dooden, 42 van de Pest. Den Coningh is van voornemen den 16 deser nae Newmarcke te Jacht te gaen voor 4 a 5 Dagen. Men verwacht hier in 't korte den Heer Hanibal Zeestad van Parijs. Ons Pacquet-Boot, komende van Oostende, en willende na Douvres, is van de Frasse genomen en gebracht tot Duynkercken, daer over inen hier seer ontstelt is. Den Koningh heeft ordre nae Yrlandt gesonden, dat het Parlement den 30 Maert, Oudestijl, aldaer souden werden ghedissolveert, ten zy den Vice-Roy andere Reeden mochte hebben.

De Beroerte der Joden in Arabien werdt hier geseyt dus ontstaen te wesen: in 't gheluckigh Arabien leght het Coninghrijck Elal, in wilcke de populeuse Stadt Aden is, vol van Joodse Coopliden, leggende by de Roode Zee, in die Stadt was een Jode, ge-

Iz Londona marta 12-go chisla.

Smushchenie evreiskogo naroda vo Aravii povedaiut sitsevym: est' Araviia imianuemaia schastlivaia, gde rodittsia zoloto, i v toi Arabii est' korolevstvo Elal i v tom korolevstve vo grade Adene v kotorom gorode

naemt Giorobaon, welcke met sijne uytnemende welsprekentyt alle de Inwoonders tat sijne devotie heeft gebrecht, die een Bassa hebben verslagen en het Guarnisoen ghedwongen haer onderdanigh te zijn een weynigh daer na nam dese Party seer toe, en so van tijdt tot tijt, tot dat sy oock Ziden en Mecca soude in-genomen hebben.

mnozhestvo zhidovskogo naroda kupetskikh liudei a tot gorod stoit pri chernom more. I ob"-iavilsia tam zhidovin imianem Giorovaon, kotoroi k sebe priklonil vsekh togo goroda zhidov svoego radi krasnorechiia i pashu togo goroda oni v gorodke i voinskikh liudei pobili. I vsednevno // skazyvaiut, chto mnogoe chislo tekhn zhidov pribyvaet i nekotorye govoriat, chto budto gorodny Sion i Mekku vziali, gde turskoi lzhivoi Magmet prorok lezhit.

One sees from the comparison that some trivia of the first half of the Dutch item have been eliminated by the translator: information on deaths in London, some of them due to the plague; the trip by the king to Newmark for four or five days; the French seizure of an English packet boat; the royal order to dissolve the Irish parliament. What the compiler of the kuranty chose to keep he rendered in a clumsy and not strictly literal translation. Note, for example, how in the Dutch version, Jeroboam "inclined all the inhabitants to his faith" (alle de Inwoonders tat sijne devotie heeft gebrecht), whereas in the Russian version, he "inclined all the Jews of that city to him" (k sebe priklonil vsekh togo goroda zhidov). The Dutch description of Elal, "in which there is the populous city of Aden, full of Jewish merchants, and situated on the Red Sea" (in wilcke de populeuse Stadt Aden is, vol van Joodse Cooplieden, leggende by de Roode Zee) is hardly

grammatical in the Russian version if we take the latter very literally: "and in that kingdom in the city of Aden, in which city there are many Jewish merchants, and that city is situated on the Red Sea." Of greater interest than these passages are the two additions to the Russian text--"where gold is produced" (gde rodittsia zoloto) and "where the Turks' false prophet Mohammed lies" (gde tur-sjoi lzhivoi Magmet prorok lezhit). These additions probably represent editorial "clarifications" inserted from common knowledge that one may assume the translators of the Diplomatic Chancellery possessed--although the examples reflect hearsay rather than fact. It is not uncommon to find the compilers of the kuranty glossing place names or describing them presumably so that the finished product would be more informative for the tsar and so that the person reading the kuranty to him and the boyars would be able to answer any question that might come up regarding the identity of a place unknown to his listeners.<sup>27</sup>

The effect of the above additions though is to add something of a literary touch to an otherwise dry text; as we shall see in considering other translations, there are even more striking examples of such literary embellishment.

The very next entry, dated Vienna, March 6, underwent similar treatment by the translator:<sup>28</sup> he dropped all of the first paragraph that contained various small news items and kept only the portion concerning the false Messiah.

Here though the "translation" is so free as to be a re-telling of the original. Instead of the Dutch version's introductory "In the [city called in] Greek Weissenburg" (Tot Grieckx Weyssenburgh), the Russian text adds identification of its location: "In the border city of the Turkish provinces called Greek Belgrade" (v ukrainskom gorode turskoi oblasti imianuem grecheskoi Belgrad). The Jews there rose up because of the Messiah, demanded that the land be turned over to them, and were punished. The Turks had to repress further disorders in Ofen and Stuhlweissenburg. What is narrative in the Dutch text becomes direct speech in the Russian: the Jews "came to the Pasha and said, 'Now our kingdom has arrived. Write to the sultan that he should evacuate our land'" (k pashe prishli i govorili, nyne de nashe tsarstvo vostalo. Pishi de k sultanu, chtob de ochistil nashu zemliu). The Russian translator further embellished the text by adding that in addition to the heavy tribute levied by the sultan as punishment (this is reported in the Dutch text), the sultan ordered that "having seized the ringleaders secretly, they be put to death" (taino zavodchikov izymav kaznil). The names of the additional cities mentioned in the Dutch text seemed unimportant; so the translator reduced them to "in many other cities" (v ynykh mnogikh gorodekh).

The translator continued to compile information solely on the false Messiah by extracting next one sentence from an article datelined Amsterdam, March 19, but

retelling it in his own words.<sup>29</sup> Instead of relating the original information from Livorno that reaction to the Messiah had been noted in the vicinity of Jerusalem, the Russian text indicated that news came from Jerusalem to Livorno regarding (in general) the smuta of the Jews and the appearance of their new Messiah. It is curious that in the same issue of the Haerlemse Courant, the translator had a choice of a different "one-liner" in an article dated Amsterdam, March 19, but he ignored it: it indicated that the Jews had disavowed the Smirna Messiah as being an impostor.<sup>30</sup>

Concluding his sequence of information about events in the Ottoman Empire, the translator turned to the next Saturday issue of the Haerlemse Courant and extracted the lead item datelined Aleppo, December 29, that related Turkish naval preparations for an undetermined purpose, probably for an expedition either to Crete or "Cecilia."<sup>31</sup> Again the translator's treatment of the original text is of considerable interest. The Dutch begins, "There is no news from here other than that the Grand Turk is equipping a force for sea" (Hier is niet nieuws; als dat den Grooten Turck machtigh ter Zee equipeert). The Russian text drops the irrelevant "there is no news," uses something of a circumlocution for "force" and adds logically that the force was being equipped "for spring," since one did not in those days fight naval battles in the winter: "The Turkish sultan has ordered a large number of warships to

be gathered for spring" (turskoi saltan ukazal mnogo chislo voinskikh kataikh k vesne sobrat'). The most interesting change comes at the end, where the Dutch text indicates that despite the uncertainty as to the Turks' intentions, the Christian princes are on their guard as they should be (de Christen Princen zijn genoegsam gewaerschoust op haer hoede te zijn). The Russian text adds a curious folkish element: "And regarding this the Christian princes and rulers should be sufficiently vigilant, because the Turk never fires at that toward which he aims" (i o sem zhe pristoino kristianskim kniazem i gosudarem osteregatel'nym byti, ponezhe turck ne tuda streliaet kuda namerivaet).

It is unusual to find in the kuranty several entries in succession on the same subject (one general exception being news about Poland, based largely on German sources). Therefore the consciously-assembled sequence of news about the false Messiah in the kuranty of April 23/May 3 indicates a particular interest in the subject either on the part of the translator or on the part of those for whom he did the work. In the two issues of the Haerlemse Courant used as sources, there are nearly sixty datelined articles. The kuranty drew on five of them, three of which were concerned with the false Messiah.

In the April 23/May 3 kuranty, there were further mentions of the Messiah, including the article from Smirna discussed above; at the end of the kuranty of that date,

there is a lengthy item, probably based on handwritten letters from Riga or Königsberg, that expands on the false Messiah's activity.<sup>32</sup> Possibly the inspiration to bring together the information from the Haarlem newspaper came from this last item, as it is entitled "Copy from various letters (gramotki) written from Turkey about the Jewish Messiah." Whether this item was compiled in Moscow or merely represents one of the pis'mennye kuranty used in the April 23/May 3 compilation probably cannot be demonstrated. I assume the latter to be the case, since the expression "various letters written from Turkey" is characteristic of the Dutch kuranty with which I have dealt. Although this final item gives some details about the career of Shabbetai Zevi that one might compare with the actual facts, it is of more interest to consider briefly the longer pamphlets about him found also in the kuranty of 1666.

The first of these, included among the "Imperial [i.e., German] printed kuranty" received apparently on May 23/June 2, 1666, is a curious piece much less concerned with a sequential account of the false Messiah's life and activity than it is with recounting miracles and oddities associated with him.<sup>33</sup> According to the heading in the translation, a "true image" of the false Messiah accompanied the text.<sup>34</sup> The source for the translation seems to have been a printed pamphlet that included rather disjointed material from a number of sources. The work



relates among other wonders a miraculous healing: the sultan sent one of his officials to interrogate the self-styled Messiah; the Turk's hand withered and healed only when the Jewish leader intervened. The same account appears as well in the composite tale at the end of the April 23/May 3 kuranty. Since tales about the false Messiah were so widespread, presumably the story about the miracle came to Muscovy in two different pamphlets, but it may be that the Muscovite translators added to later kuranty material they had received earlier. Concluding the May 23/June 3 pamphlet's catalogue of miracles and oddities is a list of the various marvellous relics the Messiah supposedly had with him--items such as a seed from the apple of knowledge which Eve gave Adam, locks of Samson's hair, etc.

The June 15/25 kuranty contain another lengthy account about the false Messiah, much more in the tradition of the accounts found in printed newspapers than was the preceding pamphlet.<sup>35</sup> And in fact, the Russian article of June 15/25 is a severely condensed version of the lead story in the Oprechte Haerlemse Dingsdaegse Courant, 1666, No. 20 (May 18).<sup>36</sup> The Russian account reproduces more fully the material in the first part of the Dutch text than in the second part, possibly because it is of a more general nature, but possibly also because it became apparent that to give equal weight to the material in the second half of the account would have meant devoting too

much time and space to the tale. Presumably the kuranty were compiled under the conditions of meeting a deadline that face any newspaper editor--the rapidity with which the material received was edited and translated and then read would seem to indicate that this is a valid assumption. It is easy to see then why there is a general trend in the kuranty to condense the original articles and why in the specific example of the June 15/25 kuranty the translator treated the original the way he did. The amount cut from the original in that case is not as surprising as the amount retained, since even with the excisions, the resulting tale is much longer than the other items in the same set of kuranty.

The final long item about the false Messiah indicates another of the sources that went into the kuranty, Polish material. Immediately following the compilation of June 15/25 from Dutch sources is a "Translation from Polish kuranty," received presumably in the second half of June 1666. The opening lines of the work give immediately the different flavor of the language, in comparison with the dry, factual accounts of the Dutch newspapers: "The fabulous origin and fearful end of the recently-appeared Jewish prophet Nathan Levi and the king and messiah Sabeta Sebi anointed by him...."<sup>37</sup> The Polish account devotes considerable attention to the "prophet" Nathan Levi, who joined forces with Shabbetai Zevi before the latter arrived in Smirna and who prophesied the

appearance of the new Messiah. After the Turkish authorities had imprisoned the Messiah on his arrival in Constantinople, Nathan Levi apparently continued to spread the word of the Messiah's coming. The Polish tale reflects these events, but stretches the facts to indicate that the Turks had cruelly killed the Messiah, when in fact he lived on after the time the account was written. The facts are of less importance than the literary effect of the tale that can be seen from the following example:

And they dealt thus with the false king: first, after he was given an ordeal of 100 blows, they pulled out his tongue, and having peeled off his skin and constructed a canopy for a spectacle for all the inhabitants, they impaled him on an iron pole. Many Jews wept at this, seeing such torments of their false Messiah, and they ran in pursuit of the prophet, and the Turkish emperor promised to give many thousands to the person who brought him in alive, and three pashas were sent by various roads, and I will not delay in telling you what else will happen, and thou, reader, shouldst not doubt this....<sup>38</sup>

A list numbered from one to twelve follows, each number with a sentence or clause describing the further fate of the false prophet--in essence, a repeat performance of what had just been related, with the ultimate reward for the prophet being the same tortures and impaling.

Why was there such a great interest in the false Messiah and what does this tell us about the interest and demand in general for translations of Western pamphlets and related material? As the example of the pamphlet about the signs in the heavens and the prophecies derived from them indicates, the common interest in things strange

and wonderful must have played some role in focussing attention on the false Messiah, his miracles, and so on. In this connection, the inclusion of a few lines on miraculous heavenly signs in Spain in a section devoted solely to the Messiah is indicative. Much more important though would seem to be the coincidence of the apocalyptic year 1666 and the Church schism in Muscovy to produce a situation in which tales of the false Messiah would be of particular interest. One cannot be sure of the identity of the translators who selected the material, nor can one be certain whether their personal tastes had anything to do with that selection; so it would be difficult to connect the literature with the religious views of any one individual. However, the conjunction of material on the Messiah and material on the raskol in one of the sets of kuranty lends support to my suggestion regarding the interaction of the two phenomena. The kuranty of May 10/20, derived from "Dutch printed kuranty" (one source apparently being the Oprechte Haerlemse Courant), contain the following sequence of entries:

From London, April 5.  
Jewish merchants here have great hope concerning their true king.

From Riga, March 13.  
In Moscow a great smuta about religion has begun. They have removed icons from churches and a large part of the city of Moscow has burned.

From Riga, March 14.  
A great smuta has begun in Moscow between the Sovereign and those who profess Catholicism, and the Patriarch has made himself head of the faith and done away with icons, and he has de-

clared that they do not recognize any other than God the redeemer, creator of heaven and earth, and Christ the Savior. The Grand Prince, however, has opposed this with fire and sword.<sup>39</sup>

The inclusion of information in the kuranty on Muscovite affairs was not unusual--in fact in this same set of kuranty another item deals with Muscovy--but the conjunction here of the material on the raskol and the false Messiah is hardly coincidence. While the material in the kuranty tended to indicate a particular foreign policy concern of Muscovy at the time of the compilation, the material about the false Messiah seems to have no such connection. The sections in Dutch newspapers of the time dealing with events involving the Ottoman Empire devoted as much space to the Venetian war against the Turks over Crete, but hardly any of this material finds its way into the Muscovite kuranty. Nor did the Diplomatic Chancellery, when concerned about events in the Ottoman Empire, appear to have paid particular attention to the false Messiah. The deposition (rassorosnaia rech') of a Greek from Constantinople, Iurii Dmitriev, recorded on August 5/15, 1666, and included in the kuranty, contains a great deal of information on various activities of the Ottomans and on the Greek Orthodox Church in the Ottoman capital, but there is nothing to indicate that the Chancellery clerks questioned the informant about the false Messiah.<sup>40</sup> Perhaps, then, all we can conclude about the reason for so much material on Shabbetai Zevi appearing in the kuranty is that the tsar

himself had expressed some personal interest in events which somehow seemed to fit into the pattern of upheaval expected for the apocalyptic year.

This rather detailed examination of a particular topic that occupied the compilers of the kuranty in the mid-1660's enables us to summarize a few important points. The translators in the chancellery were very selective in the material they used.<sup>41</sup> They had a deadline to meet, presumably could not overload the tsar and boyars with too much more material than they could use, much of it dealing with items of local interest to the Dutch or Germans who composed the original material and much of it repetitive. Yet despite the manner in which they were compiled, the kuranty are interesting indicators of the literary activities of the chancellery. Pamphlets of marginal interest for Muscovite foreign policy were included. Moreover, in the process of translation (and in many cases the term must be used very loosely indeed), the chancellery translators employed literary devices which brought to the resulting product a belletristic element often lacking in the original. Such literary creativity was rather irregular, which is understandable in the circumstances, but it is significant in view of what we know about other literary activities of the chancellery. The kuranty, then, have a place in Russian literature of the seventeenth century that goes beyond their function as documents. They have a variety of

sources, display a range of styles and forms. It should come as no surprise that pamphlets included in the material of the kuranty should be found in a separate manuscript tradition and stand on their own as independent works of literature. Before discussing these, we should consider first the means of transmission of kuranty sources into Muscovy and the apparatus and individuals involved in handling them.

II. The Muscovite Postal System and Postmasters

Muscovite acquisition of foreign news that went into the kuranty did not develop into a regular system until the second half of the seventeenth century, although the processing of the information appears to have been systematic from the time of the first kuranty. The Diplomatic Chancellery, with its staff of translators and its standard procedures for handling bureaucratic paper, had long been in existence, but contacts abroad necessary to ensure a steady flow of news and a regular means for its transmission were another matter. Material came in from agents--usually merchants--who transmitted newsletters and copies of printed papers by special courier, but just as often the information was acquired from those who had received it privately in Moscow and other cities. It is difficult to tell from the documents that have been preserved whether the receipt of information in the first half of the century was regular, as Shlosberg believes;<sup>42</sup>

it may be that Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich, in giving instructions in 1659 that he be sent news every month from abroad, was expressing impatience with the irregularity of existing arrangements.<sup>43</sup> But even if the tsar's wishes of 1659 were carried out, he was apparently still not satisfied, since the establishment of the first regular Muscovite postal service to the West in 1665 appears to have been primarily for the purpose of transmitting news from Europe.

The personal interest of the tsar in obtaining news regularly from Europe, apart from the requirements of the Diplomatic Chancellery, would seem to explain why the tsar's Privy Chancellery organized this bi-weekly postal service. The Privy Chancellery had been established by Aleksei Mikhailovich at the beginning of 1655 precisely so he would have an institution that would give him immediate control over problems in which he took a personal interest that otherwise would be handled as a matter of routine in the already well-developed Muscovite bureaucracy and thus escape the tsar's personal attention.<sup>44</sup> On May 18/28, 1665, the Privy Chancellery drew up an agreement with a Dutch merchant and entrepreneur Johann van Sweeden<sup>45</sup> that he would bring in

all kinds of printed and hand-written news sheets and letters from various states: from the Empire, Spain, France, Poland, Sweden, Denmark, England, Italy, Holland and the Netherlands, from all capitals every two weeks, and from the Turkish Empire, from the Kyzylbash [Persia] and from India, and



also from many other lands, all kinds of news from time to time, concerning military, trade, and all other affairs occurring in the above-mentioned states and cities....<sup>46</sup>

For this service Van Sweeden was to receive 500 rubles and 500 rubles worth of sables--an extraordinarily large sum, but one which was to cover all the expenses, including post horses, relay riders, payments to foreign postmasters for acquiring the newspapers, etc.

It is no surprise that the postal system was set up primarily to bring in foreign news, as we have already observed the tsar's personal interest in the matter and noted the role of the post in transmitting news throughout Europe. Nor was it unusual that the post was put in the hands of a private contractor, as such had been the case elsewhere in Europe for a long time. Since in Muscovy the hiring of foreigners for their technical expertise had long been practiced, understandably the contractor there was a foreigner.

Although Van Sweeden's tenure as postmaster was to be brief and the reorganization of the service in different hands was to bring it directly under the Diplomatic Chancellery, pamphlets and newspapers, and copies of the translations from them came into and were kept in the Privy Chancellery until its dissolution in 1676. The contemporary inventory of that Chancellery's archive reveals the wide range of pamphlets translated in seventeenth-century Muscovy, as one can see from the following list:

kuranty for all but two of the years from 1655 through 1676; translations from German, Dutch and Polish news letters and listy; rosprosy containing news; "Translation from a printed German book about the 'Khineiskaia' war with the Tatars"; "Translation from Polish printed booklets brought from Poland by the dumnyi dvorianin Afanasii Lavrent'evich Ordin-Nashchokin in the year 171 [1663] concerning the amount paid in Polish gold pieces to the Polish army after the Swedish war and how much was left unpaid"; "Tabular extracts from a German calendar for the coming year 1665 A.D."; "Translation...from a Polish printed book which the Kievan polkovnik Vasiliï Dvoretiskii brought from Poland to Kiev and which was sent from Kiev to Moscow concerning various news...."<sup>47</sup> When we seek the origin of translated pamphlets that find their way into Muscovite sborniki in the second half of the seventeenth century, it is wise to remember that the Privy Chancellery held possibly the greatest collection of such material in the third quarter of the century.

Apparently Van Sweeden carried out his duties as postmaster efficiently, but a combination of court intrigue and perhaps the expense and only bi-weekly frequency of his service deprived him of the position in 1668.<sup>48</sup> The new postmaster was a Dane, Leonhardt Marselis, a protégé of Ordin-Nashchokin, by then at the peak of his power, in control of the Diplomatic Chancellery and Muscovite foreign

policy. Marselis had spent most of his life in Muscovy, where his father, Peter, was engaged in commercial and industrial activity, notably the iron works at Tula. Both father and son carried out diplomatic missions for the Muscovite government; it was probably because of his close connection with Ordin-Nashchokin's diplomacy that the son received control of the postal service in 1668.<sup>49</sup> The change was also connected with the fact that the Andrusovo treaty with Poland in the previous year had specified that regular postal communications be established between Muscovy and Poland. The logical route for this ran west through Smolensk and Vilno. This added to the burden of the postmaster, since he now organized and ran two routes (Van Sweeden's service had apparently gone only to Riga).<sup>50</sup> Moreover, the service on both routes was now to be weekly. Another change from the previous arrangement was the use of the government postal relays (iamy) and the requirement that foreigners use the government service (private couriers were now forbidden). Presumably the net effect of the changes in the postal service, despite the fact that both the Vilno and Riga routes failed to function with equal and desired efficiency, was an increase in the frequency with which foreign news was received and an increase in the quantity of pamphlet literature imported from the West.

Due to death, inefficiency and political change, the administration of the post by the Marselis family

lasted little longer than had Van Sweeden's tenure as postmaster. For a brief period in 1672 and then from 1675 until the end of the century the postmaster was Andrei Vinius. For our purposes, the biography of Vinius is the most interesting of all the first Muscovite postmasters.<sup>51</sup> His father, a Dutchman, had been active in Muscovite enterprises since the second quarter of the century; the son, born in Moscow in 1641, spent nearly all his life in Muscovy and in the service of the government. Beginning in 1664, he served as a translator from Dutch in the Diplomatic Chancellery, possibly having been responsible for some of the translations discussed above.<sup>52</sup> In 1672 he went abroad on an important diplomatic mission to England, France, and Spain--an attempt to persuade those governments to join Muscovy and Poland in a coalition against the Turks. On his return, in addition to taking over the postal service, he became involved in the activities of the Apothecary and later was named d'iak in the Diplomatic Chancellery and headed the Chancellery of Siberian Affairs. During the period of Peter the Great's Azov campaigns, Vinius was one of the closest collaborators of the young tsar, but he fell from favor early in the new century, fled abroad, and returned only in 1708 to spend his remaining years in translation activities until his death in 1715.

If Vinius' biography were noteworthy only for his

birth into a family of foreign entrepreneurs operating in Muscovy and for his activity in Muscovite service, he would hardly be different from the other holders of the postmastership. However, it is clear that in contrast to his predecessors, he became fully a Muscovite by adopting Orthodoxy, that he had a full command of Russian, and most important, that he had an interest in turcica and engaged in literary activity. In 1667, he compiled a "Selection from Holy, Divine and Imperial books to be remembered."<sup>53</sup> Included in the manuscript were the following works, which the describer of the manuscript in the nineteenth century considered on the basis of the heading(?) to form a "Chronograph": A discussion between a father and son on matters theological and moral; extracts from the writings of the Holy Fathers, including works of Afanasii, Patriarch of Alexandria; a discussion between Patriarch Gennadius of Constantinople and Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror on Orthodox beliefs, translated from Greek; various random extracts (in part from one of the Chronographs) on Church and secular history and on geography, with some preservation of chronological order; a description of Jerusalem and of the grave of Mohammed; The tale about how Magmet Sultan wished to burn Greek books, attributed to Ivan Perevetov; finally, Russian history from the taking of Kazan'. It would seem that the main source for the turcica singled out in the description was the Chronograph in the "Redaction of 1617," which contained both the description of

Mohammed's grave (Skazanie o meste Midiiskom--a work to be discussed in Chapter IV) and the work attributed to Peresvetov. The debate between the patriarch and the sultan was known in two different versions in Muscovy (see below, Chapter VI).

In the same year, 1667, Vinius compiled a geographical manual of the distance of major cities in the known world from Moscow.<sup>54</sup> The work was based in part on a Dutch atlas or description of navigation, the original of which has not yet been determined.<sup>55</sup> Vinius' interest in navigation and geography appears also in his subsequent work, which includes a project for building a fleet on the Caspian Sea (1668) and a map of Siberia (ca. 1689) which may have been the best one ever drawn up to that time.<sup>56</sup>

In 1674, soon after his return from the diplomatic mission to Western Europe, he completed a translation from German of a collection of didactic tales based largely on Aesop's fables.<sup>57</sup> Of three different translations of Aesop collections done in seventeenth-century Muscovy (one from Latin in 1608 and another from Polish in 1675), Vinius' version ranks with the 1608 translation as having the "highest style" or most bookish language.<sup>58</sup> As Kozlovskii has noted, however, Vinius attempted to be sure his translations were clear: "he did not show off by using foreign words, and if he used them, then he attempted to

explain them; there were practically no Germanisms in his translations, and they were marked by considerable literary merit."<sup>59</sup> Vinius' literary endeavors even included the composition of laudatory verses on Peter the Great's capture of Azov in 1696.<sup>60</sup> His later literary work seems to have been practical rather than belletristic: on his return from Holland in 1708, he translated works on artillery, mechanics and fireworks, and was engaged in compiling a dictionary of Dutch and Russian.<sup>61</sup> The breadth of Vinius' interests and linguistic talents can be judged from his library, which included various dictionaries, works on theology, mathematics, jurisprudence, anatomy, military science, geography and history in Dutch, German, Latin, French, and Polish.<sup>62</sup>

Consideration of Vinius' literary activity would not be complete without some mention of his connection with pamphlet literature. "As postmaster and translator and then d'iak of the Diplomatic Chancellery, Vinius must have taken an active part in the compiling of kuranty."<sup>63</sup> During his mission abroad in 1672, he sent summaries of current news back to the Chancellery; naturally a substantial portion of this news dealt with matters relating to the Ottoman Empire, including information about a "threatening letter of the Turkish sultan to the Polish king."<sup>64</sup> Later, when Peter was besieging Azov, Vinius wrote him regularly, including summaries of the latest

news in his letters and presumably some of the kuranty themselves.<sup>65</sup>

Moreover, Vinius was engaged in what one might term "pamphleteering." In 1677, he was instructed to translate and send to all the military governors in the various towns of Muscovy a Dutch account of the victory of the combined Dutch-Danish fleet under Admiral Tromp over the Swedes (Battle of Öland, June 1676?), which had been a cause for great celebration in Moscow.<sup>66</sup> In 1687, he sent to Amsterdam for printing an engraved portrait of the regent Sofiia Alekseevna, which she had ordered reproduced to spread her "fame" (!) at home and abroad. Nicholas Witsen (later the author of the well-known Norden Oost Tartarye) to whom Vinius sent the request, returned about one hundred copies, with the portrait over the full title of the Tsarevna and Latin verses praising her.<sup>67</sup>

Such examples of official concern with pamphlet literature are not exceptions; there is other evidence to suggest that the Muscovite government took kuranty and pamphlet literature seriously, recognized its value for propaganda, and used and guarded it as official documentation. We have already noted how Aleksei Mikhailovich gave special instructions in 1659 regarding the acquisition of news from the West. Among the further instructions issued at that time to Hebdon, the English agent of the tsar who was being sent abroad, was one to obtain Swedish pamphlets



telling of Russian defeats and to write articles for foreign newspapers refuting this "slander."<sup>68</sup> Again in 1667, the Swedes and their pamphlets came under fire-- this time for printing false information about the church schism and the Razin rebellion; a Russian embassy protested this, apparently with some success in gaining satisfaction.<sup>69</sup> In 1670, more religious questions disturbed the Muscovite government--this time remarks in the Königsberg kuranty (probably the Königsberger Sonntags und Donnerstags Post-Zeitung) about the religious convictions of the tsar. In response, Marselis wrote the Königsberg postmaster a letter of warning and protest, indicating that the tsar would take up the matter through diplomatic channels with the Elector of Brandenburg unless the offender were punished.<sup>70</sup>

While the kuranty played a role in affairs of state, it is clear that the news in them was valued and relied on in a variety of matters. In 1683 the government instructed the military governors of towns on the western borders to close the border to travelers in order to prevent the spread of the plague to Muscovy.<sup>71</sup> The government cited in this order news received in kuranty from Riga about plague in the Habsburg Empire. News about the English having pursued the pirate Jan Bart northwards in 1696 caused the government to warn the officials on the Northern Dvina to beware of pirates.<sup>72</sup> A final example of the value of kuranty to the government in Moscow is rather ironic.

On September 10/20, 1697, Vinius wrote to Peter I (who was then travelling in Europe) complaining that the tsar had not written in a long time and that Moscow had received news "of the progress of my lord's embassy only from the kuranty."<sup>73</sup>

III. The Spread of Kuranty and Pamphlets  
into Muscovite Sborniki

The importance of the kuranty to the government and the clear indication that they were considered official, non-circulating documents has led scholars to the conclusion that they did not represent newspapers in the modern sense and that they circulated among only the upper strata of the court.<sup>74</sup> While this conclusion is basically true, it leaves unexplained the manner in which pamphlets and kuranty did gain some circulation outside of official circles and served as a basis for some of the most interesting literary developments of seventeenth-century Muscovy. In the first place, the "leaks" in the security of the Diplomatic Chancellery have been amply documented. A most interesting case of such a leak involves the account of the first Russian embassy to China, undertaken by Fedor Baikov in 1654-1658. On no fewer than three occasions, foreigners obtained copies of the official report (in 1665 or 1666 and twice in 1673) and published the material in various editions in Western Europe. One of these foreigners, who passed the material on to another

for publication and then later used it in his own writings, was Vinius' close acquaintance Nicholas Witsen. Witsen undoubtedly obtained the documents during his service in the embassy of Jacob Borel to Moscow in 1665-6, although the exact source of his information is not known. Nevertheless, it is possible that Vinius himself was responsible, since Vinius translated for Borel and later apparently did provide Witsen with material on Siberia from official documents.<sup>75</sup>

Even more revealing than the above example, both of the means by which the kuranty and other pamphlets might circulate, and of the official attitude about the problem, is an incident in October 1669. The translators of the Diplomatic Chancellery called Leonhardt Marselis to task for opening the mail sacks, removing letters, informing his friends of the content of the newspapers, even keeping the originals and making copies for the Chancellery, and having the audacity to mark the places he felt the translators should choose for translation. As his accusers pointed out, elsewhere in Europe, postmasters were under oath not to do such things because it meant giving away state secrets. Marselis and his father protested that if they were forced to bring the mail sacks sealed it would indicate to their clientele (of private correspondents) that the government did not trust them; furthermore, it was necessary only to ask any other foreign ser-

vitors of the state, doctors or merchants, to learn that the postal pouches in the West were brought in unsealed.<sup>76</sup> Perhaps the excessive concern the translators evidenced in this incident reflects the fact that Marselis had irritated many who would have seized any opportunity to deprive him of his position as postmaster. But we know from inscriptions on the kuranty that a careful accounting of them was standard procedure.<sup>77</sup>

Despite any efforts of the clerks and translators to keep control over the documents under their jurisdiction, material did leak, as the example of Baikov's report shows. And some of the same individuals charged with acquiring, translating, or preserving the documents played a role in their spread. We find numerous examples of the spread of kuranty and translated pamphlets from the confines of the Diplomatic and Privy Chancelleries.

In a number of cases, copyists of late Muscovite codices included such translations along with a variety of other literature that usually was of historical interest. Some of the best examples of such "historical sborniki" contain material from kuranty and pamphlets with Turkish themes. We find, for example, pamphlets describing noteworthy battles fought against the Turks in 1678 at Chyhyryn in the Ukraine and in 1697 at Zenta. There are at least two translated pamphlets about the Chyhyryn war known from Muscovite sborniki.<sup>78</sup> One of these, which contains a vivid description of the destruc-

tion of the fort at Chyhyryn, appears along with an apocryphal letter of the sultan belonging to the same family as the letter found in the kuranty of 1621 (see Chapter III). Similarly the smashing victory of Prince Eugene of Savoy over the Ottomans at Zenta was the subject of at least two Muscovite translated pamphlets.<sup>79</sup> Of course, we cannot always be certain that such pamphlets originated in the Diplomatic Chancellery, but that is a reasonable assumption. Some sborniki contain material specifically labelled as from kuranty. One striking example is a manuscript containing a number of such items, most of them longish pamphlets rather than newspaper articles.<sup>80</sup> They deal with the coronation of the new king of Poland Michał Wiśniowiecki in 1669, his burial in 1676, prophecies about the fate of the Turks, miraculous occurrences, and so on. Along with these items are a number of apocryphal letters of the sultan. Even where we do not have a direct indication of the kuranty as a source, real documentary material from the chancellery may give a clue about the origin of pamphlets found in the same sborniki. The same apocryphal letters that appear in the example just cited in another case are found with documents pertaining to Russo-Ottoman relations.<sup>81</sup> Further examples of the spread of translations from the Chancellery into the sborniki of the time will be found in the material that follows.

Examination of the Muscovite kuranty and their milieu has led to several important conclusions. First, it is clear that a sizeable amount of pamphlet literature and newspapers of various kinds came into seventeenth-century Muscovy with some regularity. Second, comparison of the kuranty with the sources from which they derived reveals that the translations might be quite free and contain belletristic elements. Third, kuranty and the connected pamphlet literature can be associated primarily with individuals working for the Privy Chancellery and the Diplomatic Chancellery--in particular the translators and those involved in running the postal system. Among these individuals, Andrei Vinus stands out for his literary talents and interests. Finally, there is no question that ample possibilities existed for kuranty and pamphlets to find their way outside of the Chancellery. It is to certain of such works which "leaked" out that I now turn.