

Peter I And The Azov Fleet



**Above The Ship
Predestination**

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FIVE YEARS BEFORE PETER I BECAME TSAR, Russia had formed an alliance with the German Empire, Rzech Pospolita (the Kingdom of Greater Poland), and the City-State of Venice in order to oppose the Ottoman Turks. In 1695, during his first campaign against the Turks, Peter I quickly realized that Russia's free access into the Black Sea and Sea of Azov was not possible so long as the Turks held the Fortress of Azov.

In a protracted and ultimately disastrous attempt to capture Azov, the Russian forces were defeated: Azov was both well fortified and protected by the Turkish fleet. It now further became apparent that wresting Azov from the Turks depended upon the creation of a Russian naval fleet.

Consequently, at the Preobra-zhenskoye and Voronezh shipyards, construction of a fleet of ships was undertaken in earnest in 1696. The shipbuilding proceeded quickly, and by the spring of that same year two warships, 24 galleys, four fire ships and over 1,400 smaller boats had been constructed and were ready for launching.

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Peter I named his trusted confidante and chief advisor Franz Lefort commander and admiral of the Russian fleet. Under Lefort's command the Russian naval attack force proceeded down the Don River toward Azov.

The pride of the flotilla, and its most threatening vessel, was the Apostol Pyotr [Apostle Peter], a 34-gun combat frigate. Although shallow waters prevented piloting the Apostol Pyotr directly into the Sea of Azov, the frigate took part in the bombardment and blockade of the fortress.

On 20 May forty boats and galleys, commanded by Cossack Hetman [Chieftain] Frol Minyaev, sailed into the Sea of Azov in support of the Russian fleet. The Cossacks captured twelve Turkish vessels, laden with ammunition and provisions that were destined for the fortress.

By 3 June Azov was totally surrounded by Russian sea and land forces. Ten days later another Turkish fleet arrived to aid the beleaguered fortress; however, the Russian display of force appeared so formidable that the Turkish ships never joined the battle. On 18 July Azov surrendered.

Although jubilant over Russia's victory at Azov, Peter I grew even more determined to create a true Russian navy. While in counsel with the Boyar Duma on 20 October 1696, the Tsar proposed the creation and perpetual maintenance of a Russian fleet. The Boyars agreed, declaring "The seagoing ships shall be!", whereupon the Azov Naval Base was founded. Its creation in 1696 marks the birth of the regular Russian navy and naval fleet.

From a specially erected structure called the Tsar's Tent on the Voronezh River, Peter himself was in command, but construction of the ships was directed by Chief of the Admiralty Alexanter Protasyev. The manual work at the Voronezh shipyard was performed by thousands of serfs, overseen by hundreds of shipwrights and officers brought from Western Europe.

In 1697 Peter I sent sixty young noblemen to Europe to learn shipbuilding and study navigation. Peter himself soon followed. In Holland he studied the most advanced nautical sciences of the day, worked in ship

construction as a ship's carpenter and earned the title of shipwright. He brought back to Russia books and charts, models of ships, tools and, of even greater significance, vast knowledge and new skills.

Peter I founded two important schools for maritime studies. In 1698 the Nautical School (for young future seamen) opened under the direction of a Serb named Melankovich, a veteran of the Adriatic. In addition, Russia's first secular institute of higher learning, the Nautical School of Mathematics and the Sciences, opened in Moscow in 1701 in the Sukharev Tower.

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, a total of 134 ships had been constructed; however, the level of craftsmanship was judged to be, at best, mediocre. The ships had been built by private entrepreneurs who had sub-contracted to the State; many vessels had been constructed with undue haste at the expense of their seaworthiness. The ship's carpenters were often under qualified, and a matter of further concern was common thievery: not infrequently tools, rigging and lumber were mysteriously spirited away.

Consequently, on 20 April 1700, responsibility for ship construction was transferred from private concerns to the government. Fyodor Apraksin became the new Chief of the Admiralty and was given authority to maintain the very strictest control. In that same year the pride of the Russian navy was launched. Christened the *Predestination*, it was a 58-gun warship built according to Peter I's own design and under the direct supervision of the Tsar and his master shipwright Fedosey Sklyaeu.

In 1699 Russia's Azov fleet set sail for Kerch, the peninsula in the eastern Crimea. The attack fleet numbered ten ships of the line armed with a total of 366 guns and carrying a combined crew of 2,126 seamen and officers, and accompanied by two galleys and sixteen smaller craft. The Pasha of Kerch was so overwhelmed at the sight of this unexpected and threatening display of naval strength that he surrendered without offering resistance. The 46-gun *Krepost* [Fortress] carried the Tsar's first diplomatic mission across the Black Sea to Constantinople. According to the truce signed a year later, the Sea of Azov and its coastal territory were officially



The Azov Fleet 1700



Kerch Strait - Sea of Azov



The Port of Azov



The Russian Black Sea Fleet 1886

relinquished to Russia. Nevertheless, following Russia's loss to the Turks in the army campaign of 1711, the Treaty of Prut returned the Azov lands to the Turks.

The Azov Fleet
Comments by Duncan Henderson of Orange Street (June 2004) On “Peter I and the Azov Fleet” Ref. 14641

There are White Russians, Slavs and Mongols. The latter with their 3 century conquest of Russia did enormous harm, and in my opinion led to the 1917 October Revolution by the Communists. Most of whose leaders were Ashkenazim Jews and therefore Mongols. A friend of mine knew a Sephardic Jew who told her that the Saphardim would have nothing to do with the Ashkenazim, an interesting example of Racial Prejudice.

In the BI. “theory”, the Vikings originated from the Black Sea. They crossed and re-crossed Europe with their longships. The distance between the navigable of the rivers flowing north and south is 20 miles. Put on rollers the longships are easily dragged across. And the great gateway of Kiev was a Viking a city. These trade routes were cut off with the Mongol invasion. And after this event no more Byzantine coins are found in Viking coin hoards found in Northern Europe. Quite apart from literary sources, the invasion can be dated from the coin hoards.

In my opinion the White Russians are of Viking blood and therefore seagoing people. So I was not surprised when I read some years ago that a Naval Officer a contemporary of Lord Nelson, reported that the Russian Navy was then extremely good. But cannot be under Communism.



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