



# 4 Russian Czars Increase Power

## TERMS & NAMES

- Ivan the Terrible
- boyars
- Peter the Great
- westernization

### MAIN IDEA

Peter the Great made many changes in Russia to try to make it more like western Europe.

### WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Many Russians today debate whether to model themselves on the West or to focus on traditional Russian culture.

**SETTING THE STAGE** Ivan III of Moscow, who ruled Russia from 1462 to 1505, accomplished several things. First, he conquered much of the territory around Moscow. Second, he liberated Russia from the Mongols. Third, he began to centralize the Russian government. This laid the foundation for the absolute monarchy that would come later.

## From Ivan to the Romanovs

Ivan III was succeeded by his son, Vasily, who ruled for 28 years. Vasily continued his father's work of adding territory to the growing Russian state. He also increased the power of the central government, a trend that would continue under his son, Ivan IV.

**The First Czar** Ivan IV, called **Ivan the Terrible**, came to the throne in 1533 when he was only three years old. His young life was disrupted by struggles for power among Russia's landowning nobles, known as **boyars**. The boyars fought to control young Ivan. When he was 16, Ivan seized power and had himself crowned czar. This title meant "caesar," and Ivan was the first Russian ruler to use it officially. He also married the beautiful Anastasia, related to an old boyar family, the Romanovs.

The years from 1547 to 1560 are often called Ivan's "good period." He won great victories, added lands to Russia, gave Russia a code of laws, and ruled justly.

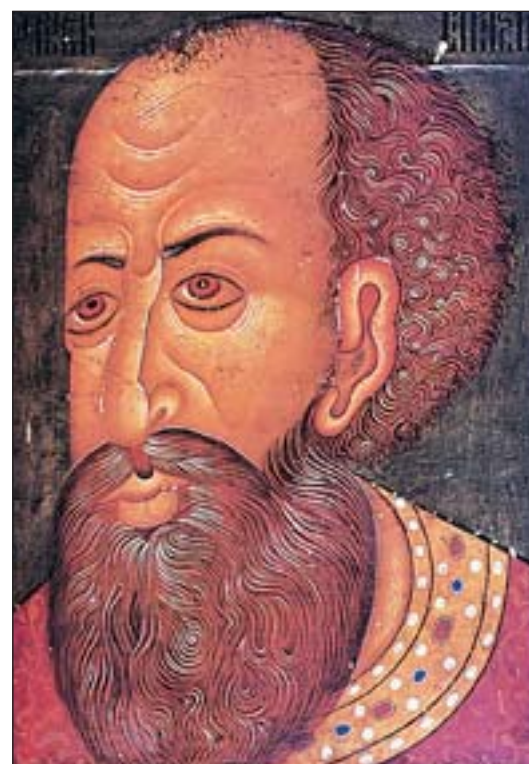
**Rule by Terror** Ivan's "bad period" began in 1560 after Anastasia died. Accusing the boyars of poisoning his wife, Ivan turned against them. He organized his own police force, whose chief duty was to hunt down and murder people Ivan considered traitors. The members of this police force dressed in black and rode black horses.

Using these secret police, Ivan executed many boyars, their families, and the peasants who worked their lands. Thousands of people died. Ivan seized the boyars' estates and gave them to a new class of nobles, who had to remain loyal to him or lose their land. One noble, Prince Kurbsky, described the suffering Ivan caused him:

### A VOICE FROM THE PAST

In front of your army have I marched—and marched again; and no dishonor have I brought upon you, but only brilliant victories. . . . But to you, O czar, was all this as naught; rather do you show us your intolerable wrath and bitterest hatred, and furthermore, burning stoves [a means of torture].

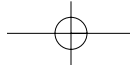
PRINCE ANDREW KURBSKY, letter to Czar Ivan IV



This portrait of Ivan IV is painted in the style of Russian icons. Perhaps this style was chosen to encourage deep respect for Ivan—who believed in his divine right to rule.

### Background

Prince Kurbsky was an adviser to Ivan and also won many battles for him. When Ivan turned against him, Kurbsky fled to Lithuania.



Eventually, Ivan committed an act that was both a personal tragedy and a national disaster. In 1581, during a violent quarrel, he killed his oldest son and heir. When Ivan died three years later, only his weak second son was left to rule.

**Rise of the Romanovs** Ivan's son proved to be physically and mentally incapable of ruling. After he died without an heir, Russia experienced a period of turmoil known as the Time of Troubles. Boyars struggled for power, and heirs of czars died under mysterious conditions. Several imposters tried to claim the throne.

Finally, in 1613, representatives from many Russian cities met to choose the next czar. Their choice was Michael Romanov, grandnephew of Ivan the Terrible's wife Anastasia. Thus began the Romanov dynasty, which ruled Russia for 300 years (1613–1917).

## Peter the Great Takes the Throne

Over time, the Romanovs restored order to Russia. They strengthened government by passing a law code and putting down a revolt. This paved the way for the absolute rule of Czar Peter I. At first, Peter shared the throne with a feeble-minded half-brother. However, in 1696, Peter became sole ruler of Russia. He is known to history as **Peter the Great**, because he was one of Russia's greatest reformers. He also continued the trend of increasing the czar's power.

### THINK THROUGH HISTORY

#### A. Recognizing

**Effects** What were the long-term effects of Ivan's murder of his oldest son?

## HISTORYMAKERS



**Peter the Great**  
1672–1725

Peter the Great had the mind of a genius, the body of a giant, and the ferocious temper of a bear. One could not help but look up to Peter, who stood about 6 feet 8 inches tall. He was so strong that he was known to take a heavy silver plate and roll it up as if it were a piece of paper.

Peter had a good, if crude, sense of humor and loved to make practical jokes. But heaven help the person who crossed his path. If someone annoyed him, he would take his massive fist and knock the offender unconscious. If he were angrier, he would have the person's nostrils torn out with iron pincers.

Although Peter saw himself as a father to his people, he was cruel to his own family. When his oldest son opposed him, he had him imprisoned and killed.

**Russia's Differences from Europe** When Peter I came to power, Russia was still a land of boyars and serfs. Serfdom in Russia lasted much longer than it did in western Europe. Serfdom continued in Russia into the mid-1800s. When a Russian landowner sold a piece of land, he sold the serfs with it. Landowners could give serfs away as presents or to pay debts. It was also against the law for serfs to run away from their owners.

Most boyars knew little of western Europe. In the Middle Ages, Russia had looked to Constantinople, not to Rome, for leadership. Then Mongol rule had cut Russia off from the Renaissance and the Age of Exploration. Geographic barriers also isolated Russia. Its only seaport, Archangel, was choked with ice much of the year. The few travelers who reached Moscow were usually Dutch or German, and they had to stay in a separate part of the city.

Religious differences widened the gap between western Europe and Russia. The Russians had adopted the Eastern Orthodox branch of Christianity. Western Europeans were mostly Catholics or Protestants, and the Russians viewed them as heretics and avoided them.

**Peter Visits the West** In the 1680s, people in the German quarter of Moscow were accustomed to seeing the young Peter striding through their neighborhood on his long legs. (Peter was more than six and a half feet tall.) He was fascinated by the modern tools and machines in the foreigners' shops. Above all, he had a passion for ships and the sea. The young czar believed that Russia's future depended on having a warm-water port. Only then could Russia compete with the more modern states of western Europe.

Peter was 24 years old when he became sole ruler of Russia. In 1697, just one year later, he embarked on the "Grand Embassy," a long visit to western Europe. Peter's goal was to learn about European customs and industrial techniques. With him were 200 servants and 55 boyars. Never before had a czar traveled among Western "heretics."

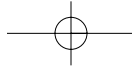
On his journey, Peter insisted on keeping his identity a secret. He went to the Netherlands in the plain clothes of an ordinary worker

### THINK THROUGH HISTORY

#### B. Summarizing

Restate the main reasons that Russia was culturally different from western Europe.





and labored as a ship's carpenter for four months. However, a Russian giant in a Dutch seaport attracted attention. Word of his identity soon spread. Yet if a fellow worker addressed him as "Your Majesty" or "Sire," he would not answer. After all, he was just plain "Carpenter Peter." Peter also visited England and Austria before returning home.

## Peter Rules Absolutely

Inspired by his trip to the West, Peter resolved that Russia would compete with Europe on both military and commercial terms. Peter's goal of **westernization**, of using western Europe as a model for change, was not an end in itself. Peter saw it as a way to make Russia stronger.

### THINK THROUGH HISTORY

#### C. Recognizing

**Bias** Judging from this remark, what was Peter's view of his people?

**Peter's Reforms** Although Peter believed Russia needed to change, he knew that many of his people disagreed. As he said to one official, "For you know yourself that, though a thing be good and necessary, our people will not do it unless forced to." To force change upon his state, Peter increased his powers as an absolute ruler.

Peter brought the Russian Orthodox church under state control. He abolished the office of patriarch, head of the church. He set up a group called the Holy Synod to run the church—under his direction.

Like Ivan the Terrible, Peter reduced the power of the great landowners. He recruited able men from lower-ranking families. He then promoted them to positions of authority and rewarded them with grants of land. Because these men owed everything to the czar, they were loyal to him alone.

To modernize his army, Peter hired European officers, who drilled his soldiers in European tactics with European weapons. Being a soldier became a lifetime job. By the time of Peter's death, the Russian army numbered 200,000 men. To pay for this huge army, Peter imposed heavy taxes.

## CONNECT to TODAY

### Russia: East vs. West

Peter's reforms sparked the beginning of a debate in Russia that continues today—whether to westernize or to focus on Russian culture. The breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991 has led to developments in both directions.

Many ethnic groups have established individual republics or are striving to do so. On the other hand, Russia and other former Soviet countries are experimenting with democracy and a market economy. These are distinctly Western traditions.

Because Russia straddles two continents—Asia and Europe—the tension between East and West will probably be an enduring part of its culture.

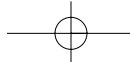
1462	Acquisitions to 1682
Acquisitions to 1505	Acquisitions to 1725
Acquisitions to 1584	Acquisitions to 1796

## The Expansion of Russia, 1500–1800



### GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Maps

- Location** Locate the territories that Peter added to Russia during his reign, from 1682 to 1725. What bodies of water did Russia gain access to because of these acquisitions?
- Region** Who added a larger amount of territory to Russia—Ivan III, who ruled from 1462 to 1505, or Peter the Great?



## DailyLife: Russia, 1700

# New Russian News

### Your Money or Your Beard

About a year ago, as part of his attempt to westernize Russia, Peter the Great decided that the Russian custom of wearing beards showed too much Mongol influence. Our modernizing czar offered most men a hard choice: shave their beards, or plunk down money to keep their whiskers. Those who paid the beard tax received a token (shown below) to prove that they had the right to have hairy faces.

Peter's beard tax ranged from a sixth of a kopeck for a peasant to one hundred rubles a year for a wealthy merchant. The rich had to pay 60,000 times as much as the poor!

Now that the policy has been in effect for a year, the results are in.

Most peasants and merchants and all priests and monks chose to pay rather than shave. All soldiers, officers, and court officials are clean-shaven for a good reason: Peter didn't give them a choice.



### Winter Happenings: Moscow

It takes more than sub-zero temperatures to keep hardy Russians home. While some people brave the frigid air to sell their wares or to shop, others find delight at the fair.

Yesterday's outdoor market featured the rock-hard frozen carcasses of cows, sheep, pigs, and chickens piled into pyramidlike heaps. On hand-pulled sleds, shoppers carted home their purchases of meat, butter, eggs, and fish.

Clowns, magicians, jugglers, and musicians entertained at the outdoor fair. For the athletic, there was an ice-skating rink, as well as a 35-foot ice hill to delight sledders. Dizzy visitors swung back and forth in boats suspended from a wooden frame.



This winter scene shows bustling activity in Ivan the Great Square in Moscow.

### Happy New Year!

Forward-looking Russians are celebrating the new year with festivities in January—instead of waiting until September, as their grandparents would have done. Just last month, Peter the Great decreed that Russia would adopt the calendar used by western Europe. He ushered in the calendar change with a fireworks display and a week of public feasting.

### Build It Today, Move in Tomorrow

Need a new house or a replacement part for your current dwelling? Check out the carpenter's market at the end of any major street. There you'll find logs cut in a variety of lengths and widths and marked for easy assembly. In addition, ready-made beams, roof shingles, and door and window frames are also offered for sale.

With a little help from your friends, you can move into your new house in almost no time at all. Some tips for keeping that new house cozy in the winter:

- Buy windows with double glass.
- Keep ceilings low.
- Stuff the spaces between the logs with moss.
- Make a steep roof so that snow will slide off.



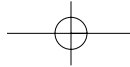
### Connect to History

**Synthesizing** How have Russians adapted to their cold climate? Discuss transportation, housing, and activities.

SEE SKILLBUILDER HANDBOOK, PAGE R18

### Connect to Today

**Researching** At the library, research the records of the winter Olympics for the last 20 years to learn what events Russians (or Soviets) participated in and how many they won. What winter sports do modern Russians like and excel at?



**Westernizing Russia** As part of his attempts to westernize Russia, Peter

- introduced potatoes, which became a staple of the Russian diet
- started Russia's first newspaper and edited its first issue himself
- raised women's status by having them attend social gatherings
- ordered the nobles to give up their traditional clothes for Western fashions

Peter also believed education was a key to Russia's progress. In his journal, Peter (referring to himself as "the Czar") described his efforts to advance learning:

#### A VOICE FROM THE PAST

A school of marine [navigation] was opened, and schools for the other arts and sciences began to be introduced gradually. . . . At the same time the Czar permitted his subjects to leave the country in order to study the sciences in foreign lands. This was forbidden in former times under pain of death, but now not only was permission given for it but many were forced to undertake it.

CZAR PETER I, quoted in *Peter the Great*, edited by L. Jay Oliva

**A New Capital** To promote education and growth, Peter wanted a seaport that would make it easier to travel to the West. Therefore, Peter fought Sweden to gain a piece of the Baltic coast. After 21 long years of war, Russia finally won the "window on the sea" that Peter wanted.

Actually, Peter had secured that window many years before Sweden officially surrendered it. In 1703 he began building a new city on Swedish lands occupied by Russian troops. Although the swampy site was unhealthy, it seemed ideal to Peter. Ships could sail down the Neva River into the Baltic Sea and on to western Europe. Peter called the city St. Petersburg, after his patron saint.

To build a city on a desolate swamp was no easy matter. Every summer, the army forced thousands of luckless serfs to leave home and work at St. Petersburg. An estimated 25,000 to 100,000 people died from the terrible working conditions and widespread diseases. When St. Petersburg was finished, Peter ordered many Russian nobles to leave the comforts of Moscow and settle in his new capital.

For better or for worse, Peter the Great had tried to reform the culture and government of Russia. To an amazing extent he had succeeded. By the time of his death in 1725, Russia was a power to be reckoned with in Europe. Meanwhile, another great European power, England, had been developing a form of government that limited the power of absolute monarchs, as you will see in Section 5.



This 1753 painting shows a view of St. Petersburg from the water. The ships indicate that it did become a booming port, as Peter had wanted.

#### THINK THROUGH HISTORY

##### D. Synthesizing

Which of Peter's actions in the building of St. Petersburg demonstrate his power as an absolute monarch?

## Section 4 Assessment

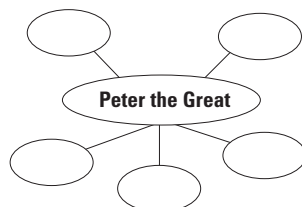
### 1. TERMS & NAMES

Identify

- Ivan the Terrible
- boyars
- Peter the Great
- westernization

### 2. TAKING NOTES

On a cluster diagram like the one shown, list the important events of Peter the Great's reign.



### 3. SUPPORTING OPINIONS

Do you think Ivan the Terrible or Peter the Great was more of an absolute monarch? Explain the standards by which you made your decision.

#### THINK ABOUT

- ways that each increased the power of the Russian czar
- long term effects of each one's rule

### 4. ANALYZING THEMES

**Power and Authority** Which of Peter the Great's actions reveal that he saw himself as the highest authority in Russia? Explain.

#### THINK ABOUT

- steps he took to reduce the authority of others
- actions that overturned traditional sources of authority in Russia