Translated by Greg Gorsuch (Part 4)

THIRD PERIOD.

RUSSIA SHAKES OFF THE YOKE OF THE TARTARS.

Restoration of the empire by Ivan III Vasilyevich, surnamed the Great, and by Ivan IV Vasilyevich, his grandson.

(From 1462 to 1584.)

This secret force of aggregation which forms or re-establishes the great empires had begun to react in the heart of Russia, when Ivan III Vasilyevich ascended the throne (1462), with the intelligence and the vigor necessary to take advantage of this movement. Most of the principalities formed from the dismemberments of the empire of Rurik had fallen back into the hands of the heirs of his house, either by conquest or by fraud. Such had been the fate of the towns of Suzdal and Nizhegorod under the grandfather and father of Ivan III. This movement, which leveled the ground for a single throne, gradually descended from independent princes and appanages down to the nobles, who formed the secondary aristocracy. From the fourteenth to the fifteenth century, Russia therefore experienced a revolution analogous to that which changed, at the same period, the face of all the other States of Christianity. This progress of political society, by associating Russia with the destinies of Europe, contributed perhaps more to preventing it from becoming totally Asian than the Christian religion, although belatedly implanted in it.

Looking around, Ivan III foresaw his future greatness. He understood that the glory he could acquire against his external enemies would put him on a par with the independent princes who still existed, thanks to the inheritance of Rurik; consequently, it was with the Tartars that he began. According to some authors, he would not have dared until 1477 to refuse the khan of Kaptchak the tribute paid by his predecessors; but it is sufficiently attested by other historians that, from his accession to the throne until 1465, he waged bitter war against them. After eight years of defeats, Khan Ibrahim asked the Great Prince for peace, a qualification given to Ivan III. At the same time (1470), disturbances aroused in Novgorod by the ambition of a woman, furnished Ivan with the occasion of annihilating, for his own profit, the ancient liberty of this republic of merchants. This woman, whom history calls Marfa, in love with a Lithuanian lord, wished to bring his country under the yoke of Poland, and, to please his lover, hastened the ruin of his country. Having become a subject, Novgorod the Great was losing population, trade and wealth every day. Its enslavement to Ivan III was consummated in 1475.

At the end of that same year, Ahmed, Khan of the Golden Horde, sent deputies to the Great Prince to order him to pay tribute; Ivan, in response, had Ahmed's envoys put to death, with the exception of one, reserved to go and announce to his master that the times of servitude were over.

From 1475 to 1480, the Khan made vain attempts to renew the chain which Ivan's courage had just broken: all his incursions were unfortunate. An alliance with Casimir IV, King of Poland, and with Ivan's two brothers, Andrew and Boris, did not render the fate of arms more favorable to him.

Ivan's successes kindled hatreds and aroused conspiracies against his life. Prince Loukamtki, instrument of one of these plots hatched by Casimir IV, and which had for its object the poisoning of Ivan, was betrayed and burned in an iron cage. Poland, following this event, waged a war against Russia which was all the more terrible because on both sides everything was massacred, old men, women and children.
The Horde of Kazan, relieved, reappeared in a threatening attitude (1486); Ivan marched against it, subjected it, and invested with a shade of royalty the brother of the Prince whom he had just dethroned. Driven out by his subjects, whom he oppressed, then reassembled on the throne, this Khan had all the Russian merchants who found themselves in his states slaughtered, called the Nogai to his aid, and, advancing into the Russian domain, gave himself up to those devastations so habitual to the peoples who obeyed him.

At the end of the reign of Ivan III, Russia had begun to become an object of attention for Europe. The astonished Muscovites saw the ambassadors of the Emperor of Germany, the Pope, the Republic of Venice and Denmark arriving within their walls. Ivan signed treaties of alliance with all these powers. The arts, being reborn in Italy, penetrated under the ice of the North as a result of these first relations. Italian artists and workmen, architects, engineers, goldsmiths, founders, etc., were invited to this distant transplanting by the attraction of great rewards. Then the capital of Russia became more beautiful, and the great princes, who henceforth took the title of grand dukes, began to sleep on wainscots unknown to their rude ancestors. Under Ivan III, the black double-headed eagle replaced the Saint George on horseback which, until then, had served as an armorial type for the rulers of Kiev and Vladimir.

Vasily IV Ivanovich followed the course of his father's prosperity against the Tartars of Kazan and against Poland, then governed by Sigismund, from whom he took the city of Smolensk. From 1505, when he ascended the throne, until 1534, he consolidated the bases of this great restoration which was to be accomplished, at the cost of bloody sacrifices, by the hands of a prince to whom history owes a deeply weathered page.

**IVAN IV VASILYEVICH, FIRST CZAR**

_nickname by the Russians the Terrible, and by foreigners the Tyrant._

The extreme youth of the children of Vasily IV delivered Russia to the troubles and misfortunes which usually entail a regency. Helena, mother of these young princes, governed by her favorites, opened a wide door to the discontents and ambitions of a restless nobility. Helena, at once gallant and cruel, put out the eyes of her uncle, whose representations had offended her; then she died, leaving her seven-year-old son surrounded by rebels and enemies. As long as this prince was not old enough to make himself respected, one saw among the great nothing but plots and anarchic rivalries; but that childhood weakness of their future master, to which they insulted, ceased earlier for Ivan IV than for other men. Barely fourteen years old, he extended over the heads of his subjects both the scepter of a king and the claw of a tiger, for there were two beings within him: the great man and the ferocious beast. Let's talk about one first; there will always be too much room for us to make the other known.

Since Russia had ascended to the rank of an independent nation, the Tartars usually came to the highest bidder power among its enemies. Under the two preceding reigns, they had been, in consequence of this system, in a continual alternation of alliance and enmity with Russia. The Crimean Tartars, no less changeable, ceased to recognize the suzerainty of Russia after the death of the Khan Meñli Giray, who had sworn the most holy fidelity to Vasily IV. They had to be subjected a second time; many victories were necessary to reduce, though well degenerated from their former value.

As early as 1545, Ivan had established the _streltsy_, which have since become so famous. Before the organization of this permanent militia, we did not yet know of regular troops in Russia: it was the nobles who were obliged to serve; the principal among them fulfilled, under the name of _roiérodes_, the functions of general officers, or else they were _golovy_, that is to say _chiefs_, which corresponded to the rank of colonel. The wealthiest served at their own expense, the others received a low cash pay and fiefdoms called _pomestnye_. The possessors of fiefs were followed by their peasants, badly dressed, badly armed,
and observing no discipline. Each noble was obliged to bring with him a number of footmen proportionate to the extent of his lands. This practice was for a long time that of the whole of Europe: the nobility alone commonly constituted all the force of the armies. It will be easy to understand the faults that such a militia must have had: Ivan recognized them and wanted to correct them; and for this purpose he established the militia of streltsy, which it would be more correct to call strelsi*. He trained it, subjected it to military discipline, and replaced the bow, which had hitherto been the favorite weapon of the Russians, by the fusil(sic).

*In the singular strelts, man who shoots the gun, says the historian Lévèque. --Spitler writes streiltzi, and translates this word as that of guards.

The fight which the father and the ancestor of Ivan Vasilyevich had supported against the Tartars of Astrakhan and Crimea began again at the beginning of his reign (1547). They advanced as far as Moscow, after having ravaged the towns and the countryside, and reduced this royal residence to ashes.

Sweden and Poland immediately resumed arming (1575); their preparations were so imposing in the eyes of the Czar, that the latter, in his dismay, had recourse to the mediation of Pope Gregory XIII. The Jesuit Possevin was sent to Moscow by the Holy Father, to negotiate peace, which was concluded between the three powers of the North; Ivan obtained it however only by the sacrifice of all his previous conquests (1582). The pope alone paid for the expense of the negotiation, for this promise of a return to the bosom of the Latin Church, with which Ivan had flattered him in order to obtain its mediation, had all the effect it should have had on the part of a Russian of that time, that is to say, there was no more question of it as soon as the danger was over.

The civil organization of his empire occupied Ivan no less than his wars with the powers of the North, his neighbors. Doubtless, it is rather as a legislator than as a conqueror that he merited the attention of history; unfortunately, he knew how to deserve it much more by his cruelties. Northern historians have called him the tyrant Basilides; but we, who are more impartial than national writers ordinarily are, will bring into relief the benefits of this tyrant, and the useful views he had conceived for his country.

Ivan IV established the first printing press at Moscow, and obtained from Queen Elizabeth of England physicians and surgeons, who practiced the art of healing in those States where, until then, the robust constitution of the people had known how to do without the science of some and the practice of others.

Russia had lost her commerce; the invasions of the Tartars had broken her relations with the East, and the roads of Greece were, so to speak, lost; new ones had to be cleared towards the Western nations, heirs of the ancient civilization, pushed back from the South by Islamism: chance served the czar. While the jealousy of the Hanseatic towns was preparing to thwart the accomplishment of his commercial plans, Englishmen, thrown by shipwreck on the coasts where the Dvina falls into the icy sea, became the negotiators of the first commercial treaty which existed between the Britain and Russia; it is to the same event that the city of Archangel owes its origin, which has since become so powerful and so famous by the immense extent of its relations. In vain Gustav I°, King of Sweden, who saw with pain this rise of Russia towards enterprises likely to increase the power of a rival already so formidable, wanted to raise some claims against this new order of things; he was neither listened to by the King of Denmark, who alone could impede the navigation of the Glacial Sea, nor by the Queen of England, too an enlightened protector of the commerce of her country to want to prescribe limits to it. Finally, Ivan established at Narva a market where the English, the French, the Dutch, the Lubeckians, and all the traders from the other Hanseatic towns were not long in coming to, in spite of the rigorous prohibitions which these same towns had made their subjects, a few years previously, to trade with Russia. of this nation presaged dangers to all that touched its borders: it was necessary, however, that its emancipation be accomplished.
Now, to complete the picture of the reign of Ivan, we will say that the cruelties of this prince offer a terrible reverse of medal; they bear such an imprint of madness that it is difficult to understand how they could have come out of the brain of a man who gave birth to ideas of order, justice, civilization. These contrasts in the character of a sovereign only attest, in our opinion, to the weakness of human organization, and invalidate all the rules of experimental philosophy.

Ivan had, at the age of sixteen, married Anastasia, daughter of Roman-Yurievich. The virtues of this princess, superior to her century, having gained a happy ascendancy over the mind of her husband, suspended the explosion of her bloodthirsty genius; but after the too hasty death of this commendable woman, the lion she had known how to put to sleep on her bosom awoke more terrible than ever, and all of Russia must have trembled.

The number of men, to put it better, of individuals of all sexes and all ages, whom Ivan IV caused to perish in the tortures passes the imagination. What must astonish even more is that in the midst of so many murders, the desolate Russian nation did not bring forth an avenger, and that it did not leave a single monument, a single vestige of indignation for such great outrages: one can judge by that, we will not say respect, but fear, or rather the blind cult and the idolatrous devotion of the Russians for their princes. When Peter I, of less terrible memory, exterminated the streltsy, a hundred and fifty years later, a single cry, a single vow of curse and revenge did not rise against his crown and his head either; when Catherine poisoned Peter III, her husband, to ascend the throne in her place, the Russians bowed slavishly before her usurpation. It was only after the troublesome but not tyrannical reign of Paul I that the maxim that one can kill a tyrant was introduced into Russia; but to be fair to everyone, let us add that it was the English who brought and implemented this principle on the banks of the Neva.

"Withdrawn to the impregnable retreat he had built for himself beyond Moscow, named Alexandrov-Sloboda," says the historian Lévêque, "and there, surrounded by the many satellites he had chosen from the most obscure ranks to become the stem of a new and powerful nobility, Ivan dispersed throughout his empire the bloody orders which he traced in the intermissions of his orgies: orders of their sovereign, and to avenge the hatred which he had aroused by his oppression. The remains of the victims were abandoned to them; a part of the old nobility perished by the odious calculations of the oprichniki, who became an aristocracy of mud and of blood, and of which a secret and general reprobation still pursues the dreadful origin."

The inhabitants of Novgorod, who always remembered the freedom they had lost, having been suspected, during the first war of Ivan against the Crimean Tartars, of wanting to take advantage of the circumstance to give themselves to the king of Poland, Novgorod was almost depopulated by the revenge of the Czar. Wanting to go to this city, he began by intercepting all communication between Novgorod and Moscow: ambushing soldiers massacred all travelers; thus no salutary advice could reach the unfortunate whose ruin had been sworn. When the Czar set out from Alexandrov-Sloboda, a body of Tartars preceded him to prepare for him, by iron and fire, a road bristling with ruins and soaked with blood.

“He arrived (Ivan) in Novgorod, starving for carnage,” says the historian Muller in his turn, “and begins by hearing mass. On leaving the church, he entered with his son into an enclosure built expressly to serve as a theater for his revenge, and where the magistrates with the principal inhabitants were confined: both, mounted on vigorous horses, rushed sword in hand and kill until their strength was exhausted; when the iron fell from their hands, the rest of the victims are delivered to the oprichniki, as the remains of a feast are delivered to slaves and dogs; then the ice of the Volkhov was broken, and the inhabitants are thrown there by the hundreds. Not a day passed without at least five or six hundred individuals being sacrificed in this way."
The massacre having lasted five weeks, the czar declared that he was sufficiently avenged. He called together what remained of the inhabitants, ordered them to be faithful to him, and commended himself to their prayers; the whole country of Novgorod remained devastated, and the city could never recover from this disaster. This ancient capital, the name of which alone still inspires the Russians with a sort of religious respect, is now no more than a kind of village.

The towns of Pskov and Tver, also accused of being in league with the King of Poland, were punished with the same rigor, but not depopulated. Over the noise of all these furies and all these murders, the unfortunate inhabitants of Moscow awaited the return of the czar in the silence of consternation: he arrived (1570), and immediately eighty sinister pitchforks rose in the public square, numerous instruments of torture are brought there, great fires were lit and the water boiled in immense copper cauldrons. At this sight, everyone shuddered; but soon three hundred citizens, all illustrious by birth, were drawn from the dungeons and, dragged by soldiers, appear bearing on their bodies the imprint of the tortures they have already undergone. A hundred of these unfortunates were ranged before the prince, and as many courtiers cut off their heads, while others uttered cries of applause. Ivan himself transports to the houses of the victims whom he has just put to death, and causes, in front of him, to apply their wives to torture, until they declare where the treasures of their husbands were hidden.

When this terrible prince seemed to bend under the burden of years, the boyars cast a look of hope on his heir. They were not afraid to conjure the czar to hand over to his eldest son the command of the troops which were going to march against the Poles. This wish, so imprudently expressed, became the death sentence of the unfortunate Czarevitch: his father killed him with a blow of an iron stick. This murder, its causes and its circumstances have been told variously; but this fact remains: that Ivan murdered his son. Filled with remorse, he wanted, it is said, to become a monk as a form of expiation; for it must be remarked that this cruel man had the kind of religion which the priests taught at that time, where one ransomed oneself from everything. After this last crime, Ivan had money distributed in all the monasteries; he even sent considerable sums to the patriarchs of Greece. It is this combination of the instincts of ferocity and those of bigotry which rightly caused him to be compared to Louis XI; moreover, these two monarchs had no less striking political relations, for if one destroyed his great barons, the other annihilated the knyaz or great boyars.

The contemptible talent of knowing how to amuse the table with coarse sallies was, at the court of Ivan, a means of success; but this advantage was compensated by unfortunate risks, and more than one titled jester, having lacked accuracy or moderation in his remarks, was stabbed; others got off with the loss of an ear: one of them, on whom the Czar had just inflicted this punishment, prostrated himself without letting out a complaint, and thanked his master for this mark of his favor.

Sometimes, when Ivan barked at a crowd of assembled people, he caused the most vigorous bears of his menagerie to be unleashed upon them, and shared with his son the terror of the unfortunates pursued by these ferocious animals. On other occasions, he had those whom he wished to punish covered with bearskins, hurled at them dogs of England (bulldogs), trained for this cruel hunt, and took great pleasure in seeing these men who had become the objects of his revenge torn apart.

To complete this picture of the reign of Ivan IV, it remains for us to speak of the conquest of Siberia: it was neither the least important of the events which marked his time, nor above all the least singular. This conquest, the fruit of the audacity of a leader of thieves, could not be pure either of cruelties or of crimes, and yet it could pass for an example of morality beside the expeditions that Ivan personally commanded.

Yermak-Timofeyevich, one of the hetmans or chiefs of the Cossacks of the Don, had long desolated, by his depredations, the banks of the Volga and those of the Caspian Sea. Merchants or ambassadors could no longer cross these lands with safety. In 1577, troops sent by the czar gave chase to these brigands;
they destroyed part of it and dispersed the rest, which went up the Kama under the leadership of the chief we have just named; arrived at Orel, a small town which then belonged to the Stroganovs, he obtained from the merchants who traded with the Tartars of Siberia guides to enter the country, who he made himself master easily of, after having triumphed over the prodigious obstacles which he found in the natural barriers which defended him and in the valor of the inhabitants.

The name Siberia ordinarily excites in our minds only the idea of ice and frost. One imagines an unhappy land where the outcast exhausts the wrath of all the elements. There is exaggeration in these generally accepted notions. Siberia, properly speaking, is not the most miserable country of Russia: vegetables, it is true, do not grow easily on this iron soil; but the reindeer nourishes the Siberian with its milk, its blood and its flesh, which it transports from one place to another or whose burdens it carries. Immense forests populated with game, and numerous rivers, abundant in fish, offer other means of subsistence; finally, the southern plains of Siberia are, in the summer season, of an enchanting aspect and of an astonishing fertility.

The bosom of the earth still lavishes other treasures: it contains a large quantity of elephants' teeth: it is fossil ivory, remains of a remote age and doubtless of some great physical cataclysm; mines, several of which provide gold and precious stones. The rich furs, refused to the rest of the earth, are the object of unparalleled cupidity in Siberia, and would by themselves furnish the material for an opulent trade for this country, if it were independent.

But where does the thirst for domination not penetrate? Where does not extend the ravishing arm of despotism? In vain nature had placed the freedom of the Siberian under the protection of a harsh sky; the Russian government, being unable to colonize and populate this country, made it its hell; for it is one for those condemned to work in the mines, accustomed to other latitudes. It is around Tobolsk that, from reign to reign, the victims of their own ambition or of ministerial errors, illustrious exiles or vulgar criminals, come to expiate forever the wrongs of their destiny.

One is struck, in reading the history of this conquest, by the singular relationship it presents with that of the Spaniards in America, whose discovery took place at about the same time, as if the XVIth Century had been privileged between all the others, and that the world should expand under the steps of those who dared to walk before them.

**MORALS AND CUSTOMS OF THE RUSSIANS IN THE XVIth CENTURY**

We have said what was the state of civil society for the Russian nation in the Xth Century; we have noticed in the laws and in the customs of this time, the character common to all the warlike peoples coming from the North. Later, these vestiges of Scandinavian genius, which at first had stifled the seeds borrowed from oriental civilization, allowed the influence of the latter to germinate and predominate: this is at least what we can conclude from the tableaux that the writer Muller draws of the mores and customs of the Russians in the XVIth Century, who has guided us.

The most salient features of this picture are the seclusion of women, customary in the East, and the surveillance exercised over them, which has become more rigorous; finally, the excess of paternal power, and the miserable condition of the peasants, who could not own possessions, even when they were no longer slaves.

As for personal servitude, it remained what it had been before. The only slaves properly so called were prisoners taken in war or those bought from the Tartars. Slaves were usually freed on the death of the master to whom they belonged.
The merchants continued to enjoy great privileges; they formed a particular body in the state and voted in the public assemblies of the nation.

These assemblies, the authority of the aged, and the gymnastic exercises, gave the Russian population a sort of resemblance to the ancient Greek and Roman nations. These precious traces were erased under the reign of Ivan IV, and there only remained to Russian customs certain shameful analogies with those of the Greeks: such were among them the practice of a vice which soiled antiquity and dishonored its sublime characters; vice which must appear much more odious in the North, where the effects of the climate could neither involve nor excuse these kind of aberrations.

The legal battle continued; apart from that the duel properly so called was completely unknown to the Russians, as well as the point of honor which could motivate it.

Justice was not dispensed for free; the litigant paid his judge: also, iniquity reigned in all the tribunals.

The insolvent debtor became the slave of his creditor.

The women who killed their husbands were buried alive up to the head and condemned to await death in this state. The atrocity of this torture leads one to suppose that they sometimes murdered their husbands, in retaliation for the rigorous treatment which they exercised towards them.

Finally, material life was hard and sad; and in spite of the kind of savage luxury established by the lords, this convenience known nowadays under the qualification of comfort was totally unknown, even in the interior of their palaces. The houses, built of wood, much more to protect themselves from the cold than to flatter the view by the symmetrical elegance of the proportions, were puny and mean. Small openings by way of loopholes served as windows; the rooms were surrounded by benches fixed to the wall: no other seats were yet known, even at court.

Fur skins were exported to Germany; for Poland and Turkey, leather and teeth of sea calves; for the Tartars, saddles, bridles, woolen dresses and ironmongery; but it was strictly forbidden to sell arms to them.

The Russians did not know the hereditary titles of count and baron; they did not adopt them until Peter I. The quality of knyaz (prince) was granted for a long time only to the descendants of Rurik, their first sovereign. The Tartar princes, converted to Christianity, also received this qualification.

The common weapons of the Russians were the bow, the javelin, the spear and chain mail.

"The Russians always attacked with impetuosity," says the writer Lévêque, "but they were also easily put off. They seemed to be saying to the enemy: Flee, or we will flee." One would not express oneself differently if one wanted to say that the Russians of that time lacked courage: this is doubtless not what Lévêque claimed, for it would be not only a lie, but also an insult to towards a nation which, after our own and the Polish nation, is the bravest and most intrepid on the continent.
RUSSIA.

Imperial Guard.

DRAGOON. -- OFFICER OF HUSSARS