Reform and Reaction in Russia
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 and People

- **colossus** – a giant

- **Alexander II** – ruler of Russia who came to the throne in 1855; responsible for some reforms in Russia, but was eventually assassinated by radicals

- **Crimean War** – a war that broke out when Russia invaded Ottoman lands along the Danube; ended in Russian defeat

- **emancipation** – the act of freeing someone, usually from slavery or serfdom
Terms and People (continued)

- **zemstvo** – an elected assembly in Russia that was responsible for road repair, schools, and agriculture at a local level
- **pogrom** – a violent mob attack on Jewish people
- **refugees** – people who flee their homeland to seek safety elsewhere
- **Duma** – an elected national legislature in Russia
- **Peter Stolypin** – prime minister appointed by Tsar Nicholas to restore order through arrests, pogroms, and execution; attempted reforms but was ultimately assassinated
Why did industrialization and reform come more slowly to Russia than to Western Europe?

Efforts to modernize Russia had little success because tsars imprisoned or exiled critics.

As the twentieth century dawned, Russia was a hotbed of civil unrest.
Russia was a major world power by **1815**, but it was also **economically undeveloped**.

- Russia was a **colossus**—the largest and most populous nation in Europe—and had abundant natural resources.
- However, it had a very **autocratic government**.
- Russian **rulers resisted reforms** that would lead to modernization, fearing they would be a threat to absolute rule.
One obstacle to progress was Russia’s very rigid social structure.

- **Landowning nobles** at the top resisted change and reforms.
- The **middle class** was weak and small.
- Most people were **serfs**, bound to the land.
- Many Russians knew serfdom was inefficient, but landowners had no interest in developing industry.
Tsars ruled Russia with **absolute power**.

Whenever the tsars made liberal reforms, they eventually canceled them to maintain the support of the nobles.

While the governments of other European nations changed, **Russia remained an absolute monarchy**.
**Alexander II** inherited the throne during the Crimean War in 1855.

- The war began when Russia tried to seize **Ottoman lands**, and ended in Russian **defeat**.
- The war **showed how backward Russia was**. People demanded change.

In response to pressure, Alexander agreed to the **emancipation** of the serfs.

Though peasants remained poor, **emancipation** was a turning point that led to the drive for more reform.
The Reforms of Alexander II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Emancipation</strong> of the serfs</th>
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<td>Establishment of local government in the form of <em>zemstvos</em>, or elected assemblies</td>
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<td>Legal reforms such as <strong>trial by jury</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Reduction in military service</strong></td>
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The reforms did not satisfy the Russians, who wanted a **constitution** or more revolutionary changes.

**Socialists** tried to convince peasants to rebel, which didn’t work. **Radicals** became angry and assassinated Alexander II.

**Alexander III** took the throne and embarked on a crackdown. He increased the power of the **secret police** and exiled critics.
Persecution of Russian Jews also increased under Alexander III.

- He forced them to live in **restricted areas**.
- **Pogroms** against the Jewish communities became common.
- Many Jews left Russia and became **refugees**. A large number **emigrated** to the United States.

Groups such as Poles, Ukrainians, Armenians, Finns, and Muslims also faced persecution.
Russia finally **industrialized** during the late 1800s.

**Tsar Nicholas II**, son of Alexander III, focused on economic development. His government encouraged the building of **railroads and secured foreign investment**.

Despite progress, political and social problems worsened as workers faced poor conditions in factories and urban slums.
Russia entered a war with Japan in 1904 and suffered **humiliating defeats**.

Losses abroad fed discontent at home. **Protesters** poured into the streets and workers went on **strike**.

On a Sunday in 1905, a priest organized a peaceful march in St. Petersburg. The tsar’s soldiers fired on the crowd, killing or wounding hundreds, in an incident known as **“Bloody Sunday.”**
Bloody Sunday was a turning point for Russians, who felt they could no longer trust the tsar.

- Discontent grew, strikes increased, and rural peasants demanded land.
- Nicholas announced major reforms, including a pledge to summon a Duma.
- However, the tsar dissolved the Duma in 1906. The pattern of reform and reaction continued.
Nicholas appointed Peter Stolypin as prime minister in 1906.

- Peter Stolypin worked to restore order with arrests and executions.
- He recognized the need for change and introduced several very limited reforms.
- It wasn’t enough, and Russia still roiled with unrest. Stolypin was assassinated in 1911.