Icon of St. Nicholas
Flag of the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic from 1920 to 1954
18th-century festive headdress for a married woman
Silver samovar for making tea
Soviet leader Joseph Stalin
Yury Dolgoruky, founder of Moscow
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Early Russia

Modern Russians originate from the eastern Slavs who settled in the steppelands of European Russia in the 6th century. In the 9th century, Vikings, Varangians, sailed from the Baltic Sea along the Dnieper River to establish the trade route from Scandinavia to Byzantium. One of their chieftains, Rurik, founded the first dynasty of Russian princes, and his successor, Oleg, established Kievan Rus, the first Russian state. Catastrophe struck in 1237 when Tatar (Mongol) forces raided many Russian cities, which then remained under Tatar rule for 200 years. Russia was split into many small principalities, one of which, Moscow, gradually gained power and broke the Tatar control.

RURIK THE VIKING CHIEFTAIN

The Varangians were Norsemen, or Vikings, who in the 9th century penetrated from the Baltic Sea into the land of the eastern Slavs, attracted by the trade route between Scandinavia and Greek Byzantium. The Slavs, plagued by enemies and internal feuds, invited the Varangians to come and rule over them. One of the Varangian chieftains, Rurik, took up the challenge to become prince of Novgorod in 862. The few Norsemen were soon absorbed by the Slavs and the House of Rurik reigned until the end of the 16th century.

LARGE AND WEALTHY
Prince Oleg founded Kievan Rus in the 9th century. For 400 years it was one of the largest and richest states in Europe under great rulers such as Vladimir I, Yaroslav the Wise, and Vladimir Monomakh. But in 1237 Kiev, weakened by internal feuding, was destroyed by the Mongol forces (Golden Horde) of Batu, grandson of Genghis Khan.

FROM KIEV TO MUSCOVY
At its peak, in 1054, the Kievan state stretched from the Black Sea to the Baltic Sea, and north to Lake Onega. After the decline of Kiev, Russia’s center moved northeast, first to Vladimir and then to Moscow, capital of the principality of Muscovy. Muscovy included lands as far north as the White Sea and east beyond the Volga, to western Siberia.

RULER OF THE MONGOLS
From his base in Asia, the remarkable Mongol leader Genghis Khan conquered China, northern India, what is now Pakistan, and Central Asia. Later, in 1222, he swept into southern Russia with his brilliant mounted troops, plundering the land between the Volga and Dnieper rivers. His grandson, Batu, completed the domination of Russia in 1237, taking most of Kievan Rus and the newer towns of Vladimir and Suzdal before riding west to conquer Hungary and Poland.
The followers of Genghis Khan and his grandson, Batu, were skilled horsemen and archers well protected by impressive armor. Batu established the headquarters of his state, the Golden Horde, at Sarai at the mouth of the Volga. The Mongol overlords did not attempt to colonize the Russian principalities but kept control with frequent raids and by demanding heavy annual payments. Although the Orthodox Church was tolerated by the Mongols, their 200-year rule severely retarded the development of Russian cultural and social life.

Fighting the Tatars
Moscow gradually became the center of opposition to the Tatars (Mongols). In 1380 the Moscow prince Dmitry defeated the Tatars on the River Don, and in 1480 another Moscow prince, Ivan III, tore up the document demanding tributes. But it was not until the 16th century that Russian forces, under Ivan the Terrible, succeeded in recapturing land from the Tatars.

Coat of Arms
The double-headed eagle, a popular symbol of state power in Byzantium and Europe, was also adopted in 15th-century Muscovy, together with the figure of St. George slaying a dragon. In 1672 the state coat of arms was declared to be the double-headed eagle wearing three crowns and holding the orb and scepter, with St. George on a shield at the center, surrounded by the arms of major towns and Siberia. Later the arms of Finland, Poland, Georgia, and Taurida (Crimea) were added, together with the ribbon of St. Andrew.
A varied land

Russia is the largest country in the world, straddling the two continents of Europe and Asia and crossing 11 time zones. Its three geographical regions are European Russia in the west, up to the low-lying Ural Mountains; the huge, flat expanse of Siberia; and the mountainous far eastern region. The climate is extreme – average temperatures range from \(-4\,^\circ F\) (\(-20\,^\circ C\)) in winter to \(68\,^\circ F\) (\(+20\,^\circ C\)) in summer. Russia’s mighty rivers include the Volga, Europe’s longest river, and the Yenisei in Siberia. Huge Lake Baikal in eastern Siberia is the deepest in the world and contains one fifth of the world’s fresh water. Russia’s rich variety of animal life includes tigers, reindeer, moose, sable, walrus, and the unique Baikal seal.

Solitary Tiger
The magnificent Siberian tiger, the largest tiger in the world, lives in solitude in the forests and mountains of the far eastern Ussuri region. Although the number of Siberian tigers fell disastrously to about 20 in the 1940s, a policy of protection has ensured their survival. By the mid-1990s, about 300 were known to exist.

Symbol of a Nation
The common brown bear, one of the national symbols of Russia, lives in the mountains and forests of the entire country from Europe to Siberia and the mountains of the Ussuri region, in the far east. Such large creatures can sustain themselves in semihibernation throughout the winter on the fruits and berries of the forests; on fish; and even on deer which they can bring down by covering short distances at enormous speed.

In a Cold Climate
Surprisingly, Russia’s severe climate has not impeded winter travel, for roads of packed snow are smoother than the ruts of summer or the muddy tracks of spring and autumn. Horse-drawn sleighs, such as this one, can travel rapidly over snowy highways while passengers recline snugly under the furs. In the past, when sleighs traveled long distances, horses were changed at government post stations, placed at regular intervals along the main routes. Although most sleighs have now been replaced by cars and trucks, they are still used in some rural areas.
SIBERIAN SURVIVAL
This ivory carving shows how the reindeer makes it possible for people to live in the isolated parts of northern Siberia. Indigenous (native) peoples, such as the Chukchi, rely on domesticated reindeer herds to provide transportation, meat, milk, and hides for clothing and tents.

VEGETATION ZONES
Russia can be divided into broad horizontal bands of vegetation: the treeless tundra in the north, which widens eastward to include the far eastern region; the taiga, the great forests that dominate most of Russia; and the steppes, or meadowlands, in the south.

RED-BREASTED GOOSE
Black, white, and chestnut red, these most vivid of all geese breed in the far northern reaches of Siberia, bordering on the Arctic Ocean. These beautiful birds are living proof that the huge, almost uninhabited regions of Russia's cold north can support a colorful variety of life during the warmer months of the year, June to August. But the number of breeding pairs has declined by over two thirds in the past century, mostly because of indiscriminate hunting.

TAIGA FORESTS
The great taiga forests of larch, pine, spruce, birch, and aspen account for over half of the world's resources of softwood and provide habitats for many of Russia's wide variety of animal species.

GRASSY PLAINS
Steppes, or treeless grasslands, are distinguished by a thick layer of extremely fertile black earth that is ideal for agriculture. The steppes are found in the southern parts of European Russia and Siberia.

FRIEND OR FOE?
The villain of Russian fairy tales, the large gray wolf is now found only in the wilds of Siberia and the remoter areas of European Russia. With its thick fur, which whitens the farther north it travels, it adapts admirably to life in a cold climate. Its poor reputation is undeserved, for although it will kill sheep and farm animals when in desperate hunger, attacks on human beings are very rare.

TUNDRA SUMMER
In June and July the warm sun thaws the Arctic soil a few inches down to the permafrost, permanently frozen earth over 0.62 miles (1 km) thick. During this time, the normally bleak landscape is briefly transformed by brightly colored flowers and green grasses.
Peoples of Russia

Before the Revolution, Russia was a truly multiethnic empire, which included Ukrainians and Belorussians; Kazakhs and other peoples of Central Asia; Georgians, Armenians, and Azerbaijani in the Caucasus region; Lithuanians, Latvians, and Estonians in the north; Tatars; Germans; and many others. Even present-day Russia, which is much smaller, has over 100 nationalities among its 150 million people. But ethnically “Russian” Russians are the vast majority, at 82 percent of the population. Just over half the Soviet Union’s people were Russian, and in the Russian empire Russians were a minority.

Kokoshnik
Red velvet hats with gold embroidery, like this one, were Russian women’s everyday wear for centuries. All but the highest nobility wore the kokoshnik.

FAMILY HEIRLOOM
This festive 19th-century outfit with its delightful pom-pom hat comes from the Ryazan area, south of Moscow. The owner would have made the blouse, skirt, apron, and sleeveless jacket herself. She would have spun the linen thread from flax, then woven the material and sewn the clothes together. Finally she would have done all the embroidery and crochetwork. Such a fine outfit would have been handed down within the family.

National Dress
Along with the kokoshnik, Russian peasant and servant women all over the country wore a sleeveless dress (sarafan) until the 20th century. The decoration and color of the sarafan differed greatly from district to district.

COSSACKS
Russians largely made up the Cossack (p. 23) self-governing communities in the Kuban, Astrakhan, and Orenburg provinces in the south. However, some Cossack settlements were not Russian but Kalmyk and Buryat (Mongol peoples), Bashkir (Turkic-speaking), and Tungus (native Siberian).
Hooded costume of Tatar women reflects the now rare custom of veil wearing.

REPUBLIC OF TATARSTAN
Turkic-speaking Tatars form about 4 percent of the population of Russia—about 6 million people. Most live in the Republic of Tatarstan within the Russian Federation. They are descendants of the Golden Horde (p. 11) and many of them are Muslims. In 1994 Tatarstan signed a treaty giving it special rights within the Federation.

Hood prevents loss of body heat and keeps head and ears warm in sub-zero temperatures.

Tungus nomad
Tungus town dweller
Men of Tobolsk

NATIVES OF SIBERIA
Today Russians greatly outnumber the many small groups of indigenous (native) Siberian peoples. The two native Siberians (above right) are from the Tobolsk area, west of the Urals. Those on the left are Tungus from the Amur district on the border of China. The one in the long fur-lined coat is a town dweller and next to him is a nomad, who lives with his reindeer herds.

Mittens are sewn into the sleeves to keep out biting winds.

THE NORTHERN PEOPLE
This warm coat comes from the Nganasan people, the most northerly inhabitants of Russia, whose way of life resembles that of the Inuit. There are only a few thousand Nganasan; they belong to the Samoyed-Nenets group and live on the Taimyr Peninsula in northern Siberia. They lived traditionally as nomadic hunters, reindeer herders, and fishermen, although in the Soviet period many were forced to settle on collective farms.
Wealth of a nation

Russia has vast reserves of natural resources, from timber – about one fifth of all the world’s forests – to a remarkable supply of rocks and minerals. These include huge deposits of gold, diamonds, iron ore, copper, nickel, lead, and zinc. There are also large deposits of fossil fuels including coal – half the world’s reserves – oil, peat, and natural gas. Fur trapping, Russia’s earliest source of wealth, is still practiced. Fishing, particularly for sturgeon, is a highly developed industry, and Russia’s long rivers are used to generate over 10 percent of the world’s hydroelectric power.

MINING FOR MINERALS
Iron ore and other metals are especially abundant in Siberia. The northern Siberian town of Norilsk (p. 39), beyond the Arctic Circle, was founded in the 1930s to extract rich deposits of nickel, copper, and cobalt, and now also produces gold, silver, and platinum.

DIAMOND DISCOVERY
Until the 19th century diamonds, such as those in the imperial crown, above, were imported from India. Russian diamonds were first discovered in 1955 in an isolated spot in north central Siberia. Within a year a new town, Mirny, had been built. It has good links by air, but the nearest railroad is over 600 miles (1,000 km) away. However, Mirny is now a town of about 40,000 people, who are mostly involved in diamond production.

ANCIENT AMBER
Amber is fossil resin – a thick, sticky substance from extinct conifers. It is found mostly along the Baltic Sea; for thousands of years, people have polished it, traded with it, and made it into jewelry. The Catherine Palace (p. 29) had a famous room lined with panels of amber.

GOLD RUSH
Russia has some of the largest gold reserves in the world. In 1838 a discovery near the Yenisei River in Siberia, followed by huge finds near the upper Lena River, started a gold rush. In 1923 another major find was made at Aldan on the upper Lena.

FUR TRAPPING
To combat the harsh cold of winter, most Russians wear fur hats and coats with the fur on the inside. Animals are still trapped extensively in the wild, mostly by native peoples. There are also many fur farms where mink, sable, and fox are raised for their skins. But the fur of animals living in the wild is considered the best.

FUR TRADERS
Early traders from central Russia headed north and east in search of the pelts of animals from the Russian Arctic. By the 17th century fur was the most important item of foreign trade for the merchants of Moscow. The annual fur auction in St. Petersburg is still considered the most important fur market in the world.
Deep green with pale green streaks, malachite is a popular stone for carving into objects, such as this 19th-century vase from Yekaterinburg in the Urals.

MALACHITE
This beautiful green copper compound occurs in only four places in the world, including the Ural Mountains of Russia. In the 19th century, malachite was used to make jewelry, furniture, and beautiful objects, such as this vase, for high society. The interior walls of the Malachite Hall in the Winter Palace (p. 28), a room for ceremonial occasions, are completely lined with the bright green stone.

NATURAL GAS
The leading producer of fossil fuels, Russia has 40 percent of the world’s natural gas. Deposits lie in the northern Caucasus, Siberia, and along the Arctic coast. Pipelines laid in the 1970s and 1980s, linking the Siberian gas fields with European Russia, made it much easier to export the gas to other countries. Those exports help pay for imports.

Laying pipelines in northern Russia is difficult and expensive because of permafrost (p. 11).

MIGHTY STURGEON
As the Volga and the Caspian Sea become polluted, the huge sturgeon that provide caviar (fish eggs), an expensive luxury dish, are becoming scarce. Nevertheless, fishing is a major industry in Russia. Russia’s modern fishing fleet works both in coastal waters and out on the open seas of the Atlantic and Pacific.

Arms move up and down as if washing the bear in the tub.

HYDROELECTRICITY
With its immense rivers, Russia has built many dams to generate electricity. Stalin favored huge hydroelectric projects, such as reversing the flow of rivers, but recently these have been rejected because they would damage the environment.

Traditional Russian toy carved from wood.

TIMBER
Russia has about one fifth of the world’s forests and nearly half the world’s softwood (pine and other conifers). Siberian forests are remote, so tree felling is concentrated nearer to markets in central Russia and the Urals. The wood is used to make paper, furniture, and village houses, and much is still used as firewood.

Arms move up and down as if washing the bear in the tub.

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A life of serfdom

Serfs were peasants bound to their landlord’s estates and forced to work the land. They were virtually slaves, for they could do nothing without their lord’s approval – not even marry. They could be bought and sold, exiled to Siberia, or forced to join the army. But the law forbade landlords to kill their serfs. Until the 17th century, on one day each year, serfs were allowed to move to another estate. In 1649, even this freedom was abolished. Two centuries later, in 1861, serfs were finally freed. The liberated serfs provided labor for new industry, which led to spectacular economic growth. But peasants were charged high prices for the land they believed was theirs by right; freedom brought little improvement to their lives.

ESSENTIAL TOOLS
Peasants on Russia’s large estates continued to use wooden agricultural implements, scarcely improved since medieval times, until well into the 20th century. Most landlords, with unlimited cheap peasant labor, did little to improve the land or farming methods. But some, such as the writer Tolstoy, supported more progressive farming techniques.

THE ARISTOCRATS
Until the end of the 17th century, the aristocracy shared the same culture, language, and religion as the peasants. But as Peter the Great (pp. 20, 22) forced the nobles to shave their beards and adopt Western dress, customs, and languages, the gap between aristocrats and peasants widened immensely.

CAPTURE OF PUGACHEV
Runaway serfs fled to the borderlands in the south and became Cossacks, or free warriors, farming and organizing their communities far from the heavy hand of the tsar. In 1773 Yemelyan Pugachev, a Cossack leader, declared himself Emperor Peter III, murdered husband of Catherine the Great. Promising liberation of the serfs, he led a popular revolt of peasants of Russian and other nationalities in the Volga and Ural regions. He was at first successful, capturing Kazan and threatening Moscow, but was defeated at Tsaritsyn in August 1774. Pugachev escaped, but was captured in December and brought to Moscow in this specially built cage, and publicly tortured and executed.

LOG HOUSES
Villages with identical log houses, called izbas, are still common all over Russia, although straw roofs are now rare. The izba has one large room for the extended family, dominated by a great stove that is also used as a warm sleeping bench during the long winters.

Peasants carried their lunch and personal belongings in bags woven from birch bark
PEASANT LIFE
Before the Revolution of 1917, four out of five persons in Russia were peasants. Only one fifth were literate, but they were skillful craftspeople, able to construct their own houses, spin cloth, and make all their own agricultural tools. Peasants belonged to a tight-knit village commune, or mir, whose elders were responsible for collecting taxes, settling disputes, and allocating land.

TRADITIONAL ATTIRE
Women's everyday wear was a simple blouse and skirt, or a sleeveless dress, called a sarafan. Men wore trousers, linen shirts, and a caftan. In summer peasants wore birch-bark shoes. In winter they put on felt boots, or valenki, and sheepskin overcoats with the fur on the inside, to keep themselves warm in the snow. More elaborate costumes were kept for special occasions and handed down from generation to generation.

FREEDOM TO THE PEOPLE
In March 1861, serfs celebrated throughout Russia as news spread of Tsar Alexander II's emancipation law. About 50 million Russian people were thus freed from near slavery. However, the former serfs were still bound to their commune and in debt for what little land they received. Many felt cheated and remained dissatisfied with their situation.
Orthodox religion

Although many religions, including Buddhism and Islam, are found in Russia, most of the population identifies with Orthodox Christianity. Adopted from Byzantium over 1,000 years ago by Prince Vladimir, it was chosen for the splendor of its ceremonies. Rich in ritual, Orthodox services are often long, elaborate, and colorful. Priests chant and the choir sings without the accompaniment of musical instruments, because it is believed that only the human voice should be used in sacred music. Orthodoxy remained Russia’s State religion until the Revolution in 1917. In the Soviet era many churches were destroyed; priests were shot or imprisoned. Since 1990, when official support was renewed, the Church has rapidly revived.

WEDDING CEREMONY
During an Orthodox marriage service, ornate crowns, like the poet Pushkin’s, above, are held over the heads of the bride and groom. The couple drink wine three times from the same cup. The priest then leads the couple three times around the center of the church.

NIKON’S REFORMS
Patriarch Nikon was head of the Church from 1652 to 1658. His reforms to rituals, such as making the sign of the cross with three fingers instead of two, met with strenuous opposition from a group called the Old Believers, who separated from the Church. When Nikon tried to make the Church more powerful than the State, the tsar imprisoned him in a remote monastery.

SACRED PICTURES
Sculptures were discouraged by the Church for a long time because it was thought that they might become objects of worship. But icons – religious pictures painted on wooden panels – could be venerated (deeply respected) because they are not lifelike images. Icons are found not only in churches, but also in Russian homes.

MONASTERIES
Although most of the ancient monasteries were forced to close after the Bolshevik Revolution and were neglected or destroyed, many have been vigorously revived in the new Russia. The most important is the beautiful Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius, founded in the 14th century. In 1689, its enterprising monks supported Peter the Great in his struggle for the throne against his half-sister, Sophia.

ROYAL DOORS
The royal doors are at the center of the iconostasis – the tall wall of tiered, religious paintings that screens the altar from the rest of the church. The congregation stands throughout the service, facing the iconostasis. Only the clergy are permitted to enter through the royal doors, which are opened at certain moments during services, symbolically revealing heaven to the faithful.
CHURCH CLERGY
At the head of the Church is the patriarch. He, like all senior ranks of the Orthodox Church – the metropolitans, archbishops, bishops, and archimandrites – is drawn from the unmarried “black” clergy (monks). The more numerous priests, the “white” clergy, are normally married and often remain parish priests all their lives. Women are not permitted to enter the clergy.

Orthodox bishop

The stole, omophorion, is only worn by bishops

The palitza, which hangs from the right hip, is worn by bishops and some senior priests

The sacchos hangs down to the mid-calf

CEREMONIAL ROBES
The robes for ceremonial occasions in the Orthodox Church are often magnificent and richly colored, like these bishop’s vestments. Each item of clothing has a special religious significance. Both bishops and priests normally wear a black cassock, or robe, and a black hat (skufia). For services, priests have their own special vestments, many of which are similar to those of the bishop. More ornate robes are worn by bishops and priests for Easter and other important festivals.

Priestly stole, epitrichelion, hangs down almost to the floor

The sacchos, or bishop’s vestment, symbolizes the robe of Christ

Golden chalice

HOLY BOOK
The Bible was translated into Old Church Slavonic in the 9th century by Saints Cyril and Methodius. Church Slavonic is close to the Russian language and is still used today in church services.
Russia has known two royal dynasties: the Rurikids (c. 860–1598) and, following the Time of Troubles (c. 1605–13), the Romanovs (1613–1917). The chaotic Time of Troubles was a period of civil strife when many imposters fought for the throne, and unrest, famine, and invasion plagued the country. Russian princes adopted the title “tsar” from the Roman “Caesar” in the 15th century, as the power and prestige of Moscow grew. The title “emperor” came into use in the 18th century under Peter the Great. Tsars throughout Russian history ruled with absolute power.

**Ivan the Terrible**

Ivan IV’s long rule (1533–1584) began hopefully, with new laws, territorial conquests, and commercial relations with England. After the death of his first wife, however, Ivan began a reign of terror, even murdering his own son.

**The Romanov Dynasty**

In 1613, 16-year-old Mikhail Romanov was elected to the throne. His family continued to rule for the next 300 years. The dynasty ended in February 1917 when Nicholas II abdicated (gave up the throne).

**Boris Godunov**

Unpopular Boris Godunov ruled at the end of the Rurikid dynasty. He was suspected of murdering the rightful heir, Prince Dmitry. Godunov died suddenly in 1605, resulting in a prolonged battle for a successor. The Time of Troubles had begun.

**Peter the Great**

Peter I, who took the throne by force from his half-sister, Sophia, ruled from 1689 to 1725. The most energetic of the tsars, he founded a new capital city (pp. 28–29), established the navy (p. 22), initiated radical reforms in education and government, and was the first tsar to travel abroad.

**Catherine II**

Born a German princess, Catherine became empress of Russia in 1762 and ruled for over 30 years. Known as Catherine the Great, she was the last of four strong empresses to rule after Peter I.

**Decembrist Revolt**

Throughout Russian history, there were many peasant uprisings against tsarist rule. But the 1825 revolt against Nicholas I by the aristocratic Decembrists shocked the regime. With little support, the revolt soon died out. Five of the leaders were hanged and the rest condemned to hard labor in Siberia.

**Rings made from chains that bound Decembrists in Siberia**

**Crown of Kazan**

Thought to have belonged to Ediger Mahmet, this 16th-century crown is one of the oldest in Russia. Mahmet was the last ruler of the Tatar state of Kazan. He adopted Christianity and became loyal to Ivan the Terrible.

**Gold crown studded with pearls, garnets, and turquoise**

Sable-fur trimming made crown more comfortable to wear.

**Peter and Paul Fortress in St. Petersburg, painted 1723**

Porcelain frame decorated with enamel on copper.
Cupid holds the orb and scepter, which are symbols of state power.

Empress Elizabeth's monogram

Imperial coat of arms – St. George and the double-headed eagle

Carved and gilded female head

TSARS' SECRET POLICE
The notorious secret police of the tsars, the Third Department (later the Okhrana) infiltrated and suppressed revolutionary organizations. But the organization’s cruelty pales beside the brutality of the Soviet secret police, the NKVD (later the KGB).

Like all Russian tsars, Alexander II was an accomplished horseman.

ALEXANDER II
The highlight of Alexander's reign was the emancipation of the serfs in 1861. But the reforming tsar was killed by a terrorist's bomb in 1881. His successor, Alexander III, pursued harsh, reactionary policies, reversing many of his father's reforms.

Nicholas II celebrated the 300th anniversary of the Romanov dynasty in 1913. Four years later, however, he abdicated on behalf of himself and his hemophilic son following the catastrophe of war and civil rioting. The tsar and his family were murdered by the Bolsheviks in 1918 (p.32).
Empire building

The history of Russia is one of almost continual expansion. It has been estimated that from 1600 to 1900 Russia grew at a rate of 50 square miles (130 square km) a day! With no natural barriers to the east or west, Russia lay open to repeated invasions throughout its history. After gaining strength, Russia expanded its frontiers, partly to protect its vulnerable heartland. By the end of the 18th century, Russia included Siberia, western Ukraine, Lithuania, Poland, and Tatar Crimea. In 1809, Finland was added, and in the first half of the 19th century, the small countries of the Caucasus — Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan — and huge areas of Central Asia became part of the empire.

Founder of the Russian Fleet
Peter the Great, the first tsar to interest himself in naval matters, founded the Russian fleet after studying shipbuilding in Holland and England. In the Great Northern War with Sweden (1700–21) he expanded Russian territory to the Baltic Sea, gaining Swedish territory in southern Finland, the marshes on which he built his new capital, St. Petersburg, and what are now Estonia and Latvia. Peter the Great also captured the long peninsula of Kamchatka and the Kurile Islands in the Pacific Ocean.

Bagration at Borodino
Leading a French army half a million strong, Napoleon invaded Russia in June 1812. By September, he had succeeded in reaching Borodino on the approaches to Moscow. A bloody battle broke out in which many were mortally wounded, including one of the most brilliant commanders of the Russian army, a Georgian prince, Pyotr Bagration. Afterward, the Russians, led by the crafty, one-eyed Marshal Mikhail Kutuzov, retreated. Napoleon took Moscow but was driven out in October.

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IMPERIAL EMPIRE
By 1914 the Russian empire was by far the largest in the world, stretching from the Arctic Ocean to the Caspian Sea and from the Baltic Sea to the Pacific. Within its borders were diverse nationalities ranging from the northern ice-bound Chukchi to the desert nomads of Kazakhstan. The huge empire, which included Finland and Poland, was divided into provinces and ruled from St. Petersburg.

EXPLORING ALASKA
Fur-rich Alaska, separated from Siberia by narrow straits, was first visited by Russians in 1741. In 1789 Joseph Billings, an English sailor in Russian service, led a secret expedition to study Alaska's peoples and explore its coast. The United States bought Alaska in 1867.

CRIMEAN WAR
In the Crimean War (1853–56), Russia fought against Britain, France, and Turkey. Russia, badly led and poorly supplied, was defeated despite the heroic year-long defense of Sevastopol, on the Black Sea, and a naval victory against Turkey. Under the peace treaty, Russia kept the Crimea, but its power in the Black Sea was weakened.

RUNAWAY SERFS
The first Cossacks were runaway serfs and outlaws who formed frontier settlements in southern Russia and Ukraine. At first, Cossacks opposed the Russian authorities, but by the 19th century they had turned their settlements into prosperous agricultural communities and were fiercely loyal to the tsar.

CONQUEST OF SIBERIA
Ivan the Terrible opened the way to the resources of Siberia when he defeated the Tatars at Kazan on the Volga. Yermak, a daring Cossack leader, penetrated farther into fur-rich western Siberia in 1581, as shown in Surikov's painting of 1895. With 840 men he conquered the native tribes and greatly expanded Russia's borders.

DEFEAT OF NAPOLEON
In 1812, the French took Moscow. But a terrible fire destroyed most of the city, including winter supplies. After just a month Napoleon, the conqueror of Europe and Egypt, was forced to retreat. Frozen and starving, 90 percent of his men died or deserted. Two years later, the Russians, under Alexander I, rode triumphantly into Paris and Russia began to play a prominent role in European affairs.
In Muscovite times (pp. 8–9) the royal court was at the Kremlin in Moscow. Tsars were attended by bearded boyars (nobles), wearing ornate costumes. Elaborate court rituals, such as the deep kowtow (bow), were based on Byzantine customs and those of the former Mongol overlords. The imperial court at St. Petersburg (1712–1917) adopted Western dress and manners, imitating French King Louis XIV’s opulent court of Versailles. The Russian emperor or empress was attended by French-speaking aristocrats.

Life at court

CROWN JEWELS
The diamond-studded Grand Imperial Crown of 1762, made for Catherine II’s enthronement, was used in all subsequent coronations. The central band of diamond oak leaves and acorns, symbols of state power, begins with Empress Elizabeth’s perfect diamond of 56 carats and ends with a magnificent Chinese ruby of nearly 400 carats.

CORONATION CEREMONY
The crowning of Nicholas II in 1896, shown above, took place at the Assumption Cathedral, Moscow. Coronations continued to be held in the cathedral after the capital moved to St. Petersburg. Nicholas II’s coronation celebrations were horribly marred when 1,200 peasants were killed in a stampede of people waiting to receive royal gifts.

GRAND PALACE BALLS
From the elegant dances held by Alexander I to the sumptuous fancy-dress affairs of the fun-loving Elizabeth, lavish balls were the highlight of the winter season in St. Petersburg. Olga, Nicholas II’s eldest daughter, made her debut in 1913 at the last glittering ball held before the Bolshevik Revolution.

SILVER SPECTACLES
Catherine the Great was a prodigious reader, correspondent, and writer of plays. She used these elegant spectacles (with their enamel case) when working at her desk.
IVORY HUNTING GUN
Hunting was a favorite pastime of the court. The fine workmanship of Empress Catherine’s gun, made in about 1780 at Tula, south of Moscow, is typical of the skill of Russian craftsmen. There is a famous legend that when English smiths gave Nicholas I a miniature dancing steel flea, the expert Tula craftsmen responded by fitting it with tiny boots.

FANCIFUL FABERGÉ
Peter Carl Fabergé, a St. Petersburg jeweler of French origin, made spectacular and intricate ornaments. Every year Nicholas II ordered Easter eggs for his wife and mother. This egg, with 18 miniature portraits of the tsars, was made in 1913 to celebrate the Romanov dynasty.

CATHERINE’S CARRIAGE
Catherine the Great’s lover, Count Grigory Orlov, organized the coup against her husband. He presented the empress with this ornate summer carriage, made of gilded wood and painted with scenes on the paneled back and sides. On ceremonial occasions elegant horse-drawn carriages would fill the streets leading to the Winter Palace or the Kremlin in seemingly endless processions.
After the Tatars’ defeat in 1380, Moscow gained in power and, by the 15th century, had become the leading city of Russia. Although Peter the Great moved the capital to St. Petersburg in 1712, Moscow, the “second capital,” still played a major role. In 1812 Napoleon captured Moscow. But the city was soon ablaze – probably set on fire deliberately by its citizens, who preferred to flee rather than surrender. Napoleon’s starving army, faced with the onset of winter, was then forced to retreat. The rebuilt city prospered, and became the capital again in 1918, under the Bolsheviks. Before the October Revolution, Moscow was known for its amazing domed churches, but half were destroyed during the Soviet era. In the new Russia, many are being rebuilt.
Onion domes

Cupolas, or domes, first appeared in the north of Russia. The familiar onion shape may have developed because it sheds snow more easily than the shallow Byzantine dome from which it was adapted.

**An early helmet-shaped dome**

Church of the Intercession, Rubtsovo, 1626

Church of St. Nicholas, Bersenevka, 1657

**INTO THE DOME**

Pine wood, readily available in northern Russia, was easily shaped by skillful axmen to make the dome. Supported by the king post and spindle beams, three-piece struts were slotted together; nails were not used. The framework was then linked with cross boarding to mold the frame. Wedged outer shingles were of moist aspen, which gives a silvery glow.

**KIZHI ISLAND CHURCH**

The ultimate in northern wooden architecture is the Church of the Transfiguration, built in 1714. Its 22 cupolas rise in elaborate tiers to form a striking silhouette. In the flat landscape these cupolas resemble the pine trees of the surrounding forests.

**Drum, or base, of cupola**

**Overlapping tongued shingles, lemekhi, are made of aspen wood**

**Cross boarding links the vertical struts forming the frame**

**St. Basil's in Red Square peeps over the Kremlin**

Beklemishev Tower defended the eastern approaches on the Moscow River
Palaces of St. Petersburg

ON THE MARSHY banks of the River Neva, Peter the Great built his new capital, St. Petersburg. He wanted to give Russia an outlet to the sea and a “window to the west.” By 1712 he had succeeded, but thousands had died of fevers and exhaustion in the process. St. Petersburg is a place of palaces and spires, reflecting the European classical style of its many foreign architects. During World War II over a million citizens died as a result of a nearly three-year blockade by the German army. St. Petersburg became Petrograd between 1914 and 1924, then Leningrad until 1991, when the original name was restored.

THE ARCHITECT RASTRELLI
The Italian Bartolomeo Rastrelli (1700–71) was court architect under Empresses Anna and Elizabeth. He built stunning royal palaces of astonishing size and color, with lavish interiors. But his work fell out of favor with Catherine II, who preferred classical architecture.

PETER AND PAUL FORTRESS
The fortress, begun in 1703, was the first building constructed in the city. Rising from its center is the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul. With its tall, slim spire, it symbolizes the city as much as St. Basil’s does Moscow.

FROZEN FONTANKA
Lined by grand houses, the Fontanka River is one of four rivers and canals that emerge from the Neva to loop through the center of the old city. In winter the Fontanka freezes so hard that it is able to support vehicles.

CITY LAYOUT
St. Petersburg is grouped around narrow rivers and canals with the broad Neva River at the center. Large islands like the Vasilievsky on the left and Hare Island, where the fortress stands, face the mainland. Nevsky Prospekt is the most important of the streets that radiate from the Neva River.

WINTER PALACE
The magnificent Winter Palace, begun in 1754 for Empress Elizabeth and completed in 1762, is Rastrelli’s crowning achievement. It is a closed square with a spacious courtyard built on the banks of the Neva River. It burned down in 1837 but within a year was rebuilt almost exactly as before. Long the main residence of the tsars, the Winter Palace became the Hermitage Museum after the Revolution.
CATHERINE PALACE
These gold cupolas belong to the chapel of the Catherine Palace. This royal summer residence stands at Tsarskoe Selo, on the outskirts of St. Petersburg. It was designed by Rastrelli for Empress Elizabeth and named after her mother. The palace's landscaped gardens were laid out during the reign of Catherine the Great.

GRAND INTERIORS
Rich interiors like this palatial dining room are often found in 18th- and 19th-century palaces, not only of the tsars but also of high-ranking members of the aristocracy. Marble columns are used in abundance in halls based on Greek and Roman architecture. Precious materials such as amber decorate the walls, and gold leaf is found everywhere.

SMOLNY CONVENT
Rastrelli was responsible for Empress Elizabeth's Convent of the Resurrection. Its first ornate buildings were completed in 1764, after Elizabeth's death. In contrast to the extravagant exterior, the interior was left undecorated. Catherine II confiscated the convent to use it for Russia's first girls' school, whose students were young noblewomen. The school later became the headquarters of Lenin's Bolsheviks; here he planned the October 1917 Revolution.

PETERHOF
Peterhof, on the Gulf of Finland, was Peter the Great's favorite summer residence. The palace, modeled on the French palace and gardens at Versailles, was begun in 1714 and was later added to by Rastrelli. The Grand Cascade of fountains was adorned with many gilded statues. The palace and grounds were ruined during World War II but have been beautifully restored.
After riots in Petrograd (St. Petersburg until 1914) in February 1917, Nicholas II abdicated the throne and a Provisional Government took over. The Revolution had many causes. In 1905, widespread discontent erupted in strikes, uprisings, and mutinies. Food shortages, the tsar’s weak leadership, and Russia’s disastrous performance in World War I heightened unrest. Failure to stop the war angered soldiers and peasants, and in October 1917 the Bolshevik (Communist) Party, led by Vladimir Lenin, seized power. Lenin dissolved the Provisional Government and made peace with Germany at the cost of huge territories, including Ukraine.

GRIGORI RASPUTIN
The fake holy man Grigori Rasputin gained huge influence over Nicholas II and Empress Alexandra because of his apparent ability to cure the hemophilia attacks of their son and heir, Alexei. While the tsar was at the front during World War I, Rasputin virtually ruled Russia. In 1916 the unpopular Rasputin was murdered by relatives of the tsar.

Peaceful demonstrators slain by tsar’s troops

“BLOODY SUNDAY”
On January 9, 1905, a young priest, Father Gapon, led workers from St. Petersburg’s factories to the Winter Palace to petition the tsar. Hundreds of peaceful demonstrators, including women and children, were killed when soldiers opened fire. The massacre shook the nation’s faith in the tsar.

WORKERS UNITE
In Moscow, the 1917 Revolution was very violent compared to the almost bloodless coup in Petrograd. Militant workers fought fiercely against the stronger forces of cadets loyal to the Provisional Government. Only after ten days of furious fighting around the Kremlin did the Bolsheviks emerge triumphant in Russia’s second capital.

Blank shots fired from the Aurora signaled the start of the Bolshevik uprising

WORLD WAR I
Russia, an ally of France and Britain, entered World War I in 1914. Russia’s troops fought bravely and at first won important victories against Austria and Germany. But her armies lacked adequate supplies and later suffered defeats, with heavy casualties and desertions. Popular enthusiasm gave way to disillusion and war-weariness.

The sailors of the cruiser Aurora mutinied against their officers in March 1917 and joined the Bolsheviks. Anchored on the River Neva in central Petrograd, the Aurora fired a blank shot on October 25, 1917. The shot signaled the storming of the almost undefended Winter Palace, where the remaining members of the Provisional Government were meeting.
LEON TROTSKY
The dynamic revolutionary Leon Trotsky was imprisoned and then banished for his part in the 1905 Revolution. He escaped abroad and joined the Bolsheviks in 1917. Trotsky was the main organizer, with Lenin, of the October Revolution. He became commissar (head) of foreign affairs, and then of war, and went on to organize and lead the Red Army during the Civil War.

COMMUNIST PARTY MEMBERSHIP
Lenin's party was known as the Social Democratic Labor Party until 1919, when it was renamed the Communist Party. Its members were called Bolsheviks. This membership ticket belonged to Andrei Andreev, who joined the Party in 1912. He was a member of its top policy-making committee, the Politburo, from 1932 to 1952. He was one of the few Old Bolsheviks to survive Stalin's purges (pp. 35, 36).

BOLSHEVIK LEADER
Vladimir Lenin, a revolutionary since student days, was banished to Siberia in 1897. He believed that workers had to rebel against the establishment to create a fair society. In 1900 Lenin went abroad, where he began a ruthless campaign to gain total control of the exiled Russian Social Democratic Labor Party. The party split: Lenin's group, the 'Bolsheviks' (majority), opposed the 'Mensheviks' (minority). In 1917 Lenin returned to Russia to lead the Bolshevik Revolution.

TOPPLING OF THE TSARS
Many tsarist symbols were destroyed after the Bolshevik Revolution. Nicholas II's huge statue of his father, Alexander III, was toppled in 1918. Lenin, who ordered it to be destroyed, never forgot that his elder brother had been executed for plotting to assassinate Tsar Alexander.

PETROGRAD GUARDS
The Red Guards were armed units, mostly of factory workers, who played a key part in seizing power for the Bolsheviks. This medal was awarded to Red Guards who defended Petrograd during the Revolution and Civil War (pp. 32–33).
The comparatively bloodless October Revolution (pp. 30–31) was followed by a cruel civil war between the anti-Communist White Army and the Bolshevik Red Army. The White forces lacked strong leadership but, aided by Western powers, enjoyed early successes. In 1920, however, the Red Army, joined by many tsarist officers, was victorious. Although the Bolsheviks lost Poland, Finland, and the Baltic states, the rest of the Russian empire remained within the new Communist state. The horror of civil war was followed by a terrible famine, relieved only by U.S. aid. In 1921, to restore the ruined country, Lenin announced the New Economic Policy. This reintroduced private trade.

WAR BOATS
River steamers like this one, rechristened Vanya the Communist, were taken over for use in the Civil War. The boat was destroyed in a fierce battle on the River Kama in October 1918.

SLAUGHTER OF THE ROMANOVS
In July 1918, the White forces threatened Yekaterinburg in Siberia, where the Bolsheviks were holding Nicholas II, the former tsar. Early on July 17, 1918, by Lenin's order, the tsar and his family were murdered. Their bodies, burned and buried in a pit in the forest, were not discovered until 1992.

WHITES AGAINST REDS
White Army soldiers were against the Communist takeover for a variety of reasons: some still supported the tsarist regime; some wanted the Provisional Government (p. 30) to be restored; while others were completely opposed to Bolshevik ideas.

WORDS OF MARX
This Bolshevik banner quotes the words of Karl Marx, who, in his Communist Manifesto (statement of aims), urged the workers to unite since they had nothing to lose but their chains. After the October Revolution, however, power went not to the workers but to the Communist Party leaders.
Metal-rimmed wooden wheels made it difficult to maneuver the carriage on rough terrain.

CIVIL WAR CARRIAGE
The tachanka, a horse-drawn carriage with mounted machine gun, is typical of the makeshift methods of the chaotic Civil War. This tachanka was employed in a famous battle in which Germans, Poles, and Ukrainian nationalists fought for control of the Ukraine before the Reds finally won in 1920.

MARSHAL BUDYONNY
This pistol belonged to Red Army commander Marshal Budyonny, a former officer in the Imperial Cavalry. His skilled horsemanship in battle became legendary.

RED COMMISSAR
Commissars were Party members attached to Red Army units to ensure political loyalty. They carried arms and were better dressed than most army members.

ARMY RECRUITMENT
Mass conscription (the draft) meant that many army recruits came straight from the countryside with little or no military training. They were reluctant soldiers; many deserted the army and returned to their villages, especially at harvest time.

"I am a plowman on guard, with my rifle I stand, I preserve freedom and my land." Order of the Red Banner, 1921

RED ARMY TROOPS
The ill-disciplined voluntary Red Guards were transformed into the Red Army by the brilliant commander Leon Trotsky. He appointed former tsarist officers and reintroduced order and distinctions between officers and soldiers. He kept close contact with the army by traveling quickly to areas of conflict in his armored train.

DRESSED TO KILL
Red Army uniforms were haphazard affairs. Many soldiers wore their own clothes, or captured White uniforms, and crude birch-bark lapti shoes instead of boots. The pointed hat with the star, called a budyonovka after Marshal Budyonny, came to symbolize the Red Army soldier.

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The rise of Stalin

When Lenin died in 1924, the struggle was on to inherit the leadership of the Communist Party. Trotsky, the most able candidate, was soon outmaneuvered by Joseph Stalin, the devious secretary general of the Party. Stalin joined with two other leaders to defeat Trotsky, then formed a new alliance to oust them as well. Trotsky was exiled in 1929. Stalin then strengthened his power by launching rapid industrialization and agricultural collectivization. The Great Terror began in earnest with the murder in 1934 of the leading Bolshevik, Sergei Kirov. The secret police, the NKVD (later the KGB), became all-powerful, directing mass arrests from their infamous headquarters in Moscow. All the famous Old Bolshevik leaders were tried or shot.
Motherhood award could be attached to a chain and worn proudly as a necklace.

MOTHERHOOD AWARDS
After the Bolshevik Revolution, the government supported women's freedom, but by the 1930s traditional roles of women as wives and mothers were emphasized. To encourage a higher birthrate, the Motherhood Medal was granted to women with five children; those producing ten were declared Heroine Mothers.

COLLECTIVE FARMING
Collective farms combined small holdings into single units, often including several villages. Despite the invitation on this poster, peasants had no choice. In 1929 Stalin launched forced collectivization. The peasants resisted and millions died, or were shot or sent to labor camps. Production fell, causing a terrible famine. By 1938 collectivization had spread throughout the Soviet Union.

"Come to us in the collective farm!"
Soviet children were cared for in state creches while their mothers worked.

WOMEN'S ROLE
The new Soviet state granted women full legal equality. But by the 1930s the state became more authoritarian and women were expected to perform a dual role. They not only had to cook, clean, and shop for the family, but also do heavy manual labor on the farms or in the new factories. Childcare was organized to release women for work outside the home, but poor housing and lack of amenities made their lives arduous.

RULE OF STALIN
Joseph Stalin became leader after Lenin's death by outmaneuvering Trotsky, Lenin's natural successor, and other leaders. In the late 1920s he introduced forced collectivization of agriculture and rapid industrialization, which brought many hardships. Freedom of thought in the arts was also suppressed. Any remaining opposition was eliminated in the mass purges of 1937 (p. 36).

Stalin's real name was Dzhugashvili. Stalin comes from 'stal,' the Russian for steel; he adopted the name while he was working secretly for the early Bolsheviks.

Hammer and sickle were adopted as emblems of the new state.

Stalin's mustache, simple clothes, and high leather boots were copied by the other leaders.
Soviet Russia

During Stalin’s purges millions of innocent people were executed or sent to remote labor camps (gulags). These horrors were followed by the hardships of World War II. When the Soviet Union was invaded, Moscow nearly fell to the Germans and Leningrad suffered a long siege.

After the war, good relations with Western allies deteriorated and the Cold War began. After Stalin’s death in 1953, relations began to improve. But in 1962, Khrushchev built missile launch sites in Cuba, which led to a showdown with the U.S. Finally, after Gorbachev became Party leader in 1985 and introduced the policies of glasnost (freer speech) and perestroika (reform), the U.S.S.R. and the West grew friendly.

German Invasion

Breaking the Nazi-Soviet peace pact, Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941. Stalin and the Red Army were taken by surprise and much of the western Soviet Union was occupied. But the Germans were turned back from Moscow, defeated at Stalingrad on the Volga in 1943, and pushed back to Berlin. They finally surrendered at Reims, France, on May 7, 1945. Two days later, Red Army soldiers gathered in front of the mausoleum in Red Square, Moscow, and threw captured Nazi flags before Stalin and other leaders.

Mass grave marking from a gulag near Karaganda in Central Asia

Labor Camps

Wooden grave tablets recorded only the burial sites – no prisoner names or numbers – of those who died in Stalin’s labor camps (gulags). An estimated 20 million people were swallowed up in the huge concentration camp system.

Founder of the Secret Police

Felix Dzerzhinsky was the first head of the Soviet secret police, then called the Cheka, after the 1917 Revolution. His hated statue (above), which stood on Lubyanka Square opposite the KGB headquarters in Moscow, was pulled down after the failed coup of 1991 (pp. 58–59). It now stands in a sculpture park in Moscow, along with statues of other leaders of the rejected Soviet regime.

State University

The old Moscow University was expanded in Soviet times, and a large new university building was erected in the Lenin Hills. The building is one of Stalin’s seven ornate, tiered skyscrapers, which changed the face of Moscow in the early 1950s. They are popularly known as wedding-cake palaces.

Constructed 1949–53, the central tower is 36 stories high

The vast building contains not only departments and lecture halls but living quarters for the staff and students

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CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS
In 1962, during the long Cold War (period of hostility between western countries and the Soviet Union), Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev placed missiles in Cuba, within range of U.S. cities. Cuba, a Communist state ruled by Fidel Castro, was a strong supporter of the Soviet Union. U.S. President John F. Kennedy immediately ordered a naval blockade of Cuba. Six days later Khrushchev backed down; the missiles were removed. War had barely been avoided. The Communist Party's Central Committee forced Khrushchev to retire in 1964.

CONTROLLING THE ARTS
Under Stalin, writing, art, and even music had to praise Communism, Soviet life, and Stalin himself. Worker and Peasant, a sculpture by Vera Mukhina, was made for an exhibition in Paris in 1937.

SOVIET SYMBOLS
Favorite themes for Soviet emblems were sheaves of wheat and the hammer and sickle used to decorate railings on one of Moscow's bridges. Portraits of the Party leader, hung on the walls of every office and institution, were changed when that leader fell out of favor. Instead of advertising, huge Party slogans decorated city streets and buildings.

MOSCOW METRO
The construction of the Moscow subway was one of the engineering feats of the Stalin era. Its ornate stations were referred to as 'palaces for the people.' The first line opened in 1935 and each marble-lined station was decorated with sculptures or mosaics displaying a different theme. Most large cities in Russia now have a metro system. One of the most beautiful stations is Mayakovskaya (above).
Although a late starter, by 1914 Russia had become the fifth largest industrial power in the world. After the Revolution and Civil War, production of manufactured goods fell sharply but rose again when Stalin launched his Five-Year Plans. However, tight government control left little room for new ideas, and Soviet Russia fell behind other modern economies. Industry was in crisis when the Soviet Union broke up in 1991, and production fell further when the new government moved abruptly to a market economy. In such a large country, the railroad network is vital. The first line, from Tsarskoe Selo to St. Petersburg, opened in 1837. By 1899 it had been extended east, greatly helping to open up the vast mineral wealth of Siberia.

Propaganda posters called on people to throw themselves into the work of the new factories. In 1929 Stalin's first Five-Year Plan was approved, under which rapid expansion of heavy industry was to be achieved by setting monthly and annual targets. In spite of tremendous hardships, by 1937 the Soviet Union had become the second largest industrial nation in the world.

Industry was utilized to manufacture mineral fertilizers and farm machinery to meet the needs of the new collective and state farms. Traditional wooden farming implements were cast aside in favor of modern machinery.

Powerful lights enabled farmers to work through the night.

Only the first tractors were fitted with wheel studs; later ones used caterpillar treads.

Early Soviet tractors ran on diesel and were deliberately large for the enormous fields.

This is the first tractor to roll off the production line of the Soviet Union's first tractor factory, which opened in 1930. Farm machinery was not kept on farms but at district 'machine and tractor stations' (MTS's), which decided when and where they would be used. Until they were scrapped in 1957, MTS's kept the farms under tight political control.
MASS-PRODUCED WEAPONS
At the start of World War II, hundreds of factories were moved east to the Urals and Siberia, beyond the reach of the invading German army. Tractor factories were adapted to produce tanks, including the T-34, which played a big part in Russia’s victory. After the war, Soviet industry continued to mass-produce weapons – over 20 percent of the country’s budget was spent on defense. In the new Russia, military spending has declined.

TRANS-SIBERIAN RAILWAY
At 5,777 miles (9,297 km) the Trans-Siberian is the longest railroad line in the world. It runs from Moscow through Siberia to the Pacific, with spur lines to Mongolia and China. Building began in 1891 and was finally completed in 1916. Workers had to overcome terrible problems of terrain and climate as they laid tracks through forest and around the southern edge of huge Lake Baikal. The journey, which lasts 11 days, brings home to travelers the enormous expanse of Russia.

LAYING THE TRACKS
Russia’s first railroads were laid by thousands of workers using little more than pickaxes. During World War I, German prisoners of war built the important line to the ice-free port of Murmansk, above the Arctic Circle. The new line in eastern Siberia, the Baikal-Amur Magistral (BAM), completed in the 1980s, was built largely by volunteers from the Komsomol (Communist youth group).

PASSENGER TRAINS
Russian trains are all electrified or use diesel engines. They have a wider gauge (track width) than European trains; the carriages – especially the sleeping cars – are more spacious, but cause problems at border crossings where the undercarriages have to be changed. There are no rapid trains as in Europe. The 404-mile (650-km) journey from Moscow to St. Petersburg takes five hours by express train.

RAILS ON PERMAFROST
It is very difficult to lay railroad lines in northern and eastern Russia, where the layer of permafrost (p. 11) can be almost 3,300 feet (1 km) thick and the earth is unstable during the short summer thaw. Nevertheless, rails have been successfully built beyond the Arctic Circle. They range as far as the coal-mining settlement at Vorkuta and the copper and nickel mines at Norilsk, where Stalin’s concentration camps supplied forced labor from the 1930s to the 1950s.
Russia has a long record of outstanding scientific achievement. In the 19th century Russian scientists made important advances in chemistry, radiotelegraphy, and mathematics. In the Soviet era, military science and space technology had priority, but political interference and unjustified arrests of scientists stifled progress. In 1980 Andrei Sakharov, whose theories enabled the Soviets to build a hydrogen bomb, was exiled for defending human rights. Russia was first to send an artificial satellite, and then a person, into space.

Father of Aviation
Nikolai Zhukovsky (1847–1921) is often called the father of Russian aviation. In the early days of flying he pioneered the study of aerodynamics. In 1905, he figured out how to calculate the lifting power of an airplane; later, he developed the whirlwind theory, on which helicopter flight is based.

First Russian Radio
Alexander Popov (1859–1905), a physicist, invented the antenna (aerial). In 1895 he made his first radio, right, on which a message could be sent via an antenna to a receiver. The prototype still works. The invention greatly improved communications between ship and shore and assisted in the development of the telephone. Also, telegrams could now be sent by radio waves instead of over cables. The Italian physicist Guglielmo Marconi, who knew of Popov's experiments, patented a radio at about the same time.

Atomic Theorist
Mikhail Lomonosov (1711–65) was the greatest scientist of his day. A pioneering chemist and physicist, he anticipated part of the atomic theory two centuries before it was fully described. He was also a poet and a founder of Moscow University.

Pavlov's Salivating Dogs
As a physiologist Ivan Pavlov (1849–1936) studied the brain, the nervous system, and digestion. By repeatedly sounding a bell at meal times, he trained a dog to salivate at the sound of the bell, rather than at the arrival of food. Through this study, Pavlov developed the theory of conditioned reflexes, which he later applied to humans. He won a Nobel Prize in 1904.

Visions of Space Travel
Konstantin Tsiolkovsky (1857–1935), a schoolteacher, was regarded as a dreamer for imagining space travel nearly a century before it happened. In 1903 Tsiolkovsky designed this spaceship and correctly wrote the theory of rocket power. In the 1920s, Tsiolkovsky developed the idea of jet engines, and proposed that rockets propelled by liquid fuel could be used to send ships into space. But the technology that would make space travel a reality was not available during his lifetime.

Metal filings in the coherer detect electrical waves and send signals via wires to coils.
Bell sounds when tapped by the stimulated electrical coils.
**KAPITZA’S PHYSICS**
Pyotr Kapitza (1894–1984) won a Nobel Prize in 1978 for his work on low-temperature physics. Kapitza worked in England in the 1920s and 1930s. On a visit home in 1934, Stalin made him stay in the Soviet Union. From 1946 until Stalin’s death, Kapitza was under house arrest for refusing to work on the atomic bomb. But he kept up his research using handmade apparatus.

**SOVIET SATELLITE**
On October 4, 1957, to the astonishment of the world, the Soviet Union launched Sputnik I. Designed by the brilliant rocket and engine scientists Sergei Korolev and Valentin Glushko, Sputnik was the first artificial satellite; it made one full orbit of the earth. The Space Age had begun; ultimately people landed on the moon, and unmanned probes reached Mars, Venus, and Jupiter.

**MENDELEYEV’S BALLOON**
Dmitry Mendeleyev (1834–1907) was an unusual combination of a great scientist and a successful businessman. He drew up the periodic table of chemical elements, fundamental to the study of chemistry. He also did pioneering work in crystallography and on petroleum, gases, and liquids. Among his main interests were meteorology and astronomy. When an eclipse of the sun occurred over Russia in 1887, Mendeleyev went up alone in this balloon basket to closely observe and take notes on the phenomenon.

**FIRST IN SPACE**
Only four years after the launch of Sputnik I, the Russian Yuri Gagarin (1934–68) became the first person in space. On April 12, 1961, he was launched into orbit aboard the capsule Vostok I, and made one circuit of the globe in 1 hour and 48 minutes before ejecting from the capsule and returning to earth by parachute. Gagarin died a few years later, when his jet plane crashed during a training flight.
Media and communications

Contemporary Russian uses the Cyrillic alphabet, which was developed in the 9th century to provide a written language for Slavic people. Largely based on the Greek script, Cyrillic also shares many letters with the Latin alphabet. The first Russian book was printed in 1563. Shortly afterward, moralizing tales in comic-strip form (lubok) were printed. These were the earliest form of popular newspapers; they remained popular until the 19th century. At the beginning of the 20th century, as more people learned to read, regular newspapers became common and book publication greatly expanded. Soviet Russia made great efforts to develop radio, cinema, and television – partly because of their value in spreading state propaganda.

Birch-bark tablet
By the 13th century the northern city-state of Novgorod enjoyed a high standard of literacy, and even a form of democracy. Paper was not yet in common use, so messages were sent on pieces of birch bark, such as this one which conveys greetings to a citizen of Novgorod. These ancient letters were dug up by archaeologists from the University of Moscow in 1960.

Although buried for centuries, the writing is still legible
Birch bark is flattened for ease of writing

Cyrillic script
The Russian alphabet is known as Cyrillic after St. Cyril. He and his brother, St. Methodius, adapted the Greek alphabet in the 9th century to provide a written language for Slavic people. Cyrillic’s 33 letters match all the vowels and consonants used in Russian speech. This means the language is written just as it is spoken and is very easy to spell and pronounce correctly.

Postal system
Russia had a primitive postal system as early as the 13th century. By the 17th century the mail was better organized, with post stations providing fresh horses at stages along major routes. In 1874 Russia joined the International Postal Union. The modern system serves the whole vast country using air, rail, and water transport.

Amplifier for broadcasting sound
Large wooden box containing receiver circuits

Promoting literacy
Before the reforms of Alexander II (p. 17), most Russians could not read or write. The opening of new schools meant that by 1917 over 40 percent of the nation was literate. This poster was part of the Bolshevik campaign of the 1920s to achieve 100 percent literacy.
GOING TO PRINT
Ivan Fyodorov, who printed the first Russian book in 1563, was run out of Moscow by the scribes, who were afraid of losing their jobs. In the early years of the 20th century, as people became more literate, a great expansion took place in book and newspaper printing.

SPREADING THE WORD
The phototelegraph, a technological advance in 1975, meant newspaper proofs could be sent quickly to every major city for simultaneous printing. It aided the centralized Soviet system as Party and government newspapers could appear at the same time in every city of the Soviet Union.

COMMUNIST NEWS
The increase in literacy at the beginning of the 20th century led to the widespread availability of newspapers. Pravda began publication in a very small way in 1912 but reached a circulation of over 5 million during the Soviet era. Although its name means “truth,” Pravda reported only what the Communist Party wanted the people to know, and facts were often ignored or distorted. The main mouthpiece of the Communist Party, the newspaper has survived in the new Russia but with a much reduced circulation.

EARLY TELEVISION
In 1931 the first Soviet television set was produced; it had only a tiny round screen. Transmissions began that year and by 1938 regular programs were being broadcast in Moscow and Leningrad. But only in the 1960s did television become available throughout the country. Like other areas of Soviet life, television was highly controlled and focused on the capital, with the same programs being relayed nationwide.

DOCUMENTING HISTORY
Sergei Eisenstein’s films of the 1920s and 1930s are among the world’s greatest. The scene above is from October (1927), about the Bolshevik Revolution. Under Stalin, filmmaking was rigidly controlled, but after his death exceptional films appeared again. These included Andrei Tarkovsky’s Khrustal’ (1966), about a famous icon painter, and Tengiz Abuladze’s Repentance (1987), which deals with Stalinist terror.
Russia's first-recorded literature was the 12th-century heroic poem, The Song of Igor's Campaign, about the capture of a Russian prince. But it was in the 19th century that Russian writing became world-famous. Pushkin and Mikhail Lermontov wrote fine romantic poetry and stories. Gogol's biting stories and the great novels of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky continued the Pushkin tradition. The last of the great 19th-century masters was Chekhov, who wrote brilliant plays and short stories. This great literary tradition continued in the 20th century with novels by Mikhail Bulgakov, Pasternak, and Solzhenitsyn, and the poetry of Anna Akhmatova and Osip Mandelstam, as well as new works by women writers, such as Lyudmila Petrushevskaya and Tatiana Tolstaya.

NIKOLAI GOGOL
Gogol (1809–52) was a dramatist, novelist, and short story writer. His works were a mixture of fantasy, horror, and humor. Gogol wrote about Cossacks and of life in the Ukraine. But his greatest works were The Inspector General, a play that made fun of provincial officials, and Dead Souls, a witty novel about serfs and landowners. Gogol burned his second volume of Dead Souls after a fanatical priest convinced him that the work was evil. Gogol died several days later – perhaps depriving the world of another masterpiece.

FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY
Dostoevsky (1821–81) is one of the world's greatest novelists but was often very poor. He was arrested in 1849 for belonging to a secret intellectual group, and sentenced to death. While standing before the firing squad, Dostoevsky was pardoned and sent to Siberia. His terrible experiences are reflected in his account of prison life, The House of the Dead. He also wrote Crime and Punishment, a novel about a murder.

ALEXANDER PUSHKIN
Pushkin (1799–1837) is considered Russia's greatest poet. He was banished in 1824 for revolutionary and anti-religious writings. While barred from the capital, Pushkin was looked after by his nanny, about whom he wrote the poem "Companion in My Austere Days." Among his greatest works are the historical play Boris Godunov; a long poem, The Bronze Horseman, about a tragic flood in St. Petersburg; and many wonderful lyrical poems, which most Russians know by heart. Pushkin died, aged 37, fighting a duel, like the one in his greatest work, Eugene Onegin, against one of his beautiful wife's admirers.
ANTON CHEKHOV
Chekhov (1860–1904), the grandson of a serf, was trained as a doctor but became a full-time writer of marvelous short stories; some are highly comic, others touching accounts of people's dreary lives. One of the best is "The Lady with a Dog," set in the resort of Yalta, where Chekhov, suffering from tuberculosis, lived for a time. Chekhov is best known for his great plays, such as The Seagull and The Cherry Orchard.

BORIS PASTERNAK
During the long period of Stalinist repression, Pasternak (1890–1960) translated Shakespeare and Goethe. He won the Nobel Prize for his novel about the Civil War, Dr. Zhivago. Published abroad in 1957, it caused anger in the Kremlin. Pasternak was expelled from the Soviet Writers' Union.

OSIP MANDELSTAM
Among Russia's remarkable writers of the early 1900s was the gifted poet Mandelstam (1891–1938), whose poems reflect great knowledge of the classical world. Banned from publishing in the 1930s, he was twice arrested and sent to concentration camps. He died in Siberia in 1938, his crime a satirical poem about Stalin.

LEO TOLSTOY
Tolstoy (1828–1910) was a great novelist who wrote highly acclaimed novels, among them the epic War and Peace, about Napoleon's invasion, and Anna Karenina, a tragic love story. He founded his own moral religion, based on Christianity, in which he rejected wealth. His ideas attracted followers from around the world, but he was attacked by the church and state. He died at a railway station, aged 82, having fled from home after family disputes.

ALEXANDER SOLZHENITSYN
Solzhenitsyn (b. 1918) was arrested at the end of World War II for criticizing Stalin. His experiences are reflected in One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich. Published in 1962, it was the first story about Soviet camp life to be printed.
Art and icons

In architecture, painting, and sculpture Russians throughout the ages have shown special feeling for color and shape. Religious art (icons, frescoes, and mosaics) dominated until the 17th century, when other subjects – portraits and landscapes – became popular. In the 19th century the Wanderers (a society of artists who portrayed the realities of life), led by Ilya Repin, painted ordinary people and scenes from Russian history. In the early 1900s, Mikhail Vrubel's unique style of painting influenced modern artists like Malevich, Kandinsky, and Chagall. At first vivid and daring, Soviet art was soon forced to portray positive images of Soviet life. Modern abstract art was forced underground but is free in the new Russia.

DISCOVERY OF BLACK GEORGE

Icons of St. George and the dragon were popular, but usually the horse was white, not black. This rare 14th-century icon was discovered in 1959 in a northern village near Arkhangelsk. It was being used as a shutter for a barn and was hidden by a thick layer of paint. The icon was spied as the shutter was being stripped for repainting. Moscow restorers carefully cleaned the shutter to reveal this delightful, well-preserved icon.

Pestle for grinding pigments to a fine powder

NATURAL PIGMENTS

Pigments (colors) used in icon painting are derived from the natural world. White comes from lead, black from ash. From clay comes ocher. Bright red is from vermilion, a mercury compound; gold occurs naturally.

HISTORY OF ICON PAINTING

In Byzantium, icons painted by formal rules were usually solemn and severe. But in Russia icon painting gradually took on a gentler, more emotional character. Andrei Rublev (c. 1360–1430) was one of the greatest Russian icon painters. He composed this beautiful picture, The Old Testament Trinity, of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in disguise, as guests of Abraham.

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Icon restoration

Restoration of ancient icons is a painstakingly slow process. In the past, darkened icons were repainted – the new image on top of the old. In Soviet times restorers devised methods of preserving each layer.

STRENGTHENING

Icon is strengthened by soaking with fish glue until supple. Glued transparent paper is then ironed onto surface to stick down any peeling paint and left for up to six months.

CLEANING THE SURFACE

Glued paper is removed by wetting. After careful testing, the icon is cleaned with ether. It can take an hour or more to scrape away dirt from a small segment. Care is taken not to overlap a previously cleaned section. Oil and turpentine complete the cleaning.

FINISHING TOUCHES

Finally, even with the old paint secure and clean, there are usually fragments where the image has entirely disappeared. To repaint these sections, some Russian icon restorers use watercolors and not the egg tempera paint of the original artists. They want future restorers to know from the type of paint where the icon has been restored, and where the original painting has survived.

SOVIET ART

By the 1930s artists had to obey the Communist Party policy that all art should reflect a positive view of Soviet life. Stalin and other Soviet leaders were portrayed as wise and kind by artists like Alexander Gerasimov (1881–1963). His namesake, Sergei Gerasimov (1885–1964), in his Collective Farm Festivities presents a false view of jolly life on the farm. It was painted in 1937, the worst year of the Great Terror, when hundreds of thousands, including farmers, were arrested.

ABSTRACT ART

The burst of creativity in Russia in all the arts at the beginning of the 20th century was reflected in the appearance of a modern abstract art. The uneducated but immensely talented Kasimir Malevich (1878–1935) experimented with color and geometric shapes to suggest force, motion, and space.
Music and dance

The origins of St. Petersburg’s Kirov Ballet go back to the 18th century. In 1776, the Moscow Bolshoi ballet began, using orphan children as dancers. At the end of the 19th century, ballet choreographer Marius Petipa created Sleeping Beauty and Swan Lake, ballets written to music by Tchaikovsky, the first of many great Russian composers, including Stravinsky and Prokofiev, to write for the ballet. From 1909 on, Sergei Diaghilev, founder of the Ballets Russes, sponsored radical ballets that burst like bombshells onto the world. The best new ballets of the Soviet era include Romeo and Juliet, Spartacus, and The Golden Age. Pavlova, Nijinsky, Ulanova, and Nureyev are some of Russia’s greatest dancers.

The Buffoon
A most original and witty composer of the 20th century, Sergei Prokofiev (1891–1953) wrote vivid and exciting music for the ballet Romeo and Juliet. This brilliant scenery was for his comic 1915 ballet The Buffoon.

A Shocking Composer
An original composer, Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971) shocked the public with his modern rhythms. He composed ballets for Diaghilev, such as the popular Petrushka (score sheet above). Stravinsky left Russia during World War I, but his work continued to be inspired by Russian folk music.

GOD OF DANCE
After studying ballet, Vaslav Nijinsky (1889–1950) became a leading dancer of the Maryinsky Theater in St. Petersburg. Joining Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes, he not only danced such roles as Petrushka but also choreographed daring ballets like The Rite of Spring and The Afternoon of a Faun. But Nijinsky’s relationship with Diaghilev deteriorated and by 1917 he had grown paranoid and withdrawn. From 1918 on he spent his life in a mental hospital. His career had lasted just 10 years.

Prima Ballerina
Anna Pavlova (1882–1931) was prima ballerina at St. Petersburg’s Maryinsky Theater for several years before joining the Ballets Russes in 1909 and starring in Fokine’s Les Sylphides. She finally left Russia during World War I and settled in London, where she formed her own small company. Pavlova was a superb classical ballerina with wonderful technique. She is shown here dancing in Tchaikovsky’s Swan Lake.
Squares, circles, waves, and dots are the basis of the design for the maiden's costume in *The Rite of Spring*.

**FOLK MUSIC**

Russian folk music grew out of the pagan Slavs' ritual songs used in festivals and ceremonies. In medieval times people sang epic ballads, playing a one-string instrument, the *gusli*. Jesters entertained with comical songs and satires. Here, a 19th-century accordionist plays as peasants dance.

**MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS**

In early Russia the *domra*, a 3- or 4-stringed instrument with a rounded soundboard, and the *balalaika* with 3 strings and a triangular soundboard were popular. Among wind instruments the *rozhok* (shepherd's horn) and *dudka* (pipe) were played. The *balalaika* is still widely played, especially in villages and folk music bands.

**PAGAN RUSSIA**

The subject of *The Rite of Spring* was pagan Russia before it became Christian. The ballet is divided into two parts: the first celebrates the adoration of the earth, while in the second, a chosen maiden dances herself to death as a sacrifice to the earth.

Cap by Roerich for a young man in *The Rite of Spring*
Crafts and traditions

In the past the isolation of Russian villages and the long, snowbound winters allowed peasants much free time to engage in craftwork. The abundance of wood encouraged carving; delightful wooden toys and domestic utensils, including the traditional drinking dippers (kovsh), were made in nearly every village. Some, like the colorful distaffs (prialki) for spinning, were brightly painted. Intricate embroidery and handmade lace are still produced in the northern towns. Icon painters, forbidden by the Bolsheviks in 1922 to pursue their craft, began to make lacquer boxes decorated with illustrations of fairy tales. Metal and pottery ware and clay figurines also have a long tradition.

COLORFUL EMBROIDERY
In medieval times, when Russian women were confined to the home, they occupied themselves by establishing workshops. Here they not only fashioned their family's clothes but also embroidered elaborate cloths and robes for church purposes. Humbler people decorated their linen towels, wall hangings, and dresses with embroidery or drawn-thread designs of ancient origin. The 19th-century linen towel (above) embroidered with red thread (kumach), comes from the Vologda region, north of Moscow.

DIPPING DUCK
In medieval Russia, the handled dipper, kovsh, was commonly used as a bowl for holding drinks. Dippers made from precious metals were often presented to important people by the tsars. The ancient form of the dipper is based on the shape of a duck or the prow of a boat.

SPINNING FLAX
Until recently, spinning and weaving took place in nearly every peasant home, and distaffs (prialki) were part of the essential household equipment. The women above, sitting on the porch of a large wooden house in northern Russia, are spinning flax using traditional distaffs.

WOODEN SPINNER
The distaff, made of pine or birch, is a long board with a base on which the spinner sits. The wool or flax is held by the round projections at the upper end and pulled by the spinner to make a thread. Distaffs are usually gaily painted with designs of flowers or animals — or, as here, the lion and the unicorn. It was common for a husband to present a distaff to his new bride.
FESTIVE HEADDRESS
This beautiful bonnet, or kokoshnik, comes from northern European Russia, near Arkhangelsk. Made at the end of the 18th century, it is open at the back, which means it is for an unmarried girl: married women had to cover all their hair. Glass stones and mother-of-pearl are sewn on to a brocade background, which is stiffened with canvas. The headdress would have been worn for weddings and other important festivals, and was handed down from mother to daughter.

BREAD-AND-SALT GREETING
Russians traditionally greet important guests by offering bread and salt on an embroidered towel held by the hosts’ youngest daughter. The guest breaks off a piece of bread, dips it in salt, and eats it. Salt was considered such a luxury in old Russia that it was stored in a strong warehouse in Moscow on the Solyanka, or Salt Street. Russians are very hospitable to this day, and welcome and offer food to guests, however unexpected.

GINGERBREAD TREAT
In Russian villages, crisp gingerbread was customarily baked in carved wooden molds to celebrate weddings, funerals, and church holidays, and is still considered a great treat. The molds have a long history, but by 1800 traditional designs of animals, birds, and the flowering bush – a sign of rebirth – began to change as new patterns from news sheets, (lubok, p. 42), with their cartoonlike illustrations, became more widespread. This mold, made in the early part of the 19th century, depicts a bearded peasant dressed up for a festive occasion.

CLAY FIGURINES
Homemade clay figurines were once part of a pre-Christian magic ritual, but by the 19th century were used as toys. They are still made at Dymkovo, now part of the city of Kirov, on the Vyatka River. The toys are shaped from potter’s clay mixed with river sand. They are then fired, whitened with chalk, and painted in strong colors. The craft, which was dying at the end of the 19th century, was revived during the Soviet period.
Children are well looked after in Russian society. Day care is provided for children whose parents work outside the home. Children start school at age 6 and finish by the age of 14 (16 if they continue their secondary education). Some schools still use Soviet school uniforms, which resemble those of tsarist times: girls wear brown dresses with white pinafores, boys wear blue tunics and trousers. Soviet children belonged to organizations that emphasized Communist ideals. Russia's children's literature and theater are among the best in the world.

BABY SWADDLING
It is customary in Russia to wrap babies up tightly in swaddling clothes for the first few months of life. Some people believe that this helps to straighten a baby's bones. Left swaddled for long periods of time, the babies are only occasionally unwrapped for a bath and a romp. Outside the hospitals, swaddling is gradually becoming less fashionable.

DRESSED LIKE MOTHER
This outfit from Orel province, southwest of Moscow, was typical of everyday wear for a little peasant girl in 19th-century Russia. It imitates her mother's clothes in that it consists of a jumper, or sarafan, with a long-sleeved blouse underneath. The printed cotton would have been bought in a store, but the outfit was sewn at home.

OUTDOOR GEAR
Children need to dress warmly in the cold Russian winter. This little boy, gliding down an ice slide, wears a warm coat, scarf, mittens, a fur-lined shapka cap with flaps to cover the forehead and ears, and felt boots, valenki, that are very warm in the snow.

WOODEN TOYS
Until the 20th century, Russian toys were made at home out of wood, the cheapest and most readily available material. Wood was made into puppets and all sorts of animals, from cows to bears. Colorful matryoshka nesting dolls were a favorite toy; now they are popular tourist souvenirs.
SCHOOLS FOR THE GIFTED
The Soviets established special schools in the cities to encourage those talented in mathematics, languages, music, and sports. This little girl is studying dance in a ballet school. Only a few children get into the school; they have to show great talent. Along with learning ballet, they take the usual school courses.

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE
Russia is rich in children's literature. Traditional fairy tales (skazky) were collected and vividly illustrated in the early 20th century. A famous character is the terrifying witch Baba Yaga, who has iron teeth and lives in a hut that stands on chicken's legs. Two recent children writers are Samuel Marshak, who wrote fairy tales, and Kornei Chukovsky, who wrote a Russian version of Dr. Dolittle called Dr. Aibolit ("Dr. Ouchithurts.")

COMMUNIST YOUTH GROUPS
Nearly all Soviet children between the ages of 7 and 10 belonged to the Octobrists; those ages 10 to 14 belonged to the Young Pioneers, while young people aged 14 to 28 joined the Komsomol (Young Communist League). These groups, which taught loyalty to the Communist Party, also provided hobby clubs the way Girl and Boy Scouts do. In the 1930s, however, Soviet brainwashing of children was so intense that some even betrayed their parents to the authorities. After 14-year-old Pavlik Morozov informed on his parents for helping kulaks (rich peasants), his father was shot. Pavlik was then murdered by his angry uncle, but became a Soviet hero.

SUMMER CAMPS
During their three-month summer vacation, many Russian children enjoy the green countryside at a summer camp or country home (dacha). This is an important respite from the cities' crowded and noisy apartment complexes. Summer camps are organized through schools, or parents' employers, and are often held in the country houses of the former nobles.
**National pastimes**

**In summer Russians** enjoy swimming, long walks in the countryside, and fishing. Winter activities include skating, cross-country skiing, and ice fishing. In autumn people of all ages love to go mushroom picking in the woods. Popular sports include soccer and ice hockey, at which Russia is a world leader. Tennis is rapidly becoming popular. Russians are also fond of gymnastics and perform well at many sports in the Olympics. Favorite games include chess and dominoes; older people can often be seen playing these in city parks. Even though most people have modern bathrooms, the weekly steam bath is still a regular custom in both the city and the countryside.

**Mushroom picking**

In the damp late summer and early autumn, thick clusters of mushrooms spring up in the woods and fields. Armed with baskets and buckets, people scour the countryside, and even city parks, for the many varieties of edible mushrooms. They take their trophies home to eat right away, or to dry for future use.

**Steambaths**

Russians delight in their weekly steam bath (banya). Many villages have their own steam baths, while in the cities baths are found in every district. Friday and Saturday nights are the busiest, the traditional times for a good scrub. People steam their bodies to extreme temperatures, lash themselves with birch twigs (venik), then plunge into a cold bath or, if in the countryside in winter, roll in the snow.

**Chess Champions**

The game of chess came to Russia from China 1,000 years ago. After the 1917 Revolution, chess was strongly encouraged, and clubs were organized in schools and factories. Many recent world champions have been Russian.

**Country Refuge**

In summer it is customary for city people to stay at a dacha, or country retreat. Children swim and play at the dacha, while adults fish, swim, tend the garden, walk in the woods, and enjoy a life in complete contrast to the bustle of the busy city.
SLIPPERY SLOPES
In the deep cold of winter, ice slides can be made quickly on any slope, gentle or steep. Water poured down the slopes freezes rapidly. Children all over Russia enjoy such slides; some use sleds, but many just slide down in their thickly padded clothes (p. 52). Elaborate wooden slides like this one were built in places with few hills, such as St. Petersburg.

TEA DRINKING
Russians love to drink weak black tea all day long. To have the tea readily available, they use a samovar (‘self-boiling’) urn. The water in this traditional samovar is heated by a central tube that is filled with pine cones and kindled by charcoal. The tea in the pot on top of the samovar can then be continually refreshed with the boiling water. Nowadays, samovars are usually heated by electricity.

ON FROZEN PONDS
Outdoor ice-skating has long been a national pastime in Russia for people of all ages. In winter, frozen ponds or flooded artificial rinks attract crowds of skaters who glide gracefully to piped music. The ice is regularly swept free of snow, and heated cabins allow skaters to put on their skates in comfort. These elegant skates belonged to Pavel Nakhimov, a famous Russian admiral, who in 1853 defeated the Turkish fleet during the Crimean War.

A dacha can be anything from a small wooden cottage to a sizable villa. Even a single room in a humble country cottage can be a dacha.

Screws attached these 1820s ice skates to warm boots.

Ornate air vents provide an inlet for the oxygen needed to keep the pine cones alight.

Teapot rests conveniently on top for a quick refill of hot water when needed.

Hot water to fill the teapot is obtained by turning the tap.

Fine samovars, such as this silver one, were made in the metal workshops of Tula, south of Moscow.

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The important festivals of the year in Russia begin with New Year’s, which is celebrated like the Western Christmas. Grandfather Frost and the Snow Maiden distribute presents, and on New Year’s Eve families gather around a decorated fir tree for dinner and gift opening. Christmas is celebrated on January 7, because the Russian Orthodox Church follows the Julian calendar, which is 13 days behind the Gregorian calendar used elsewhere. Easter, the main religious festival of the year, remained popular, even in Soviet times. Military parades on May Day and the anniversary of the Revolution are no longer celebrated.

Annual festivals

PAINTED EGGS
In the week before Easter, everyone is busy painting eggs. Some are just boiled with onion skins, making lovely mottled brown and yellow colors. Others, with the yolk and white blown out through small pinholes in the end, are painted elaborately with religious or festive scenes. The eggs are eaten at the feast after the long Easter service.

EASTER SERVICE
The service begins late on the eve of Easter and continues all night. At midnight the congregation, carrying lit candles, follows the priest around the outside of the church; this commemorates the women who came to the tomb of Christ and found it empty. At the doors of the church the priest proclaims, ‘Christ is risen.’ The worshipers joyfully reply, ‘He is risen indeed,’ and kiss their neighbors.

BREAKING THE FAST
As dawn breaks, the Easter service finishes, and the worshipers disperse to their homes to break their long fast with special Easter foods and colored eggs. The Easter cake (kulich), and the paskha (a sweet made of curd cheese) contain ingredients forbidden during Lent. Guests, who stop by all day, are offered the cakes.

CELEBRATION OF LENT
The eve of Lent is traditionally the time of the butter festival, maslenitsa, when pancakes are eaten in large amounts. With snow still thick on the ground, some hardy people celebrate by breaking holes in frozen lakes and rivers and diving into the icy water.
MAY DAY FESTIVAL
In sympathy with the violent strike in Chicago on May 1, 1886, annual workers' demonstrations began in many countries, on May 1, 1890. In the Soviet Union (the workers' state) it was celebrated by large parades of workers carrying huge banners and portraits of political leaders. In the new Russia this festival has become an ordinary holiday.

SOVIET PARADES
In the Soviet Union, military parades were held twice a year: on May Day (May 1), and on the anniversary of the Revolution (November 7, or October 25 by the old calendar). Soviet leaders stood on top of Lenin's mausoleum in order of rank to watch the military march through Red Square. Infantry tanks and giant rockets filed in awesome procession across the square, followed by gymnastic displays.

ICE FESTIVAL
The dead of a Russian winter is enlivened by a festival in which sculptures are carved out of ice; a competition is held for the best one. Russians have long enjoyed making ice buildings. In 1740 Empress Anna, known for her cruel jokes, ordered an ice palace built on the Neva River for the enforced marriage of her court jester.

Huge sculptures are built in city parks, and some can last until the start of the thaw in early spring.
In August 1991 hardline Communists staged a coup (overthrow) against President Gorbachev and his reforms. The newly elected president of the Russian Republic, Boris Yeltsin, occupied the White House (Parliament building), in Moscow, and opposed the coup. Moscow citizens rallied behind Yeltsin and within three days the coup collapsed. At the end of 1991, the Soviet Union fell apart and the Russian Federation, led by Yeltsin, was born. In October 1993, Yeltsin dissolved the hardline parliament, which fiercely opposed his reforms. Again the parliament was occupied, this time by Communists and nationalists. Yeltsin used force; about 150 people died, but the hardliners were defeated. Since then, Russia has kept moving toward a market economy. Despite crime and corruption, life is improving for many people.

NEW ECONOMY
In 1992 Russia attempted to change abruptly from a state-owned economy to a free-market system. At first there was confusion and huge price rises as the ruble (Russian currency) crashed in value. The economic reforms were then slowed down, and gradually the value of the ruble, which had never before operated in a free market, settled to about 5,000 to the U.S. dollar.

RESTORING THE PAST
Russian cities are taking on a fresh look as new businesses start and buildings are restored. Some important historic buildings destroyed during Soviet times – including the grand staircase of the Kremlin palaces, the Resurrection Gate on Red Square, and the Cathedral of Christ the Savior (p. 34) – have been rebuilt exactly as they were.
A construction engineer, Boris Yeltsin became Party boss in the Urals city of Sverdlovsk during the 1960s, and then of Moscow in the 1980s, under Gorbachev. Gorbachev fired him in 1987. Four years later, however, he became president of the Russian republic, the largest of the Soviet republics. Yeltsin was the first Russian leader in history to be popularly elected. In democratic elections in June 1996, Yeltsin, although unwell, was reelected president.

The Russian Federation, without the other 14 republics that made up the Soviet Union, is still the largest and potentially one of the most wealthy countries in the world. Of the 15 former Soviet republics, 12, including the Russian Federation, belong to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The Commonwealth's main aim is to promote economic and political cooperation between its members. The three remaining former Soviet republics – Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia – have chosen not to join the Commonwealth of Independent States.

The four months from the August coup to December 31, 1991, were one of the most eventful periods in the history of Russia. In that time the Communist Party was dissolved, the republics that made up the Soviet Union broke away to form the loose grouping of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and Gorbachev, the last Soviet leader, resigned. On December 25, 1991, the red Soviet flag was lowered from the Kremlin. The new flag of Russia was raised in its place. The democratic Russian Federation was born.

Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are collectively known as the Baltic States.

The red, white, and blue tsarist flag is now the flag of the Russian Federation.

New flags marked the end of Communism and the beginning of a democratic state.

Out with the Old, in with the New

The four months from the August coup to December 31, 1991, were one of the most eventful periods in the history of Russia. In that time the Communist Party was dissolved, the republics that made up the Soviet Union broke away to form the loose grouping of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and Gorbachev, the last Soviet leader, resigned. On December 25, 1991, the red Soviet flag was lowered from the Kremlin. The new flag of Russia was raised in its place. The democratic Russian Federation was born.

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