Cathrine The Great Essay, Research Paper

CATHERINE THE GREAT EMPRESS OF ALL RUSSIA Catherine II (a.k.a. Catherine the Great) Catherine II, or Catherine the Great, empress of all Russia, did much to continue the process of Westernization reforms began by Peter the Great. Catherine was devoted to art, literature, science, and politics. Many people say she had a great gift and was a great leader, thus she was awarded with the name ?the Great? She helped develop schools, hospitals, and many other organizations for the country. She was a shrewd leader and autocrat and helped to continue and further reforms made by Peter the Great, finally making Russia a permanent European power. Originally named Sophie Frederick Augusta, Princess of Anholt-Zerbst, she was born in Stettin on May 2, 1729, the daughter of the German prince of Anholt-Zerbst . At the age of fifteen she went to Russia and married Grand Duke Peter of Holstein, heir to the Russian throne. The marriage was despondent, but intelligent and ambitious Catherine soon managed to assemble up a liaison of supporters. On October 1, 1754, Catherine gave birth to her son, the future emperor, Paul Petrovich Romanov, and three years later on December 20, 1957, she gave birth to her daughter, Anna Petrovna Romanov. Elizabeth died on December 25, 1761, and Catherine?s husband succeeded as Peter III. Erratic, unstable, and contemptuous of his Russian subjects, the new ruler soon made himself unpopular, especially with certain German officers. Led by Alexei Orlov (whose brother Grigori was Catherine?s lover) the officers staged a coup in June 1762. Peter was deposed (and subsequently murdered) and Catherine was placed on the throne in his place. Catherine was fascinated with the philosophies and theories of the Enlightenment, and was well acquainted with the literature of the French Enlightenment, which was an important influence on her own political influence. She corresponded extensively with Voltaire and Denis Diderot, gave financial support to them and a number of other French writers, and played host to Diderot at her court in 1773. Although, this gesticulation of hospitality was partially aimed at creating a favorable image in Western Europe, she was probably sincere in her interest and her hope to apply some of the ideas of the Enlightenment to rationalize and reform the administration of the Russian Empire. Imbued with the ideas of the Enlightenment, Catherine aimed at completing the job started by Peter the Great–westernizing Russia–but she had contradictory methods. Rather then forcing society to reform, she encouraged individual initiative in pursuit of self-interest. In the early years of her reign, she sought to win the support of the Russian gentry, and, in particular Despite her interest in legal reform, the commission she appointed for that purpose failed to accomplish its goals. But eventually, she learned how to select capable assistants–for example, Nikita Panin in foreign affairs, Alexandre Suvorov in the military, and Grigori Potemkin in administration. Among Catherine?s more benevolent achievements were the foundation of the first Russian school for girls and of a medical college to provide health care for her subjects. In the early years of her reign, Catherine sought to win the approval of the gentry, which was a small part of Russia?s population. She succeeded to a degree with the upper class, but did nothing for the overwhelming majority of the population–the enserfed peasantry. Conservatism Peasant unrest culminated in a great revolt (1773-75), led by Cossack Yemelyan Pugachov, that raged over much of the Volga River Basin and the Ural Mountains before it was finally ruthlessly crushed by military force. The revolt marked a turn toward more reactionary internal policy. The Cossack army was disbanded, and other Cossacks were granted special privileges in an effort to transform them into loyal supporters of the autocracy. The revolt alerted Catherine to the necessity for reform. In 1775, she reorganized the local administration, integrated the Cossacks into the regular army, and put the serfs belonging to the Russian Orthodox Church under the administration of the state. In 1785, she issued two charters–to the towns and to the nobility–to involve the educated classed in local administration in return for protection of their status and property rights. In similar spirit, Catherine established the Free Economic Society to encourage the modernization of agriculture and industry. She promoted trade and the development of underpopulated regions by inviting foreign settlers such as the Volga Germans, and she founded new towns (Odessa, for example) and enterprises on the Black Sea. Herself a prolific writer, Catherine patronized arts and letters, permitted the establishment of private printing presses, and relaxed censorship rules. Under her guidance the University of Moscow and the Academy of Sciences became internationally recognized centers of learning; she also increased the number of state and private schools. As a result, the Russian nobility, and some townspeople, also began to organize associations for the promotion of schools and publications. Catherine, who did not want to surrender control over social and cultural policy, viewed these activities with suspicion. The outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789 and the publication of Alexandre Radishchev?s journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow in 1790, in which the author denounced the evils of serfdom, the immorality of society, and the abuses of government, prompted Catherine to impose repressive measures, which in turn alienated many of the educated. Finally, Catherine vastly expanded the Russian empire. Following the two successful wars against Turkey (the Russo-Turkish Wars of 1768-74 and 1787-92), Russia secured the Crimea and thus realized a centuries-old dream of establishing itself on the north shore of the black Sea. The fertile lands of the Ukraine were also opened for settlement and soon became the granary of Europe. Catherine also participated in the partitions of Poland (1772,1792, and 1795) bringing a large part of that country under Russian rule. Catherine had twenty-one lovers, and her spirit doctor inspected them all before they could be her lover…but Sergei Vasiljevits Saltykov (father of her first son) and Grigori Orlov (father of second son) were special to her. Upon the death of Catherine on November 17, 1796, modern Russian society was organized and its culture had struck firm roots. Russia was also playing a determining role in world affairs.

4a6

1. Scott, Robert, H., ?Catherine the Great? Microsoft(R) Encarta, Microsoft Corp., 1995. 2. Http://www.guide.spb.ru/culture-n-history/history/cathii/index.html. 3. Http://www.cityvision2000.com/history/catherine.htm. 4. Http://taft.k14.ojgae.edu/~garrison.naomi.html. 5. Http://www.sptimes.com/Treasure/TC.2.3.13.html. 6. Http:/www.ac.wwu.edu/~stephan/Rulers/romanov.html.