
Catherine the Great's Influence on Export Trade in Russia

Identification and Evaluation of Sources

To what extent did Catherine the Great's military advances influence export trade in Russia? The two sources being evaluated in this section provide part of the answer to the question prompt above. The first source being evaluated is a primary source written by the historical figure being investigated. This source contains the set of new laws and reforms that empress Catherine wanted to have under her rule and shows relevance to the argument of the piece. The second source being evaluated is a secondary source analysing and evaluating the multiple memoirs and theatrical works of Catherine the Great. This source goes on to discuss the image of Russia that the empress wanted to imprint on Europe.

The empress of Russia Catherine II created and wrote the document, Nakaz or The Instructions of Catherine II to the Legislative Commission, in 1764. The document was published in 1767 when the German edition was sent to Frederick II of Prussia and the French one to Voltaire. The document was personally written by the monarch, being revised and edited by her two most valued advisors, Nikita Panin and Grigory Orlov. The author created the document in order to replace the mid-17th-century Muscovite code of laws with a more modern law code in the 18th century. Catherine believed that to strengthen law and institutions was above all else to strengthen the monarchy and its rule. The document was intended to be for the All-Russian Legislative Commission. The document was a statement of new legal principles. This document is a very valuable source because it provides an example of the views and future plans of the empress Catherine II.

This second source is an excerpt of chapter, part of a full book that was written by Monika Greenleaf. The article was published in July 2004 by the Russian Review. The author is an Associate Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures and Comparative Literature at Stanford University and is a successful published author. This fact makes her work much more valuable as the author goes on to evaluate Catherine the Great's multiple memoirs. The entire book was not fully accessible but the document did state that Catherine's imperial might and her power to lead successful military actions and expand Russian territory. To conclude, compared to the other source evaluated this source did not have as much information to share as the other document.

Investigation

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Catherine II, or as she is more well known as Catherine the Great, is one of Russia's most memorable and influential past monarchs as she was an enlightened despot of the 18th century. Catherine, born Sophia Augusta Frederica of Anhalt-Zerbst At Stettin, in Prussian Pomerania on May 2, 1729, was trained by her mother from an early age to be fit for marriage to a king. Which she was as when she was 15 years old, the young Prussian girl became betrothed to the presumed heir to the throne of Russia, the Grand Duke Peter Fedorovich. Through a coup, Catherine ascended to the Russian throne. She played a key role in the three partitions of Poland and also gained various military success in conquering near countries. In her economic policies Catherine followed the tendencies of her age and adopted the doctrine of laissez-faire. Without attempting any regulation, she was interested in the development of industry and trade, especially export trade. The Black Sea grain trade was made possible after the colonization of southern Russia, the building of several towns, and the foundation of the Russian naval base in Sevastopol. Among her economic measures were the establishment of the Loan Bank, the introduction of paper currency, the reduction of the burdensome salt tax, and the encouragement of the Free Economic Society, founded through private initiative for the dissemination of information about agriculture(Catherine the Great). The empress was extremely influenced by the Enlightenment period of the time and the philosophers. She even considered herself an enlightened ruler and wanted to raise Russia's culture and economics to place it on level with all the other European superpowers. Catherine transformed Russia into a great power.

The most literate ruler in Russian history, Catherine constantly patronized cultural life; in particular a flurry of satirical journals and comedies were published anonymously with her significant participation. The basis of each of her fictional literary works were based on her own opinions and observations through her enlightenment philosophy of Russian culture. When Catherine took over the throne, she realized it's laws were clearly outdated and needed to be changed. To change these laws she wrote the Nakaz or, The Instructions of Catherine II to the Legislative Commission, as guidelines to changing these rules. One of these guidelines states, "This is clearly demonstrated by the following Observations: The Alterations which Peter the Great undertook in Russia succeeded with the greater Ease, because the Manners, which prevailed at that Time, and had been introduced amongst us by a Mixture of different Nations, and the Conquest of foreign Territories, were quite unsuitable to the Climate. Peter the First, by introducing the Manners and Customs of Europe among the European People in his Dominions, found at that Time such Means as even he himself was not sanguine enough to expect" (The Instructions to the Commissioners for Composing a New Code or Laws). The empress thought that the previous emperor, her husband, was correct in trying to expand the Russian borders. And this was something Catherine wanted wholeheartedly.

The first military leadership experience Catherine II had was during the coup to abdicate Peter I. She donned the uniform and led her loyal soldiers to convince her husband to abdicate. While

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there was no great battle or any lost lives, this moment did count for the continued respect and support of the military. The next military movement she made was against the Ottoman Empire, now known as Turkey, when after sending soldiers to put down a revolt in Poland. Russian forces pursued Polish insurgents into the Ottoman Empire; and with some conving from the French the Ottomans imprisoned the Russian ambassador and declared war on Russia. The Russian military proved to be mightier and stronger than the Ottoman forces. On land, the Russians delivered a series of brutal attacks and at sea the Russian navy delivered a surprise attack that gave them an even bigger advantage. To end the war, the Treaty of Kucuk Kaynarca was drafted. It gave the Russians a fair bit of land and some new ports in the Black Sea(ExtraCreditz). By gaining these new ports, Russia was able to expand their export trade with other countries that were not easily accessible geographically.

After the successful victories in the Ottoman Empire and at home, Catherine sought to expand the borders of Russia. And she did. While the rest of Europe was engulfed in wars of their own, Catherine was able to invade and possess new lands and territories in the Crimea, Georgia, and others surrounding Russia's limited borders. With these new lands being brought under her rule, the empress encouraged colonists to settle there and become part of the Ottoman Empire's rule. She also encouraged trade by lifting various restrictions and promoting the development of under-populated areas by attracting both Russians and foreigners to settle there. With the help of Grigory Aleksandrovich Potemkin, Catherine's favourite in the 1770s, he promoted large-scale foreign colonization and peasant resettlement in the south—with only mediocre success so far as agricultural settlements went but with great success in the foundation and rapid growth of such towns and ports as Odessa, Kherson, Nikolayev, Taganrog, and Mariupol. Within a generation or two, these became lively cultural centres and major commercial cities for all of southern Russia, contributing to the reorientation of Russia's pattern of trade with the development of agricultural exports from Ukraine(Russia).

At the end of Catherine's reign, Russia had expanded westward and southward over an area of more than 200,000 square miles to the Bosphorus Strait (connecting the Black Sea with the Aegean). At the end of her reign Catherine claimed that she had reorganized 29 provinces under her administrative reform plan. The empress invested funds in many projects. More than a hundred new towns were built; old ones were expanded and renovated. As commodities were plentiful, trade expanded and communications developed. These achievements, with the glory of military victories, have won her a distinguished place in history.

Reflection

This investigation has allowed me to gain insight into the processes and methods of historians today. I feel as if throughout this process I have grown my investigative skills and learned about whole variety of other subjects in the process. I have learned to carefully my analyze sources so

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that I may present different points of view on a same subject, to reach a justified conclusion. In order to carry out the investigation, I read excerpts of books on the subject by other experts. I read government documents of the time period as well as excerpts of some memoirs by the subject of this study, all of which are methods often used by historians.

My investigation highlighted to me the limitation of viewing others' work. While researching I always would go to the sources of the the article I was reading to verify and check if the information was reliable. There was also the fact of repeating information. In most of my research the same conclusions and information was the same which disturbed me; in a way as to how could all these historians come to the same exact truth? Could it be that they all have done extensive research and came to the correct solution? Or is it that there is not enough information to find any other possible conclusion? For example, in one of my sources which is a video; the author states that Catherine II was married secretly to another man but because there is no documentation of the union it might not even be true. The author then goes on to say that in her later correspondence to the man, she starts to refer to him as her husband and to herself as his wife. This is all the evidence he presents as he doesn't go on to say if the man ever responded to her letters in the same extent.

Historians face many challenges. As is not such in my case but, there is no absolute truth in history as it would be in science or math. There is no exact equation or formula to find out exactly what happened in the past so all historians can do until sufficient evidence can prove it is guess. In archive-based history, the historian has to be aware of which context of the event is he reading about. History is written by the winners but the losers also have a story to tell. The information being read in such archives will be different from each other which will make it difficult on the historian's part it guess the truth.

A historian is defined as an expert in history; the authority on history by the dictionary. A historian can also be defined as a writer of history; chronicler. The role of a historian is to tell the truth about the past. To make unbiased and justified conclusions within reason of the event. The role a historian is important to society and to its future as we always need to remember our past mistakes to know not to repeat them.

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