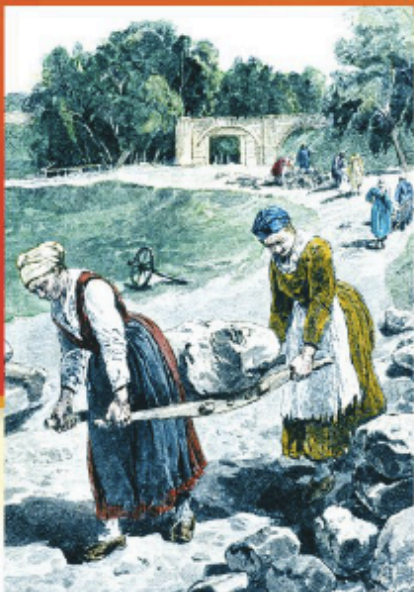


SECTION 5

Russian peasant women clearing stones from a field



WITNESS HISTORY AUDIO

Plight of the Serfs

Although serfdom had almost disappeared in Western Europe by the 1700s, it survived in Russia. Masters exercised almost total power over their serfs. A noble turned revolutionary described the treatment of the serfs:

“I heard . . . stories of men and women torn from their families and their villages, and sold, or lost in gambling, or exchanged for a couple of hunting dogs, and then transported to some remote part of Russia to create a [master’s] new estate; of children taken from their parents and sold to cruel . . . masters.”

—Peter Kropotkin, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*

Focus Question Why did industrialization and reform come more slowly to Russia than to Western Europe?

Russia: Reform and Reaction

Objectives

- Describe major obstacles to progress in Russia.
- Explain why tsars followed a cycle of absolutism, reform, and reaction.
- Understand why the problems of industrialization contributed to the outbreak of revolution.

Terms, People, and Places

colossus	pogrom
Alexander II	refugees
Crimean War	Duma
emancipation	Peter Stolypin
zemstvo	

Note Taking

Reading Skill: Recognize Sequence Create a timeline of Russian events like the one below to keep track of the sequence of events that led to the revolution of 1905. Look for dates and other clues to sequence in the text.



Reformers hoped to free Russia from autocratic rule, economic backwardness, and social injustice. But efforts to modernize Russia had little success, as tsars imprisoned critics or sent them into exile.

Conditions in Russia

By 1815, Russia was not only the largest, most populous nation in Europe but also a great world power. Since the 1600s, explorers, soldiers, and traders seeking furs had expanded Russia’s empire eastward across Siberia to the Pacific. Seeking ports, Peter the Great and Catherine the Great had added lands on the Baltic and Black seas. Seeking to contain the Ottoman and British empires, tsars in the 1800s expanded into the Caucasus and Central Asia. Russia thus acquired a huge multinational empire, part European and part Asian.

Other European nations looked on the Russian **colossus**, or giant, anxiously. Russia had immense natural resources. Its vast size gave it global influence. But many Europeans disliked its autocratic government and feared its expansion. At the same time, Russia remained economically undeveloped. By the 1800s, tsars saw the need to modernize but resisted reforms that would undermine their absolute rule.


Russia’s Social Structure A great obstacle to progress was the rigid social structure. Landowning nobles dominated society and rejected any change that would threaten their power. The middle class was small and weak. Most Russians were serfs, or laborers bound to the land and to the landowners who controlled them.



Most serfs were peasants. Others were servants, artisans, or soldiers forced into the tsar's army. As industry expanded, some masters sent serfs to work in factories but took much of their pay.

Many enlightened Russians knew that serfdom was inefficient. As long as most people had to serve the whim of their masters, Russia's economy would remain backward. However, landowning nobles had no reason to improve agriculture and took little interest in industry.

Ruling With Absolute Power For centuries, tsars had ruled with absolute power, imposing their will on their subjects. On occasion, the tsars made limited attempts at liberal reform, such as easing censorship or making legal and economic reforms to improve the lives of serfs. However, in each instance the tsars drew back from their reforms when they began to fear losing the support of nobles. In short, the liberal and nationalist changes brought about by the Enlightenment and the French Revolution had almost no effect on Russian autocracy.

 **Checkpoint** Describe the social structure that existed in Russia during the 1800s.

Emancipation and Stirrings of Revolution

Alexander II came to the throne in 1855 during the **Crimean War**. His reign represents the pattern of reform and repression used by his father and grandfather, Alexander I and Nicholas I. The Crimean War had broken out after Russia tried to seize Ottoman lands along the Danube River. Britain and France stepped in to help the Ottoman Turks, invading the Crimean peninsula that juts into the Black Sea. The war, which ended in a Russian defeat, revealed the country's backwardness. Russia had only a few miles of railroads, and the military bureaucracy was hopelessly inefficient. Many felt that dramatic changes were needed.

Freeing the Serfs A widespread popular reaction followed. Liberals demanded changes, and students demonstrated, seeking reform. Pressed from all sides, Alexander II finally agreed to reforms. In 1861, he issued a royal decree that required **emancipation**, or freeing of the serfs.

Freedom brought problems. Former serfs had to buy the land they had worked, but many were too poor to do so. Also, the lands allotted to peasants were often too small to farm efficiently or to support a family. Peasants remained poor, and discontent festered.

Still, emancipation was a turning point. Many peasants moved to the cities, taking jobs in factories and building Russian industries. Equally important, freeing the serfs boosted the drive for further reform.

Introducing Other Reforms Along with emancipation, Alexander II set up a system of local government. Elected assemblies, called **zemstvos**, were made responsible for matters such as road repair, schools, and agriculture. Through this system, Russians gained some experience of self-government at the local level.

The Decembrist Revolt

In 1825, army officers led an uprising known as the Decembrist Revolt (below). They had picked up liberal ideas while fighting in Western Europe and demanded reforms and a constitution. Tsar Nicholas I repressed the revolt. This stamp (inset) commemorates the 125th anniversary of the revolt. *How did the revolt symbolize Russia in the 1800s?*





The tsar also introduced legal reforms based on ideas like trial by jury, and he eased censorship. Military service terms were reduced, and brutal discipline was limited. Alexander also encouraged the growth of industry in Russia, which still relied heavily on agriculture.

Vocabulary Builder

radical—(RAD ih kul) *n.* a person who favors great changes or reforms

Revolutionary Currents Alexander's reforms failed to satisfy many Russians. Peasants had freedom but not land. Liberals wanted a constitution and an elected legislature. **Radicals**, who had adopted socialist ideas from the West, demanded even more revolutionary changes. The tsar, meantime, moved away from reform and toward repression.

In the 1870s, some socialists went to live and work among peasants, preaching reform and rebellion. They had little success. The peasants scarcely understood them and sometimes turned them over to the police. The failure of this movement, combined with renewed government repression, sparked anger among radicals. Some turned to terrorism. On March 13, 1881, terrorists assassinated Alexander II.

Crackdown Alexander III responded to his father's assassination by reviving the harsh methods of Nicholas I. To wipe out liberals and revolutionaries, he increased the power of the secret police, restored strict censorship, and exiled critics to Siberia. The tsar also launched a program of Russification aimed at suppressing the cultures of non-Russian peoples within the empire. Alexander insisted on one language, Russian,

INFOGRAPHIC

Tug of War: Reform and Repression by the Russian Tsars

The five tsars that ruled Russia from 1801 to 1917 all followed a similar pattern of autocratic rule: at times they appeared open to liberal ideas and enacted reforms to satisfy the groups demanding change. In every case, however, the tsars pulled back on these reforms and launched a battery of repressive measures designed to preserve their absolute power and the support of the nobles.

The Tsars Resist: Repression and Crackdown

- Secret police, arrests, executions
- Strict censorship of liberal ideas
- Exiling liberals
- Bolstering Russian Orthodox Church
- Insisting on the absolute power of the state
- Persecuting non-Russian groups within empire



▲ Jewish men survey damage done to sacred Torah scrolls during an 1881 pogrom in Russia.





and one church, the Russian Orthodox Church. Poles, Ukrainians, Finns, Armenians, Muslims, Jews, and many others suffered persecution.

Persecution and Pogroms Russia had acquired a large Jewish population when it carved up Poland and expanded into Ukraine. Under Alexander III, persecution of Jewish people in Russia increased. The tsar limited the number of Jewish people who were allowed to study in universities and practice certain professions. He also forced them to live in restricted areas.

Official persecution encouraged **pogroms**, or violent mob attacks on Jewish people. Gangs beat and killed Jewish people and looted and burned their homes and stores. Faced with savage persecution, many left Russia. They became **refugees**, or people who flee their homeland to seek safety elsewhere. Large numbers of Russian Jews went to the United States.

Checkpoint How did Alexander III respond to the murder of his father?

The Drive to Industrialize

Russia finally entered the industrial age under Alexander III and his son Nicholas II. In the 1890s, Nicholas' government



▲ Russian peasants in a rural village around 1900

The Tsars Give In: Concessions and Reforms

- Easing censorship
- Revising law code
- Limiting the power of landowners
- Freeing serfs (1861)
- Creating local self-government, or zemstvos
- Creating national legislature, or Duma
- Land reforms

Opposing the Tsars ▶

Liberals, socialists, nationalists, army officers, workers




Thinking Critically

1. **Identify Main Ideas** What factors brought about so much opposition to the tsars?
2. **Draw Conclusions** Why do you think the tsars swung back and forth between repression and reform?



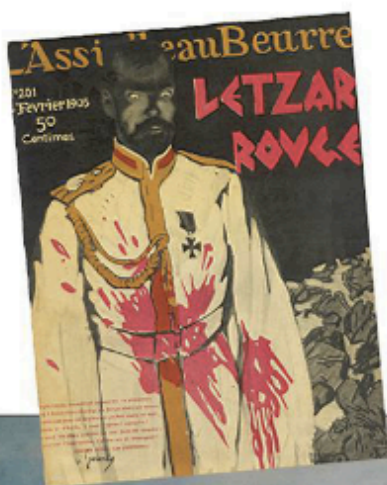
focused on economic development. It encouraged the building of railroads to connect iron and coal mines with factories and to transport goods across Russia. It also secured foreign capital to invest in industry and transportation systems, such as the Trans-Siberian Railroad, which linked European Russia to the Pacific Ocean.

Political and social problems increased as a result of industrialization. Government officials and business leaders applauded economic growth. Nobles and peasants opposed it, fearing the changes it brought. Industrialization also created new social ills as peasants flocked to cities to work in factories. Instead of a better life, they found long hours and low pay in dangerous conditions. In the slums around the factories, poverty, disease, and discontent multiplied. Radicals sought supporters among the new industrial workers. At factory gates, Socialists often handed out pamphlets that preached the revolutionary ideas of Karl Marx.

 **Checkpoint** How did Russia industrialize?

Bloody Sunday

An artist's depiction shows the execution of workers in front of the Winter Palace in Saint Petersburg, January 9, 1905 (below). The magazine cover (inset) shows "Le Tzar Rouge," or "The Red Tsar." *Compare and contrast these images of Bloody Sunday.*



Turning Point: Crisis and Revolution

When war broke out between Russia and Japan in 1904, Nicholas II called on his people to fight for "the Faith, the Tsar, and the Fatherland." Despite all of their efforts, the Russians suffered one humiliating defeat after another.

Bloody Sunday News of the military disasters unleashed pent-up discontent created by years of oppression. Protesters poured into the streets. Workers went on strike, demanding shorter hours and better wages. Liberals called for a constitution and reforms to overhaul the government.

As the crisis deepened, a young Orthodox priest organized a peaceful march for Sunday, January 22, 1905. Marchers flowed through the streets of St. Petersburg toward the tsar's Winter Palace. Chanting prayers and singing hymns, workers carried holy icons and pictures of the tsar. They also brought a petition for justice and freedom.





Fearing the marchers, the tsar had fled the palace and called in soldiers. As the people approached, they saw troops lined up across the square. Suddenly, gunfire rang out. Hundreds of men and women fell dead or wounded in the snow. One woman stumbling away from the scene moaned: “The tsar has deserted us! They shot away the orthodox faith.” Indeed, the slaughter marked a turning point for Russians. “Bloody Sunday” killed the people’s faith and trust in the tsar.

The Revolution of 1905 In the months that followed Bloody Sunday, discontent exploded across Russia. Strikes multiplied. In some cities, workers took over local government. In the countryside, peasants revolted and demanded land. Minority nationalities called for autonomy from Russia. Terrorists targeted officials, and some assassins were cheered as heroes by discontented Russians.

At last, the clamor grew so great that Nicholas was forced to announce sweeping reforms. In the October Manifesto, he promised “freedom of person, conscience, speech, assembly, and union.” He agreed to summon a **Duma**, or elected national legislature. No law, he declared, would go into effect without approval by the Duma.

Results of the Revolution The manifesto won over moderates, leaving Socialists isolated. These divisions helped the tsar, who had no intention of letting strikers, revolutionaries, and rebellious peasants challenge him.

In 1906, the first Duma met, but the tsar quickly dissolved it when leaders criticized the government. Nicholas then appointed a new prime minister, **Peter Stolypin** (stuh LIP yin). Arrests, pogroms, and executions followed as the conservative Stolypin sought to restore order.

Stolypin soon realized that Russia needed reform, not just repression. To regain peasant support, he introduced moderate land reforms. He strengthened the zemstvos and improved education. Unfortunately, these reforms were too limited to meet the broad needs of most Russians, and dissatisfaction still simmered. Stolypin was assassinated in 1911. Several more Dumas met during this period, but new voting laws made sure they were conservative. By 1914, Russia was still an autocracy, but one simmering with unrest.

 **Checkpoint** Why was Bloody Sunday a turning point for the Russians?

SECTION 5 Assessment

Progress Monitoring Online

For: Self-quiz with vocabulary practice
Web Code: naa-2255

Terms, People, and Places

1. For each term, person, or place listed at the beginning of the section, write a sentence explaining its significance.

Note Taking

2. **Reading Skill: Recognize Sequence** Use your completed timeline to answer the Focus Question: Why did industrialization and reform come more slowly to Russia than to Western Europe?

Comprehension and Critical Thinking

3. **Summarize** What conditions in Russia challenged progress during the early 1800s?
4. **Draw Conclusions** How did Russian tsars typically react to change?
5. **Draw Inferences** What does Bloody Sunday suggest about the relationship between the tsar and the Russian people?

Writing About History

Quick Write: Gather Evidence to Support Thesis Statement Choose a topic from the section, such as whether you think emancipation helped or hurt Russian serfs. Make a list of evidence from the section that supports your view.

