



IVAN the TERRIBLE

The Advent of Terror & the Secret State Police

One Silver Kopek Coin



This coin is a genuine silver Kopek coin issued during the reign of Ivan IV, “The Terrible.”

Late in the year 1564, Ivan IV of Russia suddenly abandoned the capital city of Moscow for small-town Aleksandrov, sixty miles away. He brought with him a clutch of his most trusted boyars, as well as many more soldiers than necessary to guarantee his safety.

At the time, Ivan was 34 years old. His wife, Anastasia Romanov, had recently died, and he was in the throes of an existential crisis, if not a full-blown mental breakdown. The hair on his head and his beard fell out in clumps. His eyes were dim. He looked like a madman.

After a month of self-imposed exile, the tsar sent two letters to the metropolitan, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, in Moscow. One letter explained that Ivan wished to abdicate from the throne, because of disloyal boyars and clergy plotting against him. The other letter, to be read to the masses, decreed that he had no quarrel with the common people—a population which generally adored him, as evidenced by his rosy portrayal in contemporary folklore. Divided between Moscow and Aleksandrov, and hampered by centuries of monarchical tradition, the boyars could not unite against him; instead they begged him to return.

Ivan had two conditions for his reinstatement. First, he would have absolute and unchecked power in rooting out wrongdoers and traitors among the boyars and clergy. Second, to achieve that end, he would create what was effectively a secret state police, called the *oprichnina*. It was the *oprichnina*, black-clad men on black horses and instruments of terror, whose gave Ivan the Terrible his sobriquet.

While there have been plenty of historical instances of soldiers rounding up and slaughtering suspected traitors, the *oprichnina* of Ivan the Terrible was unprecedented in its scope, its reach, its centralized bureaucracy, and its ability to sustain terror for a long period of time. It is the antecedent to modern secret police services like the Gestapo and the KGB.



This coin is a genuine antiquity. It is a silver Kopek coin issued during the reign of Ivan IV, “The Terrible.” It is often referred to as “wire money” because of the method of manufacture. The coins were crudely struck in a curious method on a continuous length of silver wire between coin dies, and then cut apart into individual coins. The coins were inscribed on one side with the Czar’s name and his titles in Old Russian script. The complete inscription is often partly cut off. On the other side is found the indistinct and partial image of Saint George slaying the dragon.
W: 0.3-0.7 g / D: 9.3-13.5 mm

The coin image used is not to scale and is for illustration purpose only. The grade of the coin in this collection may vary. All coins in each set are protected in an archival capsule and beautifully displayed in a clear box. The box set is accompanied with a story card and certificate of authenticity.

Order code: IVANTERRIBLE-CLRBOX

Box measures: 4 5/8" x 3 1/5" x 1/2"