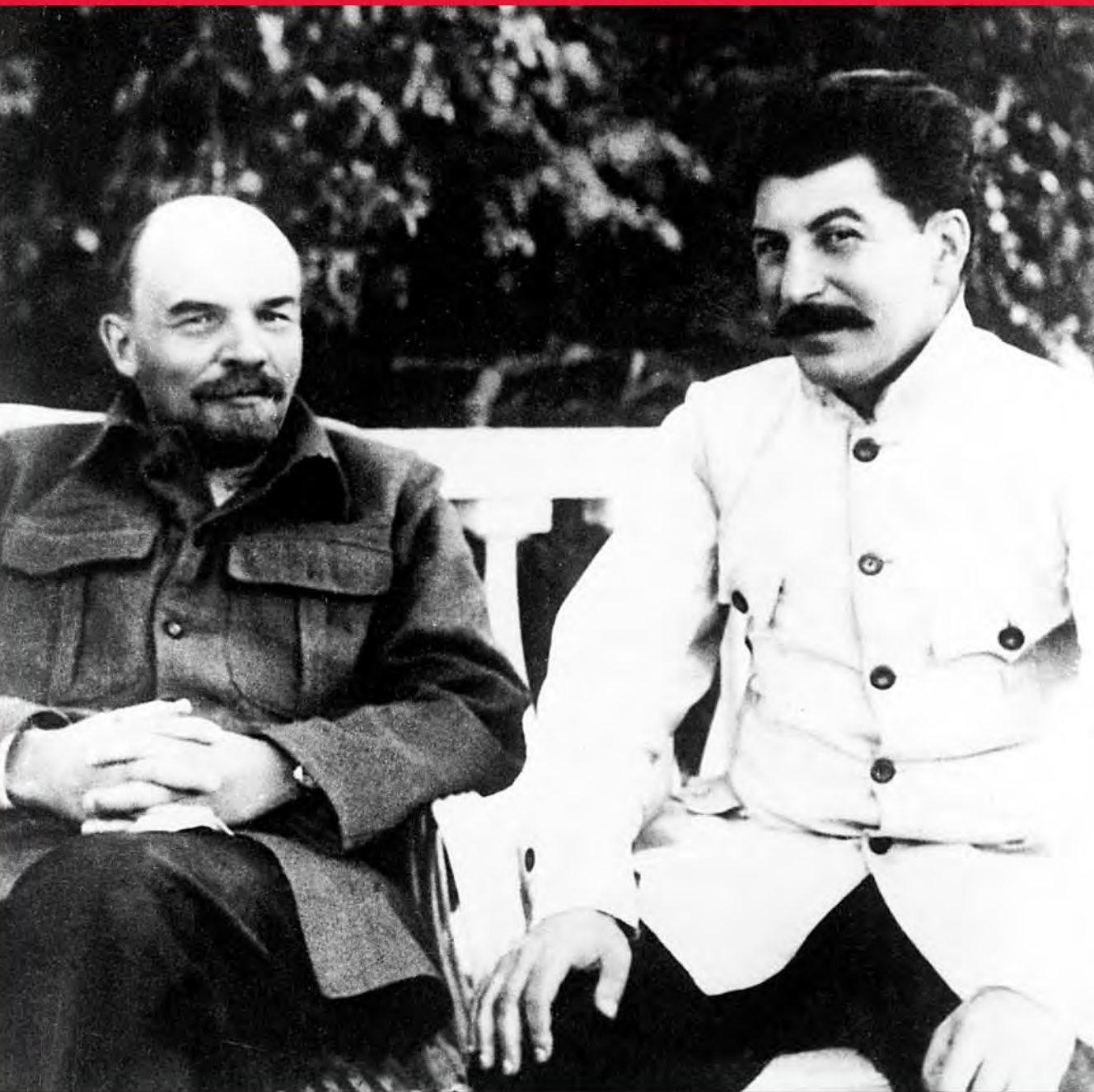


# **LEADERS OF RUSSIA AND THE SOVIET UNION**

From the Romanov Dynasty to Vladimir Putin



**JOHN PAXTON**

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Cover photo: Josef Stalin (right) and Vladimir Lenin (left), 1922. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-111092.

The Photograph is widely held to be a fake from two different sources, crudely joined in an effort to bolster Stalin's position during Lenin's illness in 1922.

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*This, my last book, is dedicated to all those who  
have helped me for over fifty years—typists,  
researchers, co-authors, copy editors, proofreaders  
and indexers, but above all to Joan for constant  
encouragement.*



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## PREFACE

*Leaders of Russia and the Soviet Union: From the Romanov Dynasty to Vladimir Putin* provides succinct biographies of leaders from the election of the first Romanov, Michael, in 1613 to President Vladimir Putin. It highlights how their influence was great, disastrous, or purely negative. It does not aim to be a history of Russia. There are some leaders who ruled for long periods such as Peter I (the Great) and Catherine II (the Great) who engineered enormous changes and some such as Lenin and Stalin who changed Russia completely. Some tsars only lasted a very short time and achieved little but have been included to show historical continuity; Ivan V is an example.

The aim is to give a useful reference tool for students, researchers, historians, as well as Russian history enthusiasts. A glossary of terms and a general chronology are aimed to help the reader, as is a select list of further reading.

As readers and writers know, transliteration problems arise in any book on Russia. I used the Library of Congress transliteration system, but it was necessary to break the rules from time to time. Certain forms, such as “Alexei Sergeyevich,” do not belong to the Library of Congress or to the British Standard schemes. Instead, they usually trace back to the idiosyncratic schemes of early translators who mixed equivalents, such as “Alexis,” with transliterations. I have used English forms for such people as “Catherine II (the Great),” and such places as “Moscow.”

Dates also present confusion because until 1918, the Julian rather than the Gregorian calendar was used in Russia. Consequently, dates determined by the Julian calendar are twelve days behind the Gregorian calendar in the nineteenth century and thirteen days behind in the twentieth century. When Russia adopted the Gregorian

system, the Julian date January 31 became Gregorian date February 14. In this book I have used the Old Style, except for external events, where I have used New Style throughout.

I have to thank the London Library, as usual, for much help and for their vast range of Russian titles, and the British Embassy in Moscow for help on particular questions. I also thank Penny White for her usual meticulous typing and Dione Daffin who tackled the computer with courage to the shame of the author who lives in the world of the quill.

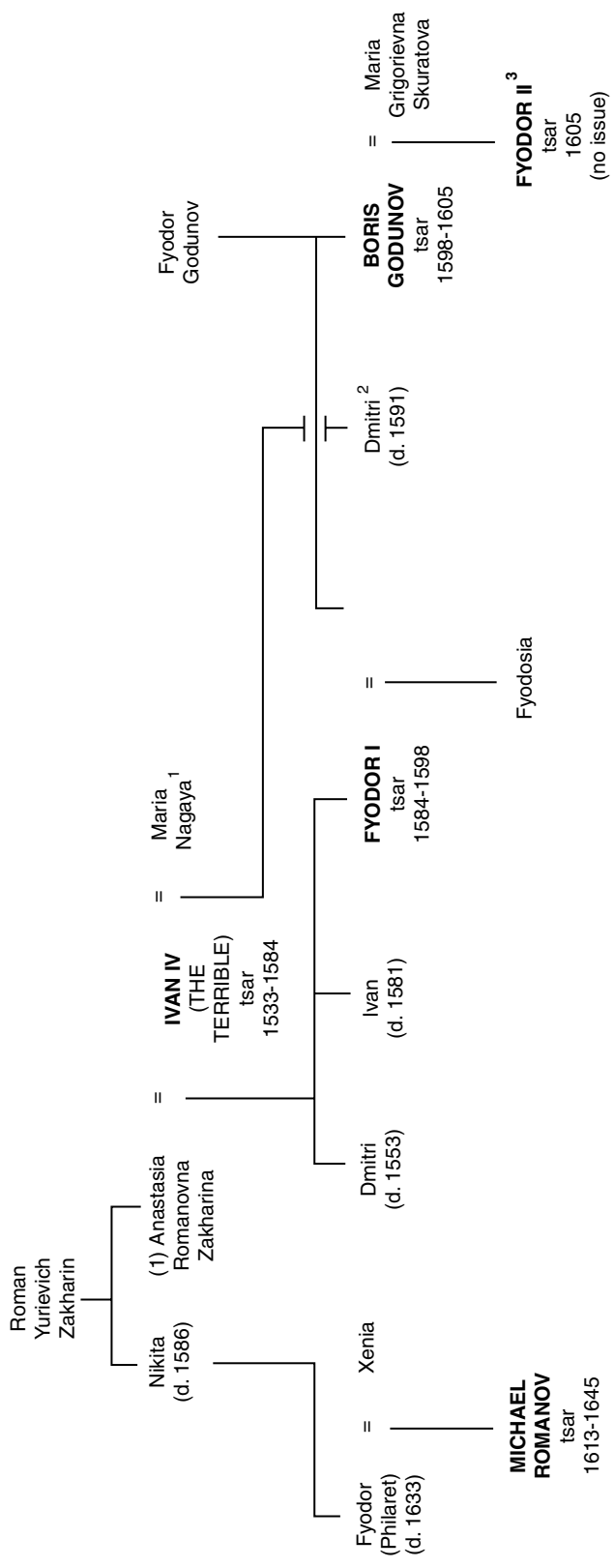
Every effort has been made to trace all copyright holders but if any has been inadvertently overlooked, the author and publishers will be pleased to make the necessary arrangement at the first opportunity.

If errors are found they are my own and I shall be pleased, although sad at the time, to be alerted so that they can be corrected for future editions.

**John Paxton**

*Bruton, Somerset, England*

*September 2003*

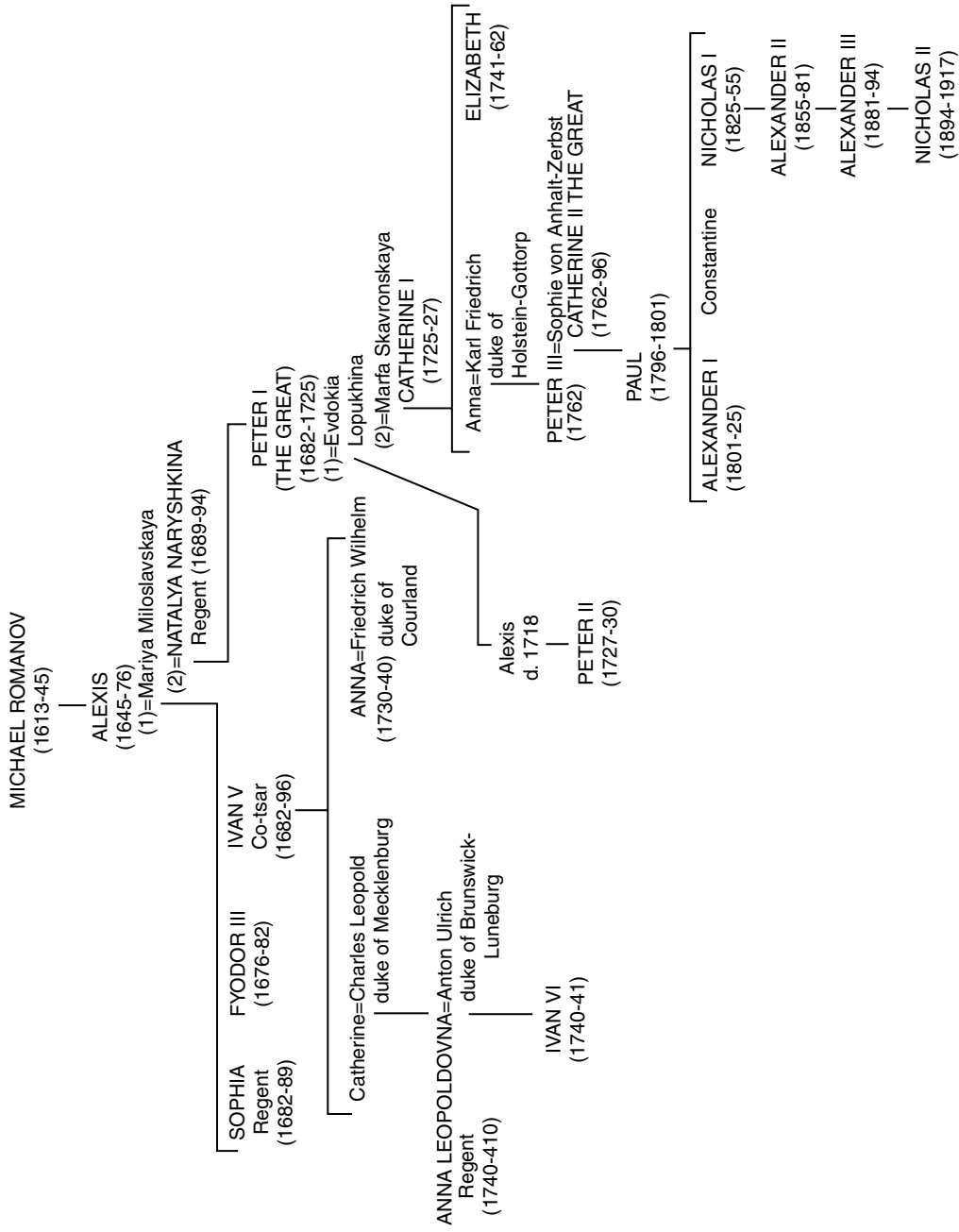


1 Seventh wife of Ivan IV.

2 Murdered at Uglich on May 15, 1591.

3 Murdered at Moscow on June 1, 1605.

*Succession from Ivan IV (1533) to Michael (1613).*



*The Romanov dynasty.*

# INTRODUCTION

*Leaders of Russia and the Soviet Union: From the Romanov Dynasty to Vladimir Putin* is a reference book covering the period from the seventeenth century to the present day. The year 1613 is one of the many watersheds in Russian history and marks the end of the Time of Troubles. It also is the beginning of the reign of the Romanovs with the election of Michael as tsar.

The Time of Troubles was a period in Russian history between the extinction of the Rurik dynasty in 1598 and the establishment of the house of Romanov in 1613. During this time there were five tsars in Moscow whose claims were dubious (including an imposter and a Polish prince), Polish and Swedish invasions, and widespread popular and Cossack unrest. It ended with the expulsion of the Poles from Moscow by patriotic volunteers and the election of Tsar Michael Romanov, the dynasty who would rule Russia for the next three hundred years.

Michael's father, Patriarch Philaret (1553?–1633), known in secular circles as Fyodor Nikitich Romanov, was a successful soldier and diplomat. Compelled to take monastic vows by Boris Godunov, he was released by the first False Dmitri and made metropolitan of Rostov in 1606. In 1609 the second False Dmitri made him Patriarch of All Russia. He was arrested and sent to Poland in 1611. After his son Michael was elected tsar, he returned to Moscow, where he became one of the leaders in the national revival of 1612–1613, and was enthroned as patriarch in 1619.

So from 1613 until the abdication of Nicholas II in 1917, there were three hundred years of Romanovs on the Russian throne. The contrast in the personalities and abilities of these autocrats is the most astonishing aspect of this reference book. It has been said that

successful absolutism depends upon the intelligence, energy, and charisma of the monarch himself. The length of the reigns is also varied and includes a number of assassinations. Succession was part of the problem and was only solved in 1797 when Tsar Paul issued a new law that provided for the succession to the throne according to primogeniture in the male line and also ruled that the successor should be of the Orthodox faith.

The stars of the Romanov era were Peter I (the Great), Catherine II (the Great), and Alexander II for his emancipation of the serfs.

Obviously, Lenin and Stalin dominate the political, economic, and social changes that took place when we move into the Soviet period. If Lenin had lived a little longer, it is possible that Stalin would not have been his successor.

In the latter part of the twentieth century the architects of change were Khrushchev, Gorbachev, and Yeltsin. Few would have predicted the end of the Soviet Union twenty years ago but it is too early to judge what contribution Vladimir Putin will make to the Russian Federation.

# I

## MICHAEL

*Mikhail Fedorovich Romanov, July 12, 1596–July 13, 1645.*

*Tsar of Russia 1613–1645.*

Michael's father, Fyodor Nikitich Romanov, was banished, together with his family, by Boris Godunov, and he was forced to become a monk under the name of Philaret (*see* p. xiii). Later he was to become patriarch of Moscow and also co-tsar with Michael (1618–1633).

By the time the election of a new tsar took place, most of the leading boyar families had discredited themselves in the struggle for power that had been in progress since 1584: in that struggle the Romanovs had figured as martyrs, owing to their persecution by Boris Godunov. Before his accession to the throne Michael lived with his mother on the family estate of the Romanovs in the village of Domnina. In his seventeenth year he was pale, nervous, and pious and the boyars who supported his candidature are said to have imposed limitations on the tsar's power. Michael was elected Sovereign of All Russia by a *zemsky sobor* (Assembly of the Land) in Red Square, Moscow on February 21, 1613, and consecrated Tsar on July 11, in the Dormition Cathedral of the Kremlin. His freedom of action was restricted from the outset by the fact that he owed his position on the throne to election, and the frequency with which he consulted the *zemsky sobor* (sixteen times in his reign) on major questions of policy shows that he felt the need of national support. The fact that in 1625 he adopted the title of autocrat could have had no great significance. In 1624 Michael married Maria Vladimirovna Dolgorukaya, member of another prominent boyar family, and on her early death he took as his second wife Evdokia Lukianovna Streshneva, daughter of a small landowner, who became the mother of his heir Alexis.



With limited ability, Michael at first leaned on favorites, but in 1618 his father, Patriarch Philaret, became his principal adviser, with the titles of co-tsar and of “Great Sovereign.” The new régime was faced with formidable tasks.

In 1613 the treasury coffers were empty, and measures for restoring the financial position of the state played an important part in Michael’s legislation. They included a reassessment of the basis of taxation that, by tending to tie the peasants to the land, powerfully reinforced the development of serfdom.

Michael resumed relations with foreign states and carried on diplomatic relations with the courts of central and eastern Europe. A plan he formed for marrying his daughter to Prince Valdemar of Denmark broke down because of Valdemar’s refusal to join the Orthodox Church—although he had been given reassurance that this was not necessary. Great attention was paid to the development of Siberia and of the trade routes down the Volga to the Caspian Sea and Persia. He produced other reforms particularly in the Russian army. The southern borders were steadily pushed out over the steppe by the foundation of new towns, joined by defensive lines.

Russia was exceedingly weak after the “Time of Troubles,” and both Sweden and Poland claimed Russian territories; Sweden claimed land to the northwest, and Poland claimed Smolensk and large stretches of land to the west. Towards the end of the reign a force of Don Cossacks seized and offered to the tsar the fortress of Azov, a Turkish possession. The Cossacks had withstood a siege of four months but felt that they could not hold on. Michael referred the offer to a zemsky sobor, which refused it on the ground that there was no money for a war with Turkey, and the acceptance of Azov would have involved a war.

Michael died on July 13, 1645, having named Alexis as his heir, and was buried in the Archangel Cathedral of the Kremlin in Moscow.

## CHRONOLOGY

- 1613** The *zemsky sobor* elect Michael Romanov as tsar and he is crowned by Metropolitan Cyril in Moscow (February 21). Philaret, father of the tsar, is taken prisoner.
- 1618** Philaret Romanov, father of the tsar, is freed by the Poles and is elected patriarch and shares power with his son. Under Philaret's influence, from 1622 to 1633, the role of the *zemsky sobor* is gradually reduced.
- 1624** Marriage of Michael to the princess Maria Vladimirovna Dolgorukaya, who died in 1625.
- 1625** Michael marries Evdokia Lukianovna Streshneva, who dies in 1645.
- 1633** Philaret dies. Michael Romanov restores power to the *zemsky sobor* convoking it during crises.
- 1645** Michael dies, and his eldest son, Alexis, succeeds him. The accession to the throne is confirmed by a vote of the *zemsky sobor* (July 13).

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**ALEXIS**

*Alexis Mikhailovich Romanov, March 9, 1629–January 30, 1676.*

*Tsar of Muscovy 1645–1676.*

Son of Michael, first tsar of the house of Romanov, and father of Peter I (the Great). Alexis Mikhailovich was consecrated tsar on July 16, 1645, after the death of his father. He was one of the most educated men of his time and wrote and edited many important decrees and documents. Called “Tishaishii” (the Quietist), because of his piousness and good nature, he delighted in field sports, particularly falconry, and wrote a technical manual on the subject. He also enjoyed practical jokes and also often lost his temper. Alexis was married twice: from 1648 to 1669 to Maria Ilinishna Miloslavskaya (1626–1669), and from 1671 to 1676 to Natalia Kirillovna Naryshkina (1651–1694). There was a total of twenty-one children from both marriages.

This was a period of change for Russia in the seventeenth century when the medieval period was beginning to fade. A group of Russians at the tsar’s court became the first “Westernizers” and Alexis chose his advisers, Morozov, Afanasy Lavrentievich Ordin-Nashchokin (1605?–1680) and Artamon Sergeyevich Matveyev (1625–1682) from this group. Boris Ivanovich Morozov (1590–1662) was tutor and, after 1648, brother-in-law of Tsar Alexis of Russia. Alexis was dependent on advisers in the early part of his reign and Morozov directed the affairs of state at the beginning of Alexis’s reign in 1645. He was keen on Western culture and encouraged Alexis to wear Western clothing. Morozov was hated by the populace, having cut government salaries, and this reached a peak when he increased the salt tax in 1646, which caused severe unrest in Moscow in 1648 and further disturbances in Novgorod and Pskov in 1650. Morozov

was temporarily sent into protective exile and never regained his former power.

Following the “salt rebellion,” Alexis called a meeting of the Assembly of the Land and they elected a commission that drew up a new legal code, the *Ulozhenie* of 1649. Measures included severe punishments for anyone challenging the political or religious order. It finalized the process of serfdom including the period in which fugitive peasants could be returned to their masters, which became indefinite. Merchants and craftsmen were bound to their towns. Traveling abroad was not permitted except with permission of the tsar. Some restrictions were placed on the church; it could not acquire additional land and a Monastery Department was formed to oversee church estates.

The movement toward change met with strong disapproval from many people, particularly when it seemed to be spreading to the sphere of religion and undermining the foundations of the true Orthodox faith. The development of printing meant that it was essential to have authoritative versions of texts and saw the introduction in 1653–1654 of a revised version of the church service books, and of certain small reforms in ritual observance, which merely corrected distortions that had crept in during the Middle Ages. This was the signal for a mass protest that led to the great schism in the Russian church. All non-Orthodox foreigners had to live outside the walls of Moscow; this area became known as the German quarter.

In 1652 Alexis was responsible for the appointment of Metropolitan Nikon of Novgorod to the patriarchate. Nikon was a known supporter of reform but was opposed to some of the measures affecting the church in the *Ulozhenie*. He was, however, insistent that the Russian church should conform to Greek Orthodox rituals. This brought him into conflict with many, including Archpriest Avvakum. Some of the issues included the correct spelling of the name Jesus and whether the sign of the cross should be made with two or three fingers. This dispute led to a schism and a separate church was formed in defiance of the patriarch and the tsar. These “Old Believers” or

Schismatics were vigorously persecuted and suffered exile, long imprisonment, or death.

Nikon surrounded himself with much pomp. He assumed the title of “Great Sovereign” creating the impression that Moscow had two tsars. In 1658 Alexis forbade Nikon to use this title. Nikon refused to perform his official duties and withdrew to a nearby monastery. Eventually, in 1666, he was brought to trial—Alexis having persuaded the patriarchs of Antioch and Alexandria to be present—and Nikon lost his office and was reduced to the rank of an ordinary monk. This ended a trial of strength between church and state.

External affairs saw the acquisition of the Ukraine. The people of the Ukraine had revolted against Polish rule and in 1653 offered their allegiance to Tsar Alexis. War was the result because the king of Poland could not accept the loss of this important possession. The war from 1654 to 1667 ended with Moscow, under the Treaty of Andrusovo, gaining all the territory east of the river Dnieper and the city of Kiev on its right bank; it also regained Smolensk, which had been held by Poland after “The Time of Troubles.”

To finance the wars Alexis debased the currency by using copper instead of silver for coins. This caused an uprising, known as the “copper rebellion” in Moscow in 1662. Many died as a result and in 1663 a decree reestablished the silver currency and copper coins were melted down.

The war with Poland brought Muscovy into conflict with Sweden but under the Treaty of Cardis of June 1661, Muscovy surrendered all the land that it had conquered from Sweden.

Soon after the signing of the Treaty of Andrusovo in 1667 the most serious of many revolts took place in southeastern Russia led by the cossack leader Stenka Timofeyevich Razin (?–1671) in 1670–1671. Stenka Razin captured the whole of the central and lower courses of the river Volga. Many members of the upper classes were massacred, however, the soldiers and peasants welcomed him. By the time Stenka Razin reached Simbirsk his army was 200,000 strong. It was, however, defeated by Muscovite troops. Stenka Razin escaped but in 1671 was captured and executed.

Samuel Collins, who was physician to Alexis in Moscow in the early 1660s, wrote in his *The Present State of Russia* published in London in 1671, “without doubt this present Emperour of Russia is

*Without doubt this present Emperour of Russia is as pious, conscientious, clement, merciful and good a Prince as any in the world. As for his People and Ministers of State,*

they are like other Nations, ready to act anything for Bribes or Money, and to deceive as many as they can.”

Alexis died in 1676 and was buried in the Archangel Cathedral of the Kremlin in Moscow.

## CHRONOLOGY

- |                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| <b>1629</b>      | Alexis born (March 9).  |
| <b>1645</b>      | Morozov, Alexis's former tutor, exercises a <i>de facto</i> regency.                                      |
| <b>1648</b>      | Alexis marries Maria Ilinishna Miloslavskaya (dies 1669).   |
| <b>1670–1671</b> | Uprising of Stenka Razin who together with fugitive serfs and others savages Ukraine and Southern Russia. |
| <b>1671</b>      | Alexis marries Natalia Kirillovna Naryshkina. Stenka Razin executed.                                      |
| <b>1676</b>      | Alexis dies (January 30) and is buried in the Archangel Cathedral of the Kremlin, Moscow.                 |

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## FYODOR III

*Fyodor Alexeyevich Romanov, May 30, 1661–April 27, 1682.*

*Tsar of Russia 1676–1682.*

Fyodor was the son of Alexis's first wife, Maria Miloslavskaya, and the throne was dominated by his mother's relatives. He came to the throne at the age of fourteen and a struggle began between the rival Naryshkins, relatives of Alexis's second wife, and Miloslavsky families. The Naryshkins were exiled but when Fyodor died, at the age of twenty, the Naryshkins wanted to place Peter, his half-brother on the throne instead of Fyodor's full brother, Ivan. The *streltsy*, a hereditary military caste, revolted and installed Ivan's sister Sophia as regent.

Fyodor endeavored to modernize the government of the country and this included the abolition of *mestnichestvo*, the system by which appointment of court officials, ambassadors, and army officials depended upon inherited rank and status. Records of genealogical tables were burned in 1682, thus abolishing *mestnichestvo*. The abolition was inspired by Vasily Golitsyn (1643–1714) who was appointed by Fyodor. Fyodor was instrumental in gaining freedom for the ex-patriarch Nikon in 1680 who died on the homeward journey from the northern monastery where he had been in exile.

When Fyodor acceded to the throne, his chief adviser was Artamon Sergeyeovich Matveyev (1625–1682) who was, in 1654, chief of the *streltsy*, and head of the foreign department in 1671. Fyodor fell victim to intrigue and in 1674 he was exiled to Siberia but recalled to Moscow and pardoned in 1682 by Peter I (the Great).

Later in the reign Vasily Golitsyn became the most important member of the government.



During Fyodor's reign an attempt by the Ukraine to break away from Russia (1677–1681), with the help of Turkey, was foiled. The Treaty of Bakhchisarai (1681) brought the war with Turkey to an end. Muscovy retained Kiev and the Turks retained Podolia.

Fyodor and his brother Ivan were both invalids. In 1680 Fyodor married Agafia Grushevskaya who died the following year. In 1682 he married Marfa Apraxina (d. 1716). There was a child (Ilya) by the first wife, who was born and died in 1681. Fyodor died without designating an heir.

### CHRONOLOGY

- 1661** Fyodor born (May 30).
- 1676** Fyodor III accedes to the throne.
- 1682** Fyodor III abolishes the *mestnichestvo*.
- 1682** Fyodor III dies (April 27).

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## IVAN V

*Ivan Alexeyevich Romanov, August 27, 1666–January 29, 1696.*

*Joint tsar with Peter I (the Great) 1682–1696.*

Ivan was the son of Tsar Alexis and Alexis's first wife Maria Miloslavskaya. He was not expected to be heir to the throne, because of ill health and blindness. After the death of Fyodor III, he was, as eldest remaining son, considered by his mother's family, the Miloslavskys, the rightful heir. However, the Boyars' Duma voted for Ivan's half-brother, the ten-year-old Peter Alexeyevich, the future Peter I (the Great). Following a revolt by the *streltsy* (a hereditary military caste) which was encouraged by Sophia, the sister of Ivan, against the Naryshkin clan, Ivan was named as First Tsar and Peter as Second Tsar under the regency of Sophia. Both Ivan and Peter were consecrated tsar on June 25, 1682, at a joint coronation, believed to be unique in the history of European monarchies.

Because of ill health, Ivan V played no role in political affairs of state and devoted much of his time to prayer, fasting, and pilgrimages. He married Praskovia Feodorovna Saltykova, who died in 1723, and had five children, including the future Empress Anna Ivanovna. He died on January 29, 1696, and was buried in the Archangel Cathedral of the Kremlin in Moscow.

## CHRONOLOGY

**1666** Ivan V born (August 27).

**1682** Consecrated tsar, jointly with Peter (June 25).

**1696** Ivan V dies (January 29).

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## SOPHIA

*Sophia Alekseyevna, September 17, 1657–July 14, 1704.*

*Ruler of Russia 1682–1689.*

Sophia was the daughter of Tsar Alexis and Maria Miloslavskaya. After the death of her brother Tsar Fyodor III in 1682, the successors to the throne were her feeble-minded and partially blind brother Ivan and her half-brother Peter, son of Alexis's second wife, Natalia Naryshkina (1651–1694). Initially Peter was declared Tsar, but after rioting on the part of the *streltsy* and much bloodshed, Peter and Ivan were declared joint tsars and Sophia was declared regent and thus was effectively the autocratic ruler of Russia. Her chief adviser and lover was Prince Vasily Golitsyn (1643–1714), who became foreign minister. She was extremely active in foreign and internal affairs.

In 1686 Russia concluded the “Eternal Peace” with Poland, confirming the truce of 1667, by which Russia gained Kiev and the territory east of the Dnieper River in exchange for a promise to join a European coalition against the Turks. Russia concluded the favorable Nerchinsk Treaty with China in 1689. This was a political and commercial agreement between Russia and China that also established boundaries between the two countries. The agreement gave Russia Transbaikalia (east of Lake Baikal) and gave China the Amur valley, and it permitted Russian trade caravans to enter Peking (modern day Beijing). The agreement was later enlarged in 1727 and remained the basis of Russo-Chinese relations until the mid-nineteenth century. There were two unsuccessful Crimean campaigns, led by Golitsyn, and these tended to undermine Sophia's authority.

At home Sophia was instrumental in the establishment of the Academy of Slavic, Greek, and Latin Studies. She encouraged foreigners to settle and gave permission for Dutch and Germans to

establish a textile industry in Russia. She continued the harsh treatment meted out to Old Believers.

In 1689 Sophia plotted to depose Peter, aiming to become sole ruler. Peter was warned and fled to the fortified Troitsky Monastery, contacting the commanders of the army to inform them of the situation. Peter was supported by the Moscow patriarch, by the majority of the nobles, and part of the *streltsy*. Golitsyn was deported and Sophia was kept in a convent and from that date until 1694 Peter's mother, Natalia Naryshkina, acted as regent. Ivan V died in 1696.

During Peter's Grand Embassy abroad in 1698 another attempt was made by Sophia's supporters to cause a rebellion. She was suspected of knowing about the plot and, assuming the name Susanna, was imprisoned in the Cloister of Intercession in Suzdal where she died.

### CHRONOLOGY

- 1657** Sophia born (September 17).
- 1682** Becomes regent (May 29).
- 1689** Overthrown by supporters of Peter I (the Great) and exiled to Novodevichy Monastery.
- 1698** Sophia forced to take the veil under the name of Susanna.
- 1704** Sophia dies (July 14).

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## PETER I (The Great)

*Peter Alexeyevich Romanov, May 30, 1672–January 28, 1725.*

*Tsar of Russia 1682–1721 (sole ruler from 1696) and  
Emperor of Russia 1721–1725.*

Peter was the first emperor of Russia and youngest son of Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich. When Peter's half-brother Fyodor III died in 1682 without issue, the patriarch of Moscow and the leading boyars decided that Peter should be the tsar rather than his older, but handicapped, half-brother Ivan. Ivan's older sister Sophia, however, organized a coup by the palace guards which resulted in the coronation of Ivan and Peter as joint tsars, with the appointment of Sophia as regent. The next seven years Peter spent in a village near Moscow with his mother. Physically and mentally far in advance of his years, and receiving no systematic education, Peter picked up a mass of knowledge and technical skills, mainly from foreigners in Russian service who lived in a suburb nearby—particularly the Swiss Lefort, the Scotsman Patrick Gordon, and the Dutchman Franz Timmerman.

François Jacob Lefort (1653–1699) was a Swiss soldier who fought for the Russian army. He was a close friend of Peter I and had a considerable influence over him. It is thought that he suggested to Peter that he undertake foreign travels. He assisted in the reorganization of the army and the navy and was appointed a general and an admiral. In 1697 he headed the Grand Embassy.

Peter left nominal precedence to Ivan but in fact ruled the country himself following the resignation of Sophia as regent. Peter's first care on assuming the government was to form an army disciplined according to European tactics, in which task he was greatly aided by Gordon and Lefort. He also strove to create a navy and a merchant fleet. Peter, thinking the possession of a portion of the Black Sea would