LEGACY and MURDER



0. LEGACY and MURDER - Story Preface

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In this work, by Apollinary Vasnetsov (1856-1933), we see members of the *Oprichnina* coming into a town. The immediate result is that everyone flees as fast as they can. This scene was used as a setting for Tchaikovsky's opera *The Oprichnik*. Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons. PD

In the later years of Ivan IV's reign, Muscovy was becoming a world power. Despite a disastrous twenty-five year war with Lithuania and Sweden, Ivan Grozny had expanded his country's territory into Siberia, tapping its vast forests and mineral deposits.

Failings usually overshadow accomplishments when one considers Ivan the Terrible. Aside from the obvious, however, part of the reason may be that most first-hand sources were destroyed when Ivan's archival holdings burned in a 1692 fire.

Notwithstanding the loss of those authentic primary sources, historians know that during his reign:

- Russia's first print shop was opened in Moscow;
- The country had its first code of laws, the *Stoglav* (meaning, the "One Hundred Chapters"); and
- An interesting set of rules for Russian households (the Domostroi) were issued.

In 1572, the Tsar unexpectedly dissolved the *Oprichnina*. Thereafter, he sought to court Russia's most precious resource: its people. Within ten years, however, he committed an act so heinous that it sent his country - and its people - into confusion.

Two of Ivan and Anastasia's children had survived. The oldest son, Ivan Ivanovich, was heir to the throne. Twenty-eight years old, Ivan the younger was married to a woman who often annoyed the Tsar.

On the 19th of November, 1581 - in the 34th year of his reign - Ivan Grozny was upset with his daughter-in-law's choice of clothes. It is said the Tsar boxed her ears (some accounts say he beat her) when she refused to change those clothes.

Accounts vary on what happened next. The Tsarevich either came to his wife's rescue (she ultimately miscarried) or later argued with his father about the incident. Ivan the son was upset with Ivan the father for harming his wife.

Suddenly, in a fit of rage, the Tsar struck his son in the head with his iron-tipped staff. The wound festered for several days while the Prince lay in a coma. When the Tsarevich died, Ivan IV was a murderer not just of opponents but of his own son.

Overcome with grief, just as he was when Anastasia died, Ivan knocked his head against his son's coffin. The scandalous murder of the next Tsar threw Russia into a devastating turmoil.

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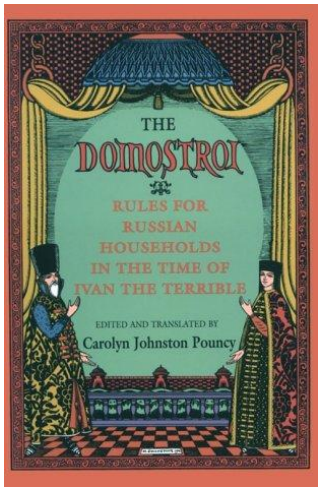
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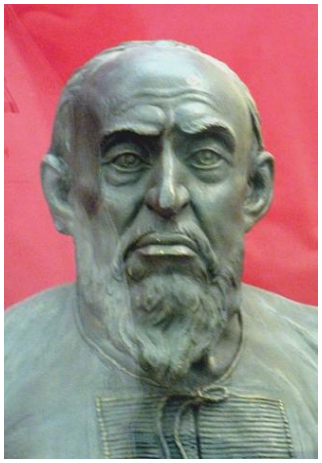
Ivan the Terrible - Admiring His Wife

Grigory Sedov painted this work in 1875. Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.
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The Domostroi: Rules for Russian Households - Carolyn J. Pouncy

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Ivan IV - Facial Reconstruction

Image of bust by M. Gerasimov, featuring reconstructed facial features of Ivan IV, online via Wikimedia Commons with permission of the Museum Fund of the Russian Federation.
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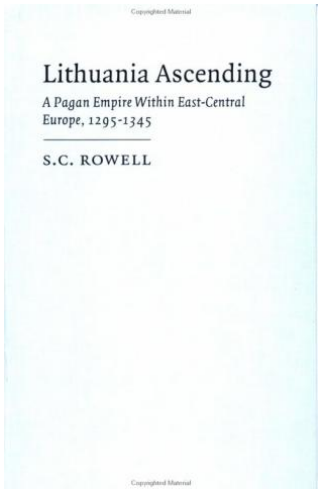
Ivan the Terrible Murders His Son

Painting by Ilya Repin, 1873. Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.
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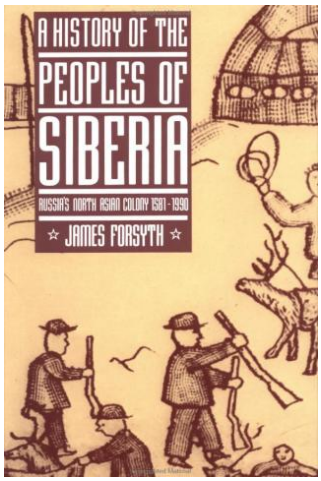


Ivan the Terrible - At the Deathbed of His Son

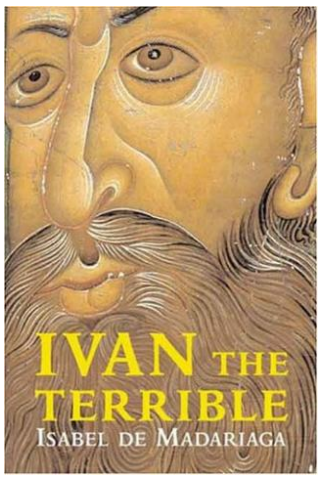
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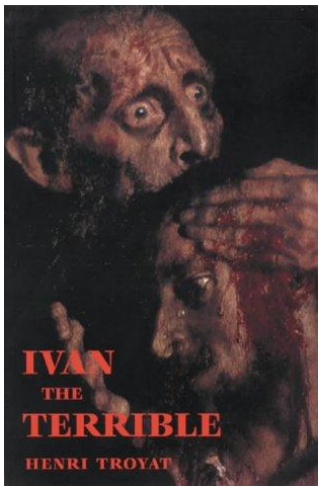
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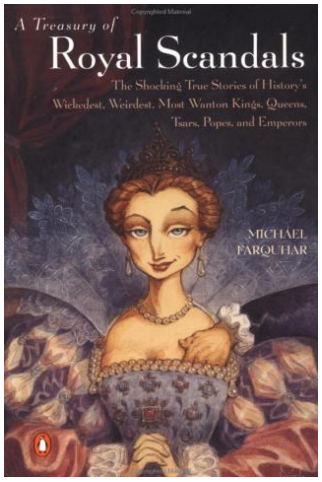
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