Czars of Russia
Early Russian History: geography

- Before 1500’s parts of Russia had been conquered by various groups (Mongols, Ottomans, etc.)
- By 1500 Russia would gain the Balkan region, the Ukraine and parts of Poland.
- Geographically had been isolated so was slow to see the changes that came to Western Europe (Industrialization, modernization)
Early Russian History: Government

- Ivan III was 1st to set up a system of Czars or leaders
  - “Czar” term taken from the old Roman word “Caesar” which means king/emperor
  - Close link between Russian Orthodox Church and the Czar
    - Czar seen by the Russian people as “God’s representative on earth”
    - Czar seen as a “father-like” figure who looked out for the Russian people (his “children”)
Background

- Inherited the throne at age 3
- At age 7 his mom was poisoned by nobles
- Was a very paranoid & cautious man throughout his rule
Ivan the Terrible

- Suffers from mental illness
- Creates “secret” police to hunt down real and imagined enemies
- Kills his son
The Rule of Ivan IV:

- Ruled as a totalitarian ruler (total dictatorship)
  - Feared potential threat by the nobles (boyers)
    - Seized their lands
    - He directly controlled ½ the land of Russia
      - Placed people loyal to him on those lands
      - Bound the serfs to the land (feudalism)
  
- Ruled through fear & oppression
  - Created the secret police (*Oprichniki*)

Ruled 1533-1584

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VPDAxB38hWc
**Russian Territory Under the Rule of Ivan IV**

- **Russia needed more usable land** (most seaports were not accessible for most the year due to the cold climate)
  - During 1500’s he conquered Mongol lands east and south of Moscow
  - Waged unsuccessful wars for areas along the Baltic Sea.

**After Ivan...**

- **Fyodor I Ivanovich (Feodor the Bellringer)**
  - 1584-1598
  - Liked to travel around country ringing bells in churches
  - Undiagnosed with mental retardation
Peter “The Great”

- **Background:**
  - Inherited the throne at age 10
  - Not well educated but very motivated to learn
  - Spent time before rule mingling with foreigners living in Russia
    - He found the “new” ways of Western Europe fascinating.
The Rule of Peter The Great

- Created a system of local Bureaucracies (local lands administered/controlled by local govts.)

- Gave total control over the serfs/peasants to the nobility
Russian Territory Under Peter The Great

- His goal was to make Russia a European power
  - 1689 forced China to accept Russian rule of Siberia
  - Russia fought Poland, Sweden & the Ottoman Empire with little success (Russian military was very outdated)
    - Peter was convinced he needed to modernize the Russian military in order to be able to win
    - 1721 was successful in defeating Sweden
Peter Modernizes Russia

- He wanted to Russia to compete intellectually & militarily with the rest of Europe
  - Once Czar he took a trip to Europe and studied
    - European society & culture (European art)
    - New technologies
      - Shipbuilding
      - The factory system
      - Medicine

WESTERNIZATION
Catherine “The Great”

- Born of German Royalty
- Married Peter III; an ineffectual ruler who she plotted against to murder & take over the rule of the Russian Empire

Ruled from 1762-1796
Peter III’s personality

“Peter was a young barbarian with the manners of an *unlicked cub*... he was of a *temper* alternately violent and sulky, addicted to practical jokes in a society of ladies, spent most of his time in playing at soldiers with his valets, and a good deal of the rest of it *playing with dolls and toys.*”
More of Peter’s “un-Royal” behavior

“The Great Duke took his toy soldiering very seriously. Later in their marriage, Peter executed a large rat in their bedroom for devouring two toy soldiers made of starch. Peter claimed that the rat was clearly guilty according to military law, and that, after one of his dogs broke its back, he had hanged it in public view "for three days, as an example." Catherine, thinking he was joking, burst into hysterics. Peter's face darkened. He was twenty-five.”

Not many Russians trusted the rule of Peter III who was thought to be both mad and cruel
Catherine take Power

- She became popular with many elite nobles (had affairs with many important nobles and military men)
  - She used these ties to plot against her husband
  - 1762 she seized power from him and he was imprisoned and later assassinated by her lover
  - Peter had only been in power for 6 months
The Rule of Catherine the Great

The Enlightened Despot

- She read the works of the writers of the Enlightenment but;
  - Allowed nobles to control the peasants
  - Took firm action against the peasants after they revolted against her harsh rule.
  - More serfs forced into serfdom
Alexander II

- He came to power during the Crimean War
- Had to rule during a time when the people were demanding change but the system of Czarist rule was still in place
The Rule of Alex. II

- Set up a system of local govts. (*zemstovs*)
  - This gave some individuals experience in local politics/governing
- Legal reforms like trial by jury
- Eased censorship
- Wouldn’t go so far as to create a constitution (this is what many were already asking for)
Russian Territory Under Alex. II

- Loss in the Crimean War showed how backward and inefficient Russia was in terms of military power
Social Reforms Under Alexander II

- Limited the use of the secret police
- Expanded education system
- He knew that Russia needed to industrialize but the labor force were the peasants
  - In 1861 he freed the serfs and officially ended Russian feudalism
Reaction to his rule

- The former nobles/elite feared the weakening of the old conservative system.
- The softening of authority allowed those that thought the reforms were not enough to organize against the Czar.
  - Radical groups formed; some to overthrow or assassinate the Czar (they succeeded in 1881 with a bomb).
Alexander III

- **Background:**
  - Came to power during a very heated & revolutionary time
  - Goal was to crush the revolutionaries that had killed his father and threatened the authority of the Czars
Rule of Alexander III

Totalitarian Ruler

- He increased power of the secret police
- Restored strict censorship
- Exiled many to Siberia
- Rejected all ideas on democracy
- Suppressed the cultures of all non-Russian people in the empire
  - Insisted on one official language
  - Persecution of the Poles, Ukrainians, Finns, Armenians and Jews & Muslims in the empire
Nicholas II

Background:

- Czar Alexander III died suddenly and son, Nicholas II was not prepared to be Czar

- He was recently married and preferred to spend time with his wife
- Was more of an intellectual than a leader or military man
The Rule of Nicholas II

- Wanted to rule as an absolute ruler but was weak
  - Gave most of the decision making to advisors
  - Was easily influenced being that he really didn’t want to be Czar (at least the part where he had to work & make decisions)
Nicholas II was an ineffectual military leader

- Blamed for the loss to Japan in the Russo-Japanese war in 1904
- Was blamed for Russian losses during WWI
Soft Side to Nicholas II

- More of a family man than a Czar
  - Deeply devoted to his wife the Czarina and their children

Queen Victoria with the Czar and little Alexi