Igor Vasilevich Kurchatov Encyclopedia Article

Igor Vasilevich Kurchatov

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Igor Vasilevich Kurchatov

1903-1960

Russian nuclear physicist who headed the development of Soviet nuclear technology. Kurchatov's early work on non-conductors (dielectrics) led to studies in atomic physics. After studying neutrons, Kurchatov proposed the splitting of heavy atoms in 1939, and became the head of Soviet atomic research efforts during World War II. On August 12, 1953, his team detonated the first Soviet hydrogen bomb. An advocate of peaceful atomic uses, he helped build the first atomic energy station. He also devised a method to protect shipping from magnetic mines.