

Volume 11

Number 045

**Catherine the Great and the
Assassination of Peter III - II**

Lead: Catherine, the new Empress of Russia, was about to be discarded by her husband of 18 years. As always, her resourcefulness turned aside disaster and her ruthless ambition made her Catherine the Great.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: Burdened with a feckless husband and limited prospects, Catherine, the German consort of the future Czar, secured her position

through powerful male allies, intellectual curiosity, and a clever ruthlessness that eventually made her a great monarch. During nearly two decades of marriage, while husband Peter frittered away his reputation on aimless living and an unwise fascination with Prussian King Frederick II, Catherine built alliances with important parts of the Russian ruling class. She cultivated the Empress Elizabeth. Her well-chosen lovers numbered among the most powerful men in the kingdom. In contrast to her husband, she was aggressively patriotic and, despite a prodigious and wide-ranging sex life, a generous devotee of the Russian Orthodox Church.

When Peter became Czar in 1792 he let it be known that he wished to dump Catherine in favor of his ugly, pock-marked mistress. It was the Czarina's ultimate moment of danger. She assembled her allies and on July 9th had herself proclaimed Empress. Peter made a feeble attempt at resistance, but was arrested, humiliated in front of the entire court, banished to the countryside, forced to abdicate and was eventually assassinated by his guards. She probably did not wish to see him murdered, but his removal certainly secured her position. Catherine went on to a successful reign of 34 years as Empress, the last ruler of Russia so designated as Great.

At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

Resources

Alexander, John T. *Catherine the Great: Life and Legend.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.

De Madariagoa, Isabel. *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981.

Haslip, Joan. *Catherine the Great: A Biography.* New York: Putnam, 1977.

Pavlenko, Nikolai. "A Woman of Substance," *Russian Life* 39 (11, November, 1996): 4-7.

Voltaire, Francois Marie Arouet. *Voltaire and Catherine the Great: Selected Correspondence.* Translated, with Commentary, Notes and Introduction by A. Lentin. Cambridge: Oriental Research Partners, 1974.

<http://members.tripod.com/~Nevermore/CGREAT.HTM>

Copyright by Dan Roberts Enterprises, Inc.