

Eastern European and Russian Absolutism



Ivan IV “Ivan the Terrible”

(1547-1584)



became Tsar at age of 3 and watched rival groups of nobles who sought to control the country
when he took charge, he saw treason everywhere
arrested, exiled, or executed many of his closest advisors, even his own son
Ivan took land from the nobles (boyars) and gave it to his own loyal people (oprichniki)
[they became Ivan’s secret police force]
these boyars were then kicked out of or dispersed throughout the nation

The Time of Troubles

(1598-1613)



a time of noble feuds over the throne, peasant revolts, and foreign invasions

Russia suffered a famine from 1601–1603 that killed 1/3rd of the population [about two million]

Michel Romanov

(1613-1645)



Painting by Grigory Ugryumov of the 16 year-old Mikhail being offered the crown at the Ipatiev Monastery in 1613

Russia defeated Poland in 1612, which gave the Russian people a new outlook of hope. They wanted their country to do better, and to achieve this, they must have a great leader. The quest for a new tsar began, with letters being sent throughout the land for elected representatives. From farmland to noble estates, these deputies came to Moscow to select the new tsar.

16 year-old Michael Romanov's family had been related to other tsars by marriage and both of his parents had been very influential [until they were sent to monasteries by their enemies to break their power]. It was decided that he was the best choice for tsar.

The only dilemma was that Michel was nowhere to be found. He was finally found in the same monastery where his mother was hiding.

Messengers were sent to tell him that he was to be the new Tsar. Michel I ruled Russia from 1613-1645.

[The Romanov dynasty ruled Russia until 1917.]

Peter the Great

The Early Years



When Peter's father, Tsar Alexis I, died in 1676, Peter's elder half-brother, the weak and sickly Feodor III took his place, until he died in 1682. As Feodor did not leave any children, a dispute arose over who should inherit the throne. Peter's other half-brother, Ivan V, was next in line for the throne, but he was chronically ill and of infirm mind. Consequently, the Boyar Duma (a council of Russian nobles) chose the 10-year-old Peter to become Tsar with his mother as regent. This arrangement was brought before the people of Moscow, as ancient tradition demanded, and was ratified.

Some relatives, including his half-sister Sophia, were very opposed. They insisted that Peter and Ivan be proclaimed joint Tsars, with Ivan being acclaimed as the senior.



Sophia acted as regent during the minority of the sovereigns and exercised all power. For seven years, she ruled as an autocrat. A large hole was cut in the back of the dual-seated throne used by Ivan and Peter. Sophia would sit behind the throne and listen as Peter conversed with nobles, while feeding him information and giving him responses to questions and problems

Peter the Great/Peter I

As Acting Regent

(1682-1725)



Fun Fact: Peter the Great was GREAT - very tall (nearly 7 ft)

toured England and the Netherlands and upon returning home forced the Russian nobility to adopt Western European ways: wear Western European clothing, shave beards

sent Russians abroad to learn, esp. shipbuilding, naval warfare, foreign languages, and mathematics

built new capital in St. Petersburg on coast of the Baltic Sea

it would be more accessible to the West - called it Russia's "window to the West"

expanded borders

took control of Siberia from China

took control of Alaska through Bering Strait

took eastern end of Baltic region from Sweden

changed the Russian government

created central bureaucracy under his control (like France)

brought Eastern Orthodox Church under his authority

ruled by a Holy Synod, group of bishops under his control

Maria Theresa

(1740-1780)



Hapsburgs built a strong Austrian monarchy

repelled Ottoman attack in 1683

regained Balkan Peninsula territory

[had been taken by the Ottomans]

received Italian and Dutch lands as a result of the

War of Spanish Succession

in 1718, Austrian ruler Charles VI convinced European rulers to accept a pragmatic sanction

(royal decree having the force of law)

agreed to accept his daughter, Maria Theresa, as the next ruler of Austria

[but wait - women weren't supposed to rule Austria? AHA - Austrian lands wouldn't have to be divided!]

in 1740, at 23-yrs-old, Maria Theresa inherited throne from her father, HRE Charles VI

she became the only female ruler of the Habsburg dominions

was the last ruler of the House of Habsburg

was the sovereign of Austria, Hungary, Croatia, Bohemia, Mantua, Milan, Lodomeria and Galicia, the Austrian Netherlands, and Parma

she reorganized the bureaucracy, improved tax collection, and furthered the building of roads

ended trade barriers between Austria and Bohemia

used government funds to boost production of textiles and glass

Frederick William, Prussia's "Great Elector"

(1640-1688)



a member of the Hohenzollern family who governed Brandenburg (*N Germany*)

they won Prussia in Thirty Years' War

he created a standing army that was financially supported by higher taxes

the Junkers (*nobles*) opposed this plan, so Frederick William worked out a compromise

only Junkers allowed to be landowners

didn't have to pay taxes (townspeople and peasants taxed instead)

given full power over peasants

pledged their support of Frederick William, creating alliance

(townspeople and peasants too weak to raise any opposition to this plan)

Frederick William was Prussia's absolute monarch

Frederick I (his son) ruled after his death, 1688-1713

sided w/Austria in War of Spanish Succession, won title of "King"

