More on Peter the Great

The struggle for the power continued...

Peter with his mother lived in a country house outside of Moscow. His friends were village boys, and he became their leader. In 1682, Peter and his retarded half-brother were named as joint tsars, and were brought to Moscow for ceremonial occasions.

Young Peter loved to play soldier, and at the age of 12 constructed a wooden fortress on the grounds of the house where they lived. He learned to how to shoot a cannon and always played wars. By the age of 14, he about 300 soldiers dressed in uniforms, which Peter had designed. These men, his "merry company," later became the nucleus of the elite units of the Russian Army.

Peter introduced a revolutionary concept: **advancement should be based on merit and not on rank** (E.g., until he felt he was sufficiently skilled, served as a private in his own regiment). At the age of 15, he learned how to sail a bout; it was the beginning of his passion for boats and the sea, which has dramatically changed the history of Russia.

Peter was a giant (6'7''); he could roll up silver plates, fell trees, and shoe a horse. He could take apart and reassemble any mechanical equipment. He studied masonry and carpentry and became skilled in 14 specialties.

In 1696, his brother died, and Peter became the ruler. His mission was "to break the bonds of inflexible customs of Muscovy and to lead this country toward a new day which shall be better than this." He wanted a sweeping adoption of Western culture and technology.

In 1697 he sets out to Europe with an exotic looking company of 270 friends and servants. Peter was dressed as a sailor and traveled incognito as Peter Mikhailov. In the streets, he demanded to see and examine everything. He took a course in gunnery from a Prussian engineer; sailed down the Rhine; went to Holland; rented a tiny house from a carpenter in the suburbs of Amsterdam; dressed as a Dutch sailor to work in the local shipyards; learned how to build a frigate and received a certificate in shipbuilding; climbed to the uppermost galleries in the Houses of Parliament in London; always recorded his observations; worked in a paper factory; learned the art of engraving; human anatomy and surgery; visited Paris; got interested in Gobelins tapestry; he said of Versailles "it looks like a pigeon with the wings of an eagle"; hired people skilled in various specialties and sent them to Russia.

**Peter started to change his people's ways, i.e completely overturned the traditions and habits of centuries.** Reforms:
In Russia, a beard was a mark of a real man and a true believer. Peter ordered to shave beards. He instituted a tax for the privilege of keeping the beard;

cut off long sleeves of men's kaftans, and instituted Western-style jackets;

made war on the seclusion of women;

ordered not to marry young people against their wills;

he instituted Assemblées, were men and women spent time together and danced

created a modern army in Russia, and built the navy;

founded schools of navigation, mathematics, geography, medicine, politics, philosophy, and astronomy;

introduced the potato and encouraged the breeding of native Russian horses;

instead of rewarding victorious generals with estates, presented them with a ribbon and a diamond order;

began the first Russian newspaper, and ordered the printing of 600 books, including a guide to the writing of compliments, proposals of marriage, and invitations;

introduced lace-making, tapestry, and paper-making industries;

opened mines for semi-precious stones in the Urals;

changed the calendar and reformed the Russian alphabet;

sent hundreds of promising Russians to Europe to learn navigation, engineering, and arts;

tried to open grammar schools to all classes, but was opposed by the conservative boyars and clergy who called him the "Anti-Christ with smoke billowing out of his mouth";

fought a continual war with the Swedes; won the Poltava battle in 1709' was given the title "the Great" and proclaimed Russia's first Emperor;

found time for a great love to a simple Lithuanian orphan girl Martha Skavronskaya; she was baptized an took the new name of Catherine (later crowned Empress Catherine I); they had 12 children, all their children died except Anna and Elizabeth;

**Building the new capital: St. Petersburg:**
May 16, 1703

Lake Ladoga; the Neva river; an island that the Finns called the Isle of Hares (Vasilyevsky Island); laid the first stone of Peter and Paul Fortress; dug a trench and buried a casket containing relics of St. Andrew; placed a stone that had been blessed and sprinkled with holy water; legend--eagle;

**extraordinary difficulties in construction:** Swedish enemy, severe nature-- the river is frozen 4-6 months in the year; the city was built on wooden piles sunk into the shifting swampy ground;

thousands of peasants, prisoners, and soldiers (150,000 total); slept in the open air; had almost no tools; so many died that the city is built o bones;

built himself a wooden cabin (3 rooms) and lived there for 5 years!

floods; in 1705 the whole city was several feet deep in water;

**Compare:** 47 years to built Versailles vs. 7 years to built St. Petersburg;

St. Petersburg became the capital in 1712; in 1714 there were 34,550 buildings;

brought foreign engineers, architects, and artists;

Trezzini built one Summer and two Winter Palaces for Peter. Peter insisted that his private residence should be built next to a shipyard.

Peter always surrounded Catherine by luxury, his own rooms were very simple.

**St. Petersburg: Architecture**

Domenico Trezzini. Cathedral of SS. Peter and Paul. 1712-1733
Trezzini and Ustinov designed the Peter and Paul Fortress and church with a 400-foot tower, surmounted by a guilder spire made entirely of wood; stretches more than 197 feet into the sky; it was a startling architectural landmark in a country dominated by the cupola/domes; note: again he broke the national tradition!

The cathedral's plan is not the traditional one for Russian churches. It is a three-nave basilica with a dome over the altar part. A huge three-story belfry dominates the cathedral, square in plan, which rises on the western side and forms the main facade.

Massive volutes flank the ground story and contribute to the belfry's unity with the building. The three stories of the belfry are decorated with pilasters and crowned by octagonal domical roof with circular dials on all four sides below the spire.

**Definition of Terms:**
**Basilica**- church or cathedral of high rank

**Capital**- crowning part of a column or pillar. In the Classical period, the principal types of capitals were Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian as well as composite type.

**Nave**- main part of church interior (usually of a basilica), a long hall with columns or piers along its sides;

**Pilaster**- flat rectangular projection on a wall treated as a column. Used mainly as decorative element dividing a wall. Pilaster strips are shallow and lack capitals.

**Pillar**- upright, usually supporting column or shaft;

**Volute**- spiral, or scroll-shaped form