

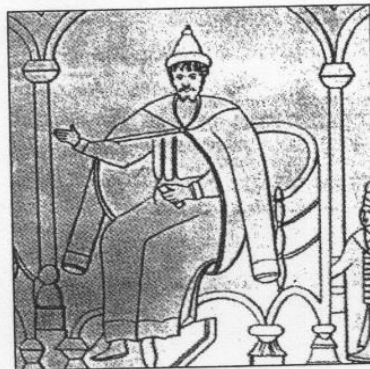
PEOPLE IN WORLD HISTORY PROFILE 18

Vladimir I (c. A.D. 956–1015)

Vladimir I, grand duke of Kiev, was the son of Svyatoslav I, duke of Kiev. Svyatoslav sent his son to rule Novgorod in A.D. 972. After his father's death, Vladimir found himself in competition with his two brothers to assume their father's title. He defeated both of them, killing one. Vladimir thereby took control of Kiev and united Novgorod with it. Thus, Vladimir began his rule with expansion. Such expansion and clever statecraft became a hallmark of his reign. Vladimir conquered Slavic tribes and waged war against the Lithuanians, the Bulgars, and the Byzantines.

Vladimir made many important decisions in his capacity as a ruler. He promoted the trade that helped the economy. He ordered the building of schools and libraries. He was an effective warrior who expanded Russia's western borders and defended its people against nomads in the east. However, it was one decision for which Vladimir would be most remembered, a decision that fundamentally changed the history of Russia—and the lives of its people—forever.

In A.D. 988, Vladimir, a fervent pagan, converted to Christianity. It is said that Vladimir



considered several religions, including Islam, Judaism, Roman Catholicism, and Eastern Orthodoxy, before deciding on Eastern Orthodoxy. He dismissed his four wives and soon thereafter married Princess Anna, the sister of the Byzantine Emperor Basil II. Some historians argue that the benefits of the alliance with the powerful Byzantines may have been a factor in Vladimir's decision to convert

and marry Anna.

Regardless of his motives for conversion, Vladimir championed Christianity in his realm. Upon his own conversion, he required his subjects to be baptized. In fact, the people of Kiev were ordered to wade, en masse, into the Dnieper River. He ordered the building of churches, the most famous of which is the Cathedral of the Tithes, and he supported religious charity. Vladimir also gave the church strong legal status. Together, these acts formed the foundation of a Christian tradition in Russia that has lasted nearly 1,000 years. Vladimir died in 1015 and, later, was made a saint. The Feast of Saint Vladimir continues to be celebrated every July 15.

Reviewing the Profile

Answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper.

1. Identify Vladimir's religion before his conversion. To what religion did he convert?
2. How did his conversion affect the people in his domain?
3. What factor do some historians think helped motivate Vladimir's conversion?

Critical Thinking

4. **Expressing Problems Clearly** Because of his own religious conversion, Vladimir ordered the conversion of thousands of his subjects. Do you think this was fair? Explain your answer.