

# Age of Absolutism

## Peter the Great Deals with a Rebellion

How sharp was the pain, how great the indignation, to which the tsar's Majesty was mightily moved, when he knew of the rebellion of the Streltsy [an elite military unit stationed in Moscow], betraying openly a mind panting for vengeance! He was still tarrying at Vienna, quite full of the desire of setting out for Italy; but, fervid as was his curiosity of rambling abroad, it was, nevertheless, speedily extinguished on the announcement of the troubles that had broken out in the bowels of his realm. Going immediately to Lefort..., he thus indignantly broke out: "Tell me, Francis, how I can reach Moscow by the shortest way, in a brief space, so that I may wreak vengeance on this great perfidy of my people, with punishments worthy of their abominable crime. Not one of them shall escape with impunity. Around my royal city, which, with their imperious efforts, they planned to destroy, I will have gibbets and gallows set upon the walls and ramparts, and each and every one of them I will put to a direful death." Nor did he long delay the plan for his justly excited wrath; he took the quick post, as his ambassador suggested, and in four weeks' time he had got over about three hundred miles without accident, and arrived the 4th of September, 1698---a monarch for the well disposed, but an avenger for the wicked.

His first anxiety after his arrival was about the rebellion---in what it consisted, what the insurgents meant, who dated to instigate such a crime. And as nobody could answer accurately upon all points, and some pleaded their own ignorance, others the obstinacy of the Streltsy, he began to have suspicions of everybody's loyalty... No day, holy or profane, were the inquisitors idle; every day was deemed fit and lawful for torturing. There were as many scourges as there were accused, and every inquisitor was a butcher... The whole month of October was spent in lacerating the backs of culprits with the knout and with flames; no day were those that were left alive exempt from scourging or scorching; or else they were broken upon the wheel, or driven to the gibbet, or slain with the ax...

To prove to all people how holy and inviolable are those walls of the city which the Streltsy rashly meditated scaling in a sudden assault, beams were run out from all the embrasures in the walls near the gates, in each of which two rebels were hanged. This day beheld about two hundred and fifty die that death. There are few cities fortified with as many palisades as Moscow has given gibbets to her guardian Streltsy.

*Answer the following questions pertaining to the above readings. Support your answers with examples from the readings.*

1. What does King Louis XIV consider the greatest power of a monarch?
2. Describe Louis XIV's view of human nature. How did this viewpoint affect Louis XIV's governing?
3. What important advice does Louis give his son about the role of being an absolute monarch?
4. Why was Peter gravely concerned with the revolt of the Streltsy (note who and where)?
5. How did Peter suppress the rebellion? Was his decision overly harsh or justified based on the circumstances?
6. What would Louis XIV have to say about Peter I's actions in Russia?