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Autore	Marsden Thomas <1983->
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Sommario/riassunto	In the 1650s and 1660s, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Nikon, carried out a series of reforms which were rejected by a large number of the faithful. The split that resulted, the Great Schism or raskol, led a large proportion of the Russian population to become completely isolated from the official church. Known as raskol'niki, they were seen as stubborn opponents of both church and government and were fiercely persecuted. Two centuries later amidst peasant protests, revolutionary conspiracies and government paranoia, Russia's religious dissenters were again at the forefront