Russia During the Early-Modern Period
Review of Russian History

► Kievan Rus
  ▪ Dominated by Kiev, but various other principalities throughout

► Ties with Byzantine Empire

► Adopted Orthodox Christianity in 900’s

► Fell under Mongol rule in the 1220’s
  ▪ Remained under Mongol rule until late-1400’s
Russia Under Mongol Rule

► Golden Horde
  ▪ Indirect rule, largely for tribute
  ▪ Used local princes and officials as tax collectors

► Economic and Social deterioration
  ▪ Stagnant economy
    ▶ Lack of trade
    ▶ Tax and tribute a financial burden
  ▪ Arts and learning (literacy) decrease

► Orthodox Christianity remains dominant religion
Throwing off the “Mongol Yoke”

► Moscow grows in power
  ▪ Princes serve as tax collectors for Mongols
  ▪ 1400’s stop paying tribute, rebel against Mongol rule
    ► Ivan III (Ivan the Great) major figure in freeing Russia from Mongol rule
      ▪ Ends by 1480

► Moscow begins conquest and expansion
Beginnings of a Russian Empire

► Under Ivan III, Moscow begins to build a Russian empire
  ▪ Promotes centralized rule

► Ivan IV (Ivan the Terrible), will continue expansion and centralization of power
  ▪ Crowned himself as tsar
Ivan IV (The Terrible)

- Ruled from 1533-1584
- Known for intelligence, devoutness, and mental instability
- Centralized power as tsar by eliminating suspected political threats
  - Execution of many aristocrats (boyars)
- After death, his son became tsar, but died without heir
  - Setting off “Time of Troubles” in Russia
  - We will come back to this in just a bit.
Patterns of Expansion

► Moscow expands west and seizes territory in Kiev, Novgorod

► Looks to east (Siberia)
  - Ideal for furs, timber, gold, and iron deposits
  - Harsh climate
  - Sent out Cossacks (explorers) to settle new lands
    - Comparable to the American pioneers of the American west
  - Lands were granted to loyal nobles
  - Claims Alaska

► By end of early-modern period, Russia had become the largest country in the world
  - Spanning from the Pacific Ocean westward to Eastern Europe
  - Southern border met with Ottoman Empire
The Romanov Dynasty

► Back to the Time of Troubles

► After death of Feodor (Ivan IV’s son), there was a power struggle to determine who should rule
  ▪ Conflict between the boyars

► 1613: boyars choose Michael Romanov as tsar
  ▪ Ruled from 1613-1645
  ▪ Established the Romanov Dynasty that would rule Russia until 1917
Romanov Dynasty

- Under the Romanov Dynasty, Russia would continue its expansion
- Alexis (Michael’s successor) reaffirmed the tsar’s role as both political and religious leader in Russia
  - Close tie between Church and State
- Greatest of the Romanov rulers were:
  - Peter the Great
  - Catherine the Great
Peter I

► Peter the Great
► Ruled from 1689-1725
  ▪ Autocrat: harshly put down rebellion
    ► Created a secret police to help maintain order
  ▪ Westernized Russia
    ► Modeled military after the west
    ► Built Russia’s first navy (w/help of western Europe)
    ► Encouraged learning and education
    ► Reshaped social norms among the elite
      ▪ Western dress, shaving beard
Peter I

- Mostly unsuccessful wars with Ottoman Empire
- Great Northern War (w/ Sweden), gained access to Baltic Sea
  - Built St. Petersburg & moved capitol
The Expansion of Russia under Peter the Great. Peter added vital territory on the Baltic Sea to the vast Russian empire.
Selective Westernization

- Peter the Great was very deliberate in his choices for reform
  - Used tactics to weaken the boyars by taking away their traditions
- Censored Western ideas that might threaten his power as tsar
  - ie. Enlightenment ideas and Parliamentarian government
- Also, did not implement changes in labor
  - West using paid labor while Russia was implementing an extreme version of serfdom
Catherine the Great

- Following Peter’s death in 1725, Russia had a series of weak rulers
- Next great ruler was Catherine the Great
  - Ruled from 1762-1796
  - German princess
  - Married to Peter III (distant relative to Peter I)
    - Mental handicap, became tsar
  - 1762, her husband dies (maybe murdered?)
    - Catherine instilled as regent and then declared Empress
Catherine the Great
Catherine the Great

► Much like Peter the Great in her policies
  ▪ Selective westernization
    ► Patronized European art, architecture

► Courted favor with boyars by giving them more power over their serfs

► Ruled with absolute power by putting down rebellions

► Gained new lands
  ▪ Crimea (bordering Black Sea) and part of Poland
Responses to Reforms of Peter I

► Boyars often angered due to loss of power and their old traditions
  ▪ Catherine the Great gave some power back to the boyars

► Peasant revolts common
  ▪ Neither Peter nor Catherine instituted policies to help the serfs
    ► Passed laws giving landowners more power over their serfs

► Scholars begin to write about and call for reform
  ▪ Their ideas censored and writings banned
Bringing It All Together
Russian Government

► Autocratic government
  ▪ Tsar
    ► Appointed local magistrates to carry out tsar’s wishes on a local level
    ► Often filled bureaucracy with people from within and from outside of the aristocracy
      ▪ Training systems to promote merit
      ▪ Designed to keep boyars from gaining too much power

► Close tie between Church and state
  ▪ Tsar seen as head of state as well as Church

► Attempts to make government more efficient
  ▪ Ie, systemized law codes and taxation
Russian Society

- Population growth
  - Population doubles in 1700’s (36 million people)

- Nobles (boyars) important part of Russian society
  - Landowners, control of serfs

- Orthodox Christianity dominant religion among Russians BUT
  - Multicultural empire due to new lands and peoples incorporated during expansion
  - Internal tensions as a result

- Westernization policies helped to make elite Russian society comparable to that of the west
  - Clothing styles, adopted forms of architecture
    - The onion dome was a variation of the dome that was popular in Renaissance architecture

- Did NOT develop large urban centers and artisan class, which was common in Western Europe
  - Remained largely rural, agricultural economy
Russian Society

► 1649: peasants legally declared serfs
  - Pleasing to landowners and boyars b/c it gave them more power
  - Extreme, and unusual, form of serfdom that bordered on slavery
    - Unlike most other systems of serfdom, Russian serfs could be bought and sold
    - Serfdom was a hereditary status that could not be escaped
  - The conditions of common people in Russia continued to deteriorate
    - Revolts common
      - Sets stage for massive changes in Russian history later on down the road
  - Serfdom finally abolished in 1861
Women in Russia

- Westernization brought more freedom to upper-class women
  - Encouraged to attend public events with men
  - Pass the whip ceremony ended

- Lives of peasant women remain largely unchanged
Russian Economy

► Agricultural based
  ▪ Low ag. productivity, serfs not motivated to make more b/c landowner would get the profit

► Lack of large urban middle class or artisans and merchants

► Very little industry and manufacturing

► Trade (largely in furs)
  ▪ Facilitated largely by merchants from western Europe

► Some attempts to diversify the economy (limited)
  ▪ Metallurgy, mining

► Much of Russia’s money was used to fund the military
Final Thoughts

During the early-modern period, Russia sets the stage for the rest of its history

- Builds world’s largest state
- Reform policies help Russia transform and advance
- Emphasis on military will help Russia gain a power position in the world
- Social unrest and inequality set stage for revolution and change later on down the road