

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 Parliamentary 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