

## CHAPTER 11

# RUSSIA OF THE ROMANOVS

### 11.1 BACKGROUND TO 17th CENTURY

#### 11.1.1 *Ivan III* (1440 – 1505)

Ivan III, “Ivan the Great,” put an end in 1480 to Mongol domination over Russia. He married Sophie Paleologus (1472), the niece of the last emperor of Constantinople. (The Byzantine Empire was conquered by the Ottoman Turks in 1453). Ivan took the title of Caesar (i.e., *Czar*) as heir of the Eastern Roman Empire (i.e., Byzantine Empire). He encouraged the Eastern Orthodox Church and called Moscow the “Third Rome”, and many Greek scholars, craftsmen, architects, and artists were brought to Russia.

#### 11.1.2 *Ivan IV* (1533 – 84)

Ivan IV, “Ivan the Terrible,” grandson of Ivan III, began westernizing Russia.

A contemporary of Queen Elizabeth, he welcomed both the

English and the Dutch and opened new trade routes to Moscow and the Caspian Sea. English merchant adventurers opened Archangel on the White Sea and provided a link with the outer world free from Polish domination.

The "Time of Troubles" followed the death of Ivan IV in 1584 when the ruling Muscovite family died out. The Time of Troubles was a period of turmoil, famine, power struggles, and invasions from Poland.

## 11.2 THE ROMANOV DYNASTY

The Romanov dynasty ruled Russia from 1613 to 1917. Stability returned to Russia in 1613 when the *Semski Sobor* (estates general representing the Russian Orthodox Church, landed gentry, townspeople, and a few peasants) elected Michael Romanov as Czar from 1613 to 1645.

Russia, with a standing army of 70,000, was involved in a series of unsuccessful wars with Poland, Sweden, and Turkey. In 1654, Russia annexed the Ukraine with its rich farmlands. The Ukrainians were to be granted full autonomy, but were not.

It was under Michael Romanov that Russia continued its expansion into contiguous territory and created an enormous empire across Asia to the Pacific. Westernization, begun under Ivan IV, continued under Michael Romanov.

The Russian army was trained by westerners, mostly Scotsmen. Weapons were purchased from Sweden and Holland. Four Lutheran and Reformed Churches and a German school were established in Moscow. Western skills and technology, western clothes and customs were accepted in Russia. By the end of the 17th century, 20,000 Europeans lived in Russia, developing trade and manufacturing, practicing medicine,



smoking tobacco, trimming their beards, and wearing western clothing.

Western books were translated into Russian. In 1649 three monks were appointed to translate the Bible for the first time into Russian. The *Raskolniki* (Old Believers) refused to accept any Western innovations or liturgy in the Russian Orthodox Church and were severely persecuted as a result. In twenty years 20,000 of them were burned at the stake, but millions still called themselves Old Believers as late as 1917.

### 11.3 PETER THE GREAT (1682 – 1725)

Peter was one of the most extraordinary people in Russian history. He was nearly seven feet tall with physical strength so great that he could bend a horse shoe with his bare hands. His restless energy kept him active doing things incessantly, perpetually at work building boats, extracting teeth, dissecting corpses, shoemaking, cooking, etching, writing dispatches and instructions sometimes for fourteen hours a day. He did not understand moderation and could be cruel and vicious. He often whipped his servants, killed people who angered him, and even tortured his son to death. When he received good news, he would sometimes dance around and sing at the top of his voice.

Peter was born in 1672, the son of Czar Alexis' second wife, Natalia. When Peter was only four years old, his father died and the oldest son Theodore ruled until 1682, when he also died without an heir. For seven years Peter and his older half-brother ruled with the older half-sister Sophia as regent. Discovering a plot by Sophia to kill him, Peter, in 1689, banished her to a monastery and began ruling in his own right with his mother Natalia as regent. When she died in 1694, Peter, at age 22, took over the administration of the Russian government.

The driving ambition of Peter the Great's life was to modernize Russia and he needed the West to accomplish that. At the same time he wanted to compete with the great powers of Europe on equal terms.

Peter visited western Europe (in disguise!) in order to study the techniques and culture of the West. He worked as a carpenter in shipyards; attended gunnery school; and visited hospitals and factories. He sent back to Russia large numbers of European technicians and craftsmen to train Russians and to build factories, some of which were larger than any in the West. By the end of Peter's reign Russia produced more iron than England (though not more than Sweden or Germany).

### **11.3.1 Wars of Peter the Great**

Peter built up the army through conscription and a 25-year term of enlistment. He gave flintlocks and bayonets to his troops instead of the old muskets and pikes. Artillery was improved and discipline enforced. By the end of his reign Russia had a standing army of 210,000 out of a population of only 13 million. Peter also developed the Russian Navy.

In 1696, Peter sailed the fleet of boats down the Don River and took Azov on the Black Sea from the Turks.

### **11.3.2 The Great Northern War (1700 – 1721)**

In 1699 Peter allied with Poland and Denmark against Sweden.

Charles XII, the 18-year-old Swedish king, defeated the Russian army of 35,000, capturing its artillery and most of its senior officers.

The main Swedish effort, though, was against Poland, but

the Swedish war lasted for twenty years. In 1706 Sweden again defeated Russia at Grodno, but in 1709 Peter won at Poltava.

*Treaty of Nystad* (1721) ended the war. Russia returned Finland. Livonia (Latvia) and Estonia became part of the Russian Empire. Russia now had possessions on the Baltic Sea and a “window on the West.”

### 11.3.3 *St. Petersburg*

The building of this great city (formerly Leningrad) out of a wilderness and making it the capital and one of the two principal cities of Russia was one of Peter’s crowning achievements. Construction began in 1703, supervised by the Czar himself and done by conscripted labor.

Peter sought to make St. Petersburg look like Amsterdam. It became cosmopolitan, lively city with French theater and Italian opera. His palace imitated Versailles with its terraces, fountains, cascade, art gallery, and park. St. Petersburg was built mostly of stone and brick rather than from traditional Russian wood.

The Czar ordered a specific number of noble families to move to St. Petersburg and build their houses according to Peter’s plans. At Peter’s death in 1725, St. Petersburg had a population of 75,000, the largest city in northern Europe.

### 11.3.4 *Reforms Under Peter the Great*

The Czar ruled by decree (*ukase*). Government officials and nobles acted under government authority, but there was no representative body.

All land-owners owed lifetime service to the state, either in the army, the civil service, or at court. In return for govern-

ment service they received land and serfs to work their fields.

Conscription required each village to send recruits for the Russian army. By 1709 Russia manufactured most of its own weapons and had an effective artillery.

The Russian navy, mostly on the Baltic, grew to a fleet of 850 ships, but declined sharply after Peter's death.

Taxes were heavy on trade, on sales, on rents, and the government levied a head tax on every male.

State-regulated monopolies brought income to the government, but stultified trade and economic growth so in the long-run were counter-productive economically. Half of the two hundred enterprises begun during Peter's reign were state-owned; the rest were heavily taxed.

Peter sought unsuccessfully to link the main rivers by canals. Thousands died in the effort but only one of his six great canals was completed: St. Petersburg was linked to the Volga by canal in 1732.

The budget of the Russian government at the end of Peter's reign was three times its size at the beginning, 75% of which was spent on the military. Peter established naval, military, and artillery academies.

The Russian Secret Police ferreted out opposition and punished it as subversion.

The Swedish model was followed in organizing the central government. Russia was divided into twelve provinces with a governor in charge to decentralize many of the functions previously done by the national government.

Industrial serfdom mean that workers were brought and sold with the factories and invariably created inferior products.

Russia had a “conditional land tenure” system with the Czar as the theoretical owner of all land in a Russian-style feudal system where both nobility and serfs served the state.

When the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church died in 1700, Peter abolished his authority and began treating the Church as a government department. He eventually gave governing authority to a Holy Synod.

## **11.4 18th CENTURY RUSSIAN CZARS AFTER PETER THE GREAT**

Catherine I, who ruled from 1725 to 27, was the second wife of Peter the Great.

Peter II (1727 – 30) the son of Alexis and grandson of Peter the Great, died at age 15.

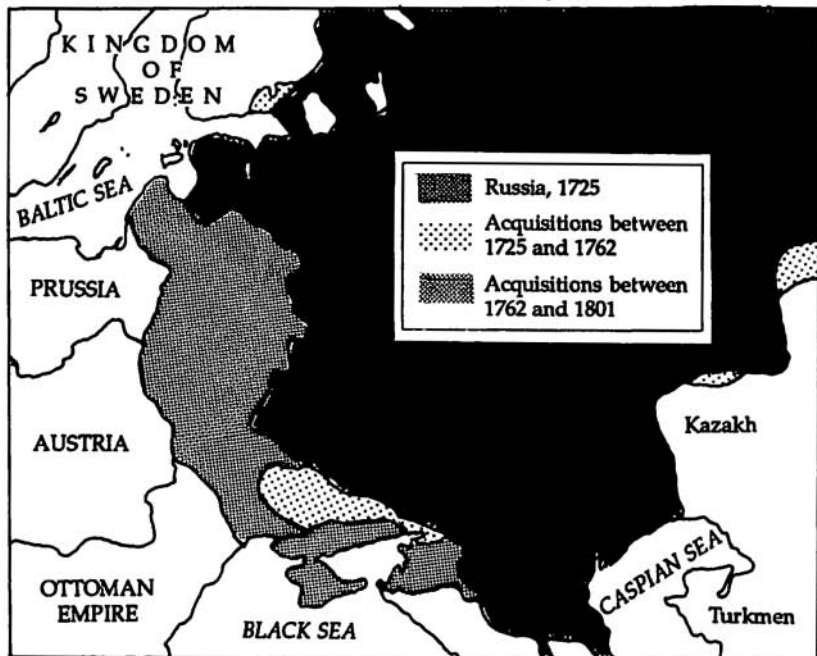
Anna (1730 – 40) was dominated by German advisers. Under her rule the war of the Polish Succession (1733 – 35) gave Russia firmer control over Polish affairs. War against the Turks (1736 – 39) gave Azov to Russia once again. Russia agreed not to build a fleet on the Black Sea.

Ivan VI (1740 – 41) was overthrown by a military coup.

Elizabeth (1741 – 62) was the youngest daughter of Peter the Great. This was the Golden Age of the aristocracy as they freed themselves from some of the obligations imposed on them by earlier Czars. Russia entered the Seven Years’ War (1756 – 63) during Elizabeth’s reign.



## THE GROWTH OF RUSSIA, 1725 – 1801



Peter III (1762) was deposed and killed in a military revolt.

Catherine II (“the Great”; 1762 – 96) continued the westernization process begun by Peter the Great. The three partitions of Poland, in 1772, 1793, and 1795 respectively, occurred under Catherine II’s rule. Russia also annexed the Crimea and warred with Turkey.