

Peter the Great: His Life and World Study Guide

**Peter the Great: His Life and World by Robert K.
Massie**

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Plot Summary

Robert K. Massie's *PETER THE GREAT: HIS LIFE AND WORLD* examines how a larger-than-life force of nature turns medieval Muscovy into modern Russia by force of arms, importation of talent, and harsh discipline.

Born in 1672, with little chance of attaining the throne of Muscovy, Peter finds himself at age ten reluctantly accepting popular acclamation as Tsar and soon reigning jointly with his chronically ill half-brother, Ivan V. Peter spends little time in the Kremlin, tainted for him by watching his relatives slain by the Streltsy in 1682, preferring to learn military science and European lifestyles. Shipbuilding and seamanship become his passion. Peter marries to sire an heir but is soon estranged from Eudoxia. Peter continues to play while the Regent Sophia rules and Ivan handles necessary pomp.

Yearning for the sea, Peter begins visiting Archangel and contemplates invading the Black Sea. He builds warships at Voronezh, twice attacks the Turkish fortress at Azov, builds a harbor, and dispatches a diplomatic mission. Having dealt a final blow to the Streltsy, Peter sends a "Great Embassy" to Europe, traveling himself incognito as Peter Mikhailov. He observes, questions, collects, and recruits to build a new Russia. Back home, Peter allies with Augustus II, of Poland to start a war with Sweden's Charles VII, that lasts twenty years. Initial confrontations show the Russian army ill-trained and equipped, so Peter begins drafting men and raising grinding taxes. He seizes Lake Ladoga and the length of the Neva River, too and begins building forts in the marshy delta. Swiftly a new capital, St. Petersburg, to Peter paradise, rises. The war grinds on to the Swedish defeat at Poltava, which allows Peter to concentrate on his domestic reforms of government bureaucracy, commerce, and the church .

Peter revisits Europe, including France, looking for allies in a shifting political situation. The long battle of wills between Peter and his heir, Alexis, comes to a head as the Tsarevich flees Russia but is found. Obsessed about traitors, Peter uses torture to determine the scope of Alexis' threat and condemns his son to torture and death. Alexis dies begging his father's forgiveness and blessing. Physically an old man by age 52, largely thanks to a lifetime of heavy drinking, Peter crowns his second wife Elizabeth as Empress, with the assumption that she will succeed him. He dies in agony of gangrene, begging God's forgiveness for his many sins in recognition of all of the good he has tried to do for Russia.



Part 1, Old Muscovy, Chapters 1-6

Part 1, Old Muscovy, Chapters 1-6 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 1, "Old Muscovy," describes Moscow in the 1670s, its unassuming and pious Tsar Alexis, the foes surrounding Orthodox Russia—Sweden, Poland, the Ottoman Empire, and China—and how the 8 million peasants and serfs, scattered thinly across the countryside, live in harmony with harsh nature. Moscow is a bustling commercial city. The Kremlin is a city within, the center of government and church. Alexis is a demigod and his government, run by the hereditary nobility (boyars), is inefficient.

Chapter 2, "Peter's Childhood," shows the widowed Alexis in 1671, marrying Natalya Naryshkin, who bears a healthy son, Peter, on 30 May 1672. At age three Peter loses his doting father and is seen as a threat to the invalid 15-year-old Tsar Fedor by the Miloslavsky in-laws who return to power. Natalya and her children fade from public view but are safe. Peter's education shifts towards the military arts. When Fedor dies in 1682 without heir, the choice is between his physically-challenged brother Ivan (age 16) and healthy half-brother Peter (age ten). The people acclaim a reluctant Peter. Matveev is recalled from exile to control the government.

Chapter 3, "A Maiden of Great Intelligence," tells of Sophia, Peter's half-sister, first surveying the plight of women in 17th-century Russia and particularly the royal sisters and daughters cloistered in the "terem," forbidden to marry. Sophia is educated with brother Fedor, flourishes during his brief reign, and fearing a return to obscurity, uses Fedor's funeral to break tradition by mourning—and raging—publicly.

Chapter 4, "The Revolt of the Streltsy," describes Muscovy's professional soldiers, who in 1682 believe Sophia's rumors of treachery, invade the Kremlin, and over three days slaughter boyars, Matveev, and Peter's uncle Ivan before his eyes. Ivan and Peter are crowned as co-tsars and Sophia takes over as Regent. Peter is scarred for life and later takes vengeance.

Chapter 5, "The Great Schism," provides background on the revolt of the "Old Believers" against ritual reforms in the church dating from Alexis' day. Patriarch Nikon, who sternly enforces his views and challenges Alexis, is deposed in 1666. Many fundamentalists rallied behind the Archpriest Avvakum and seek martyrdom, while others populate the far north. Peter faces enforcing discipline on a lethargic, corrupt, and superstitious church.

Chapter 6, "Peter's Games," describes the activities that Peter prefers to ceremonies of state, out of the way at Preobrazhenskoe. War games with playmates expand to the nearby village of Semyonovskoe and the two play armies evolve into real regiments of the Imperial Guard. Peter works his way up from the bottom—a pattern that lasts a lifetime. Peter seeks technical advice and recruits officers in the German Suburb and



learns many trades at the expense of formal education. In 1688, Peter and his Dutch tutor find and refurbish a boat and sailing becomes his passion on Lake Pleschev. In 1688, Peter marries Eudoxia Lopukhina, who bears one live son, Alexis, before they are estranged.



Part 1, Old Muscovy, Chapters 7-11

Part 1, Old Muscovy, Chapters 7-11 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 7, "The Regency of Sophia," sees new cohorts installed including Sophia's chief advisor, principle minister, and eventually her lover, Prince Vasily Golitsyn, who is responsible for the foreign policy highpoint of the Regency, the return of Kiev to Russian control, but also commands the two failed campaigns against the Khan of the Crimea, the Sultan's vassal, a condition of the Polish-Russian treaty. Upset by Sophia's hailing Golitsyn's heroism and by her assuming the title Autocrat, the boyars rally around the Naryshkins. Controlling the Streltsy, Sophia has the edge as tensions rise.

In Chapter 8, "Sophia Overthrown," the Streltsy mobilize against rumors that Peter will kill Ivan and Sophia. Other rumors, that they are marching on Preobrazhenskoe, send Peter fleeing by night to the historic Troitsky Monastery, whence Peter wins over the Patriarch and threatens death to all who oppose him. Refusing to see Sophia, Peter orders all foreign officers to rally to him. Sophia's inner circle is tortured and executed, Golitsyn is exiled, and Sophia is sent for life to the Novodevichy Convent (not as a nun).

Chapter 9, "Gordon, Lefort and the Jolly Company," shows Peter enjoying his freedom for five more years, leaving government to wither in the hands of his mother, the Patriarch, holdovers, and relatives. Joachim is succeeded by another obscurantist, Adrian, but Peter feels free to live openly among foreigners in the German Suburb, where he makes three important friends, Andrew Vinius, Patrick Gordon, and Francis Lefort—and through Lefort meets Anna Mons, his mistress for the next 12 years. Peter forms a heavy-drinking "Jolly Company" and a "Drunken Synod" that convinces many that he is the Antichrist. Peter endangers himself with fireworks and war games, builds a warship, ignores the Kremlin, and nearly dies of dysentery.

Chapter 10, "Archangel," shows Peter's passion for ships expand as in 1693, he first visits Archangel, Russia's only port near the Arctic Circle. Peter inspects foreign ships, hears about Dutch shipbuilding, and practices various trades. Soon after Peter's return to Moscow, his mother dies, and grief soon turns to enjoyment of being unrestricted. Back in Archangel, Peter launches one ship, nearly drowns on another, and happily takes delivery on and command of a Dutch-built warship. Returning to Moscow, Peter holds maneuvers at Kozhukhovo and looks forward to real fighting.

Chapter 11, "Azov," shows Peter in 1695, at age 22 seeking an outlet for his vast energy. He decides to attack the Turkish fortress of Azov, to end Tatar raids in the Ukraine, appease his Polish ally, and gain access to the Black Sea. The first attack fails for lack of experience in siege engineering and unified command, leaving Peter shocked but not discouraged. He sets up a shipyard at Voronezh on the upper Don and stocks it with workers. While he is at this task, Tsar Ivan dies suddenly, leaving Peter as sole ruler. The second assault succeeds, impressing Europe and filling Moscow with joy



even before the triumphal entry staged with Greco-Roman pomp, in which Peter marches as a common soldier. Needing a sea-going fleet and naval harbor at Taganrog, Peter taxes landowners and the church and sends Streltsy families there as colonists. Western shipbuilders are hired; young Russians are sent West to study, and Peter announces an 18-month "Great Embassy" to Europe to study and recruit.



Part 2, The Great Embassy, Chapters 12-16

Part 2, The Great Embassy, Chapters 12-16 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 12 begins describing one of the major events in Peter's life. To enter the Black Sea, Peter needs technology, trained manpower, and reliable allies. He needs to shore up the dying anti-Turkish alliance as Europe worries more about the ambitions of King Louis XIV. Peter goes personally to complete his education and incognito to avoid hated ceremony. Europe embraces science, music, art, and literature while Russia remains medieval—and participants in the Great Embassy blink in disbelief that "heretics" could achieve this. Earlier Russians in Europe act ignorantly and arrogantly.

Chapter 13, "It Is Impossible to Describe Him," launches the Great Embassy, led by Lefort with diplomats Fedor Golovin and Prokofy Voznitsyn, many of Peter's favorites as "volunteers," and himself as Peter Mikhailov, hidden in the 250-member staff. He leaves behind a regency council, but Romodanovsky keeps order. Before leaving, Peter executes three Streltsy for criticizing his rule. The Swedish hosts in Riga offend Peter, with tragic consequences later; Courland does better, and in Prussia, Peter escapes an anti-Swedish alliance to concentrate on the Turks. As Poland elects a king, Peter shifts troops to support his favorite and then speeds across Germany as word spreads that he is not, after all, a barbarian.

Chapter 14, "Peter in Holland," provides background on Dutch prosperity before following the Tsar excitedly to apprentice in the famed shipyards. He is too easily identified and is thronged until he is set up in the secure East India Company dockyard, where he works for four months. Meanwhile, the Embassy is well received and talks about future trade and others study various trades. Peter is kept abreast of the situation at home and issues orders by courier. He wanders, examines, questions, observes, and practices all that Western science and technology reveal and dedicates himself to achieving the same in Russia. Religious tolerance appears the key.

Chapter 15, "The Prince of Orange," shows William, simultaneously Stadholder of Holland and King of England, meeting Peter, long an admirer of his military exploits opposing Catholicism. William is in Holland, concluding one war and preparing for another, when the Embassy arrives. He is not ready to ally with Peter against the Turks. Leaving diplomacy to his ambassadors, Peter returns to shipbuilding, exploring, and recruiting. He is given the frigate Amsterdam, which he helps build and proudly earns a shipwright's certificate. Needing a more systematic approach to things naval, Peter proceeds to England (Chapter 16, "Peter in England"), where his activities continue the same for four months. While devoted to Orthodoxy, Peter investigates Anglicanism and is fascinated by the Quakers. Peter leaves the happy island reluctantly, but wiser.



Part 2, The Great Embassy, Chapters 17-21

Part 2, The Great Embassy, Chapters 17-21 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 17 "Leopold and Augustus," sees the Embassy sending 640 Dutch officers and specialists plus equipment to Russia and departing for Dresden and Vienna. Treated as an upstart monarch, Peter is enthusiastic to meet Leopold I, the master of Central Europe, and behaves with decorum. He fails, however, to obtain an ally against the Turks, as Austria seeks peace in anticipation of a new war in the West. Austria promises not to give away his gains at Azov, but offers no help in gaining entry to the Black Sea. The Embassy ends abruptly before a trip to Venice when word comes that the Streltsy are rebelling. En route home, Peter meets Augustus II, King of Poland, who convinces him to undertake a joint war against Sweden. Thwarted in the South, Peter looks to establish a port on the Baltic Sea. Peter's homecoming is shown in Chapter 18 "These Things Are in Your Way." He breaks tradition by shaving the nobles' beards, banning Russian clothing, freeing himself of wife Eudoxia, reforming the calendar and the currency, and introducing decorations as rewards for service in lieu of land.

Chapter 19, "Fire and Knout," shows Peter dealing grimly with the Streltsy, tortured and imprisoned and awaiting his judgment after marching on Moscow to replace the absent and bewitched Tsar. Peter uses (sometimes personally) intense, systematic torture to determine the extent of the plot and rid himself of the menace. Russian methods, encapsulated in the chapter title, are described in excruciating detail, with the caveat that Europe also deals brutally with traitors. Peter tries to hide the savagery from foreigners, but all of Moscow is terrorized, which helps Peter's ongoing reforms. When letters turn up purportedly from Sophia, she is tonsured and cloistered, but her life is spared. Public executions continue through the fall and winter, hundreds at a time. Peter forces his favorites to act as executioners and exiles the few surviving Streltsy to Siberia.

Chapter 20, "Among Friends," draws heavily on accounts by the Austrian Johann-Georg Korb to depict Peter partying while the events of the previous chapters unfold. Anna Mons is often with him in public. Peter's moods swing unpredictably. He takes part in the raucous celebrations of the Mock-Synod at Christmas and before Lent, at Epiphany stands with the troops rather than the Patriarch when the Moscow River is blessed, and order executions ended and corpses buried as lent begins. Peter deals harshly with beggars and robbers, particularly those who threaten foreigners.

Chapter 21, "Voronezh and the Southern Fleet." shows Peter returning to his highest priority, finding in the shipyards shortages, waste, and sullen workers. Peasants and serfs by the thousands are drafted for unskilled labor; death and desertion rates are high but, even without machinery, work moves swiftly. Peter labors with them happily. In March 1699, Peter cuts short a second stay to bury his friend Lefort, and six months



later loses Gordon, his ablest soldier, who might have avoided later disasters. In the spring, a full fleet sails down the Don and Peter sends an envoy to Constantinople on the first Russian warship ever to enter the Black Sea. He gains only a 30-year truce, freedom from the Khan's tribute, and a permanent embassy. The great fleet, having no purpose, rots unused.



Part 3, The Great Northern War, Chapters 22-27

Part 3, The Great Northern War, Chapters 22-27 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 22, "Mistress of the North," describes the picturesque Baltic and Sweden, overextended at the peak of its power, ruling Finland, Karelia, Estonia, Ingria, Livonia, Western Pomerania, and ports near Denmark. Centuries earlier, Sweden and Russia battle over territories that Peter considers his. An anti-Swedish Livonian, Patkul, stirs Augustus and Peter to action against the newly-crowned Charles XII. Peter is in Voronezh making a show of power to speed a treaty with the Turks when Baltic fighting starts. Truce in hand, he sets out to reclaim Karelia and Ingria.

Chapter 23, "Let the Cannon Decide," gives background on Europe's wars of the 17th century, which steadily grow in scope and deadliness but still obey rules such as seasonal campaigning. Sieges are preferred over open-field battle and usually end in honorable surrender. Charles XII proves rash in the use of his disciplined troops, breaking traditions, and forcing battles. It is years before the Russians can stand up to him. Chapter 24, "Charles XII," summarizes the king's youth, emphasizing his love of adventure and military science before he gains the throne at 14. At 18, Charles finds his cousins, Augustus II and Frederick of Denmark, begin what Charles considers an unjust war. Depending on God, Charles vows to finish one off and then talk with the other—not knowing that Peter is preparing to attack. England and Holland side with Charles against Denmark to keep the political status quo in Europe, and Frederick drops out after a nearly bloodless campaign.

Chapter 25, "Narva," shows Peter attacking an Estonian fortress not originally in his war plans. The walled, 13th-century seaport is defended by 1,900 men. Digging siege lines and transporting goods are difficult, and the Russians' bombard ends for lack of ammunition. When Augustus ends his siege of Riga, Charles launches a surprising winter campaign against Narva. Breaking through the strong defensive line that the Russians have erected, the Swedes massacre the inexperienced Russian infantry. Peter is humiliated across Europe and Charles' easy victory leaves him "intoxicated with victory." War becomes the object of Charles' life and seals his doom at Poltava because he feels unconquerable and holds Russia in contempt,

Chapter 26, "We Must Not Lose Our Heads," shows Peter stunned and worried by the loss but sparing nothing to create, arm, provision, and train a new army under Boris Sheremetev. The artillery is rebuilt from scratch using iron melted down from church bells. Angry at his cousin, Charles focuses on him indecisively, freeing the Russians to capture forts and the length of the Neva River to let Peter build his coveted port. During raids, Sheremetev captures a peasant girl, Martha Skavronskaya, destined to become Peter's wife and successor, Catherine I.



Chapter 27 tells the unique story of "The Founding of St. Petersburg," in 1703. Over five months, by hand, the Fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul is erected and armed at the marshy mouth of the Neva. The Swedes threaten but are driven off. Peter builds an outpost on Kotlin Island that grows into the Kronstadt naval base and a new shipyard and brings in the Italian architect Domenico Trezzini to design a city of brick and stone. From across Russia, skilled and unskilled labor is drafted. Death and desertion rates are high; building materials and food must be hauled in, and a population compelled to take up residence in a city that only Peter calls "paradise."



Part 3, The Great Northern War, Chapters 28-33

Part 3, The Great Northern War, Chapters 28-33 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 28, "Menshikov and Catherine," examines the rise from obscurity of two people central to Peter's life. Calculating, greedy, talented Alexander Menshikov enters Peter's world through Lefort, rises through the ranks, receives titles and property, and makes enemies. After Lefort's death, Menshikov becomes Peter's best friend. He also introduces to Peter another Lithuania peasant, 19-year-old Martha Skavronskaya, renamed Catherine, who begins bearing Peter's children in 1705, quietly marries him in 1711 and with full pomp in 1712. Catherine keeps up with Peter's pace like no one else can and calms him by unconditional love. She travels with him and corresponds when he is on the road alone. Excerpts from their letters is included.

Chapter 29, "The Hand of the Autocrat," show Peter ever on the move, inspecting and commanding, needing to decree everything, and surrounding himself with new men and new departments (or ministries) to handle some matters for him. To finance war and building, "fiscals" tax every aspect of life; commodities become state monopolies, and the vast country is divided into eight governorships, each responsible for collecting taxes and providing draftees. As burdens breed discontent, a Secret Office roots out treason. At the same time, Peter improves the condition of women, deformed infants, and foreigners, pushes technical and language education, orders translations, starts a newspaper, introduces theater, and abolishes medieval adoration of his person, preferring loyalty to servility. Some Russians cannot bear the burdens and flee to outlying regions, and open rebellions by Streltsy remnants in Astrakhan, Don Cossacks, and Bashkirs, are repressed.

Chapter 30, "Polish Quagmire," shows Peter in 1704 seizing Dorpat and Narva to protect St. Petersburg, restoring the army's honor. Charles vows, despite his peoples' pleas, to make the Poles join him or be annihilated. The Polish Diet deposes Augustus and installs Charles' puppet, Stanislaus I, freeing Charles for a surprise attack on the Russian winter camp at Grodno. When Peter orders the fortress abandoned, Charles invades Saxony, Augustus' hereditary domain and obtains his written abdication. Peter accepts Patkul into his service and is in Austria negotiating on his behalf when Charles arrests, court-martials, and brutally executes Patkul. Peter's attempts to save Patkul, are futile.

Chapter 31, "Charles in Saxony," depicts the curiosity and fear with which Europe views Charles—and vies to ally with him. Protestants want to keep him apart from Louis XIV. At age 36, Charles is shown to be simple, stubborn, fatalistic, and chaste. Peter realizes that he is a fanatic, sure to invade Russia after dealing with Poland and seeks a mediator or ally in Holland, Prussia, Denmark, France, and Britain. Keeping St.



Petersburg is his only demand. Unwilling to talk to anyone or concede any territory, Charles prepares to dethrone the unjust Tsar and restore old Muscovy. Choosing a direct thrust at Russia's heart over first restoring the Baltic, Charles augments his army with German Protestants and heads out, confident and lighthearted.

Chapter 32, "The Great Road to Moscow," opens with the Russians torching Poland to deny Charles provisions and bridges and drafting new forces. Moscow is fortified but many flee. Rather than risk open warfare in Poland, the Russians retreat to Minsk. Peter is often bedridden with fever and depressed but rallies. Charles is twice thwarted from flanking the Russian on the Vistula before a confrontation at strategic Grodno and the bridge over the Neman River. After seesaw battles, the Russians reform at the River Berezina. Giving Peter little chance of victory, Europeans recognize Stanislaus, but the winter is hard on the Swedes. Not knowing whether Moscow or Petersburg is Charles' target, Peter prepares for both, burning a swath 120 miles long from Pskov to Smolensk.

Chapter 33, "Golovchin and Lesnaya," finds 35,000 Swedes facing 57,500 Russians (with reinforcements of 70,000 and 110,000 respectively), with Peter's being more readily supplied and replaced. Again outflanked, the Russians entrench in a marshy wooded area, meet an attack, fight hard, and retreat orderly. Charles dispatches Gen. Lewenhaupt to collect massive supplies in Riga and conduct them to Mogilev, but the effort bogs down, costing the prime campaigning months. Impatient, Charles crosses the Dnieper River and is surprised by a competent Russian attack. Seeing only scorched earth northward, Charles heads to fertile Severia, but Peter's new "flying corps" harass his columns and intercept the supply train at Lesnaya.



Part 3, The Great Northern War, Chapters 34—39

Part 3, The Great Northern War, Chapters 34—39 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 34, "Mazeppa," opens by explaining how the enfeebled Swedish forces are divided en route to Starodub, allowing the Russians to occupy key positions. With Severia lost, Charles enters the fertile Ukraine hoping to ally with the Cossack Hetman Mazeppa, who for over 30 years has watched for an opportunity to win Ukrainian independence. Caught in a lie about his health, Mazeppa panics and runs into Charles' arms. To limit the rebellion, Peter puts a price on the traitor's head and Menshikov demolishes Mazeppa's capital, Baturin, both to deny the Swedes and to deliver a lesson. Deep in enemy territory, low on food and gunpowder, Charles is desperate.

Chapter 35, "The Worst Winter Within Memory," shows the effects of the intense cold that grips all of Europe in 1708. The Swedes impose on the Ukrainian peasantry as the Russians harry them to deplete and demoralize. Charles' anger leads him into a trap: marching out to fight and costs him warm quarters. Losing thousands to frostbite, Charles besieges Veprik, loses more, and gains no benefit. Peter prepares to defend the Voronezh dockyards at all costs. As cold gives way to a thaw and rainfall that paralyze operations, Charles rejects his officers' call to withdraw to Poland. He orders the Poles to join him and hopes for help from the Zaporozhsky Cossacks and Crimean Tatars—and perhaps their Turkish masters. Instead, Peter strikes at the rebel Cossacks and destroy the boats Charles needs to cross the Dnieper, and convinces the Sultan to constrain Devlet Gerey.

Chapter 36, "The Gathering of Forces," brings spring's oppressive heat and Charles' rejection of a peace feeler and march on Poltava. As Peter crosses the Vorskla River with the Swedes poised to repulse him, Charles is shot and laid up nearly dead from infection. As Swedish morale plummets, Peter has ten small redoubts built in a "T" formation to slow their attack. Chapter 37, "Poltava," describes the clash, most affected by Rehnskjold's failure to share battle plans with fellow generals. Much of the infantry wastes time on the redoubts and is out of position for the main battle. Peter for the first time launches a disciplined infantry line, which envelopes the counter-striking Swedes. Charles escapes to Cossack asylum. In Chapter 38, "Surrender by the River," the trapped Swedes convince Charles to flee to Turkish territory.

Finally, Chapter 39, "The Fruits of Poltava," shows the celebration of deliverance and foreign capitals offering treaties and dynastic marriages. Augustus reclaims the Polish throne. Peter enters Moscow in triumph ahead of 17,000 Swedish POWs, who are dispersed to the frontiers. Russia captures Riga and Vyborg, securing Petersburg. Peter keeps the Baltic lands but allows them to keep their Lutheran culture. There is peace.



Part 4, On the European Stage, Chapters 40-46

Part 4, On the European Stage, Chapters 40-46 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 40, "The Sultan's World," colorfully surveys the situation in the vast Ottoman Empire with which Peter renews hostilities after Poltava. The government and army are filled with Christians kidnapped and converted. The Janissaries resemble the Streltsy in their potential for political disruption. The Sultan lives as a demigod in luxury in the Seraglio, enjoying his harem. Under weak sultans, including after 1703, the morose aesthete Ahmed III, grand viziers rule. Chapter 41, "Liberator of the Balkan Christians," backgrounds Peter's meddling with Ahmed's restive subjects in 1710-11. Turkey stays out of the Northern War largely thanks to Peter Tolstoy's diplomacy, which Charles as the Sultan's guest sets about subverting, culminating in a declaration of war. The Tatars are loosed on the Ukraine while an elite force pushes to the Danube. Illness keeps Peter from leading the holy war of liberation.

Chapter 42, "Fifty Blows on the Pruth," takes its title from Peter's wry assessment of suffering only half as much as he deserves for putting himself at risk of capture on the River Pruth. The rulers of two Christian principalities, Moldavia and Walachia, secretly agree to help fight Turkey. Moldavia revolts but Walachia reneges. Cornered and sure to be massacred, Peter is amazed to get off by abandoning Azov, Taganrog, and Poland and making peace with Charles. Charles foments four bloodless wars in 1712-13 before Peter withdraws for good from the South.

Chapter 43, "The German Campaign and Frederick William," follows Peter and Catherine north for the exhausted Tsar to "take the cure" in Carlsbad and witness his son Alexis' marriage to Princess Charlotte. He engages the philosopher Gottfried von Leibniz to oversee educational, legal, and administrative reforms. Peter wants peace with Sweden and its Council agrees, but Charles forbids it. Heading home via Berlin, he meets Prussia's King Frederick I and son Frederick William, who soon succeeds Frederick I.

Chapter 44, "The Coast of Finland," examines the naval battles that follow the frustrating allied fight against Swedish forces in Europe. Peter uses his new Baltic fleet to expel the Swedes from Finland. Unable to compete in new "ship-of-the-line" warships with Britain or Sweden, Peter builds rowed galleys that can sail close to shore and swarm the larger ships. They conquer coastal Finland in one summer, seize ten ships off Cape Hangö, and invade the Aland Islands. Peter accelerates his shipbuilding.

Chapter 45, "The Kalabalik," returns to Turkey in 1713 bitter Charles' welcome ends. The "tumult" is a staged battle until Charles overreacts. Flushed out with fire and held in Adrianople for 20 months, during which Russia and Turkey conclude peace, Charles



then races to Swedish Pomerania to resume the fight. Only after taking Danish Rügen does Charles go home to Sweden, 15 years after leaving.

Chapter 46, "Venice of the North," looks at St. Petersburg's rapid growth after 1709. Without decree, it becomes the seat of government. The city expands from Petrograd Island to the mainland and downstream to Vasilevsky Island, Menshikov's domain, whose spacious palace is where Peter entertains. Government buildings and mansions, including Peter's, rise on the south bank. Upstream rises the Summer Palace, divided to suite Peter and Catherine's different tastes. The Parisian architect LeBlond adds to the landscape great fountains and designs Peter's summer homes including Peterhof and Peter's favorite, the tranquil Dutch-style Mon Plaisir. Chapter 47, "An Ambassador Reports," briefly shows life in this new milieu, chiefly through the eyes of Friedrich Christian Weber of Hanover. He writes colorfully about dwarfs, religious rites, bath houses, sports, and drinking.



Part 4, On the European Stage, Chapters 48-52

Part 4, On the European Stage, Chapters 48-52 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 48, "The Second Journey West," covers Peter's travels in 1716-17 as a victorious, influential monarch. It has three goals: 1) to recover his health, 2) to witness his niece Catherine's wedding, and 3) to bolster his allies' support for an invasion of Sweden at Scania to force Charles to make peace. The marriage pleases Peter but the prospects of a Russian military presence in Mecklenburg worry the allies and cause procrastination that makes Peter unilaterally call off the campaign. To spare Catherine a winter trip home, Peter goes ahead of her to Holland. She gives birth but the baby dies the next day; Catherine reaches Amsterdam to find Peter in bed with fever. When he recovers, Peter shows Catherine the sights and plans a trip to Paris.

Chapter 49, "The King Is a Mighty Man...," looks at Peter's visit to France, first describing the difficult succession from Louis XIV to his five-year-old great grandson, Louis XV. Philippe, Duc d'Orléans, is Regent and Abbé Guillaume Dubois controls foreign policy, whose cornerstone is friendship with England. When Dubois blocks a dynastic marriage with Russia, Peter goes to meet the Regent. The French first impressions of Peter are irresolute, haughty, and uncivil, and he astonishes them by lifting their little boy King in the air, hugging and kissing him when they meet. Chapter 50, "A Visitor in Paris," describes Paris in 1717, largely in terms of what a modern tourist would expect, following Peter's headlong pace, oblivious to majesty, curious about everything. Peter gets on well with the aristocracy, although etiquette gets in the way of some meetings. He treats the Boy-King with affection and respect. After six weeks, Peter bids the Regent farewell, and then the King, informally. San-Simon compares Peter favorably with the late Sun King. The visit, however, bears no diplomatic fruit, as Dubois is determined to ally with England and George I hates Peter.

Chapter 51, "The Education of an Heir," brings Peter home to straighten out a governmental mess and confronting Tsarevich Alexis with his duty. Alexis' history is detailed: ignored by his busy father, educated better than Peter, leaning toward the spiritual life more than war and duty. Peter sends him West for a bride with whom he spends little time as he grows into a sickly drunk. In 1715, Charlotte dies after giving birth to a son, Peter, shortly before Catherine bears another Peter. Chapter 52, "A Paternal Ultimatum," portrays the crisis. Alexis avoids military affairs and dreads his father, whose opponents focus hope on Alexis restoring the old ways. Alexis' advisor, Alexander Kikin, advises him to flee abroad as Peter demands that Alexis learn the art of war in order to rule well or not succeed him. Alexis' request to be excluded seems too quick, so Peter writes again: join him or become a monk. Alexis begs six months to

decide while Peter tours Europe. As the deadline passes, Peter orders Alexis to Copenhagen, and on Kikin's advice, Alexis heads West, but diverts to asylum in Austria.



Part 4, On the European Stage, Chapters 53-57

Part 4, On the European Stage, Chapters 53-57 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 53, "Flight of the Tsarevich," shows Alexis and Afrosinia hidden by his brother-in-law Emperor Charles VI in remote Tyrol, incognito and heavily guarded. Shamed by this scandal on the verge of seeing Paris, Peter orders Alexis found. Confronted with evidence of his whereabouts and a letter from Peter asking help, Charles moves Alexis to Naples, whence Alexis writes to senators and clergy in Russia about why he has fled. Through Peter Tolstoy, Charles is reminded of the danger of harboring Alexis, who in writing is promised paternal forgiveness. Alexis quakes with fear but gives in when Tolstoy says surrendering is the only way to keep and marry Afrosina. Convinced, Alexis departs, assuring Charles that it is voluntary and, once inside Russian territory, is held to face his father.

Chapter 54, "The Future on Trial," shows Alexis formally denounced but promised forgiveness on condition that he name his accomplices. Two-year-old Peter Petrovich is named heir and all must swear allegiance. Menshikov arrests and questions everyone whom Alexis names, including Kikin, Dolgoruky, and Apraxin, and the net widens to encompass Bp. Dositheus of Rostov, Peter's half-sister Maria, and ex-wife Eudoxia. Peter leads the inquisition that ends in executions and exiles. Peter cannot leave Alexis as a future rallying point and when Afrosina provides proof of treason, orders ecclesiastical and secular trials, presents the accusations and authorizes torture. Alexis is broken, confesses he has wished his father dead, is condemned to death, but dies before the sentence can be carried out. Peter makes no false show of grief and forbids mourning clothing at the royal funeral. Such dynastic tragedies are commonplace and this one shows that opposition to Peter and his reforms had been significant.

Chapter 55, "Charles' Last Offensive," shows the Swedish king's two years at Malmö waiting to see what Peter will do. Though his people long for peace, Charles drafts new forces and raises taxes, aided by Baron Georg Heinrich von Goertz, who becomes his voice if not his brain. Goertz rallies Sweden's enemies, all of whom are apprehensive about Peter's power. Goertz opens negotiations with Peter based on conditions that he knows Charles will reject and that worry England and Denmark. Talks are held in the Aland Islands. Without royal authorization, Goertz offers to cede territory in exchange for an alliance to conquer Norway and territories in Germany. The Russians agree to covert assistance only. Charles refuses to relinquish areas won by "unjust war." Goertz goes to consult Charles, is arrested, and ten days later Charles dies in Norway. Swedes do not mourn.

Chapter 56, "King George Enters the Baltic," describes Charles' sister Ulrika taking the throne and ordering Goertz beheaded, leaving Sweden in a vacuum. As stubborn peace



negotiations resume, William I of England, who has been sending the fleet every summer to advance the interests of Hanover, reverses alliances to thwart Russian mastery of the Baltic. Only Fredrick William of Prussia stands by Peter. The British fleet postures to "support mediation" that Peter does not want. Chapter 57, "Victory," shows Ulrika abdicating in favor of her husband, Frederick of Hesse, who asks the British to keep Peter's galleys out of his waters. Britons reject a war against Russia and as British subsidies end, Sweden has to make peace. As talks languish, Peter orders another successful amphibious attack. Finally, Livonia is ceded "in perpetuity" along with Karelia. Peter is exuberant and Russia celebrates. The Russian Senate gives Peter the epithet "The Great" and the title "Emperor and Father of His Country."



Part 5, The New Russia, Chapters 58-63 and Epilogue

Part 5, The New Russia, Chapters 58-63 and Epilogue Summary and Analysis

Chapter 58, "In the Service of the State," looks at Peter's achievements vis-a-vis his father's and the major efforts he makes in domestic matters after Poltava. During the war, Peter keeps Muscovite forms of governing and decentralizes administration to maximize tax collection and recruiting. He creates a Senate to rule in his absence and turn his hasty ideas into legislation. When Senators prove difficult to control and motivate, Peter creates oversight and moves executive functions to Western-style "colleges" run by foreign experts. As he grows older, Peter appreciates that laws and institutions cannot function when arbitrarily controlled from above. Peter demands that all Russians competently serve the state in the army, navy, or civil service, and rise only by merit. He ends primogeniture to keep estates intact. He tries to compel honesty through anonymous tips and professional informers, and makes example of top men found embezzling. Menshkov, the worst offender, is untouchable as Peter's friend, although Peter several times fines him when he becomes too flagrant. Restored, Menshikov hides behind Catherine. Peter pulls upward while millions pull down.

Chapter 59, "Commerce by Decree," looks at Peter's efforts to raise Russian life to the level of the West and to end dependence on imports. He has to break down the nobility's disdain for trade and all Russians' backwardness. Peter uses trial-and-error to push reforms and uses foreigners as intermediaries. Peter diverts shipping from Archangel to St. Petersburg and Riga, begins building a merchant marine, and envisages linking the Volga and Don by canals, and later all of European Russia. To pay for all of this, Peter shifts from taxing commodities to taxing "souls," which serves to bind serfs to landowners as never before. Industry, too, has its serfs.

Chapter 60, "Supreme Under God," examines Peter's belief in God and his reasonable, practical approach to religion. He tolerates non-Orthodox forms to attract foreign workers and the Old Believers because they do good work in remote areas. Only the politically-active Jesuits does he exclude. Despite the hopes of Western churches, Peter has no interest in conversion or union. Wanting the church to be useful to society, Peter demands that the clergy be trained, purges superstition and hoaxes, and restricts the monasteries. Peter is too busy in 1700, to care about a successor for Patriarch Adrian, fires one Guardian Exarch, Stephen Yavorsky, for favoring Tsarevich Alexis in a sermon, and settles on learned, sycophantic, reformist Feofan Prokopovich, to hold the interim role permanently. Peter adopts the synodal mode of government that he has seen in Europe, embodied in his Ecclesiastical Regulation in 1721. The new arrangement makes the church subservient to the state but meets no opposition, because it leaves alone ritual and dogma.



Chapter 61, "The Emperor in St. Petersburg," looks at Peter's everyday life late in his reign, his simple appetites, hasty temper, which only Catherine alone can control, his concern about retired lieutenants, joy in working with his hands and sailing. In 1719, both parents are devastated when the young heir to the throne, Peter, dies and the question of succession returns. Anne and Elizabeth, both adolescents, are ripe for dynastic marriages. Peter institutes "assemblies" on the model of the Paris salons, which hastens acceptance of Western fashions. His 1716-17 visit to the West produces the nucleus of the Museum of the Academy of Science and a lifetime of collecting books begins its library. Russia has to import academicians and students, but Peter is looking to the future.

Chapter 62, "Along the Caspian," shows Peter's new interest in Persia as a gate to India. The first mission to the Muslim Khans is massacred, but the young Shah, fearing the Turks, seems amiable. A commercial treaty is arranged, but a Persian raid on Shemaha occasions a Russian military reprisal. Peter and Catherine follow by water to Astrakhan, Derbent, and Baku. Only in this last town is there opposition. To avoid another Pruth, Peter withdraws and orders the army home to replenish, ending his last campaign. Next summer, Baku is captured.

Chapter 63, "Twilight," completes Peter's story. Leaving Moscow after a last pre-Lenten Carnival, Peter often drinks mineral water and exercises on doctors' orders. His plans to marry one of his daughters to the French nobility is thwarted. Anne marries but dies shortly after giving birth to the future Peter III. With Alexis' son Peter the only remaining male Romanov, Peter changes the law to allow each Tsar to name his/her successor, and crowns Catherine, leaving her powers unspecified. A corruption scandal causes a rift, but Peter and Catherine reconcile a month before he dies in agony of gangrene praying that God will forgive his sins for the good he has tried to do.

The Epilogue shows Catherine's accession and reliance on Menshikov and the new Supreme Privy Council until she dies in January 1727 and is succeeded by Peter II, who soon strips proud, powerful Menshikov of his offices and exiles him. Peter II abandons St. Petersburg for Moscow before dying 11 Jan. 1730, with no named successor. The throne goes to Ivan V's second daughter, Anne. When she dies in 1740, her elder sister's infant grandson becomes Ivan VI until he is deposed by Elizabeth, Peter the Great's "frivolous" daughter, who rules for 21 years, followed briefly by Peter II, and then for 34 years by Catherine the Great. Historians argue about Peter, but as a force of nature, he is beyond judgment.



Characters

Tsar Peter the Great

The subject of Robert Massie's massive biography, Peter the Great is the son of Tsar Alexis and his second wife, Natalya Naryshkina. Alexis' first wife leaves two live sons, but they are for physical reasons unlikely candidates for the throne. When grown, Peter stands an impressive six foot seven inches tall, with an angular body, slim shoulders, long arms and hands, calloused hands, a round, almost-handsome face with a small mustache and long, straight, auburn hair. He is a man of titanic energy, unable to sit still. He suffers a mortifying nerve disorder that ranges from a small tic to full convulsions (falling short of grand-mal epilepsy). At an early age he sees his relatives brutally slaughtered before his eyes, an image that never leaves him and inspires him to destroy the perpetrators, the Streltsy guards.

Reluctantly accepting popular acclamation as Tsar following his half-brother Fedor III's death, Peter, through his half-sister Sophia's machinations, soon finds himself jointly reigning with the chronically ill Ivan V. He spends his time at Alexis' hunting lodge, Preobrazhenskoe, learning military tactics through mock wars in which he always remains at a low rank. Peter frequents the German Suburb, gaining experience in European lifestyles. The discovery of a boat leads to one of the great passions of his life: seamanship and shipbuilding. He is less attracted to his obligation to marry and sire a successor. Eudoxia is his mother's idea, soon regretted. They are quickly estranged, but a Tsarevich, Alexis, is born.

Yearning for the sea, Peter begins visiting the far-north port at Archangel and contemplates entering the Black Sea, the Ottoman Sultan's private lake. He orders the construction of shipbuilding facilities at Voronezh, working with his own hands to build warships. Twice he attacks the Turkish fortress at Azov, builds a harbor, and dispatches a warship on a diplomatic mission to Constantinople. Determined to learn the crafts of the West (particularly Holland), Peter sends a "Great Embassy" to Europe, traveling himself incognito as Peter Mikhailov. Peter observes everything, asks questions, collects interesting objects, and recruits experts to build a new Russia. He also spends time in London but avoids Louis XIV's France.

Back home, Peter sends Eudoxia to a convent, freeing himself to remarry, and turns to another traditional enemy, Sweden, allied with Augustus II of Poland, beginning a war that lasts 20 years. Initial confrontations show the Russian army ill-trained and equipped, so Peter begins drafting men and raising grinding taxes. He moves shipbuilding to Lake Ladoga, defeats Swedish fleets, and moves down the Neva River to claim the marshy delta, where he builds a new capital, St. Petersburg. War and rebellion in the south continue, but victories shift toward the Russians. Peter's scorched earth policy and the worst winter in memory set up the Swedish defeat at Poltava, a victory that allows Peter to concentrate on his domestic reforms of government bureaucracy, commerce, and the church .



As the Great Northern War sputters on, Peter revisits Europe, including France, looking for allies in the shifting political situation. The long battle of wills between Peter and his heir, Alexis, comes to a head. The Tsarevich flees to Austria, is found, and returned to face trial. Obsessed about traitors, Peter tortures from Alexis' companions enough evidence to condemn his son to torture and death. Alexis dies before the sentence can be executed, having begged his father's forgiveness and blessing. Peter makes one last campaign, south to the Caspian Sea, which he fails to master as a road to India. Physically an old man at age 52, largely thanks to a lifetime of heavy drinking, Peter crowns his second wife Elizabeth as Empress, with the assumption that she will succeed him. He dies in agony of gangrene, begging God's forgiveness of his many sins in recognition of all of the good he has tried to do for Russia.

Tsarevna Sophia Alexaeвна

Peter the Great's half-sister, Sophia serves as Regent for her full brother, Tsar Fedor III during his brief reign (1674-82) and then for Peter and Ivan V during their joint reign. Sophia is born in 1657 and spends her early childhood in the "terem" among the female relatives of Tsar Alexis who are forbidden ever to marry. Always exceptional, Sophia persuades Alexis to let her share the thorough, classical education afforded Fedor at the hands of the famous theological scholar Simeon Polotsky of Kiev and his assistant Sylvester Medvedev.

During Fedor's death, Sophia emerges from the terem, attends council meetings, and discovers the strength of her intellect. Only her sex prevents her from being the Autocrat. Sofia genuinely mourns her brother's death and fears a Naryshkin restoration if the crown goes to her half-brother Peter. She and the new Regent, her step-mother Tsaritsa Natalya, dislike one another and Sophia suggests to Patriarch Joachim that the under-aged half-brothers rule jointly. A dramatic exhibition of grief/rage at Fedor's funeral wins her case.

Aged 25 when she becomes Regent for seven years before being stripped of her powers, Sophia is likely not as hideous as the Marquis de Béthune describes, but is, in his words, "shrewd, subtle, unprejudiced and full of policy." She follows Machiavelli's maxims without reading them. Eventually Sophia takes on the title of Autocrat, making herself while uncrowned the joint tsars' equal, but her siding with the Streltsy leads to her downfall. Sophia is exiled to Novodevichy Convent, where she lives in comfort rather than monastic simplicity. When letters turn up during the inquest over the Streltsy rebellion of 1698, purportedly from Sophia, she is questioned by her brother, denies involvement, but is tonsured as the Nun Susanna and cloistered for life. She dies in 1704 at age 47.

Alexander Danilovich Menshikov

Peter the Great's closest friend, Menshikov rises from lowly beginning along with Peter's second wife, Catherine, to become Peter's "mightiest satrap," field marshal, First



Senator, a "Serene Highness," and a prince. He alone absolutely can "speak for the Tsar." Menshikov has a high-domed forehead, blue-green eyes, a strong nose, a pencil-thin mustache, and an enigmatic smile. He dresses in Western fashion including a white wig, and wears along with the Order of St. Andrew various foreign medals. He is clever, powerful, and unforgiving.

Born in 1673, the son of a Lithuanian peasant (or soldier), Menshikov enters the service of Lefort, through whom he becomes one of the first play soldiers at Preobrazhenskoe. He fights as a sergeant at Azov and goes on the Great Embassy as Peter's orderly. In Holland he studies shipbuilding. Menshikov takes an enthusiastic part in the Jolly Company and in the execution of the Streltsy. Despite many detractors, Menshikov continues to rise by knowing how to anticipate Peter's commands and moods and accept his violence. In 1700, Menshikov shows a talent for military command and serves as Peter's lieutenant. He is named governor of the captured fortress of Nöteborg-Schlüsselberg and is responsible for building one of the six bastions of the Peter and Paul Fortress in St. Petersburg. He then becomes Governor General of Karelia, Ingria, and Estonia.

Menshikov falls in love with the beautiful Darya Anseneeva, who becomes his wife in 1706, when Peter insists on regularizing their situation. After Francis Lefort's death, Menshikov becomes Peter's closest friend and confidant, but makes many envious enemies and several times nearly destroys himself by avarice. Menshikov virtually controls the Empress Catherine during her short reign as Peter's successor but is stripped of offices and honors and exiled by young, old-fashioned Peter II.

King Charles XII

Ten years younger than Peter the Great, King Charles XII of Sweden is Peter's most implacable foreign adversary. The son of stern Charles XI and Queen Ulrika Eleonora, a Danish princess, Charles is a frail youth who applies himself to "rough, masculine activity," picking up his father's mannerisms and belief in the primacy of honor. He most enjoys history, biography, the Bible, and practical mathematics (ballistics). His weakness is always his obstinacy.

Charles VII's education ends at age 14, when he becomes King under a regency council, which is soon eliminated. Charles crowns himself, continues his father's unpopular "reduction" policy, and eliminates the argumentative council. Charles enjoys outdoor activities that include the thrill of danger, including military games like Peter's at Preobrazhenskoe. Growing up with no female contact, Charles remains indifferent to marriage and cold. Swedes are scandalized by stories of reckless pranks with his cousin Frederick IV, Duke of Holstein-Gottorp when the latter comes to marry Charles' sister Hedwig Sophia. Charles amends and becomes a teetotaler.

Charles VII is 18 when his cousins, Augustus II and Frederick of Denmark, begin what he considers an unjust war. Depending on God, Charles vows to finish one off and then talk with the other—not knowing that Peter is allied with them. When he leaves



Stockholm on 13 Apr. 1700, to join the Anglo-Dutch and Swedish battle fleet, Charles does not realize he will never see the city again. Charles' leading commander is Field Marshal Carl Gustav Rehnskjold. After the loss of Dorpat and Narva in 1704, Charles still believes that he will beat Peter, but is concerned that Poland, despite defeats, has not deposed Augustus II, and vows that the Poles will join him or be annihilated. When the Polish Diet deposes Augustus and installs a puppet, Stanislaus Leszczynski, on the throne, Charles, to gain compliance, bloodlessly invades Saxony and recruits German Protestants for a long march across Europe, forging rivers and enduring hunger as Russian scorched earth policies deprive him of food.

Sending for supplies adequate for a march on Moscow, Charles loses time and at Tatarsk decides to go to Severia to replenish and await Gen. Lewenhaupt. This is the beginning of disaster. On his 27th birthday, 17 Jun. 1709, Charles suffers his first significant battle injury, a shattered left foot, refuses amputation, and for months is laid up with fever, near death. Swedish morale plummets. Unable to supervise at Poltava, he watches his greatest defeat. He flees to Turkish territory, where he conspires to keep Turkey at war with Russia. He blames himself for Peter escaping at the Pruth, for he would have seen the situation clearly had he gone along as an observer; without his experience, the Turks bungle it.

Charles remains in the Ottoman Empire as a sacred guest for nearly five years, until the "Kalabalik" (tumult), which Charles' love of battle provokes, and then in Adrianople until peace comes to Europe. He is sent home, incognito, nearly 1,300 miles, reaching Swedish soil at Stralsund for the first time in 15 years. Against the popular will, Charles resumes drafting and training. While campaigning in Norway, Charles is shot through the head while exposing himself to get a better view of the fighting. His older sister succeeds him and is eventually forced to make peace with Peter.

Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich

The second Tsar of the Romanov dynasty and father of Peter the Great, Alexis is to his subjects semi-divine but as a person is unassuming, quiet, gentle, and the most pious of the tsars. He reigns from 1645 (age 16) until 1676 (age 47). He is tall, well-built, round-faced, and fully bearded. He leads a monk's life of prayer and fasting (eight months out of the year in total) while his courtiers eat gargantuan meals. He loves to hear stories and engage in falconry. Alexis' first wife of 21 years, Maria Miloslavskaya, dies in 1669, giving birth to her 14th child. His two surviving boys are feeble and unlikely successors to the throne.

Alexis remarries at age 41 in 1671, to the ward of his minister and friend, Artemon Matveev, and Tsaritsa Natalya Naryshkina's relatives displace the Miloslavky clan at court, creating an explosive situation when Alexis dies on 8 Feb. 1676 at age 47. Marriage to Natalya revives Alexis' spirit and delights and softens him. The last years of his life are the happiest. Alexis' conflict with the powerful Patriarch Nikon influences Peter's decision to eliminate the Patriarchate in later years.



Tsarevich Alexis Petrovich

Peter the Great's son by Eudoxia, Alexis is born in 1690, when Peter is barely 18. Alexis sees little of his busy father, and at age eight is wrenched from his mother's arms when she is ordered to the convent. He is moved to Preobrazhenskoe, put in care of his Aunt Natalya, and educated by Heinrich von Huyssen in French, German, Latin, mathematics, history, geography, and the Bible. Alexis makes good progress in his studies while showing a penchant for spiritual matters. Peter's favorite, the cruel Alexander Menshikov is named Alexis' governor in 1705, to train him for the throne. Alexis later blames Menshikov for many of his failings, including alcoholism.

Peter is a hard man to follow and Alexis' character has formed when Peter finally summons Alexis to his side. He cannot share Peter's sense of duty or mission and is slow and defeatist when ordered to fortify Moscow for war. Instead, he enjoys the holy places of history and legend. The Miloslavskys and Lopukhins hope that Alexis as Tsar will restore the old ways. In 1706, Alexis visits his mother in the convent; when his father learns of it forbids any repetitions. With his confessor, Fr. Jacob Ignatiev, Alexis forms a "company" like his fathers to exchange ideas and carouse. After the victory at Poltava, Alexis hosts celebrations in Moscow.

Peter then decides that Alexis must have a Western education and a Western bride. For both he turns to Saxony. Alexis gets along well with Princess Charlotte and studies in Dresden until the wedding. He smuggles in Ignatiev, disguised as a peasant for confession and drinking. The couple marries in 1711, and Alexis is quickly taken away to help in the Swedish war. Charlotte is commanded alone to St. Petersburg and, once united with Alexis, finds him abusive and frequently absent. He takes a lover, Afrosina, a Finnish girl, whom he installs in his half of the shared house. Peter upbraids his son to no avail. Constantly drunk, Alexis health deteriorates. He is fond of his first daughter and dutifully impregnates Charlotte again to obtain a son and heir, Peter. Charlotte dies days later, happy that her torment is over. Shortly after her funeral, Peter's wife Catherine gives birth to another Peter.

Before his second visit to Europe, Peter demands that Alexis decide between accepting his role as Tsarevich or become a monk. Alexis postpones the decision, living in luxury, and when a new demand arrives, flees with Afrosina to Austria, where he is hidden by his brother-in-law, the Emperor. Peter mounts a successful search, demands the young man's return, and has Peter Tolstoy lie about his unconditional forgiveness. Alexis heads home, only to be arrested at the border. Peter orders ecclesiastical and civil trials for treason, torturing information from accomplices whom Alexis names, and is condemned to torture and death. Alexis dies before the sentence can be carried out, begging his tearful father's forgiveness. Alexis is given a royal funeral but is little mourned except by those who see him as the failed hope of restoring the old Muscovite ways.



Fedor Matveevich Apraxin

Descended from an old boyar family, the brother of Tsar Fedor V's widow is a bluff, proud, hearty, blue-eyed man. He serves Peter the Great as a general, governor, senator, and as Russia's first Admiral. Apraxin goes to Amsterdam in 1697, as part of the Great Embassy. He leads the fight for Vyborg (1710), the naval campaign of 1713-14, including the Battle of Hangö, and the Baltic campaign of 1719-21. A recipient of the coveted Order of St. Andrew, Apraxin blots his reputation by corruption charges but survives.

Augustus II

Simultaneously Elector of Saxony and, thanks to Peter the Great's support, King of Poland, Augustus becomes a pawn in the Great Northern War fought between Peter and Sweden's Charles XII, a war Augustus suggests to Peter at their first meeting in Rawa in 1698. Augustus is known for "duplicity and chicanery." He converts to Catholicism to rule Poland, but retains his philandering ways, fathering 354 bastards. Like Peter, Augustus is a "bluff, hearty, fun-loving" young man.

Charles dethrones Augustus in 1704, but he is reinstated in 1709, an act that is confirmed by Sweden only in 1720. While deposed, Augustus flees to Russia and is given command of the army at Grodno, further confusing the contentious command structure. Seeing an opportunity to regain Warsaw, Augustus leaves his post. When diplomacy fails to obtain Augustus' abdication, Charles invades Augustus' hereditary dominion, Saxony. Augustus' family scatters in fear, but the Saxon Governing Council capitulates without a fight. The Treaty of Altranstadt (1706) allows Augustus to keep his honorary title of king, but not to call himself King of Poland. Augustus tries to keep credibility in both camps, assuring Peter that his abdication is temporary but confirming it in writing to Charles.

Empress Catherine I

Born Martha Skavronskaya in Dorpat, Lithuania (several versions of her early life are given) Catherine is captured by Boris Sheremetev 1702, and becomes an intimate (probably non-sexual) of Alexander Menshikov, who himself is rising from obscurity to become Peter the Great's best friend. Catherine is introduced to Peter in 1703 as his affair with Anna Mons is ending. She is described as "a sturdy, healthy, appealing girl in the full bloom of youth, although not a "classic beauty. She has velvet black eyes, thick blond hair (later dyed black), sun-tanned skin, and a "full, womanly bosom." Soon Catherine is traveling with Menshikov's lover, Darya Arseneva while the menfolk are fighting wars. Catherine begins bearing Peter's children in 1705, only two of whom survive to adulthood.

Peter consents to marry Catherine, quietly in 1711 and with full pomp in 1712. She keeps up with Peter's pace like no one else can and is able to get him out of his moods



by offering him total, uncritical love. Where Peter prefers a simple life, Catherine enjoys "ornamental pomp." At the same time, she frequently travels with him, enduring all of the torments 18th-century travel and army camp life entail and corresponds with him when he travels alone. The royal couple is understanding of the other's sexual exploits, which do not affect their relationship. Catherine accedes to the Russian throne in 1725 upon Peter's death and reigns, heavily influenced by Menshikov, until her own death in 1727.

Tsar Fedor III Alexeevich

Peter the Great's oldest half-brother, Fedor rules Russia from his father's death in 1674 until his own in 1682. Born to Tsar Alexis' first wife, Maria Miloslavskaya, Fedor is a semi-invalid but formally recognized as heir in 1674. His delicate constitution contrasts with his half-brother Peter's robust health. Fedor and his sister Sophia receive a thorough classical education at the hands of famous theological scholars from Kiev. During his brief reign, Fedor is like his father, mild-mannered, indulgent, and educated. He abolishes the medieval system of precedence, allowing people to rise in government and the military by merit not birth. Fedor marries twice but dies without an heir.

Prince Vasily Vasilievich Golitsyn

The Regent Sophia's principle advisor, minister, comforter, and eventually lover, Golitsyn is a scion of an ancient aristocratic house, more Western in outlook than Artemon Matveev, an experienced statesman, lover of the arts, and cosmopolitan political visionary. He admires France's King Louis XIV and wants to send young Russians to study in the West. Born in 1643 and educated in theology, history, and languages, Golitsyn lives in style in Moscow. He is married with grown children when at age 39 he meets the young Sophia and begins providing her ideas, which she puts into practice. Sophia names Golitsyn head of the Foreign Office and within two years Keeper of the Great Seal—in effect, Prime Minister. Obtaining the return of Kiev from Poland in 1686 is the diplomatic highpoint of the Regency period. Golitsyn commands the Russian armies seeking to clear the Crimea of Tatar forces in 1687 and 1689. Both times he fails but Sophia honors him as a hero. Enmity between Golitsyn and the boyars grows. Peter publicly rebuffs Golitsyn but accepts Shaklovity's statement that Golitsyn is not involved in a plot against the Tsar's life. At age 46, Golitsyn begins a wretched 25-year exile in the Arctic, dying in 1714 at age 71.

Count Fedor Alexeevich Golovin

One of Peter the Great's closest companions, Golovin is Russia's most experienced diplomat, having negotiated the Treaty of Nerchinsk with China. He joins Peter's "Jolly Company," takes part in the Azov campaign (1695), and is an official ambassador during the Great Embassy. He becomes Governor-General of Siberia. In 1702, Golovin is created a Count of the Holy Roman Empire and becomes Peter's de facto prime



minister. Golovin is awarded the Order of St. Andrew for his bravery at the Battle of Narva. He succeeds Francis Lefort as General-Admiral and serves as Chancellor before dying in 1706 at age 55.

Gen. Patrick Gordon

Born into an illustrious, fiercely Catholic family in 1635 in the Scottish Highlands, Gordon goes abroad after Cromwell's victory in the English Civil War. He studies at a Jesuit college in Brandenburg before joining the Swedish army and serving with distinction. After changing sides in the Swedish-Polish wars five times, Gordon is recruited by the Russians and never allowed to go home. He settles into Moscow life, marries a Russian woman, and rises to the rank of general. He is the preeminent foreign soldier in the German Suburb in Peter the Great's youth and becomes his intimate friend, counselor and ablest soldier. After taking part in the Azov campaigns (1695-96) and putting down the Streltsy uprising (1698), Gordon feels himself weakening in 1699. Peter stands at his deathbed, closes his eyes, and buries provides a state funeral. Gordon would have proved invaluable in the coming war with Sweden and might have prevented the disaster at Narva.

Tsar Ivan V Alexeevich

Peter the Great's half-brother with whom he reigns as co-tsar until Ivan's death in 1696. Ivan is happy to let Peter rule, while Peter prefers to self-educate himself away from the Kremlin. Ivan's granddaughter Anne is eventually one of Peter's successors.

Patriarch Joachim

The head of the Russian Orthodox Church at the time of the Tsar Fedor's death and the controversy over succession, Joachim suggests a popular acclamation over the idea of joint rule. Muscovites favor Peter over the sickly Ivan. When the Streltsy swarm the Kremlin in bloody revolt, Joachim is powerless to convince them that rumors of Fedor and Ivan's murders are unfounded and then accepts the Streltsy demand for co-tsars.

Joachim succeeds the mighty Patriarch Nikon after he is deposed in 1666 and immediately declares subordination to the secular power. During the 1689 Streltsy crisis, the Regent Sophia asks Joachim to go to the Troitsky Monastery, where Peter has sought refuge, to seek a reconciliation. Once there, Joachim sides with Peter. From a boyar background, Joachim dislikes Sophia and Golitsyn for their Western manners and detests Medvedev. When Sophia is overthrown, Joachim is at Natalya Naryshkina's side in the ad hoc government, pushing to exclude foreigners and foreign ways, expelling the Jesuits, censoring mail, and criticizing Peter's behavior. Joachim's death on 17 March 1689 liberates Peter.



Francis Lefort

One of Peter the Great's closest companions, Lefort is born in Geneva in 1656, the son of a prosperous merchant. Disliking that line of work, Lefort joins the Dutch Protestant armies fighting French King Louis XIV and at age 19 heads to Archangel to seek opportunity in Russia. He lives for two years unemployed in the German Suburb of Moscow before marrying a cousin of Gen. Patrick Gordon and becoming a captain in the Russian army. He serves under Golitsyn on the two Crimean campaigns and is with Gordon pledging loyalty to Peter during the Streltsy crisis. He is promoted to major general after Sophia's fall.

Lefort's love of talking about the West captivates Peter and they spend much time together. Lefort is able to restrain Peter physically when he lashes out in anger at people or things. In Lefort's home, Peter sees what women are like outside the terem, learns to smoke, drink, and carouse. Always a heavy drinker as part of Peter's Jolly Company, Lefort is able to keep his senses but dies young at age 43. Lefort takes part in the Azov campaigns (1695-96) and both suggests and heads the Great Embassy as Governor-General of Novgorod and General-Admiral. Learning of Lefort's death while at Voronezh, Peter hurries to Moscow and takes charge of the funeral at the Reformed Chapel personally. Lefort's passing leaves "an enormous gap in Peter's personal life." He keeps Lefort's nephew and steward, Peter, in his service and summons his son Henry. In time, Menshikov steps into Lefort's shoes as confident.

Eudoxia Fedorovna Lopukhina

Peter the Great's first wife and the mother of Tsarevich Alexis Petrovich and two sons who die in childhood, Eudoxia is chosen for Peter by his mother, who soon realizes her mistake. Peter never cares for the simple, pious girl three years his senior and quickly begins to ignore her. Peter abandons Eudoxia for the beautiful Anna Mons while she claims in letters to love him deeply. In 1696, Peter from Western Europe begins prodding his relatives to get Eudoxia to withdraw to a monastery—profession as a nun would render all of her connections to the world, including marriage, void, allowing him to remarry. She goes to the Pokrovsky Monastery in Suzdal but lives as a laywoman for ten months before being tonsured as the Nun Helen. Eudoxia endures this only briefly before reverting to the lay estate, living in style, and taking a lover. Later, she is implicated in the plot against Peter by supporters of her son Alexis but escapes torture and execution by pleading to her ex-husband.

King Louis XIV

The powerful monarch of France during Peter the Great's reign, Louis, the "Sun King," reigns 72 years as a demi-god. His presence is overwhelming. He builds on the site of his father's hunting châteaux at Versailles the grand palace that is imitated across Europe, including St. Petersburg. Large enough to house all important French nobles, it helps concentrate power in Louis' hands. Everything is according to protocol. His wife,



Maria Theresa, tolerates his many mistresses and every endures his inconsideration. He is stern and ruthless. Outside France he is considered a brutal and aggressive tyrant. He commands a peacetime army of 150,000, growing to 400,000 in wartime. Peter avoids Paris during the Great Embassy but visits Louis' seven-year-old grandson and successor, Louis XV, whom he lifts in his arms but treats with royal respect.

Artemon Matveev

Tsar Alexis' leading minister and close friend, Matveev rises from the lower classes and takes an unusual interest in Western culture. He marries the daughter of a Scots royalist living in exile in the German Suburb, Mary Hamilton, and together they live like Europeans. Matveev accepts as his ward Natalya Naryshkin to expose his friend's daughter to culture, and introduces Alexis to his second wife. When Alexis dies in 1674, the Miloslavky relatives return to power and Matveev is exiled to Pustozersk above the Arctic Circle. Matveev is restored when Tsar Fedor III marries Martha Apraxina, Matveev's goddaughter, who makes this a condition of marriage. Matveev is brutally murdered in the Streltsy uprising of 1682, permanently scarring the young Tsar Peter the Great's psyche.

Ivan Stepanovich Mazeppa

Chief of the Ukrainian Cossacks who dreams of independence from Russia, Mazeppa is born in 1645, studies at a Jesuit academy (but remains Russian Orthodox), and serves in the court of King Jan Casimir of Poland. Caught in a sexual scandal, Mazeppa flees home and rises through the ranks. Captured on a diplomatic mission to Constantinople, he is taken to Moscow for questioning during Sophia's Regency, and ingratiates himself to her and Vasily Golitsyn, who installs him as Hetman of the Cossacks. Proclaiming loyalty to Peter, Mazeppa receives the Order of St. Andrew. Rank-and-file Cossacks consider him a puppet, but he is already discretely looking for a chance for natural independence.

An arch-conservative, Mazeppa hates Peter's Westernizing policies but remains strictly loyal until Charles XII arrives in the Ukraine, promising to unseat Peter, and Mazeppa risks siding with him. When Peter summons Mazeppa to Starodub to fight Charles, Mazeppa claims to be on his deathbed. Believing him, Peter sends Menshikov to discuss a successor, which panics Mazeppa into joining Charles. Stunned, Peter orders the prevention of the treason spreading. A price is put on Mazeppa's head but he dies of natural causes in Turkey, where he shares exile with Charles.

Anna Mons

Peter the Great's mistress during much of his troubled marriage to Eudoxia Lopukhina, Mons is an "exceedingly beautiful," flaxen-haired German girl, the daughter of a Westphalian wine merchant. She has a bold laugh, flashing eyes, and an "easy-mannered beauty." Francis Lefort has already "conquered" Mons when she meets Peter



in Lefort's home. Peter likes that Mons can hold her own drinking and joking, and they become lovers for 12 years.

Tsaritsa Natalya Naryshkina

Tsar Alexis' second wife and Peter the Great's mother, Natalya is the daughter of Kyril Naryshkin, an obscure landowner of Tatar origins living in Tarus Province. Natalya becomes the ward of his friend, Artemon Matveev, to expose her to Western culture in his household. At 19, the tall, shapely girl with black eyes and long eyelashes attract the attention of the widowed Tsar Alexis and becomes his Tsaritsa. Natalya and her relatives endure political exile during Sophia's Regency and Natalya takes a central role in the ineffective government that follows, while Peter is entertaining himself partying, playing war games, and building ships. She dies on 4 Feb. 1694, plunging Peter into grief. Soon, however, he feels relief at being no longer restricted and held to the old Muscovite traditions.

Prince Fedor Romodanovsky

One of Peter the Great's favorite revelers, large, grim, xenophobic Romodanovsky attaches himself to young Peter after Sophia's downfall out of a limitless sense of devotion. He hates the Streltsy who in 1682, murder his father and relishes revenge in 1689, torturing and killing "like a pitiless avenging angel." Romodanovsky is one of the few noblemen whose beards Peter spares. In the Jolly Company, Romodanovsky is known variously as the "King of Pressburg," "Prince-Caesar," and "Mosk-Tsar," and Peter regularly pretends to be his bondsman and eternal slave, a fiction maintained when Peter is on the battlefield. Romodanovsky serves as the iron-fisted Governor of Moscow and Chief of Police and later as Viceroy of Russia. When he dies in 1717, Romodanovsky's offices pass to his son.

Baron Peter Shafirov

Russia's first baron, Shafirov rises from obscurity, the son of a Jewish convert to Russian Orthodoxy, working like his father as a translator in the foreign office. His knowledge of Latin and skill at drafting diplomatic documents earn promotions ultimately to Vice Chancellor. Shafirov takes part in the Great Embassy. Eventually he has a falling out with Fedor Golovin, but Peter demands that they both continue to serve him. Shafirov has a hot temper but always keeps his word and foreign diplomats respect him.

Count Boris Sheremetev

Twenty years older than Peter the Great, a descendant of an ancient family, Sheremetev is, nevertheless, a proponent of Westernization. He gains diplomatic experience abroad. Sheremetev takes part in the Azov campaigns (1695-96) and after the defeat at Narva, is put in charge of rebuilding the Russian army. After the symbolic



first victory against the Swedes at Erestfer (near Dorpat), Sheremetev is named a field marshal and awarded the Order of St. Andrew. He takes part in the torture and execution of Streltsy following their last revolt (1682). Sheremetev dies in 1719 at age 67, a few years after marrying a cultured widow who had lived in England.

Count Peter Adreevich Tolstoy

Once a supporter of the Regent Sophia, Tolstoy at age 52 becomes the oldest of the Russian students sent by Peter the Great to the West to study shipbuilding. There he also learns languages and appreciates Western culture enough to qualify him to serve as the "shrewd, cool-headed, opportunistic" ambassador to Constantinople. He arrives in 1701 with orders to preserve the truce that enables Peter to wage his Northern War with Sweden. Tolstoy is also to collect useful information about the Ottomans, which is thwarted by the Turks holding him under virtual house arrest. In 1709, Tolstoy prevents a Swedish-Tatar alliance, but in 1710, the combined arguments of Charles XII and the Khan convince the Sultan to declare war on Russia. Tolstoy is sent to the Seven Towers prison whence he is freed only with the Treaty of Adrianople. Tolstoy is entrusted to bring the runaway Tsarevich, Alexis, back from Austria and Italy, and succeeds with subtle lies.

Nikita Zotov

Peter the Great's boyhood tutor, Zotov stays with the grown Tsar, playing the role of "Prince-Pope" in the Drunken Synod revelries, helping torture the Streltsy (1698), and serving as Inspector of Degrees after 1715. Zotov is sometimes criticized for giving Peter an inferior education, but at the time Peter stands third in the succession, so he looks unlikely to be Tsar. Zotov, a kindly man, allows Peter to explore everything that whets his curiosity.



Objects/Places

Archangel

Russia's only outlet to the sea until the founding of St. Petersburg, Archangel is inconveniently distant from Moscow and closed during the long winter. Archangel is situated 30 miles up the North Dvina River from the White Sea. British, Dutch, and German merchants throng it during the hectic open season. Peter the Great sets up shipbuilding in Archangel and spends long periods there. After the establishment of Baltic ports, Archangel declines sharply in importance.

Azov

An ancient Greek colony 15 miles upstream from the Sea of Azov on the Don River, Azov since 1475 is a Turkish fortress guarding against Russian penetration into the Black Sea. It is fortified with towers and walls with two outlying watchtower forts on opposite banks of the river with iron chains stretched between them to prevent galleys from slipping through. Peter the Great's first campaign to seize Azov in 1695 is disastrous but is hailed in Moscow as a victory. The fort is taken from the Ottomans in 1696 and is ceded to Russia in 1699 as part of a 30-year truce. Azov is finally given back to the Ottomans in 1712 when Peter realizes that Russia is not sufficiently powerful to fight on two fronts and his highest priority is peace with Sweden.

The German Suburb

The area northwest of Moscow on the road to Probrazhenskoe, the prosperous German Suburb ("Nemetskaya Sloboda") is where all foreigners are compelled since 1652 to live. An earlier German Suburb founded inside Moscow by Ivan the Terrible is destroyed in the "Time of Troubles" and in Tsar Alexis' day, the Streltsy object to foreigners being allowed to live anywhere that they please. In Peter the Great's day, the population includes Germans, Dutchmen, Englishmen, and Scots in exile after the beheading of King Charles I. French Huguenots also flee there from King Louis XIV. All national, political, and religious factions mingle together. From childhood Peter is curious about the German Suburb but is prevented from visiting too often until the death of Patriarch Joachim in 1690. Thereafter, he virtually lives there, learning to drink, smoke, and carouse, to wear Western clothing, and to pick up a smattering of foreign languages.

Holland

The goal of Peter the Great's Great Embassy in 1697-98, tiny Holland is a great commercial and shipping center. Officially named the seven "United Provinces of the Northern Netherlands," Holland has its capital in Amsterdam. It and Rotterdam occupy the twin mouths of the Rhine River, through which pass most European commerce.



Holland at the time has a near world monopoly on merchant shipping and develops the earliest financial services.

Of particular interest to Peter are the shipyards at Zaandam on the IJ River, producing 350 vessels a year. Peter hears stories about Zaandam while still in Russia and wants to sign up as a tradesman. He is too easily recognized and annoyingly thronged until he is placed in Amsterdam's secure India Company dockyard, where he works for four months. Peter wanders around Amsterdam, examining, questioning, observing, and practicing all that Western science and technology reveal, and he dedicates himself to achieving the same in Russia. Religious tolerance appears to him to be the key to Dutch prosperity. Peter visits Holland again in 1716-17.

The Jolly Company and Drunken Synod (Mock Synod)

A vagabond, itinerant, "motley collection of distinguished graybeards, youthful roisterers and foreign adventurers," the Jolly Company is Peter the Great's favorite companions after the Regent Sophia's downfall and the liberating death of Patriarch Joachim. The Jolly Company numbers 80-200 at any given time. It drops in unannounced at noblemen's houses to party in the Russian style—drink, fall asleep, awake, and drink some more. Peter builds a large hall for his friend and advisor, Francis Lefort, to accommodate parties 2-3 times a week, and pays the bills.

Eventually the spontaneous partying turns into "organized buffoonery and masquerades." Nicknames are given: Romodanovsky is the "King of Pressburg" and "Prince-Caesar," and Peter pretends to be his bondsman and eternal slave. The company expands its parody to the church, forming an "All-Joking, All-Drunken Synod of Fools and Jesters," headed by a Mock Prince-Pope and a hierarchy that worships Bacchus. The Synod is most active and raucous at church feasts, around Lent, and when members marry. Seeing the antics, many Orthodox faithful believe that Peter is the Antichrist. Formation of the Drunken Synod is in part Peter's payback for rejecting his enlightened candidate for Patriarch. To defray criticism, the Drunken Synod comes to parody Roman Catholicism rather than Eastern Orthodoxy. Peter is certain that God is too majestic to be offended by his clownish games.

Moscow

The capital of Russia before Peter founds and moves to St. Petersburg, Moscow is dominated by the golden domes of 1,600 white churches. It is a city the size of London in the 1670s. Its center is the citadel of the Kremlin, a 69-acre city within a city, heavily fortified but not impregnable. It contains three cathedrals, a mighty bell tower, gorgeous palaces, chapels, and hundreds of houses. Moscow overflows into flourishing suburbs surrounded by the estates of great nobles and monasteries. It is a great commercial city, teeming with humanity, often drunk. The densest crowds are in Red Square, a brawling open-air marketplace. Moscow halts at noon for dinner and siesta and locks up



at dusk because brazen criminals rule the night. Moscow is built of wood and sections frequently burn, allowing urban renewal.

The Assumption Cathedral is where tsars are crowned and St. Michael's Cathedral is where they are entombed. Both are designed by Italian architects. The smallest of the three Kremlin cathedrals, Annunciation, is Russian-designed. Forming a fourth side of the square are the bell towers of Ivan the Great, combined with the Patriarch's residence. The five-story Palace of Facets is the official state building where the tsar lives; its top floor houses the "terem," where female royals are cloistered. The throne room is called the "Golden Hall."

Bloody Streltsy revolts and the back-looking culture of Moscow turn Peter against it. His torture and execution of the Streltsy (and other supposed rebels later) leave the city bloody. Peter's "window on the West" takes all of his attention (when not waging war) and in 1712, he officially moves the new Senate there and rarely returns.

Narva

Twice besieged by the forces of Peter the Great, the Baltic fortress of Narva in 1700 projects to Western Europe an image of the mediocrity of the Russian army and makes Swedish King Charles XII feel invincible. A second assault in 1704 routes the Swedes, rehabilitating the Russian image.

The Ottoman Empire

Peter the Great's southern foe, the vast Muslim state controls the Black Sea as the Sultan's private lake and supports the Crimean Tatars who annually raid the Ukraine, dragging off Russians to be sold as Muslim slaves. Hurling back from Vienna by the Polish King Jan Sobieski leading a coalition Christian army, the Ottomans remain friendly with the Russians until 1685, when Russia allies with Poland to regain sovereignty over Kiev. Russians and Turks are thereafter at war in 1687-79, 1695-96 (the Azov campaigns), and (bloodlessly) in 1710-11, 1712, and 1713.

The decade of peace at the start of the 18th century allows Peter to war against Sweden. After the Battle of Poltava, Swedish King Charles XII enjoys Ottoman hospitality while fomenting trouble for Russia. Peter trusts the Christian principalities of Walachia and Moldavia to revolt against the Turks and support him, but they fail and Peter narrowly escapes capture. After the curious Kalabalik, the Sultan insists that Charles depart. During the bloodless wars, Peter's emissaries are cruelly imprisoned in Turkey and by the Treaty of Adrianople, expelled. While in Constantinople under virtual house arrest, Peter Tolstoy, the ambassador, is viewed as a spy seeking to liberate Orthodox Christians in the Empire.



Poland

Russia's vast neighbor to the West, Poland is a staunchly Roman Catholic nation that elects its kings by vote of the Diet (parliament) rather than hereditary descent. In 1685 the Poles seek an alliance with Russia against the Ottoman Empire, relinquishing their claim to Kiev in exchange for a promise to attack the Sultan's vassal, the Khan of the Crimea. Peter sides with Austria to back Augustus II, Elector of Saxony, in seizing the throne after the Diet elects Prince de Conti. Despite its giant but diverse population, Poland is militarily weak and vulnerable. During the Great Northern War between Russia and Sweden, Poland is devastated.

Poltava

A commercial city in the Ukraine located on the Kiev-Kharkov road and the Vorskla River, Poltava in 1709 becomes the site of the great battle in 1709, against Charles XII and his rebel ally, Hetman Mazepa. The rout removes the 20-year threat of Swede, allowing Peter's greatest reforms to proceed.

Preobrazhenskoe

Tsar Alexis' favorite villa and hunting lodge on the Yauza River, three miles northeast of Moscow, Preobrazhenskoe becomes his son, Peter the Great's, refuge during Sophia's Regency. There, the youth stages war games with playmates, honing military skills. The first of Peter's new regiments trains at and is named the Preobrazhensky Regiment. A second, the Semyonovsky Regiment, is named for the nearby village. When Peter represses the second Streltsy rebellion in 1698-99, much of the torture and many of the executions occur at Preobrazhenskoe. Before leaving Moscow for the last time, Peter burns his original home at Preobrazhenskoe, where he had planned the Swedish war. He does it as a symbol of peace going forward.

St. Petersburg

The city that Peter the Great builds on the marshlands at the mouth of the Neva River flowing into the Gulf of Finland and the Baltic Sea, St. Petersburg rises rapidly first as a wooden fortress and town, and then as a Western-style stone city, created at great expense in terms both of money and manpower. Peter calls it paradise, but few subjects—royal or common—want to live there because of the expense and remoteness. Nevertheless, Peter moves the Senate there in 1712, and the Russian Empire thereafter is ruled from the Western-style city of palaces and parks. Late in Peter's reign, the Russian Academy of Sciences and other cultural institutions are founded in St. Petersburg.



Streltsy

The "shaggy, bearded pikemen and musketeers" who guard the Kremlin for generations are Russia's first professional soldiers, vowed to protect the "government." They are like a "collective dumb animal, never quite sure" about their master. Each regiment wears distinctive, vivid colors and carries a firearm in one hand and a halberd (pointed battle axe) in the other. In peacetime, most live with their families in a special quarter of Moscow south of the Kremlin.

In 1682 the Streltsy number 22,000 and serve as sentries, escorts, policemen, and firemen. Many become merchants on the side and grow rich, using their wealth to avoid unwanted military assignments. That year, they accuse their colonels of maltreatment and demand punishment. Given the officers to punish, the Streltsy gain a sense of power and entitlement and, accepting Miloslavsky-fed rumors that Tsar Fedor has been poisoned and Ivan V's rule usurped, the Streltsy assault the palace. They slaughter Peter the Great's Naryshkin relatives in front of his young eyes.

In 1689, acting on rumors that Peter intends to kill Ivan and Sophia, the Streltsy again mobilize, but fail to march on Preobrazhenskoe. Word is sent, however, to the contrary, and Peter flees to the Troitsky Monastery, whence he demands their loyalty. After the first Azov campaign (1695), they are left as unwilling military colonizers. They rise again in 1698, leading to cruel tortures and executions and virtual disbanding. The remnant proves ineffective at the Battle of Navra (1700) and seek refuge at Astrakhan. The Streltsy are officially disbanded in 1708.

Troitsky Monastery

Located 45 miles northeast of Moscow, the "Lavra of St. Sergius under the Blessing of the Holy Trinity," is the holiest place in Russia and the impregnable fortress to which the royal family flees in times of trouble. When rumors that the Streltsy are preparing to march on Preobrazhenskoe, 17-year-old Peter the Great flees by night to Troitsky, where in safety and sanctity, Peter calls on all Streltsy colonels to come and pledge loyalty. The Regent Sophia sends Patriarch Joachim to Troitsky to mediate, but once there, he sides with Peter. Sophia is not received personally, but forced to accept banishment to a convent.

Voronezh

Peter the Great's shipyard on the Don River, 300 miles below Moscow and 500 above the Sea of Azov, Voronezh is established after the Russians' failed first attack on Azov and long remains a building site for war galleys, barges, and sea-going warships, where foreign craftsmen and drafted domestic unskilled workers produce at maximum speed.



Themes

Duty

Duty is the dominant theme in Robert K. Massie's *PETER THE GREAT: HIS LIFE AND WORLD*. Coming to the throne as a ten-year-old co-tsar with his invalid half-brother Ivan V, Peter appears to take his duties lightly, leaving ceremonial matters to Ivan, who enjoys them, and the actual ruling to Ivan's older sister, the Regent Sophia. Peter spends his time at war games and learning about European lifestyles in the German Suburbs of Moscow. He is not only learning to drink, smoke, and carouse but is picking up practical information that he will use to transform his backward domains. He sends young Russians to the West to learn vital trades and accompanies incognito a Great Embassy to Holland and England, where he obtains a shipbuilder's certificate. His companions, with less enthusiasm, study all aspects of seamanship, Peter's passion.

Twenty years of war with Sweden require great sacrifices from the Russian people in taxation and service in the military. Many desert or evade service. Only after the victory at Poltava can Peter begin systematic reforms, which include the obligation that all noblemen perform twenty-five years of devoted service to the state, in the army, civil service, or navy. Peter does away with ancient preferences, insisting that everyone start at the bottom (as he always has during his youthful war games and during actual combat) and work their way up strictly by merit. Those who evade service become outlaws, diligently hunted by the new secret services. Loopholes are closed. Foreign experts are brought in to provide leadership, but language problems, old jealousies, and reticence to change slow progress. Lifting the masses with the strength of ten, Peter feels the downward weight of millions.

As Tsar, Peter must provide for a successor. His son Alexis refuses his duty to learn how to wage war and other matters of state. They clash over this repeatedly, with Peter finally demanding that Alexis decide whether to accept his responsibilities and prepare to reign or retire from the world to a monastery. Living in lazy luxury is no option. Alexis flees the father whom he fears, is hunted down, and ultimately sentenced to death as a traitor, as many of Peter's enemies look to him for hope of someday rolling back the taxes and innovations. Peter's highest duty is to secure his legacy, and he performs it tearfully but resolutely.

Religion

Religion provides a constant background to Robert K. Massie's *PETER THE GREAT: HIS LIFE AND WORLD*. The opening chapter, "Old Muscovy," provides the reader with a reasonably full picture of the central role of ritual, faith, and superstition in Russia at the time of Peter's birth. Peter's father, Tsar Alexis, leads a virtual monk's life of prayer and fasting (eight months out of the year in total) while his courtiers eat gargantuan meals. He dies too early for Peter to pick up his habits, but Peter learns his Bible and



liturgy and throughout his life is able to quote them and enjoys singing in choirs. For some of his antics, Peter is viewed by arch-conservatives as the Antichrist, but he believes that God has a sense of humor, even if his adherents do not.

First in the German Suburb of Moscow and later in Europe itself, Peter comes in contact with various forms of Protestantism. Religions that might have fought in their native habitats live in harmony in the German Suburb, and Holland, Peter's favorite Western country, makes religious toleration a keystone. Peter joins in worship services wherever he travels. He particularly enjoys the Quakers' service. Such openness tempts the heads of churches, Protestant and Catholic, to try to convert him and open vast mission lands to their missionaries. Peter has no such intentions. In fact, he has little concern for doctrinal and ritual matters that so inflame most Russians. He even tolerates the Old Believers because they perform useful work, colonizing the northern forests.

Based on his experiences in Europe and still smarting from the interference of Patriarchs in his and his father's business, Peter discontinues the Patriarchate following the death of Adrian, and turns the church into a virtual state ministry lead by a Holy Synod and its lay Over-Procurator. Churchmen who cross Peter are dealt with brutally. Peter wants the clergy to become educated, particularly in public speaking, in order to root out superstition in the people. Religion, like everything else, must serve the goals of the state. Agonizing on his deathbed, Peter hopes that God will forgive his many sins because of the good he has tried to do for his people.

Brutality

Robert K. Massie makes clear that Peter the Great is not a sadist like his predecessor Ivan the Terrible, who tortures for the pleasure of watching, and his methods of dealing with traitors differs little from Western contemporaries (Londoners love a good hanging at Tyburn, particularly if it involves drawing and quartering). Nevertheless, a great deal of blood flows through PETER THE GREAT: HIS LIFE AND WORLD.

Peter is brutalized before he brutalizes. As a child he watches the Streltsy guards throw his close relatives off a balcony onto upraised spears and hack multitudes to pieces all over Red Square. When he achieves full power and the Streltsy are foolish enough to revolt again, Peter breaks them completely. He and his closest comrades use every means of torture to determine the extent of the rebellion, and fill the Kremlin with mutilated corpses that hang through the winter as a warning to others.

Years later, Peter believes that his son Alexis is the center of a new conspiracy to roll back his reforms, and again he uses torture on Alexis' accomplices. Obtaining sufficient evidence to brand Alexis a traitor, Peter turns him over to torture to obtain a confession. Alexis admits wanting to see his father dead, pleads for forgiveness, and dies before he can be judicially executed. During this inquisition, Peter spares no one except his ex-wife, whom he has already confined to a convent. The renowned Bishop of Rostov, Dositheus, is expelled from the clergy and broken on the wheel. A few former close associates are beheaded to spare them further suffering.



Peter tortures to obtain vital information to secure his throne and puts people to death as a matter of justice and to set an example. Any monarch of his age would have understood and done likewise. Still, Peter obtains a reputation for cruelty that is hard to live down. Many passages show Westerners amazed that he is not a "baptized bear."



Style

Perspective

Robert K. Massie is a historian, trained at in American history at Yale University and, as a Rhodes Scholar, in modern European history at Oxford University. His first undertaking in Russian history is a bestselling biography of Nicholas and Alexandra, the last of the Romanov dynasty. That book is acclaimed for its combination of finding the "essence and drama of extraordinary lives." In 1980, Massie applies his talents to the pivotal reign of Peter the Great, as ancient Muscovy is brought into the modern world. Peter the Great wins the Pulitzer Prize in biography. The Acknowledgments describe his multiple trips to the Soviet Union and the surnames of those whom he thanks show the dedication with which he verifies the materials he has included in the book.

Massie seems wholly dedicated to interpreting for a modern audience a world and culture utterly foreign to its experience. He opens by evoking Old Muscovy, a society formed throughout the social structure by the Russian Orthodox Church, itself a daughter of Byzantium, and most distinct in its governance and practices from Catholicism and Protestantism. Throughout the book, Peter fights to break the church's lethargy and make it contribute to Russia's progress. Throughout the book Massie also takes pains to show that the barbaric aspects of Russian society and Peter's character, are not that different from his contemporaries.

Massie never assumes that a reader will be acquainted with some person, place, or theme in history, but sketches in enough colorful detail to orient the reader to a particular subject. Quite a few mini-biographies are worked into the text and rarely is a superfluous detail included. Never are characters' "warts" ignored, but never is anyone made a scape goat. Peter emerges from Massie's pen as a gifted man interested in everything and dedicated to improving his vast country. Little more can be desired in a biography.

Tone

Robert K. Massie's PETER THE GREAT: HIS LIFE AND WORLD is an objective but sympathetic biography. Whenever possible, the author works in quotations, often extensive, from contemporaries to give the flavor of Peter, his contemporaries, and his society. Most people considering what to say about someone "impossible to describe" begin with his towering height and vast energy, sketch how he matches or diverges from popular Western stereotypes of Russians ("baptized bears"), and remark on the power of his largely-untrained mind. Such scenes are included at intervals to show the progress of the man.

Massie shows the full range of Peter's emotions and impulses. He is hardly attractive at his most brutal and barbaric, torturing political enemies—even when he occasionally



orders them swiftly beheaded to spare them more torment. Unless one is a humorless fundamentalist, Peter when drunk and blasphemous carousing with his friends is entertaining. Those offended now as then can see him as the Antichrist, although Peter himself insists that God has a sense of humor. On the other side, Peter sings in choirs, asks God's blessing on every undertaking, and gives public thanks for his victories and successes.

The parallels between Peter and Charles XII of Sweden are carefully established, showing why the Great Northern War stretches for twenty years. As in any war, both sides have valid arguments, but it is hard not to side with Peter's desire to build and hold onto St. Petersburg. His determination to make Russia a better place comes out throughout the story and in the end, perhaps suffering agony in retribution for the suffering he has caused, Peter begs God to forgive his sins in consideration of the good he has intended to do. The Epilogue briefly shows how Peter has been evaluated by historians in the Imperial and Soviet periods, and concludes that he is simply a "force of nature" that cannot be explained. Massie has shown this long before he proclaims it as a dictum.

Structure

Robert K. Massie's massive PETER THE GREAT: HIS LIFE AND WORLD consists of five numbered and titled parts, totaling 63 consecutively numbered and titled chapters, an epilogue, genealogical charts of the Romanov Dynasty, 1613-1917 (indispensable in the final chapters), Acknowledgments, a Selected Bibliography, Notes, and Index. It includes illustrations and useful maps.

Part 1, "Old Muscovy" consists of the following chapters: 1) "Old Muscovy," 2) "Peter's Childhood," 3) "A Maiden of Great Intelligence," 4) "The Revolt of the Streltsy," 5) "The Great Schism," 6) "Peter's Games," 7) "The Regency of Sophia," 8) "Sophia Overthrown," 9) "Gordon, Lefort and the Jolly Company," 10) "Archangel," and 11) "Azov." Part 1 surveys the background of the Old Russia, which Peter remakes in his own image, showing the factors that form his personality, ending with his seizing, most tentatively, an outpost on the entryway to the Black Sea and a warm water port.

Part 2, "The Great Embassy," consists of: 12) "The Great Embassy to Western Europe," 13) "It Is Impossible to Describe Him," 14) "Peter in Holland," 15) "The Prince of Orange," 16) "Peter in England," 17) "Leopold and Augustus," 18) "These Things Are in Your Way," 19) "Fire and Knout," 20) "Among Friends," and 21) "Voronezh and the Southern Fleet." Part 2 examines Peter's adventures in Western Europe, learning hands-on how to build ships and a panoply of other modern sciences. Long excurses are given to Western rulers and important figures. A highlight after Peter's return to Russia is the destruction of the old-fashioned and rebellious Streltsy regiments. Peter's violence is shown to be normal in the context of the 17th century.

Part 3, "The Great Northern War," consists of: 22) "Mistress of the North," 23) "Let the Cannon Decide," 24) "Charles XII," 25) "Narva," 26) "We Must Not Lose Our Heads,"



27) "The Founding of St. Petersburg," 28) "Menshikov and Catherine," 29) "The Hand of the Autocrat," 30) "Polish Quagmire," 31) "Charles in Saxony," 32) "The Great Road to Moscow," 33) "Golovchin and Lesnaya," 34) "Mazeppa," 35) "The Worst Winter Within Memory," 36) "The Gathering of Forces," 37) "Poltava," 38) "Surrender by the River," and 39) "The Fruits of Poltava." Part 3 shows Peter turning his attention from the Ottoman Empire in the south to Sweden in the north. It covers a most trying time in Peter's life, from the defeat at Narva to the victory at Poltava.

Part 4, "On the European Stage," consists of: 40) "The Sultan's World," 41) "Liberator of the Balkan Christians," 42) "Fifty Blows on the Pruth," 43) "The German Campaign and Frederick William," 44) "The Coast of Finland," 45) "The Kalabalik," 46) "Venice of the North," 47) "An Ambassador Reports," 48) "The Second Journey West," 49) "The King Is a Mighty Man...," 50) "A Visitor in Paris," 51) "The Education of an Heir," 52) "A Paternal Ultimatum," 53) "Flight of the Tsarevich," 54) "The Future on Trial," 55) "Charles' Last Offensive," 56) "King George Enters the Baltic," and 57) "Victory." Part 4 shows Peter continuing the war largely because Charles VII refuses to relinquish St. Petersburg and Peter will not be deprived of his prize. The heart of the section is the tension between Peter and his son Alexis, which involves European diplomats and ultimately leads to sorrowful punishment and jeopardizes the Romanov dynasty.

Part 5, "The New Russia," consists of: 58) "In the Service of the State," 59) "Commerce by Decree," 60) "Supreme Under God," 61) "The Emperor in St. Petersburg," 62) "Along the Caspian," and 63) "Twilight." Part 5 focuses on three aspects of Peter's post-Poltava reforms, adds a sketch of Peter with his life ebbing and snuffed out. The Epilogue ties up dynastic questions and suggests that Peter the Great cannot be pigeonholed in history and ideology.



Quotes

"The upheaval was over. In rapid and bewildering succession, a tsar had died; a ten-year-old boy, the minor child of a second wife, had been elected in his place; a savage military revolt had overthrown this election and spattered the young Tsar and his mother with the blood of their own family; and then, with all the jeweled panoply of state, the boy was crowned jointly with a frail and helpless older half-brother. Through all the horror, although he had been elected tsar, he was powerless to intervene. The Streltsy revolt marked Peter for life. The calm and security of his boyhood were shattered, his soul was wrenched and seared. And its impact on Peter had, in time, a profound impact on Russia." Part 1, Chapter 4, "The Revolt of the Streltsy," pg. 52.

"Within the family, Natalya's place in Peter's affections was taken by his younger sister, Natalya, a cheerful girl who, without understanding all of her brother's objectives, always supported him wholeheartedly. She belonged to his generation, and she was curious about everything that came from abroad. Nevertheless, with the Tsaritsa's death, all the strong members of Peter's family were gone: his father and mother dead, his half-sister Sophia locked into a convent. His wife, Eudoxia, was there, but he seemed utterly oblivious to her feelings or even her existence. Gone with the Tsaritsa were the last bonds of restraint on Peter's actions. He loved his mother and tried to please her, but increasingly he had been impatient. In recent years, her constant effort to restrict his movements and curtail his desire for novelty and contact with foreigners had weighed on him. Now, he was free to live as he wished. For Natalya's life, although influenced by her years in Matveev's Westernized house, had remained essentially that of a Muscovite woman of the older type. Her passing was the breaking of the last powerful link which had bound Peter to the traditions of the past. It was only Natalya who had kept Peter in touch with Kremlin ritual; after her death, he quickly ceased to take part in it. Two and a half months after Natalya's death, Peter appeared with Ivan in the great court Easter procession. After that, no one possessed the strength to force him to do what he was not inclined to do." Part 1, Chapter 10, "Archangel," pg. 129.

"Unfortunately, their grumbling touched a raw nerve in Peter's character: Once again, the Streltsy were mixed up in charges of treason. His fear and loathing of them boiled forth. The three men were bloodily executed on Red Square, losing first their arms and legs to the axe, and then their heads. In addition, Peter's fear that their dissent might be only the prelude to an attempted Miloslavsky restoration stirred him to a lurid act of contempt against that family. The coffin of Ivan Miloslavsky, who had been dead for fourteen years, was placed on a sledge, yoked to a team of swine and dragged into Red Square. There, the coffin was opened beneath the execution block, so that the blood of the newly condemned men would spatter the face of the corpse.

Five days after this barbaric scene in Moscow, the Great Embassy set out to study the civilization and technology of the West." Part 2, Chapter 13, "'It Is Impossible to Describe Him'" pgs. 169-170.



"The Great Embassy was over. The first peacetime journey out of Russia by a Russian tsar had taken eighteen months, cost two and a half million roubles, introduced the carpenter Peter Mikhailov to electors, princes, kings and an emperor, and proved to Western Europe that Russians did not eat raw meat and wear only bearskins. What were the substantive results? In terms of its avowed, overt purpose, the reinvigoration and enlargement of the alliance against the Turks, the Embassy failed. Peace was coming in the East as Europe prepared for new and different wars. Wherever he went for help, in The Hague, in London, in Vienna, Peter found the looming shadow of Louis XIV. It was the Sun King and not the Sultan who frightened Europe. European diplomacy, money, ships and armies were being mobilized for the impending crisis when the throne of Spain would become vacant. Russia, left to make peace or fight the Turks alone, had no choice but to make peace.

In terms of practical, useful results, however, the Embassy was a considerable success. Peter and his ambassadors had succeeded in recruiting more than 800 technically skilled Europeans for Russian service, the bulk of them Dutchmen, but also Englishmen, Scots, Venetians, Germans and Greeks. Many of these men remained in Russia for years, made significant contributions to the modernization of the nation and left their names permanently inscribed in the history of Peter's reign." Part 2, Chapter 17 "Leopold and Augustus," pgs. 231-232.

"Yet, Peter was not a sadist. He did not enjoy seeing people tortured—he did not, for instance, set bears on people merely to see what would happen, as Ivan the Terrible had done. He tortured for practical reasons of state: to extract information. He executed as punishment for treason. To him these were natural, traditional and even moral actions. Few of his seventeenth-century contemporaries, Russian or European, would have argued this principle. In fact, at that moment in Russian history, what counted was not the morality of Peter's act but its effect. The destruction of the Streltsy inspired in the Russian people a belief in Peter's harsh, implacable will, and proclaimed his iron determination to tolerate no opposition to his rule. Therefore, despite his Western clothes and tastes, his people knew that they had no choice except to follow. For beneath the Western clothes beat the heart of a Muscovite tsar.

This was part of Peter's plan. He did not destroy the Streltsy simply to wreak vengeance, or to expose one specific plot, but to make an example, to terrify, to force submission. The lesson of the Streltsy, burned in blood and fire, was one from which we today recoil, but it cemented Peter's reign. It gave him the power to work his reforms and—for better or worse—to revolutionize Russian society." Part 2, Chapter 19, "Fire and Knout," pgs. 259-260.

"From that moment on, war became the great object of Charles' life. And in this sense, while Narva was the King's first great victory, it was also the first step toward his doom. A victory so easily won helped persuade Charles that he was unconquerable. Narva, added to the dramatic success of the descent on Zealand, began the legend of Charles XII—which he himself accepted—that with a handful of men he could rout vast armies. Narva also instilled in Charles a dangerous contempt for Peter and for Russia. The ease



with which he had overwhelmed Peter's army convinced him that Russians were worthless as soldiers and that he could afford to turn his back on them for as long as he liked. Years later, in the summer dust of the Ukraine, the King of Sweden would pay dearly for these moments of exaltation on the snow-covered battlefield of Narva." Part 3, Chapter 25, "Narva," pgs. 337-338.

"Peter called the new city St. Petersburg after his patron saint, and it became the glory of his reign, his 'paradise,' his 'Eden,' his 'darling.' In April 1706, he began a letter to Menshikov, 'I cannot help writing you from this paradise; truly we live here in heaven.' The city came to represent in brick and stone everything important in his life: his escape from the shadowy intrigue, the tiny windows and vaulted chambers of Moscow; his arrival on the sea; the opening to the technology and culture of Western Europe. Peter loved his new creation. He found endless pleasure in the great river flowing out to the Gulf, in the waves lapping under the fortress walls, in the salty breeze that filled the sails of his new ships. Construction of the city became his passion. No obstacle was great enough to prevent his carrying out his design. On it he lavished his energy, millions of rubles and thousands of lives. At first, fortification and defense were his highest considerations, but within less than a year he was writing to Tikhon Streshnev in Moscow asking for flowers to be sent from Ismailovo near Moscow, 'especially those with scent. The peony plants have arrived in very good condition, but no balsam or mint. Send them.' By 1708, he had built an aviary and sent to Moscow for '8,000 singing birds of various sorts.'" Part 3, Chapter 27, "The Founding of St. Petersburg," pg. 365.

"On the early morning of September 15, the march to the south began, a march fateful in the life of Charles XII and in the history of Peter and of Russia. The advance on Moscow was turned aside—as it happened, for good. Charles' decision at Tatarsk also marked a turn in Sweden's fortunes. In the previous fall and winter, he had marched halfway across Europe, brilliantly maneuvering his enemy out of a series of formidable river barriers. Yet in the summer of 1708, Charles' strategic planning had gone badly awry: he had allowed himself to be chained to the arrival of Lewenhaupt and the supplies. Lewenhaupt had not arrived, and the summer and the advance on Moscow had both been lost. Nevertheless, in September 1708, when Charles stood at Tatarsk and decided to turn south, he still held the initiative. His army was intact. He turned toward Severia with optimism and hope that, if the Moscow campaign had failed, the setback was only temporary.

In fact he was on the brink of a series of disasters which for him would end in ruin." Part 3, Chapter 33, "Golovchin and Lesnaya," pg. 450.

"Defeat on the Pruth and his final treaty with the Sultan ended forever Peter's southern ambitions. With the hauling down of the Russian flag and the destruction of the forts at Azov and Taganrog, the dream of his youth and the work of sixteen years came to an end. 'The Lord God drove me out of this place like Adam out of paradise,' said Peter of Azov. During his lifetime, there would be no Black Sea fleet. The mouth of the Don remained closed, and all Russian ships would continue to be forbidden on the sea,



which would remain the Sultan's private lake. Not until the time of Catherine the Great would Russia conquer the Crimea, open the Don, force the Strait of Kerch and finally achieve what Peter had begun.

Russia simply was not strong enough to accomplish simultaneously everything that Peter wanted. He was still at war with Sweden, he was building St. Petersburg and he was trying, through sweeping reforms and reorganization, to reshape the Muscovite tsardom into a new, technologically modern European state. In this last, overriding purpose, the Baltic and St. Petersburg were more important than the Black Sea and the Azov." Part 4, Chapter 42, "Fifty Blows on the Pruth, pg. 565.

"The Pleyer, who hated Peter, began to exaggerate. 'Everything here is ripe for rebellion,' he told Vienna. He wrote of a plot which rumor said would kill Peter, imprison Catherine, free Eudoxia and set Alexis on the throne. He went on to catalogue the complaints of the nobility, to whom he had obviously been talking. 'High and low talk of nothing else except the contempt shown to them and their children who are obliged to be sailors and shipbuilders, although they have been abroad to learn languages and have spent so much money; of the ruin of their property by taxes and by their serfs being carried off to build fortresses and harbors.' Pleyer's letter, which Alexis gave to Afrosina to keep with her belongings, and which later turned up in the hands of his inquisitors in Moscow, was to do the Tsarevich great harm." Part 4, Chapter 53, "Flight of the Tsarevich," pg. 683.

"Soon, the surges of pain through Peter's body became so great that Osterman begged him to think only of himself and forget all matters of business. In agony, crying out loudly from the intensity of the pain, Peter repeatedly expressed contrition for his sins. Twice more, he received the Last Rites and begged for absolution. On the 27th, the priest was Feofan Prokopovich, in whose presence Peter said fervently, 'Lord, I believe. I hope.' Soon after, he said, as if speaking to himself, 'I hope God will forgive me my man sins because of the good I have tried to do for my people.'

Through his ordeal, Catherine never left her husband's bedside, day or night. At one point, telling him that it would help him make his peace with God, she begged Peter to forgive Menshikov, still in disgrace. Peter consented, and the Prince entered the room to be pardoned for the last time by his dying master. At two o'clock on the afternoon of the 27th, perhaps thinking of the succession, the Emperor asked for a writing tablet. One was given to him, and he wrote, 'Give all to...'. Then the pen dropped from his hand. Unable to continue, meaning to dictate, he sent for his daughter Anne, but before the Princess arrived, he had become delirious.

He never recovered consciousness, but sank into a coma, moving only to groan. Catherine knelt beside him hour after hour, praying incessantly that he might be released from his torment by death. At last, at six o'clock in the morning of January 28, 1725, just as she was pleading, 'O Lord, I pray Thee, open Thy paradise to receive unto Thyself this great soul,' Peter the Great, in the fifty-third year of his life and the forty-third year of his reign, entered eternity." Part 5, Chapter 63, "Twilight," pgs. 844-845.



"Very well, very well, that may be,' said Peter impatiently, 'but flattery as as much of every king when he is present. My object is to see the fair side of thing, but to know what judgment is formed of me on the opposite side of the question. I beg you to tell it to me, whatever it might be.'

The ambassador bowed low. 'Sire,' he said, 'since you order me, I will tell you all the ill I have heard. You pass for an imperious and severe master who treats his subjects rigorously, who is always ready to punish and incapable of forgiving a fault.'

'No, my friend,' said Peter, smiling and shaking his head, 'this is not all. I am represented as a cruel tyrant; this is the opinion foreign nations have formed of me. But how can they judge? They do not know the circumstances I was in at the beginning of my reign, how many people opposed my designs, counteracted my most useful projects and obliged me to be severe. But I never treated anyone cruelly or gave proofs of tyranny. On the contrary, I have always asked the assistance of such of my subjects as have shown marks of intelligence and patriotism, and who, doing justice to the rectitude of my intentions, have been disposed to second them. Nor have I ever failed to testify my gratitude by loading them with favors.'" Epilogue, pg. 855.

Topics for Discussion

What do you consider Peter the Great's finest personal quality? Select an incident from his life and describe how that quality contributes to the attaining of his goal.

What do you consider Peter the Great's worst personal quality? Select an incident from his life and describe how that defect detracts from the legacy of his reign.

Compare and contrast the fatalism of Peter the Great and Charles XII of Sweden.

How do Peter's chronic bouts of illness affect his reign?

What does the "Mock Synod" reveal about Peter's attitude toward religion? Is it representative of his overall views on the subject?

How does Peter's changing the law of succession affect Russia for the rest of the 18th century? How does it fit in with his other reforms?

Describe the situation of women in Muscovite Russia and how Peter liberates them.