**Russia in the 19th Century**

* Although Russia was a major European power in the 19th century, unlike most of the West, Russia retained an absolute monarchy, and the state maintained strict, authoritarian control over individuals and society.
* At the start of the 19th century, Russia lagged behind the west in terms of industrialization, but still had a large, powerful standing army. Russia played a big part in the defeat of Napoleon and at the Congress of Vienna.

Russia and the Napoleonic Wars:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Izw29EJvv-g&list=PL658EE0F2CE09D44E>

* As a consequence of the Napoleonic Wars, many educated Russians were introduced to Western European Enlightenment ideals, which led to the Decembrist revolt in 1825.

Decembrist Rebellion: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rXPP1j1yahg>

* Most Russian peasants were serfs until 1861, when Czar Alexander II freed the serfs as part of a drive to industrialize and reform.

Emancipation of Serfs: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8PFQ7Th_rAs>

* State-directed industrialization began shortly after Russia’s loss in the Crimean War, which Czar Alexander II attributed to their industrial and technological lag compared to Western Europe.
* By the 1890’s, Russia was in the midst of industrialization with a focus on building railways and heavy industry. Russia’s size both helped and hindered industrialization: there were abundant natural resources but the sheer size of Russia made modernization slow and cumbersome. Plus the peasants and the urban industrial workers were always unhappy, exploited, and had no political voice or freedoms.
* By the end of the century, large-scale strikes became common despite the absence of legal unions or political parties.
* The Revolution of 1905, which resulted in “Bloody Sunday” and a general strike in cities across Russia, forced Czar Nicholas II to make some reforms, but too little too late.
* Nicholas II issued “The October Manifesto” in 1905, which did create the Russian Duma (parliament) though it initially had little power and was even dissolved by Nicholas for a time.
* Discontent would continue to grow until the Bolshevik/Communist Revolution in the midst of WWI.