

History does not necessarily repeat itself

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All the reports about senseless destruction in Ukrainian lands may call to mind what happened in Novgorod 450 years ago. The city of Novgorod had been a founding member of Kievan Rus, second only to Kyiv itself in importance and splendor, and it remained so after it had seceded from Rus in 1132. It avoided the wrath of the Mongol invaders although it had to pay a regular tribute to them. However, in 1478 it was conquered and annexed by Muscovy whose power had grown during the 15th century, but it could still compete with Moscow in many respects. It was able to retain its system of governance whereby it was ruled by a council of aldermen who controlled the affairs of the city and its territories, together with a mayor and a military commander. In 1570, however, tsar Ivan the Terrible heard a rumor that the leaders of Novgorod were planning to secede from Muscovy and seek the protection of the neighboring Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth that had been consolidated the previous year. Tsar Ivan responded by sending his army to conduct what is known as the massacre of Novgorod, where both the city and the surrounding lands were laid to waste. Novgorod never recovered from this blow.

Fortunately, history does not necessarily repeat itself.

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