Eastern European and Russian Absolutism

Ivan IV “Ivan the Terrible”
(1547-1584)

became Tsar at age of 3 and watched rival groups of nobles who sought to control the country
when he took charge, he saw treason everywhere
Ivan took land from the nobles (boyars) and gave it to his own loyal people (oprichniki)
these boyars were then kicked out of or dispersed throughout the nation
a time of noble feuds over the throne, peasant revolts, and foreign invasions
Russia suffered a famine from 1601–1603 that killed 1/3rd of the population

Michel Romanov
(1613-1645)
Russia defeated Poland in 1612
wanted their country to do better
needed a great leader
letters were sent throughout the land
deputies came to Moscow to select the new tsar
the Romanov family were related to former tsars
it was decided that 16 yr-old Michel was the best choice
couldn't find him
[was hiding in a monastery with his mother]
messengers were sent to tell him that he was the new Tsar
[The Romanov dynasty ruled Russia until 1917.]
Tsar Alexis I died in 1676
his son, the weak and sickly Feodor III took his place
he died in 1682, leaving no heir
a dispute arose over who should inherit the throne
Ivan V, was next in line for the throne
[was chronically ill and of “infirm mind”]
the Boyar Duma (Russian nobles council) met
they chose Alexis’ 10 yr-old son Peter to become Tsar
[with his mother as regent]
his half-sister Sophia was very opposed
she and others insisted that Peter and Ivan be joint Tsars
Sophia acted as regent and exercised all power
she ruled as an autocrat for seven years

Peter the Great/Peter I
As Acting Regent
(1682-1725)
forced Russian nobles to adopt Western European ways
sent Russians abroad to learn, esp. shipbuilding, naval warfare, foreign languages, and mathematics
built new capital in St. Petersburg on the Baltic Sea coast
it would be more accessible to the West
expanded borders:
took control of Siberia, Alaska, and the eastern end of Baltic region
changed the Russian government:
created central bureaucracy under his control
brought Eastern Orthodox Church under his authority, ruled by a Holy Synod

Fun Fact: Peter the Great was GREAT - very tall (nearly 7 ft)
Peter the Great/Peter I
Results of his Reign
(1682-1725)

- economic changes instituted by Peter
- created the dvorianie, a new class of feudalistic nobles
- given land and control of the serfs on the land
- promised to work for the government until death
- they didn’t pay taxes - the peasants did
- gave incentives to increase production in areas such as mining and metalworking
- workers tied to their trade like serfs were to the land
- overall effects of his reign”
- divided those who wanted to continue old Russian ways and those who adopted Western culture
- brought Russia into mainstream European culture

“Catherine the Great”/Catherine II
(1762-1796)

- after Peter’s death in 1725, Russia was ruled by a series of weak rulers
- Catherine seized the throne from her weak husband, Peter III
- originally thought of freeing serfs
- she changed her mind when they revolted against her
- freed nobles from their required government service, allowing them to treat their serfs as they wished
- when they tried to revolt, she crushed them mercilessly
- defeated Ottoman Turks to secure warm-water port of Black Sea and took territory from Poland
- was the most renowned and the longest-ruling female leader of Russia
- reigned from July 1762 until her death in 1796 at the age of sixty-seven
- her reign was called Russia’s Golden Age
Maria Theresa
(1740-1780)
Hapsburgs built a strong Austrian monarchy
repelled Ottoman attack in 1683
regained Balkan Peninsula territory
received Italian and Dutch lands as a result of the
War of Spanish Succession
in 1718, Austrian ruler Charles VI convinced European
rulers to accept a pragmatic sanction
agreed to accept his daughter, Maria Theresa, as the next
ruler of Austria
in 1740, at 23-yrs-old, Maria Theresa inherited throne from her father, HRE Charles VI
she became the only female ruler of the Habsburg dominions
was the sovereign of Austria, Hungary, Croatia, Bohemia, Mantua, Milan, Lodomeria and Galicia,
the Austrian Netherlands, and Parma
she reorganized the bureaucracy, improved tax collection, and furthered the building of roads
used government funds to boost production of textiles and glass

Frederick William, Prussia’s “Great Elector”
(1640-1688)
a member of the Hohenzollern family who
governed Brandenburg
they won Prussia in Thirty Years’ War
he created a standing army supported by taxes
the Junkers opposed this plan,
so Frederick William worked out a compromise
only Junkers could be landowners
didn’t have to pay taxes
given full power over peasants
pledged their support to Frederick William
(townspeople and peasants too weak to raise any opposition
to this plan)
Frederick William was Prussia’s absolute monarch
Frederick I (his son) ruled after his death, 1688-1713
sided w/Austria in War of Spanish Succession, won title of “King”
powerful leader
centralized Prussian gov’t into one bureaucracy completely controlled by him
supported production and trade and made lots of money for Prussia
devoted his life to army, making it the most efficient fighting force in Europe
royal agents recruited men from rural areas of Germany
specifically recruited tall men and trained the “regiment of giants” himself

Frederick William I, the “Royal Drill Sergeant”
(1713-1740)

Frederick allowed to keep Silesia
Maria Theresa retained control of rest of Austria, Hungary, and Bohemia
she gained support of Russia (Russian Empress Elizabeth enemies w/Frederick II)

War of the Austrian Succession
(1740-1748)
Frederick II, rejecting the pragmatic sanction
attacked Austrian province of Silesia w/backing of Spain and France
Great Britain and Dutch Netherlands backed Austria

Treaty of Paris
(1763)
ended war between France and Great Britain
Great Britain won lands in French Canada and east of the Mississippi River from France
Great Britain now strongest colonial power in the world