

Peter the Great as a Constructive Revolutionary

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“In Peter, beneath the imperial purple, one senses a revolutionary.”¹ These words, spoken by Alexander Herzen, are an indication of Peter the Great’s influence upon Russia as Tsar of the country from 1689 until 1725. His reign was a period of significant, even revolutionary, changes. Many of his reforms were revolutionary, in that they effected major changes, and were meant to be constructive, or useful and beneficial, to Russia. Peter’s reforms in the area of education in particular reveal this constructive revolution. Some of the historical problems concerning this topic are questions such as: what was actually new about Peter’s reforms? What changes occurred as a result of his reforms? How were the reforms constructive? What were the goals of these reforms?

After becoming Tsar of Russia in 1689, Peter the Great began the process of profoundly influencing Russian history. Many scholars, as well as contemporaries from Peter’s day, have connected him with the words “reform” or “revolution” because he aimed to modernize and transform his country for the better. This process of modernization was based largely upon Europeanization, or bringing elements of European society into Russia. Much of his reign was defined by war with Sweden as well as the Ottoman Turks. After two successive defeats at the hands of both of these enemies, which were reminiscent of military losses that had occurred prior to his reign, it became clear to Peter that the creation of a navy and the modernization of the military would be key to any Russian victories. The Tsar sought to reform the state by introducing new bureaucratic models, which would in turn increase the capabilities of the military. Peter also firmly believed in strengthening the idea of Russia as a universal service state, in which everyone was to contribute to the interests of the state and the

¹ Evgenii V. Anisimov, *The Reforms of Peter the Great: Progress through Coercion in Russia* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), 296.

“common good” by serving in some way. Inevitably, Peter’s Europeanization of Russia also entailed many cultural, economic, and societal changes within Russia.

If one looks at Peter’s early life, it can be seen that even at a young age he was fascinated with learning and observing. As a boy, Peter would sneak into a settlement just outside of Moscow where foreigners from Europe were forced to live. Here he observed Western ways of living. He even learned basic geometry and geography at this settlement, which is itself an indication of the lack of a formal educational system within Russia. Peter grew up in a Russia that was traditional, and for the most part, closed to outside influence. This closed and traditional society is evidenced by the isolation of foreigners within the settlements, as well as the continuation of old ways of dress and social etiquette. Peter, however, was fascinated by things which existed outside of Russia, particularly in Western Europe. Early on in his reign, the Tsar began to visit Europe. He was exposed to its greatness, as well as its modernity. He then brought these influences back to Russia and wanted his country to achieve this same greatness. He knew that significant, and revolutionary, changes needed to occur if Russia was to become a great power within Europe.

Most historians agree that Peter’s reign had a substantial impact upon Russia because of the changes that he initiated in so many areas of society.² However, different historians have various opinions and approaches concerning the Petrine reforms. Some emphasize the coercive measures that were used to implement some of the reforms, while others have acknowledged the resistance that existed as a result of Peter’s plans but have focused on those aspects of his reforms which helped Russia modernize. Still others have

² M.S. Anderson, *Peter the Great* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978); Anisimov; James Cracraft, *The Revolution of Peter the Great* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); L. Jay Oliva, *Russia in the*

contended that the Petrine reforms cannot be described as revolutionary.

Historian Nicholas V. Riasanovsky's book, *The Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought*, was published in 1985. He primarily deals with the changing Russian attitudes towards Peter the Great in different periods of history. Riasanovsky contends that Peter's image within Russian history can be divided into four periods. Each period has its own emphasis on positive or negative aspects of Peter's reign, or a more mixed view. He asks the question: "What will the next Russian image of Peter the Great be like?"³ Essentially, he believes Peter's image in Russia is ever changing as new periods develop.

During the "Age of Enlightenment," which lasted from 1700-1826, the image of Peter as expressed by the educated public was mainly defended and seen in a positive light. This view focused on Peter's achievements and virtues, as well as his significance within Russian history. Riasanovsky points out that a change occurred in the 1830s during the "Age of Idealistic Philosophy and Romanticism." In this period, three basic images predominated. The government and its supporters continued to uphold the image of Peter as "the victorious creator of the Russian empire and its might, the sage organizer of the state, the lawgiver of modern Russia."⁴ They believed his influence upon Russia was beneficial and that his reforms had a constructive effect upon society. Those who held this view, however, did not want to see any further Westernization of Russia, which contrasted with the view of the Westernizers who also upheld Peter's image but wanted Russia's continued Westernization. The third image was that held by the Slavophiles, a

Age of Peter the Great (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969)

³ Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *The Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 303.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 304.

group of Russian intellectuals who wanted a return to “the true Russian principles” and who believed that Peter’s reforms were disastrous. Riasanovsky calls this view the “first full-scale negative one to emerge in the midst of the Russian educated elite.”⁵

The “Age of Realism and Scholarship,” which began in 1860, is classified as one of disunity. The government officials still promoted a positive image of Peter the Great, while the liberals wanted continued Westernization. Some of the radical liberals considered Peter “the true Enlightener,” while other radicals believed he oppressed his people. The populists generally had a negative image of him, but Riasanovsky points out that this group was also not very concerned with him. This period ended in 1917, after the October revolution. This led to a “hostile” view of Peter the Great within history. Within this new fourth period concerning the image of Peter, Joseph Stalin came to power. Riasanovsky then writes of a “complex bipolar Petrine image.”⁶ The author believes that this image still existed at the time of the publication of his book. This image emphasizes both constructive and destructive effects of the Petrine reforms.

The Russian historian Evgenii V. Anisimov has also analyzed Peter’s role within Russia. He describes the reasons for the Petrine reforms, which include the need to win wars, as well as Peter’s own personality and his need to create what he perceived as the ideal state. Anisimov’s interpretation acknowledges the progress that occurred in Russia because of Peter’s reforms. The Tsar opened up Russia to Europe and the modern world. To Anisimov, the revolution initiated by Peter was the catalyst for change in Russia that would have otherwise taken years to be accomplished. However, he does not glorify Peter but rather indicts him for the particular methods he chose when trying to achieve

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 305.

his vision. The coercive nature of the reforms is of central importance to Anisimov, as he believes the noble ends proposed by Peter do not justify the means which he employed.

Along with Peter's military aspirations came his own vision of the "state ideal."⁷ He believed that just as the army was regulated, so too should be the state. The basis for this "state ideal" was the concept that the state has an incredibly significant role in society. Anisimov states that, for Peter, the right laws would lead to prosperity and the progress of a country. This, in turn, meant that each aspect of a subject's life needed to be regulated. Within this state, each citizen was to play a role in serving the state and thus promote the common good. Part of this involved the state's intrusion into the private lives of individuals, who were forced to change their dress and hairstyles. Anisimov asserts that these regulations even went so far as to determine that the ceiling in private homes be plastered, as well as the stipulations concerning the types of coffins that could be used at funerals. Those who opposed certain rules were met with "harsh punitive measures."⁸ Historian E.F. Shmurlo has described this opposition as "traditionalists" who came from "all strata of society."⁹

Another interpretation of Peter's reforms and their significance is exemplified in *The Revolution of Peter the Great* (2003) by James Cracraft. In this work, Cracraft argues that although Peter's reforms did have social and economic consequences, the main effect was a political and cultural revolution. He believes that although Peter cannot necessarily be credited with later Russian "political and cultural achievements,"¹⁰ he also cannot be

⁷ Anisimov, 143.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ E.F. Shmurlo, "The Opposition of the Traditionalists" in *Peter the Great: Reformer or Revolutionary?* ed. Marc Raeff (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath and Co., 1963), 74.

¹⁰ James Cracraft, *The Revolution of Peter the Great* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 163-4.

blamed for “its subsequent social and economic deficiencies.”¹¹ Despite the resistance from the peasants and those who did not want Russia to “modernize,” such as the traditionalists and the Old Believers within the Orthodox Church, Peter was able to advance Russian society. Cracraft describes a military and naval revolution, with particular emphasis upon the development of the navy. The author states that this navy connected Russia with Europe and the modern world. He particularly emphasizes the *cultural* revolution brought about by Peter. French astronomers, as well as Dutch, Italian, and British naval officers, brought new technical terminology that was, in turn, taught to Russian students. He points to the increase in education, a change in architecture, as well as considerable increase in the Russian vocabulary that was primarily due to foreign influence.

Like several other interpretations of the Petrine Era, Cracraft’s view does not present Peter the Great as perfect in his methods, but he places him in a generally positive light. Cracraft acknowledges the resistance that occurred as some opposed the reforms, but overall his emphasis is on the revolution that occurred and its beneficial impact on Russian society. To Cracraft, Peter’s significance seems to lie in the vision that he had for Russia and the positive and revolutionary changes that occurred as a result of this vision.

An opinion which is in sharp contrast to Cracraft’s is that of S.F. Platonov, an early twentieth century Russian professor at the University of St. Petersburg. He argues that Peter the Great was simply not a revolutionary. He believes his reforms do not represent a revolution in either “their substance or their results.”¹² He states that after studying

¹¹ Ibid., 164.

¹² S.F. Platonov, “Peter the Great Not a Revolutionary Innovator” in *Peter the Great: Reformer or*

Peter and his actions it becomes clear that he did not initiate a “sudden revolution” that would have surprised those living in Muscovy.¹³ There was no political revolution, as Peter merely continued on the path of his predecessors. Nor were there social or economic revolutions, as the same class relations and agricultural economy remained.¹⁴ Platanov also points out that in the area of cultural change, Peter brought nothing that was “radically new.”¹⁵ According to the Platanov, the traditional “cultural ideals” had already begun to be challenged prior to Peter’s time.¹⁶ So, instead of being the initiator of the “cultural trend” which was interested in Western ideals, Peter was simply the first tsar who took the time to implement reforms in that area.

Platanov asserts that the Tsar has only been considered a revolutionary because of his speedy reforms, which contrasted with the “cautious and slow” policies of the past, as well as the manner in which he went about reforming.¹⁷ This manner made it seem as though the Tsar was destroying the old order and creating a new one.¹⁸ In other words, the speed of Peter’s reforms gave the illusion that a revolution was occurring. Platanov reinforces the idea that there was no real break with the past, as things merely continued on that same path that was started in pre-Petrine times. In this view, Peter the Great should not be placed on a pedestal as someone who profoundly changed Russia, but instead was someone who merely put reform into action.

A different perspective is presented by British historian B.H. Sumner, who furthers the idea that Peter moved away from the traditional orthodox past to a mindset that was

Revolutionary? ed. Marc Raeff (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath and Co., 1963), 88.

¹³ Ibid., 88.

¹⁴ Ibid., 89.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., 89-90.

¹⁸ Ibid., 90.

based on secular rationalism.¹⁹ He led the way for “unremitting service” within the Russian state, by both him and his people.²⁰ Sumner then notes that Peter developed economic resources and industry, built a navy “out of nothing,” and established “what may be called modern education in Russia, not confined to one class, though mainly confined to the immediately useful and the technical.”²¹

Sumner mentions that although Peter the Great can be called revolutionary, he cannot be compared to either Lenin or Stalin. His reforms are simply not comparable to the October Revolution of 1917. Peter tried to bring about “a new outlook on life,” but not a “radically new type of society or state.”²² Peter’s “revolution” provoked a divide in Russian thought. On one side were those who felt Russia should be a part of Europe, while the other side consisted of those who believed Russia could stand alone.²³ Sumner then states that many reforms attributed to Peter were actually begun prior to his reign. He lists four innovations, however which he believes to have been completely new: sending students abroad, the creation of the Holy Synod, the formation of a navy, and the moving of the capital from Moscow to St. Petersburg.²⁴

Although Sumner acknowledges that some elements of Peter’s reforms were begun earlier, he also believes that the Tsar can be described as revolutionary. He describes Peter’s many accomplishments, such as those in the areas of education and the military. He emphasizes that there were precursors to Peter, but does not use this as a way to diminish his role in the reforms.

¹⁹ B.H. Sumner, “Peter’s Accomplishments and Their Historical Significance” in *Peter the Great: Reformer or Revolutionary?* ed. Marc Raeff (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath and Co., 1963), 102.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 102.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*, 103.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

Various approaches have been used by historians when looking at the Petrine reforms. However, something that has not been done is to view his educational reforms as the primary indicator that there was a constructive revolution. These educational reforms include decrees made by Peter, such as his initiation of the compulsory education for the nobility in 1714, the establishment of his *Spiritual Regulation* of 1721, as well as the founding of the Academy of Sciences in 1724. These reforms reveal the revolutionary and constructive qualities of the Petrine era. Contemporary evaluations of Peter's actions from both inside and outside of Russia also indicate what Peter was trying to construct in the area of education.

These contemporaries of Peter attest to the significant and productive changes he made, as well as his love of learning. Michael Lomonosov was a Russian historian, writer, and scientist who lived during the Petrine era and benefited from the changes and modernization that occurred because of the reforms of Peter the Great. He gave the oration at the coronation of Peter's daughter. In this speech, he gives high praise to Peter and deems him the "Father of the Country."²⁵ Lomonosov recalls that Peter established a new navy, new towns, as well as new public and private buildings constructed in the European style. A judiciary and Senate were founded, as were government offices and state colleges. The Tsar also brought experienced people into Russia in order to spread the study of science and the arts. He converted "laziness into industriousness."²⁶ Lomonosov goes on to state that Peter brought enlightenment to the minds of the people.²⁷ He then contrasts the old Russia and Peter's Russia by pointing out that if

²⁵ Michael Lomonosov, "Lomonosov: Father of the Country" in *Peter the Great*. Ed. L. Jay Oliva. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1970), 89.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 82, 83.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 83.

someone had left Russia prior to Peter the Great's ascension to the throne, and then returned later, he would find "new knowledge and arts," "new dress and customs," "new architecture," a "new fleet and a new army."²⁸ Essentially every aspect of Russia would appear different.

Lomonosov also mentions Peter's trips to Europe. He describes them as a way for Peter to observe what other countries had, which might then be utilized in Russia and benefit the country as a whole.²⁹ By traveling, the Tsar put himself in danger, but according to Lomonosov it was all for the sake of "Russia's renewal."³⁰ Peter's "peerless wisdom" and "thirst for learning" helped advance the transformation of Russia.³¹ Lomonosov describes Peter the Great as a ruler who is incomparable to others and he believes that the Tsar was able to achieve as much in his short lifetime as Rome had in 250 years.³²

The appraisal which Lomonosov gives of Peter seems slightly exaggerated at times, most likely because it was written for the coronation of Peter's daughter. However, it still gives a reasonable description of the changes initiated by the Tsar and conveys his significance in Russia. Lomonosov's account indicates the contrast between the Russia that existed prior to Peter's reign and the Russia that was largely created by his revolutionary reforms. It presents an image of Peter as someone who was truly interested in making changes in Russia, real and useful changes that were aimed at making Russia great. As a historian and scientist, Lomonosov was clearly an educated man and is an example of someone who was able to prosper under Peter. He found value

²⁸ Ibid., 83.

²⁹ Ibid., 84.

³⁰ Ibid., 85.

³¹ Ibid.

in Peter's efforts to create a new Russia. He also seemed to value the man's attempts to learn new things from Europe, then bring them to Russia. He noted the educational foundations laid by Peter's and described the Tsar's own intelligence. Within this speech, one can see the constructive elements of the Petrine reforms. Constructing a new and better Russia was Peter's primary goal.

Another contemporary of Peter the Great who gives an account about the Tsar is Louis de Rouvroi, a duke in France. He was able to observe Peter when the Tsar visited France in 1717. According to the Duke, Peter had "justly acquired such a great name in Russia, Europe and Asia."³³ Rouvroi states that Peter is visiting France because of his curiosity about the country. He recalls that the Tsar is "much admired for his curiosity."³⁴ He was always interested in things to do with government, commerce, education, and police. According to Rouvroi, Peter's curiosity "reached into everything and disdained nothing."³⁵ His character betrayed "wisdom" and "good sense" and "everything about him testified to his extraordinary intelligence."³⁶ The Duke also noted that everywhere Peter went he set out to examine things and ask questions.³⁷ Rouvroi believes Peter to be worthy of praise and mentions that France considers him to be a prodigy.³⁸

Unlike Michael Lomonosov, who lived under Peter, Duke Rouvroi's account is an example of a foreigner's opinion of Peter the Great. What seems to be most apparent from this particular account is Peter's love of education and his curiosity. He sought to attain new knowledge and wanted to learn all he could. Although he was intelligent, he

³² Ibid., 89.

³³ Louis de Rouvroi, "Saint-Simon: A Prodigy," in *Peter the Great* Ed. L. Jay Oliva (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970), 114.

³⁴ Ibid., 115.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., 118.

still wanted to learn more and take in all he could. These personal qualities of Peter are an indication of his particular interest in advancing the educational system in Russia. Clearly, he understood the value of learning. He exemplified this by constantly trying to learn new things. Peter then tried to bring that love of education to Russia, which was not an easy task.

Beginning in 1698, Peter the Great kept a journal of his endeavors in Russia.³⁹ They are mostly concerned with his various war efforts, but some chronicle the changes that he was making within the country. In an entry concerning the social reforms of 1699, the Tsar wrote about the advance of the printing press and how various books about artillery, mechanics, scholarship, and history had been translated and printed. He recalled that the number of schools in Russia had been increased by the founding of a “school of marine,” as well as schools concerned with “other arts and sciences.”⁴⁰ Peter then stated that part of his reform included the abandonment of the old style of dress, as well as the mandatory shaving of beards. He also recalled that in times past it had been illegal for students to study the sciences outside of Russia. The Tsar stated that under his rule, however, students are not only allowed to do this, but it is mandatory for some.⁴¹

Peter the Great began sending Russian students abroad to study navigation, in 1697.⁴² Groups of 40-50 young students were sent to Holland, England, France, and Italy.⁴³ Peter then issued instructions to Russian students who were studying navigation abroad. He told the students to learn all they could about naval endeavors, such as how to use a

³⁸ Ibid., 121.

³⁹ *Peter the Great*, ed. L. Jay Oliva (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970), 23.

⁴⁰ Peter I, “The Social Reforms of 1699” in *Peter the Great*, ed. L. Jay Oliva (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970), 25.

⁴¹ Ibid., 25.

⁴² Rozhdeestvenskii, 59.

⁴³ N.P. Pavlov-Sil’Vanskii, “Popular Reactions to the Reforms” in *Peter the Great: Reformer or*

compass, how to draw plans, and how to navigate a ship in times of battle as well as peace. Afterwards, the students had to obtain the signature of a foreign naval officer, which verified that they were ready for naval duties. These officers then had to teach another officer upon their return, as each officer was to bring back with him two naval experts of military technology. Peter then offered monetary incentives to those who would promote and spread the science of navigation.⁴⁴ Although these particular instructions were given to those studying naval science, Peter also sent students abroad to study foreign languages, law, economics, medicine, the arts, and architecture.⁴⁵

Peter's instructions point to his involvement in the advancement and spread of education, in this case education that was centered around naval pursuits. Still, it shows that Peter often connected the development of education with the development of Russia as a great power. To Peter, education was key to this greatness. He was building a navy which had never existed before in Russia, but which would be necessary to the strength of the country.

Another way in which Peter established the importance of education was through his decree on the compulsory education of the Russian nobility, which was issued in 1714. He mandated that children of the nobility, or of government clerks and officials, who were between the ages of ten and fifteen, learn mathematics and geometry.⁴⁶ Those students would then be sent to other areas of the country to teach the same subjects with salaries paid by the state. Only after they had "mastered the material" would the students

Revolutionary? (Lexington: D.C. Heath and Co., 1963), 70.

⁴⁴ Peter I, "An Instruction to Russian Students Abroad Studying Navigation" in *Imperial Russia: a Source Book, 1700-1917*. 2nd ed., ed. Basil Dmytryshyn (Hinsdale, Illinois: The Dryden Press, 1974), 16.

⁴⁵ Pavlov-Sil'Vanskii, 70.

⁴⁶ Peter I, "Decrees on Compulsory Education of the Russian Nobility, January and February 28, 1714" in *Imperial Russia: a Source Book, 1700-1917*. 2nd ed., ed. Basil Dmytryshyn (Hinsdale, Illinois: The Dryden Press, 1974), 14.

be given a certificate of completion.⁴⁷ They were not allowed to get married unless they had this certificate.⁴⁸

The introduction of mandatory education was a significant shift in the Russian educational system. It made learning among the nobility a priority and therefore advanced education altogether. The decree put a higher value to schooling within Russia. Peter was trying to give learning the importance he felt it deserved. Education had been viewed as an endeavor that was not particularly worthwhile. In order to change this view, Peter felt it necessary to require that certain groups be educated, even going so far as to prohibit those who had not been educated from getting married. In this way, the views about learning could be changed by giving it a significant role within society. The establishment of mandatory education was part of his constructive revolution. By promoting education, Peter sought to make a beneficial and significant, or revolutionary, change within the country. By requiring that the nobility and government officials attend school, he was trying to create an educated bureaucracy which would strengthen the state and increase Russia's prestige.

Another reform which was connected to education is Peter's establishment of primogeniture, or first inheritance, in which the first child became the sole inheritor of his father's estate. In the decree, Peter abolished the traditional system of equally dividing land among children after the death of their father. The new system affected education in that the subsequent children would then have a need to be educated so that they could serve the state in some way. Peter described the previous system of division of estates as

⁴⁷ Ibid., 14.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 14.

one which was detrimental to the state, as well as to peasants and families.⁴⁹ He gave an example in which he explained that if a man has 1000 peasant households and five sons, each son would then get 200 households upon the man's death. The peasants would then have to provide for five tables instead of one and the tax system would be negatively affected because "200 households cannot carry the same burden previously carried by 1000."⁵⁰ So, in effect, both the state treasury and the subject people were harmed. Peter also asserted that when those five sons have children, the land will continue to divide and cause poverty. In addition, the noblemen under this system would not be compelled to serve the state or improve their conditions because they were kept on the land. The Tsar specified that the estate should instead be given to the first child, while the others inherit the "movable" property. State revenues would then be "sunder" and the subjects "will not be ruined."⁵¹ Peter also stipulated that those children who did not inherit land must then "earn a living" through serving the state, teaching, trade, "and so forth." This would, in turn, benefit the state and bring prosperity.⁵²

By establishing primogeniture, Peter was effectively doing away with the old system and setting up a more efficient way of dividing estates. He believed the previous system greatly harmed the state, families, and peasants. He sought to replace it with a system which would benefit the state, its revenues, and estate owners. Through this decree, Peter was not only creating a more efficient inheritance system, but was also furthering the need for education and creating an educated civil service. Those children who did not receive land then needed to serve the state in some other way. They had the opportunity

⁴⁹ Peter I, "A Decree on Primogeniture" in *Imperial Russia: a Source Book, 1700-1917*. 2nd ed., ed. Basil Dmytryshyn (Hinsdale, Illinois: The Dryden Press, 1974), 15.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

to be educated instead of being tied to the land. They could then serve as teachers or civil servants, for example. The decree represents Peter's broad goal of creating a service state, but is also indicative of his advancement of education as a means to attain a more efficient and productive state. It can also be considered part of the shift from a time in Russia when education was not considered crucial, or even important, to one in which it began to be valued by the state and its beneficiaries for its necessary and practical purposes.

Despite Peter's optimism about primogeniture, the nobles opposed the decree with considerable resistance.⁵³ Many of the nobles tried to evade the practice because they felt that it infringed their right to decide how their property should be divided.⁵⁴ Their efforts met with success when, in 1731, Empress Anna repealed the law.⁵⁵ The failure of this reform indicates that Peter was not always successful at convincing others that his plans would be beneficial. However, the resistance does not diminish what Peter was trying to construct. It merely indicates that Peter's reforms were new and not necessarily always welcome. In this case, the nobles did not agree that the new system was favorable to their situation.

Peter not only furthered education by making it mandatory for some, but also reformed the system through his secularization of the Orthodox Church. He began this process soon after he became Tsar,⁵⁶ but its culmination was reached in 1721, when he issued the *Spiritual Regulation*. It made the church part of the administrative

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Lee A. Farrow, "Peter the Great's Law of Single Inheritance: State Imperatives and Noble Resistance" in *The Russian Review*, vol. 55 (1996), 444.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 430, 441.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 442.

⁵⁶ Alexander V. Muller, *The Spiritual Regulation of Peter the Great* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1972), xxi.

bureaucracy that he controlled. With the legislation he destroyed the patriarchate system and created a new governing body of the church, the Holy Synod. The church essentially became a department of state. The author of the document, Feofan Prokopovich, a trusted religious advisor of Peter, compared this new body to the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, which enrolled “qualified men” as part of the administration.⁵⁷ The synod was to regulate “spiritual activities” and govern to the benefit of the church.⁵⁸

One of the functions of the *Spiritual Regulation* was to regulate the educational system of the church. Prokopovich asserted that “when the light of learning is extinguished there cannot be good order in the church.”⁵⁹ He sought to dispel the idea that education would somehow lead to heresy and stated that times which have been “enlightened by learning” have always been better than “dark” times.⁶⁰ Prokopovich goes on to explain that just as education is good for Russia as a whole, so it is for the church. To ensure that this education be “good and sound,” the regulations required that teachers for the church be knowledgeable, “capable,” and “recognized in famous academies.”⁶¹ In effect, the church schools were to remain religion-oriented, yet new elements were added. For example, military histories as well as church histories had to be read by the students. Also, students were to study biographies of philosophers, astronomers, rhetoricians, historians, and church teachers so that they might imitate these people in the future.⁶² The expansion of the curriculum represents Peter’s goal of including subjects that had practical value to the operation of the state.

57 Feofan Prokopovich, “The Regulation of the Spiritual College” in *The Spiritual Regulation of Peter the Great* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1972), 8.

58 *Ibid.*, 3, 8.

59 *Ibid.*, 30-31.

60 *Ibid.*, 31.

61 *Ibid.*, 32,33.

62 *Ibid.*, 41.

The *Spiritual Regulation* did not affect dogmatic teachings, rather it was a means to control the functioning of the church as a department of state. It did not seek to do away with the power that the church held, it simply put it “to secular uses.”⁶³ In terms of education, albeit church education, it also set some standards and furthered the development of education as a useful and beneficial institution. It took an interest in the quality of education that the students of these church schools were receiving by indicating the qualifications the teachers must have, as well as regulating the curriculum.

The secularization of the church is also indicative of a shift towards rationalism, or the idea that knowledge stems from reason, not scripture and tradition. The shift to modernization and advancement were, in large part, due to Peter’s fascination with developments that had already been going on in Western Europe. Secularization is typically synonymous with modernization, which was a fundamental goal of the Petrine reforms. The act in itself appears revolutionary, particularly in Russia, as it sought to change long-held, traditional ways of thinking and learning.

In terms of education, the regulations clearly indicate the importance of education to the functioning of the Church, and therefore, the state. They were a promotion of broader education that involved secular elements. By describing education as something which correlated to “enlightenment,” it served as means to change pre-existing attitudes about education that were held in Russia. It is part of that larger goal of setting up education and learning as essential to the strength of the state. It also naturally promoted Peter’s goal of creating a great Russia, a Russia that would fit into the European scene as a world power and even rival Western countries.

⁶³ James Cracraft, *The Church Reform of Peter the Great* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971), viii.

The reform of the Church caused a significant amount of antagonism. One source of opposition was from a group in Russia, called the Old Believers, or schismatics, who felt that these regulations were just another indication that Peter was the “Anti-Christ.”⁶⁴ They were a substantial opposition group who firmly believed in the traditional church. To them, Peter the Great assumed not only the power of the Tsar but also that of God. Peter also broke “the laws of the Fathers” when he changed the first day of the new year to January 1, instead of September 1.⁶⁵ They viewed his reforms as an attack upon the traditional Orthodox religion. The regulations were in the interest of Peter’s autocratic power, however, they also represent a useful development in the field of education.

More than two decades before the secularization of the church, Peter had established Russia’s first educational policy, which involved the establishment of the first lay schools.⁶⁶ Primary schools, as well as colleges, were founded.⁶⁷ Prior to Peter’s educational reforms, schools were run by the church. They usually did not go beyond an elementary level and were really not able to give a true education.⁶⁸ The idea of a secular professional education was totally foreign to the Russian school system.⁶⁹ In his decree on the founding of the Academy in 1724, Peter established a state funded institution to promote the study of languages, sciences, and arts.⁷⁰ This particular Russian Academy of Sciences was to be unique in that it combined the functions of the typical university and

⁶⁴ “The Old Believers: ‘The AntiChrist’” in *Peter the Great*. Ed. L. Jay Oliva. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1970), 97.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 98.

⁶⁶ Nicholas Hans, *History of Russian Education Policy:1701-1917* (New York: Russell and Russell, Inc.,1964), 9, 10.

⁶⁷ Anisimov, 223.

⁶⁸ S.V. Rozhdestenskii, “Educational Reforms” in *Peter the Great: Reformer or Revolutionary?* (Lexington: D.C. Heath and Co., 1963), 57.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁷⁰ Peter I, “A Decree on the Founding of the Academy, January 28, 1724” in *Imperial Russia: a Source Book, 1700-1917*. 2nd ed., ed. Basil Dmytryshyn (Hinsdale, Illinois: The Dryden Press, 1974), 19.

academy that existed elsewhere in Europe. For instance, Peter explained that his Academy would differ from a similar institution in Paris because it would also serve as a college and a university.⁷¹ According to Peter, a university was a group of educated people who teach young people, while an academy was an institution in which educated people advance knowledge through their research.⁷² Because Russia was unique, he believed it required a unique educational institution. Peter proclaimed that this new Academy would “increase the glory” of Russia and be a future resource for the Russian people.⁷³ Peter conveyed that having just an academy, or just a university, would not suit Russia. A simple academy would not spread knowledge to the people. A simple university would be of no use since elementary schools were not available to teach the basics before a student went to further his education at this university. So, he proposed an institution which would advance the sciences, teach young people and instruct others who might also teach young people.

The founding of this Academy was clearly a major step forward for Russian education. Its purpose was not only to advance the sciences and the arts, but also to spread that knowledge to the Russian people so that they might benefit in the future. It entailed not only the physical construction of the Academy, but also the construction of a new promotion of education in Russia. Peter was well aware of the lack of education within Russia when he assumed the throne. He was creating a new state based upon service and the old Russian school system would not be able to meet the needs of the state.⁷⁴ Essentially, education was not being utilized as a way to help Russian society as a

⁷¹ Peter I, 20.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Rozhdestvenskii, 57.

whole. The founding of the Academy represents the Tsar's desire to remedy this lack of an educational system, which is one of the key elements to his constructive revolution.

All of these reforms, whether directly related to education or not, furthered the educational policy that Peter had established. They were constructive within Russia because they were meant to modernize and improve the country. They were revolutionary because they involved the changing of long-held attitudes about education, which meant a significant break with the past. There may be many other elements to both Peter the Great and his impact on Russia, but a major part of his legacy is that of a constructive revolution.

The changes that Peter the Great envisioned, as well as his love of learning, are central to his constructive revolution. His decrees to advance learning display the Tsar's desire not just to establish an educational system, but to make education play a vital role in the functioning of the state and the greatness of Russia as a whole. Peter essentially had to construct a new attitude towards education in the country. When he mandated that the children of the nobility and government officials be educated, he was breaking with the past and setting a new standard in society. His sending of students to study abroad and then giving them specific instructions indicate his interest in the educational process, as well as his desire that they bring new information back with them and teach it to others. Peter's secularization of the church meant that he direct could how the church functioned, and was a way to change certain aspects of its educational system, so that broader, useful knowledge could be given to the students. Peter's establishment of the Academy of Sciences was meant to spread education throughout Russia, and be of future benefit to the country. Never before had education been given such importance in

Russia. Never before had so many efforts concerning the advancement of education been made. Peter knew that a more extensive education, not just a religion-oriented education, was needed for the functioning of the state.

Peter the Great's overall effect on Russia, however, was much more expansive than educational developments. Anisimov has called Peter the "catalyst" for modernization in many areas. Other historians also describe him as the Tsar in Russian history who truly brought about revolutionary reforms. In many ways, he laid the foundations for modern architecture, language, military, and bureaucracy. Peter also brought Russia into an age in which the study of science was promoted, which is essential to modernization.

Modernization also occurred in the way women were viewed. Peter allowed them to take part in society and they were granted equal status to men. Russia had a unique history in which old ways could persist because of the country's relative isolation. Peter was able to bridge the space between Russia and the modern world. He did not merely affect those institutions and people who lived during his reign, but their futures as well. He is set apart from other Tsars because he was dynamic enough to reform a xenophobic country. Peter's legacy reveals that his role in Russia was profound and effective as he transformed the country, thereby changing its history. Although debates can arise over the nature of his reign, Peter the Great's place within the history of Russia remains meaningful and substantial.

When historians look at Peter's actions as Tsar, many factors have to be dealt with. Some have chosen to accentuate the progressive elements of the Petrine era, while others have acknowledged that modernization occurred but stress that Peter's coercive and sometimes brutal methods should not be downplayed. If taken as a whole, how can the

Petrine era be judged? Can forced modernization be supported? Can an authoritarian leader's rule be justified? When looked at from this perspective, it seems as though Peter the Great and his reforms cannot be defended. However, if one acknowledges that each event or era of history has both positive and negative elements, then Peter's reign can have both qualities as well. Peter's goals within Russia, particularly those related to education, should be viewed positively as distinct from the negative aspects of his rule. From this standpoint, it is evident that a constructive revolution occurred.

It needs to be acknowledged that Peter the Great's motivations were often related to war and the strengthening of his autocratic power, and coercive measures were used in the implementation of some of his reforms. However, his reforms in the area of education still have a broader significance. Peter was seeking to change engrained ways of thinking, as well as run the state more efficiently so that Russia could become modern and be a part of Western Europe. His act of constructing and furthering education within Russia was revolutionary within that country. Advances in Western Europe had already occurred, but Peter's actions within his own country were new and substantial. Education was effectively put on a pedestal in Russia so that society might see it as a key component to Russia's modernization, advancement, and greatness. Peter the Great was, therefore, a constructive revolutionary because of the ways in which he tried to change Russia for the better, of which education played a primary role.

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