time joined several secret societies. The most important of these was the Society of Salvation, founded in 1817 and later renamed the Society of Welfare. Several of Pestel’s fellow officers had been in Paris and Western Europe during the war against Napoleon, and from them he became familiar with the ideas of the French Revolution. Transferred to the southern Russia in 1818, Pestel organized a local branch of the Society of Welfare, where he and his friends discussed such ideas as constitutional monarchy and republican government, as well as the means by which the imperial family might be coerced into accepting the former or made to abdicate in favor of the latter.

Pestel left two unfinished works, Russkaia Pravda (Russian Truth) and Prakticheskie nachala politicheskoy ekonomy (Practical Principles of Political Economy). The first outlines a program for political reform in Russia; the second, a rambling essay on economics, expresses admiration for the prosperity made possible by political freedom in the United States. Pestel’s ideas, especially in their tendency to favor radical solutions to the problem of Russia’s political backwardness, relied heavily on the ideas of the French writer Antoine Louis Claude Destutt de Tracy, but they had other French and German sources as well.

When Alexander I died in December 1825 there was some confusion about the succession. There was also confusion among those who were plotting a revolt. The more radical revolutionaries were in the south under Pestel’s leadership. Betrayed by informants in the Southern Society, Pestel was arrested on December 13, the same day that three thousand soldiers demonstrated in Senate Square in St. Petersburg on behalf of Alexander I’s brother, Constantine, who had already given up his claim to the throne in favor of his brother, Nicholas. Pestel’s colleague Sergei Muraviev-Apostol attempted to lead a revolt, but it was crushed by imperial troops. Pestel was found guilty of treason and executed in 1826 with four of his fellow revolutionaries, Muraviev-Apostol, Peter Kakhovsky, Mikhail Bestuzhev-Ryumin, and Kondraty Ryleyev.

See also: DECEMBRIST MOVEMENT AND REBELLION; RYLEYEV, KONDRATY FYODOROVICH

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with the Grand Embassy, the official aim of which was to revive the Holy League against the Ottomans, which Russia had entered in 1686. Peter traveled incognito, devoting much of his time to visiting major sites and institutions in his search for knowledge. He was particularly impressed with the Dutch Republic and England, where he studied shipbuilding. On his return, he forced his boyars to shave off their beards and adopt Western dress. In 1700 he discarded the old Byzantine creation calendar in favor of dating years in the Western manner from the birth of Christ. These symbolic acts set the agenda for cultural change.

THE GREAT NORTHERN WAR, 1700–1721

After making peace with the Ottoman Empire in 1700, Peter declared war on Sweden with the aim of regaining a foothold on the Baltic, in alliance with Denmark and King Augustus II of Poland. After some early defeats, notably at Narva in 1700, and the loss of its allies, Russia eventually gained the upper hand over the Swedes. After Narva, King Charles XII abandoned his Russian campaign to pursue Augustus into Poland and Saxony, allowing Russia to advance in Ingria and Livonia. When he eventually invaded Russia via Ukraine in 1707–1708, Charles found his troops overextended, under-provisioned, and confronted by a much improved Russian army. Victory at Poltava in Ukraine in 1709 allowed Peter to stage a successful assault on Sweden’s eastern Baltic ports, including Viborg, Riga, and Reval (Tallinn) in 1710. Defeat by the Turks on the river Pruth in 1711 forced him to return Azov (ratified in the 1713 Treaty of Adrianople), but did not prevent him pursuing the Swedish war both at the negotiating table and on campaign, for instance, in Finland in 1713–1714 and against Sweden’s remaining possessions in northern Germany and the Swedish mainland. The Treaty of Nystadt (1721) ratified Russian possession of Livonia, Estonia, and Ingria. During the celebrations the Senate awarded Peter the titles Emperor, the Great, and Father of the Fatherland. In 1722–1723 Peter conducted a campaign against Persia on the Caspian, capturing the ports of Baku and Derbent. Russia’s military successes were achieved chiefly by intensive recruitment, which allowed Peter to keep armies in the field over several decades; training by foreign officers; home production of weapons, especially artillery; and well-organized provisioning. The task was made easier by the availability of a servile peasant population and the obstacles which the Russian terrain and climate posed for the invading Swedes. The navy, staffed mainly by foreign officers on both home-built and purchased ships, provided an auxiliary force in the latter stages of the Northern War, although Peter’s personal involvement in naval affairs has led some historians to exaggerate the fleet’s importance. The galley fleet was particularly effective, as exemplified at Hango in 1714.

DOMESTIC REFORMS

Many historians have argued that the demands of war were the driving force behind all Peter’s reforms. He created the Senate in 1711, for example, to rule in his absence during the Turkish campaign. Among the ten new Swedish-inspired government departments, created between 1717 and 1720 and known as Colleges or collegiate boards, the Colleges of War, Admiralty, and Foreign Affairs consumed the bulk of state revenues, while the Colleges of
Mines and Manufacturing concentrated on production for the war effort, operating iron works and manufacture of weapons, rope, canvas, uniforms, powder, and other products. The state remained the chief producer and customer, but Peter attempted to encourage individual enterprise by offering subsidies and exemptions. Free manpower was short, however, and in 1721 industrialists were allowed to purchase serfs for their factories. New provincial institutions, based on Swedish models and created in several restructuring programs, notably in 1708–1709 and 1718–1719, were intended to rationalize recruitment and tax collection, but were among the least successful of Peter’s projects. As he said, money was the “artery of war.” A number of piecemeal fiscal measures culminated in 1724 with the introduction of the poll tax (initially 74 kopecks per annum), which replaced direct taxation based on households with assessment of individual males. Peter also encouraged foreign trade and diversified indirect taxes, which were attached to such items and services as official paper for contracts, private bathhouses, oak coffins, and beards (the 1705 beard tax). Duties from liquor, customs, and salt were profitable.

The Table of Ranks (1722) consolidated earlier legislation by dividing the service elite—army and navy officers, government and court officials—into three columns of fourteen ranks, each containing a variable number of posts. No post was supposed to be allocated to any candidate who was unqualified for the duties involved, but birth and marriage continued to confer privilege at court. The Table was intended to encourage the existing nobility to perform more efficiently, while endorsing the concept of nobles as natural leaders of society: Any commoner who attained the lowest military rank—grade 14—or civil grade 8 was granted noble status, including the right to pass it to his children.

Peter’s educational reforms, too, were utilitarian in focus, as was his publishing program, which focused on such topics as shipbuilding, navigation, architecture, warfare, geography, and history. He introduced a new simplified alphabet, the so-called civil script, for printing secular works. The best-known and most successful of Peter’s technical schools was the Moscow School of Mathematics and Navigation (1701; from 1715, the St. Petersburg Naval Academy), which was run by British teachers. Its graduates were sent to teach in the so-called cipher or arithmetic schools (1714), but these failed to attract pupils. Priests and church schools continued to be the main suppliers of primary education, and religious books continued to sell better than secular ones. The Academy of Sciences is generally regarded as the major achievement, although it did not open until 1726 and was initially staffed entirely by foreigners. In Russia, as elsewhere, children in rural communities, where child labor was vital to the economy, remained uneducated.

THE CHURCH

The desire to deploy scarce resources as rationally as possible guided Peter’s treatment of the Orthodox Church. He abolished the patriarchate, which was left vacant when the last Patriarch died in 1700, and in 1721 replaced it with the Holy Synod, which was based on the collegiate principle and later overseen by a secular official, the Over-Procurator. The Synod’s rationale and program were set out in the Spiritual Regulation (1721). Peter siphoned off church funds as required, but he stopped short of secularizing church lands. He slimmed down the priesthood by redeploying superfluous clergymen into state service and restricting entry into monasteries, which he regarded as refuges for shirkers. Remaining churchmen accumulated various civic duties, such as keeping registers of births and deaths, running schools and hospitals, and publicizing government decrees. These measures continued seventeenth-century trends in reducing the church’s independent power, but Peter went farther by reducing its role in cultural life. Himself a dutiful Orthodox Christian who attended church regularly, he was happy for the Church to take responsibility for the saving of men’s souls, but not for it to rule their lives. His reforms were supported by educated churchmen imported from Ukraine.

ST. PETERSBURG AND THE NEW CULTURE

The city of St. Petersburg began as an island fort at the mouth of the Neva river on land captured from the Swedes in 1703. From about 1712 it came to be regarded as the capital. In Russia’s battle for international recognition, St. Petersburg was much more than a useful naval base and port. It was a clean sheet on which Peter could construct a microcosm of his New Russia. The Western designs and decoration of palaces, government buildings, and churches, built in stone by hired foreign architects according to a rational plan, and the European fashions that all Russian townspeople were forced to wear, were calculated to make foreigners
feel that they were in Europe rather than in Asia. The city became a "great window recently opened in the north through which Russia looks on Europe" (Francesco Algarotti, 1739). Peter often referred to it as his "paradise," playing on the associations with St. Peter as well as expressing his personal delight in a city built on water. The central public spaces enjoyed amenities such as street lighting and paving and public welfare was supervised by the Chief of Police, although conditions were less salubrious in the backstreets. Nobles resented being uprooted from Moscow to this glorified building site. Noblewomen were not exempt. They were wrenched from their previously sheltered lives in the semi-secluded women’s quarters or terem and ordered to abandon their modest, loose robes and veils in favor of Western low cut gowns and corsets and to socialize and drink with men. Some historians have referred to the “emancipation” of women under Peter, but it is doubtful whether this was the view of those involved.

PETER’S VISION AND METHODS
Peter was an absolute ruler, whose great height (six foot seven inches) and explosive temper must have intimidated those close to him. His portraits, the first thoroughly Westernized Russian images painted or sculpted from life, were embellished with Imperial Roman, allegorical, military, and naval motifs to underline his power. Yet he sought to deflect his subjects’ loyalty from himself to the state, exhorting them to work for the common good. A doer rather than a thinker, he lacked formal education and the patience for theorizing. Soviet historians favored the image of the Tsar-Carpenter, emphasizing the fourteen trades that Peter mastered, of which his favorites were shipbuilding and wood turning. He also occasionally practiced dentistry and surgery. Ironically, Peter often behaved in a manner that confirmed foreign prejudices that Russia was a barbaric country. Abroad he frequently offended his hosts with his appalling manners, while Western visitors to Russia were perplexed by his court, which featured dwarfs, giants, and human “monsters” (from his Cabinet of Curiosities), compulsory drinking sessions, which armed guards prevented guests prevented from leaving, and weird ceremonies staged by the “All-Mad, All-Jesting, All-Drunken Assembly,” which, headed by the Prince-Pope, parodied religious rituals. Throughout his life Peter maintained a mock court headed by a mock tsar known as Prince Caesar, who conferred promotions on “Peter Mikhailov” or “Peter Alexeyev,” as Peter liked to be known as he worked his way through the ranks of the army and navy.

One of the functions of Peter’s mock institutions was to ridicule the old ways. Peter constantly lamented his subjects’ reluctance to improve themselves on their own initiative. As he wrote in an edict of 1721 to replace sickles with more efficient scythes: “Even though something may be good, if it is new our people will not do it.” He therefore resorted to force. In Russia, where serfdom was made law as recently as 1649, the idea of a servile population was not new, but under Peter servitude was extended and intensified. The army and navy swallowed up tens of thousands of men. State peasants were increasingly requisitioned to work on major projects. Previously free persons were transferred to the status of serfs during the introduction of the poll tax. Peter also believed in the power of rules, regulations, and statutes, devised “in order that everyone knows his duties and no one excuses himself on the grounds of ignorance.” In 1720, for example, he issued the General Regulation, a “regulation of regulations” for the new government apparatus. Not only the peasants, but also the nobles, found life burdensome. They were forced to serve for life and to educate their sons for service.

ASSOCIATES AND OPPONENTS
Despite his harsh methods, Peter was supported by a number of men, drawn from both the old Muscovite elite and from outside it. The most prominent of the newcomers were his favorite, the talented and corrupt Alexander Menshikov (1673–1729), whom he made a prince, and Paul Yaguzhinsky, who became the first Procurator-General. Top men from the traditional elite included General Boris Sheremetev, Chancellor Gavrila Golovkin, Admiral Fyodor Apraksin and Prince Fyodor Romodanovsky. The chief publicist was the Ukrainian churchman Feofan Prokopovich. It is a misconception that Peter relied on foreigners and commoners.

Religious traditionalists abhorred Peter, identifying him as the Antichrist. The several revolts of his reign all included some elements of antagonism toward foreigners and foreign innovations such as shaving and Western dress, along with more standard and substantive complaints about the encroachment of central authority, high taxes, poor conditions of service, and remuneration. The most serious were the musketeer revolt of 1698, the Astrakhan revolt of 1705, and the rebellion led by the
Don Cossack Ivan Bulavin in 1707–1708. The disruption that worried Peter most, however, affected his inner circle. Peter was married twice: in 1689 to the noblewoman Yevdokia Lopukhina, whom he banished to a convent in 1699, and in 1712 to Catherine, a former servant girl from Livonia whom he met around 1703. He groomed the surviving son of his first marriage, Alexei Petrovich (1690–1718), as his successor, but they had a troubled relationship. In 1716 Alexei fled abroad. Lured back to Russia in 1718, he was tried and condemned to death for treason, based on unfounded charges of a plot to assassinate his father. Many of Alexei’s associates were executed, and people in leading circles were suspected of sympathy for him. Peter and Catherine had at least ten children (the precise number is unknown), but only two girls reached maturity: Anna and Elizabeth (who reigned as empress from 1741 to 1761). In 1722 Peter issued a new Law of Succession by which the reigning monarch nominated his own successor, but he failed to record his choice before his death (from a bladder infection) in February (January O.S.) 1725. Immediately after Peter’s death, Menshikov and some leading courtiers with guards’ support backed Peter’s widow, who reigned as Catherine I (1725–1727).

**VIEWS OF PETER AND HIS REFORMS**

The official view in the eighteenth century and much of the nineteenth was that Peter had “given birth” to Russia, transforming it from “non-existence” into “being.” Poets represented him as Godlike. The man and his methods were easily accommodated in later eighteenth-century discourses of Enlightened Absolutism. Even during Peter’s lifetime, however, questions were raised about the heavy cost of his schemes and the dangers of abandoning native culture and institutions. As the Russian historian Nikolai Karamzin commented in 1810: “Truly, St. Petersburg is founded on tears and corpses.” He believed that Peter had made Russians citizens of the world, but prevented them from being Russians. Hatred of St. Petersburg as a symbol of alien traditions was an important element in the attitude of nineteenth-century Slavophiles, who believed that only the peasants had retained Russian cultural values. To their Westernizer opponents, however, Peter’s reforms, stopping short of Western freedoms, had not gone far enough. In the later nineteenth century, serious studies of seventeenth-century Muscovy questioned the revolutionary nature of Peter’s reign, underlining that many of Peter’s reforms and policies, such as hiring foreigners, reforming the army, and borrowing Western culture, originated with his predecessors. The last tsars, especially Nicholas II, took a nostalgic view of pre-Petrine Russia, but Petrine values were revered by the imperial court until its demise.

Soviet historians generally took a bipolar view of Peter’s reign. On the one hand, they believed that Russia had to catch up with the West, whatever the cost; hence they regarded institutional and cultural reforms, the new army, navy, factories, and so on as “progressive.” Territorial expansion was approved. On the other hand, Soviet historians were bound to denounce Peter’s exploitation of the peasantry and to praise popular rebels such as Bulavin; moreover, under Stalin, Peter’s cosmopolitanism was treated with suspicion. Cultural historians in particular stressed native achievements over foreign borrowings. In the 1980s–1990s some began to take a more negative view still, characterizing Peter as “the creator of the administrative-command system and the true ancestor of Stalin” (Anisimov, 1993). After the collapse of the USSR, the secession of parts of the former Empire and Union, and the decline of the armed forces and navy, many people looked back to Peter’s reign as a time when Russia was strong and to Peter as an ideal example of a strong leader. The debate continues.

**See also:** ALEXEI PETROVICH; CATHERINE I; ELIZABETH; FYODOR ALEXEYEVICH; MENSHIKOV, ALEXANDER DANILOVICH; PATRIARCHATE; PEASANTRY; SERFDOM; ST. PETERSBURG; TABLE OF RANKS

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**PETER II**

(1715–1730), emperor of Russia, May 1727 to January 1730.

Son of Tsarevich Alexis Petrovich and Princess Charlotte of Wolfenbüttel, and grandson of Peter I, the future Peter II had an unfortunate start in life. His German mother died soon after his birth, and in 1718 his father died in prison after being tortured and condemned to death for treason. Peter I did not mistreat his grandson, but feared him as a possible rallying point for conservatives. He did not groom him as his heir, and a new Law on Succession (1722) rejected primogeniture and made it possible for the ruler to nominate his successor. During the reign of his step-grandmother, Catherine I (1725–1727), young Peter found himself under the protection of Prince Alexander Menshikov, who betrothed him to his daughter Maria and persuaded Catherine to name him as her successor, in the hope of stealing ground from the old nobility and gaining popularity by restoring the male line. On the day of Catherine’s death, Peter was proclaimed emperor.

For the rest of Peter’s short life it was a question of who could manipulate him before he developed a mind of his own. At first Menshikov kept the emperor under his wing, but, following a bout of illness in the summer of 1727, Menshikov was marginalized then banished by members of the powerful Dolgoruky clan, backed by the emperor’s grandmother, Peter I’s ex-wife Yevdokia. Peter II was crowned in Moscow on March 8 (February 25 O.S.), 1728. His chief adviser was now Prince Alexis Grigorevich Dolgoruky, but the power behind the government was Heinrich Osterman. Both men were members of the Supreme Privy Council. After his coronation Peter stayed in Moscow, where he devoted much of his time to hunting. Portraits show a handsome boy dressed in the latest Western fashion. His short reign has sometimes been associated with a move to reject many of Peter’s reforms, but there is no evidence that Peter II or his circle planned to return to the old ways, even if magnates welcomed the opportunity to spend more time on their Moscow estates. According to one source, young Peter wished to “follow in the steps of his grandfather.” He did not get the chance. In fall 1729 he was betrothed to Prince Dolgoruky’s daughter Catherine, but the wedding never took place. On January 29 (January 18 O.S.), 1730, he died from smallpox, without nominating a successor. The last of the Romanov male line, he was buried in the Archangel Cathedral in Moscow.

See also: CATHERINE I; MENSHIKOV, ALEXANDER DANILOVICH; ROMANOV DYNASTY

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**PETER III**

(1728–1762), emperor of Russia, January 5, 1762, to July 9, 1762.

The future Peter III was born Karl Peter Ulrich in Kiel, Germany, in February 1728, the son of the duke of Holstein and Peter I’s daughter Anna Petrovna, who died shortly after his birth. His paternal grandmother was a sister of Charles XII of Sweden; this relation gave him a claim to the Swedish throne. In 1742 his aunt, the Empress Elizabeth (reigned 1741–1762 [1761 O.S.]), brought him to Russia to be groomed as her heir. Raised a Lutheran with German as his first language, he received instruction in Russian and the Orthodox religion, to which he converted. In 1745 he was married to the fifteen-year-old German Princess Sophia of Anhalt Zerbst, the future Catherine II (“the Great”). On Christmas Day 1761 (O.S.), Elizabeth died, and Peter succeeded her.