

# Tsarist & Communist Russia



From Autocracy To Revolution: Part I “Background”

- By the end of 1800s: Russia was controlled by a single monarch (Tsar: *supreme ruler*)
- Majority of Russian population trapped in:
  - Poverty and Ignorance
- Tsar totally resistant to change
- Tsar was considered:
  - All powerful
  - Unchallengeable
  - Divinely Chosen
    - Each Tsar (Tsarina) believed they had been chosen by the hand of God to lead the nation



***THE ROMANOVS:  
RUSSIAN RULING FAMILY  
1600-1917***

- Under the Tsars
  - Tsar had total control
  - Tsar appointed all government officials
  - Tsar approved all decisions
- Until 1905
  - Russia had no elections
  - No political parties
  - No legislature to challenge Tsar's decisions
  - Press strictly censored
  - No civil liberties
  - Total submission of the people



***TSAR NICHOLAS II: THE LAST TSAR OF  
RUSSIA 1894-1917***



Tsar's authority based on 3 major organizations:

1. **The Bureaucracy** (*a system of government in which most of the important decisions are made by state appointed officials*)

a. Hierarchical system

i. 14 ranks

1. Nobility (Top)

a. Permanent service

b. Dismissed at will

2. Lower ranks

a. Civil servants

i. Poorly paid

ii. Dismissed



## 2. The Orthodox Church

- Greek Orthodox branch of Christianity
- Function: To prove the Tsar's reign
  - Church claimed the Tsar was the earthly representative of Christ on earth
  - To disobey the Tsar was a sin
  - Church taught:
    - Tsarism was permanent, unchanging, and unchangeable



### 3. The Police & The Army

- Brute force and terror
- No freedom allowed
  - Contradicted Tsarism
- Broke up political meetings
- Critics of the Tsar and the government:
  - Harassed & Tortured
  - Imprisoned
  - Sent into exile & death
- **Secret Police (*Okhrana*)**
  - Spies
    - Root out opponents of the government
    - Opened mail, etc.





# Tsar Nicholas II

- Last Tsar of Russia
- Reign unspeakably cruel
- Made huge mistakes
- Created enormous disasters
- Unfit ruler
  - Ineffective leader
  - Lazy
  - Dull & Unintelligent
  - Weak Character
  - Politically shortsighted
  - Viewed democracy as a “threat to the Russian soul”
  - Favored ultra-conservative causes



# Tsarina Alexandra

- Tsar Nicholas II's wife
- Authoritarian
  - Contempt for reform
- Huge influence over her weak husband & political affairs
- Her mission:
  - Preserve the autocracy (monarchy) at all costs
    - Son and heir, Alexei
      - Rare form of Hemophilia
      - Accident left him confined to a wheelchair

