

# Adam Oleary Meets Aleksey, the Russian Tsar

Adam Oleary paced the floor. As a famous German scholar, he had visited many important people. However, this was his first visit with Aleksey Mikhailovich, Tsar of Russia. Within the Kremlin, a fortified complex in the heart of Moscow, he waited for the tsar.

“I don’t know what to expect,” Adam whispered to his assistant, Henry. “Did you know Arkhangel, the main trade city, earns 300 thousand rubies a year? That’s equal to six tons of gold. Can you imagine six tons, or 12,000 pounds, of gold?! And, that’s only from one of Russia’s cities and in one year.”

Henry shook his head. “No. I can’t even imagine 10 pounds of gold, let alone 12,000 pounds. Meeting the Russian tsar is a little scary.”

The two fell silent as Adam paced the floor again. It was an exciting opportunity to meet the Russian tsar and learn more about him and his country. But, it was scary too. Foreign visitors were never certain what to expect or how they’d be treated.

Suddenly, a servant raced through the room shouting, “Food to the Sovereign.”

Adam and Henry were led into a huge banquet hall. There were two tables, one grander and larger than the other.

Adam’s hands felt sweaty. The tsar was seated at the head of the larger table. He and Henry were seated at the other table with a number of other visitors.

Henry nudged Adam. “He’s much bigger than I expected.”

Adam shot Henry a glare. “Shhh.”

Servants carried plates of food and placed them on the smaller table. Adam counted more than 50 different dishes.

The servants would raise one dish at a time, just a little. The main table servant pointed to the dishes that would go to the tsar’s table.

“No wonder he’s so heavy,” whispered Henry.

Adam kicked Henry under the table.

After everyone had eaten, the tsar sent a servant to bring Adam to his table.

Adam bowed before the tsar.

“Mr. Oleary, your reputation as a scholar and scientist is impressive. You are a man of great knowledge.”

“Your Sovereign, you honor me,” said Adam. “I know you are considered a gentle and very religious man.”

“Yes, yes,” said the tsar. “Did you know my people call me Aleksey the Quiet?”

Adam smiled. “I do know. And, now I can see how magnificent your court is. I will be sure to tell of its grandeur.”

The tsar motioned to his head servant. “Thank you for visiting, Mr. Oleary. Please let those outside Russia know of our progress and strength.”

The servant took Adam’s arm. Adam bowed again. “Thank you for your graciousness.”

Adam was brought back to Henry, and they were escorted to their rooms. The next day they would travel back to Germany.

**Questions**

1. Who was Adam O'Leary?
2. Why was Adam in Russia?
3. What was the tsar called by his people?
4. Do you think Russia was wealthy during Alexsey's reign? Why or why not?