



# The Russian Empire

## TERMS & NAMES

czar

Ivan the Terrible

Peter the Great

Catherine the Great

Russian Revolution

### MAIN IDEA

Strong leaders built Russia into a large empire, but the country's citizens had few rights and struggled with poverty.

### WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Russia has had a great influence on world politics and is experiencing a period of great change.

## DATELINE

**Moscow, Russia, 1560**—Today, the most magnificent church in Moscow opened with a grand celebration. The Cathedral of St. Basil has ten domes—each one unique. The massive structure, built of bricks and white stone, is decorated with brilliant colors.

Ivan IV built this cathedral to celebrate his victory eight years ago over the Tatars (TAH•tuhz). These Turkish people who live in Central Asia have long threatened Russia's security.

The victory also added the lands of the Tatars, including their capital at Kazan, to our growing empire. Russians everywhere should be proud of Moscow's new church and of the victory it symbolizes.



Place • Ivan IV has honored a Russian victory over the Tatars with the construction of St. Basil's Cathedral. ▲

## Russia Rules Itself

Russia, geographically the world's largest nation, is located in both Europe and Asia. It takes up large parts of both continents, and both continents have helped shape its history.

Mongols from eastern Asia conquered Russia in the 13th century and ruled it for about 200 years. During the 15th century, Russia broke free of Mongol rule. At this time, the most important Russian city was Moscow, located in the west.

### TAKING NOTES

Use your chart to take notes about people and ideas.

Influences	New Ideas	People/Achievements
The Renaissance		
European Exploration		

**Reading**  
**Social Studies**

**A. Clarifying** Why did the Russian people give Ivan IV the nickname Ivan the Terrible?

**The First Czars of Russia** In 1547, a 16-year-old leader in Moscow was crowned the first **czar** (zahr), or emperor, of modern Russia. His official title was Ivan IV, but the people nicknamed him **Ivan the Terrible**. Ivan was known for his cruelty, especially toward those he viewed as Russia’s enemies. During his rule of 37 years, the country was constantly at war.

During the reigns of Ivan the Terrible and the czars who followed him, Russia had an unlimited government. This is a form of government in which a single ruler holds all the power. The people have no say in how the country is run.

**Conflicts at Home** The first Russian czars were often in conflict with the Russian nobles, who possessed much land and wealth. The czars viewed the nobles as a threat to their control over the people. Ivan the Terrible ordered his soldiers to murder Russian nobles and church leaders who opposed him.

The poor farmers, or peasants, of Russia also suffered under the first czars. New laws forced the peasants to become serfs, who had to remain on the farms where they worked.



**Region** • Ivan the Terrible is said to have worn this fur-trimmed crown at his coronation in 1547. ▲

## The Expansion of Russia

In addition to strengthening their control over the Russian people, the czars wanted to gain new territory. Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, rulers such as Peter the Great and Catherine the Great conquered neighboring lands.

**A Window on the West** An intelligent man with big ideas for his country, **Peter the Great** ruled Russia from 1682 to 1725. After defeating Sweden in war and winning land along the Baltic Sea, Peter built a port city called St. Petersburg. This city, which Peter saw as Russia’s “window on the west,” became the new capital.

One of Peter’s goals was to have closer ties with Western Europe. He hoped to use the ideas and inventions of the Scientific Revolution to modernize and strengthen Russia. During his rule, Peter reformed the army and the government and built new schools. He even ordered Russians to dress like Europeans and to shave off their beards. Peter’s reforms made Russia stronger, but they did not improve life for Russian peasants.

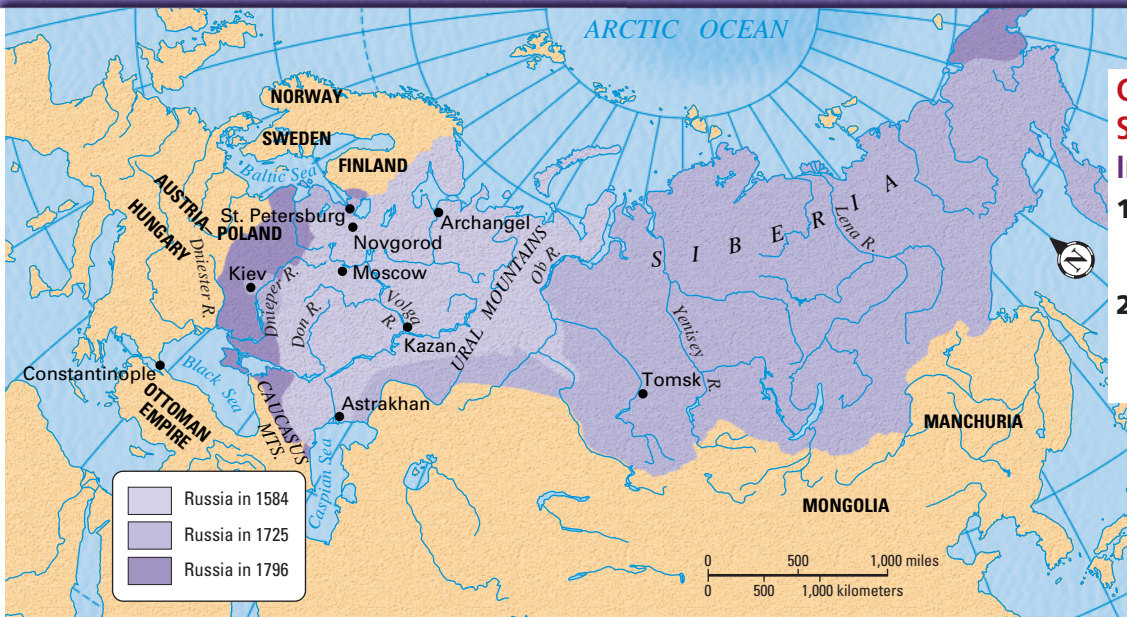


**Movement** • Peter the Great brought to Russia many of the improvements of the Scientific and Industrial Revolutions. ▲

### BACKGROUND

In 1721, Peter the Great changed his title from *czar* to *emperor*, a title that he thought sounded more European.

## The Expansion of Russia, 1584–1796



### GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting a Map

- Location** • What body of water did Russia gain access to in 1796?
- Place** • When did Russia gain the most land?

**A Great Empress** Catherine the Great took control of Russia in 1762 and ruled until her death in 1796. Catherine added vast new lands to the empire, including the present-day countries of Ukraine (yoo•KRAYN) and Belarus (behl•uh•ROOS). Like Peter the Great, Catherine borrowed many ideas from Western Europe. She started new schools and encouraged art, science, and literature. Catherine also built new towns and expanded trade.

During Catherine's reign, Russia became one of Europe's most powerful nations. The lives of the peasants, however, remained miserable. Catherine thought about freeing them, but she knew the nobles would oppose her. When the peasants rebelled in the 1770s, Catherine crushed their uprising.

**Movement** • Catherine the Great continued Peter the Great's practice of bringing the ideas of Western Europe to Russia. ▼



## A Divided Russia

In the 19th century, Russia remained a divided nation. Most people were poor peasants, and most of the wealth belonged to the nobles. This division would lead to conflict and eventually to a political revolution.

**The Nobles** Many Russian nobles sent their children to be educated in Germany and France. In fact, many noble families spoke French at home, speaking Russian only to their servants. The Western Europeans introduced many new ideas to the Russian nobles, among them the idea that a nation's government should reflect the wishes of its citizens.

### BACKGROUND

Catherine the Great was born in Germany. She came to Russia at 15 to marry the heir to the throne, Peter III. He was a weak ruler, however, and Catherine, supported by the army and the people, overthrew him.

Many Russian nobles were army officers or government officials. Most supported the czar and were proud of Russia's growing power. In 1825, one group of nobles tried to replace the government. Their attempt to gain more power failed.

**The Serfs** In the 19th century, the Russian serfs still had no land or money of their own. They worked on farms owned by others and received little help from the Russian government.

In 1861, Alexander II decided to end serfdom in Russia. He hoped that freeing the serfs would help his country compete with Western Europe. The serfs had to pay a heavy tax, though, and the land they were given was often not good for farming. Most former serfs felt that they had gained very little.

**Bloody Sunday** The serfs were not the only unhappy Russians. Many university students, artists, and writers believed that the government's treatment of the serfs was unfair. Some joined groups that tried to overthrow the government. In addition, workers in Russia's cities complained about low pay and poor working conditions.

In 1905, a group of workers marched to the royal palace in St. Petersburg with a list of demands. Government troops shot many of them. News of the events of this "Bloody Sunday" spread across Russia, making people even angrier with the government and czar.

### BACKGROUND

In the 1850s, Russia fought the Crimean War against Turkey. Two of Turkey's allies were Britain and France. When Russia lost, Alexander II thought this proved that his country was still far less advanced than Western European nations.

## Spotlight on CULTURE

**The Hermitage Museum** One of the world's largest art museums is the Hermitage in St. Petersburg. It contains many works of art, including French, Spanish, and British paintings. Part of the collection is in the Winter Palace, a former royal residence.

Both Peter the Great and Catherine the Great collected European art. On a trip to Amsterdam in 1716, Peter bought paintings by the famous Dutch artist Rembrandt. About 50 years later, Catherine bought more than 200 works of art when she visited Germany. These royal collections became part of the Hermitage when it opened as a public museum in 1852.

### THINKING CRITICALLY



#### 1. Analyzing Motives

Why did Peter the Great and Catherine the Great collect art from Western Europe?

#### 2. Making Inferences

Why do you think the works of art were displayed in a museum?

For more on the Hermitage Museum, go to



## The End of the Russian Empire

In 1914, World War I began. Nicholas II—a quiet, shy man who did not want war—ruled Russia, but he failed to keep his country out of the battle. Russia, whose allies included the United Kingdom and France, suffered terrible losses fighting Germany and its allies.

During World War I, there were food shortages in the cities and workers went on strike. Russian revolutionaries organized the workers against the czar. Even the Russian army turned against their ruler, and in 1917, Nicholas was forced to give up power. This overturning of the Russian monarchy is known as the **Russian Revolution**.

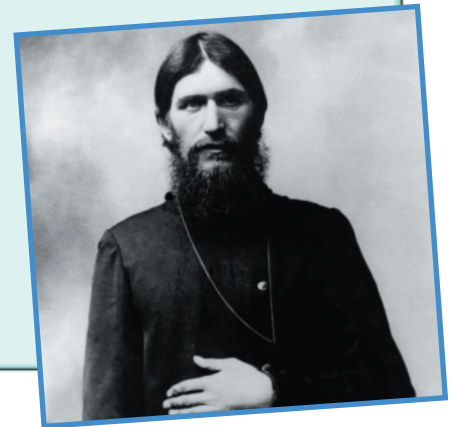
Nicholas II and the royal family (the Romanovs) were imprisoned by the revolutionaries. On July 17, 1918, they were all shot to death. This execution ended more than 300 years of rule by the Romanov family and nearly 400 years of czarist rule.

### Reading Social Studies

**B. Analyzing Motives** Why did Russian workers strike?

## Strange but TRUE

**Rasputin** One of the most influential people at the court of Czar Nicholas II was Rasputin. He came from Siberia in eastern Russia and was a self-styled holy man. Crown prince Alexis suffered from the disease hemophilia, and no doctor in Russia could cure him. Rasputin seemed to mysteriously heal the boy, gaining favor with Nicholas's wife, Czarina Alexandra. However, in 1916, Russian nobles killed Rasputin out of fear of the considerable power and influence the monk had.



## SECTION 4 ASSESSMENT

### Terms & Names

1. Explain the significance of:
- |                         |                        |                     |
|-------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| (a) czar                | (b) Ivan the Terrible  | (c) Peter the Great |
| (d) Catherine the Great | (e) Russian Revolution |                     |

### Using Graphics

2. Use a chart like this one to describe three characteristics of czars of Russia.

Ivan the Terrible	Peter the Great	Catherine the Great	Nicholas II

### Main Ideas

3. (a) What effects did an unlimited government have on Russian peasants?
- (b) How did Peter the Great help reform Russia?
- (c) Alexander II ended serfdom in 1861, but this did little to help the serfs. Why?

### Critical Thinking

#### 4. Finding Causes

What events led to the Russian Revolution?

#### Think About

- ◆ the life of the serfs
- ◆ Bloody Sunday
- ◆ the events of World War I

### ACTIVITY -OPTION-

Look at the map on page 320 that shows the expansion of Russia. Write a brief **summary** to describe how the Russian nation grew from the 1500s to 1800.