

**History Summer Reading
Booklet
A Background to Revolution
and Dictatorship**



Tasks:

1. This booklet contains an introduction to the background to conditions that led to revolution in Russia. Read, highlight and annotate carefully. When annotating you need to pick out key details such as laws, policies, key terms, key people, key organisations/groups and important statistics. This is an important skill to practice at A Level.
2. There are also several articles with short tasks, these are **OPTIONAL**. You may choose to do some or all, these tasks are important to help develop your knowledge of Russia prior to and in the early 1900s, which forms the background to the conditions for revolution.
3. You must do the following tasks: Answer the question: 'Why had opposition to the Tsar's rule grown by 1914?', you will need to consider several factors to answer this question. It is up to you how you will present this information. For example, paragraphs, bullet points, mind maps, or a flow diagram.

Please bring this to your first lesson in September and will form the basis for your understanding of the background to the revolution will be the focus of your first lesson.

You will receive a reading list created by the exam board but in addition here are some suggestions from us:

- **History of the Russian Revolution by Leon Trotsky**
- **Russian Revolution 1917: A Personal Record by NN Sukhanov**
- **Ten Days That Shook the World by John Reed**
- **Through the Russian Revolution by Albert Rhys Williams**
- **Year One of the Russian Revolution by Victor Serge**
- **The Autobiography of a Sexually Emancipated Communist Woman by Alexandra Kollontai**
- **Roots of Revolution: A History of the Populist and Socialist Movements in 19th-century Russia by Franco Venturi**
- **Towards the Flame: Empire, War and the End of Tsarist Russia by Dominic Lieven**

Have a great summer and enjoy ☺

Mrs Woodward (Head of History) and Miss O'Connor

How was Russia governed in 1900?



SOURCE 1 Tsar Nicholas II and Tsarina Alexandra in full regalia

SOURCE 2 An extract from an open letter from Leo Tolstoy, the famous novelist, to the Tsar in 1902

"A third of the whole of Russia lives under reinforced surveillance ... The army of the police, regular and secret, is continually growing in numbers. The prisons and penal colonies are overcrowded with thousands of convicts and political prisoners, among whom industrial workers are now included ...

The censorship has reached a level not known since the 1840s ...

In all cities and industrial centres, soldiers are employed and equipped with live ammunition to be sent out against the people.

... and the peasants, all 100,000,000 of them, are getting poorer every year ... Famine has become a normal phenomenon. Normal likewise is the discontent of all classes of society with the government. "

NICHOLAS II, of the Romanov dynasty, came to the throne in 1894. He was an **AUTOCRAT**. This means that he had complete and absolute power. He was not elected. He believed that he had a divine right to rule - that is, that he had been chosen by God. He could do what he liked without consulting anyone. He had the power of life and death over his subjects.

To help him rule, he had a council of ministers who ran the various government departments. But they all reported to the Tsar, who made the important decisions.

Because Russia was such a large country to run, there were thousands of civil servants, from top officials down to tax collectors and customs officers. Getting things done was a painfully slow business. The civil servants carried out the orders passed down to them. However, since the wages of the people at the bottom were very low, there was a good deal of bribery and corruption.

There was no parliament to represent the views of the people, and there was no way for people to get their views heard. Newspapers and books were, **CENSORED**: they had to be sent to the government for approval before they could be printed. Opposition was not tolerated, and the Okhrana, or secret police, dealt with anyone who criticised the government. The secret police had spies and agents everywhere. **DISSIDENTS** soon found themselves in jail or exiled to Siberia.

If there were strikes, protests or riots, which often took place in times of famine, then soldiers, particularly the much-feared Cossacks, would be used to restore order. They stopped any demonstrations with great brutality.

1. Explain in your own words the meaning of the word 'autocrat'.
2. What impression of the Tsar and his wife was Source 1 designed to put across?



SOURCE 5 Political prisoners, including the revolutionary Marie Spirodonova (left; see page 15)

SOURCE 4 From *Russia as it Really Is*, written in 1904 by Carl Joubert, a French doctor. Here he describes some of the prisoners he examined who were going to Siberia

“■ *A young man, aged twenty, a student from Kazan, stated that he had committed no crime: but he was found reading a certain book in which the censor's name did not figure on the title page, was arrested by the secret police, and sent for five years hard labour . . . I examined him and found him in the second stage of consumption. His troubles would soon be over.*

■ *A girl, aged nineteen, from Taganrog, stated that she was found in the house of a revolutionary. The revolutionary got away before arrest, but she was taken, though absolutely innocent, as a substitute. No trial. Twenty years' [sentence] . . . Examined her and found that she was suffering from cancer of the breast. Nothing had been done for her.*

■ *A woman, aged 27, from the city of Moscow, wife of a lawyer. Her husband, in the same prison, was sentenced to ten years for being in possession of certain books. Health: advanced pregnancy.*

Such were a few of the cases that came to my notice . . . It is not therefore surprising that a large number of them never reach their destinations. ”

The Orthodox Church

The Orthodox Church - a branch of Christianity - was very important in Russia. In most houses there were holy pictures or icons on the walls. The Orthodox Church was surrounded by mysticism and superstition. Holy men, or *STARTSY* (one *STARETS*) were held in special regard. However, there was a great gap between the poor parish priests on one side and the rich bishops and higher clergy on the other.

The Orthodox Church was closely linked to the Tsar and supported his way of ruling. It taught that the Tsar was the head of the country and the head of the Church - in other words, that he was God's chosen representative on earth. This was why many peasants and workers thought of the Tsar as the 'little father', their special protector. But this image was to be shattered in the early part of the new century.

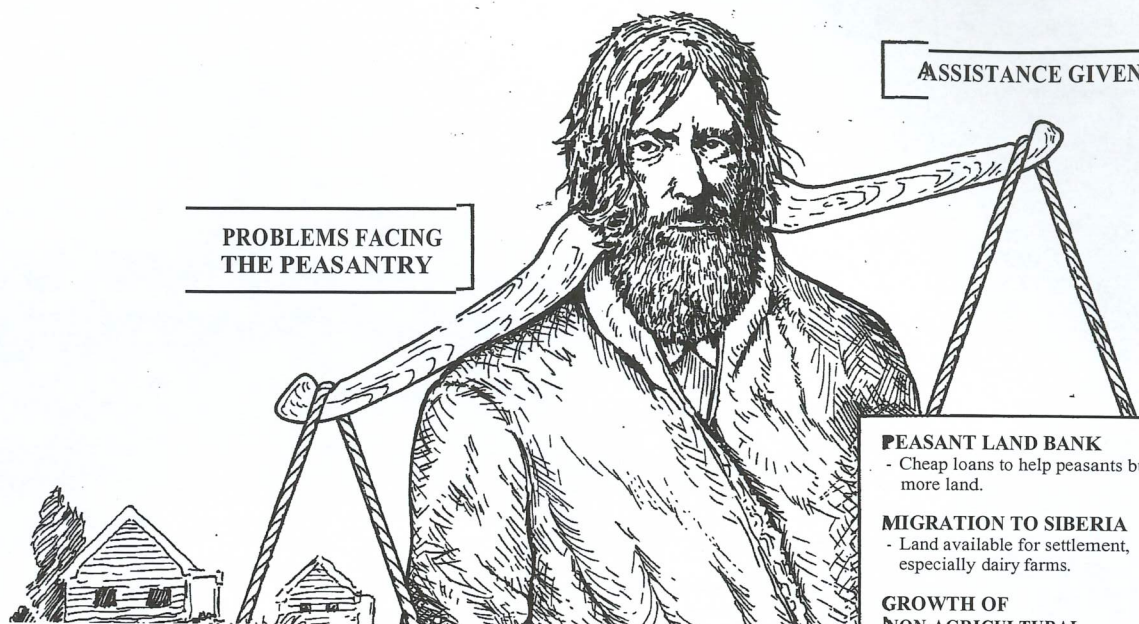
5. Do Sources 2-4 suggest that the system of governing Russia was working well? Explain your answer.
4. What do each of the cases in Source 4 tell us about the Tsar's method of keeping control?
5. How do you think the Orthodox Church helped to keep the Tsar in power?
6. What aspects of the way that Russia was governed do you think made people most angry?

ACTIVITY

You are a Russian noble who believes that there is a lot wrong with Russia in the year 1903. You have spent some time in Moscow and St Petersburg and have toured around many villages. Write a letter to the Tsar telling him what is wrong and why changes need to be made. Mention:

- the poverty of the peasants and the land problem
- the living and working conditions of the industrial workers
- corruption in government
- censorship of the press
- the violence used to deal with protesters
- the lack of opportunity for people to have their views heard.

Chart 7.6 Agriculture in the late nineteenth century



PROBLEMS FACING THE PEASANTRY

ASSISTANCE GIVEN

PEASANT LAND BANK

- Cheap loans to help peasants buy more land.

MIGRATION TO SIBERIA

- Land available for settlement, especially dairy farms.

GROWTH OF NON-AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYMENT

- Growth of industry creating opportunities in expanding towns.

SPREAD OF EDUCATION

- 1860s onwards. Zemstva supplemented church schools, and later on state schools, in educating some peasants.

ZEMSTVA AGRICULTURAL ASSISTANCE

- Advice on new crop rotations, fertilisers, financial arrangements etc.

ASSISTANCE

(for more details see chart 7.7)

ENVIRONMENT

- Short growing season.
- Poor quality soils in non-Black Earth regions.
- Periodic droughts, especially in South].

NATURE OF EMANCIPATION

- Peasants lost land, and most plots too small for prosperity.
- Burdened with redemption payments.
- Powers of mir strengthened.

GOVERNMENT POLICY

- Peasants highly taxed (poll tax till 1885), redemption payments, land tax, high indirect taxes and tariffs).
- High tariffs put up cost of imported agricultural machinery and fertilisers.
- Peasants had to pay for industrialisation.
- Lack of direct government investment in agriculture till post 1905.
- No real agricultural policy.

BACKWARD AGRICULTURAL METHODS

- 'Earth Scratching'.
- Primitive technology; 'solcha' wooden plough still widely used.
- Traditional rotations leaving land fallow.
- Few animals, which led to little manure, and thus low yields.

COMMUNE ORGANISATION

- Some communes periodically repartitioned land amongst peasantry; this discouraged improvement of land.
- Scattered strips, usually about 20 per household.
- Communal agricultural cycles.
- Hindered enterprise.
- Restricted movement away from villages.

POPULATION RISE

- 1860 - 1914. Rural population rose from 50 million to 103 million.
- Led to smaller holdings, and increased land hunger.

SMALL SCALE CULTIVATION

- In most areas average farms were under 25 acres, and declining.

LOW GRAIN PRICES, HIGH LAND PRICES, RENTS

- Abundant world supplies after 1860s opening up of American Prairies, led to low grain prices.
- Pressure on land led to rising land prices, rents; hindered ability of peasants, especially poor, to acquire more land.

RUSSIAN PEASANT HIMSELF

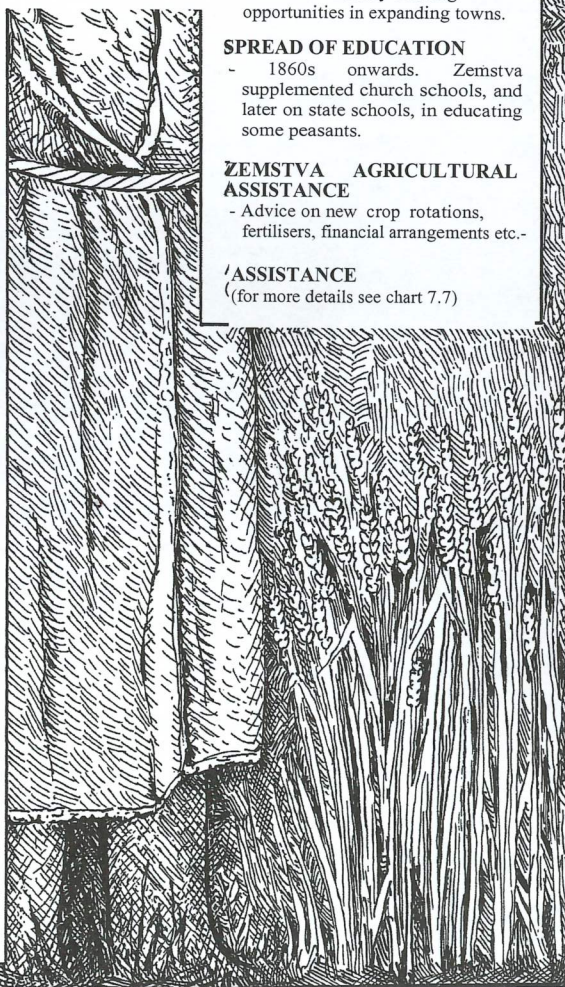
- Notorious for sloth.
- Unenterprising, traditional spirit.
- Poverty discouraged innovation.

LIMITED EDUCATION

- Low literacy and cultural levels.
- 1860s. Zemstva began spread of education, but not major effect till 20th century.

RUSSIAN GENTRY

- Largely parasitic, it. rented out land in return for money, crop or labour payments.
- Most gentry themselves unenterprising, and gave little assistance to peasantry.
- Gentry estates attracted the 'fixed gaze' of the peasantry, ie peasants saw the solution to their problems as gaining gentry land, especially emancipation 'cut offs'.



Was the Tsar fit to rule Russia?

THE SYSTEM OF government in Russia meant that a lot depended on the man at the centre - the Tsar. He had to be a strong person, capable of making hard decisions and controlling his ministers. Was Nicholas II up to the job?

Tsar Nicholas II

There is no doubt that Nicholas was a kind, well-meaning person, with a deep affection for his family. He was devoted to his wife, Alexandra, his son, Alexis, and his four daughters, Tatiana, Olga, Maria and Anastasia. Family photographs were in every room of the palace, including the lavatory. Nicholas would sooner spend time with his family than deal with governmental matters.

Although kind to those around him and deeply religious, Nicholas could also be cruel and merciless. He would not stand for opposition. His answer was always the same - violence. He praised regiments who put down disorder and hanged the people involved. He was particularly anti-Jewish and encouraged **POGROMS** (attacks) against Jewish settlements.

Nicholas believed wholeheartedly in autocracy. He thought that democracy with elections and parliaments would lead to the collapse of Russia.

It does seem that he genuinely wanted to bring happiness and prosperity to his people: Unfortunately, Nicholas knew very little about the people. He did not visit factories or villages, or go on tours. His information about what was going on came from a small number of people, who were quite happy to protect him from the realities of life in Russia.

His wife: Alexandra

The Tsarina Alexandra, Nicholas's wife, had a very different type of personality. Although shy, she was strong willed and obstinate.

She was also very religious. She believed that the



SOURCE 1 A photograph of the Tsar with his wife Alexandra and their children

Tsar had been appointed by God and that it was her duty to support him.

Alexandra was clearly very much in love with Nicholas. In the evenings, she demanded that he spend time with the family. She encouraged the Tsar to withdraw from public events to a private family world.

The Tsarina had a great influence on the Tsar. She was determined that Nicholas should not share power with the people. She felt Nicholas should keep all his autocratic powers, given to him by God, to pass on to their son.

1. How might Alexandra have had a harmful influence on her husband in his role as leader?

What did his contemporaries say?

SOURCE 2 Written by Kerensky, the leader of the government which took over from the Tsar in 1917, in his memoirs *Crucifixion of Liberty*, in 1934...

"The daily work of a monarch he found intolerably boring. He could not stand listening long or seriously to ministers' reports, or reading them."

SOURCE 5 Said by an unknown cabinet minister

"Nicholas II was not fit to run a village post office."

SOURCE 4 Written by Leon Trotsky, one of the leaders of the revolutionaries who opposed the Tsar, in 1932.

"His ancestors did not pass on to him one quality which would have made him capable of governing an empire."



SOURCE 5 From the diary of the Tsar's sister, the Grand Duchess Olga

"He kept saying ... that he was wholly unfit to reign ... And yet Nicky's unfitness was by no means his fault. He had intelligence, he had faith and courage and he was wholly ignorant about governmental matters. Nicky had been trained as a soldier. He should have been taught statesmanship, and he was not."

SOURCE 6 By Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich

"He never had an opinion of his own ... always agreeing with the judgement of the last person he spoke to."

SOURCE 7 By Sergei Witte, chief minister under Nicholas, in his memoirs. Even though he disliked the Tsar, he said this of Nicholas

"He has a quick mind and learns easily. In this respect he is far superior to his father."

2. What did Nicholas's contemporaries (people who lived at the same time) think of him as a ruler (Sources 2-7)?
5. a) Are there any reasons why some of these people might want to run Nicholas down and make him out to be worse than he was?
- b) Which of these sources would you trust most? Why?
- c) Which would you trust least? Why?

Who opposed the Tsar?

THERE WERE MANY people in Russia who did not like the way the Tsar governed the Empire. They believed there were better ways of running the country and improving the living conditions of the people. By the early 1900s, a number of groups had emerged who opposed the Tsar.

Socialist Revolutionaries

Formed in 1901, the SOCIALIST REVOLUTIONARIES believed in a general revolutionary movement which would unite all the people who were suffering under the Tsar. They thought the peasants would bring about revolution in Russia.

SOCIALIST REVOLUTIONARIES

Aims

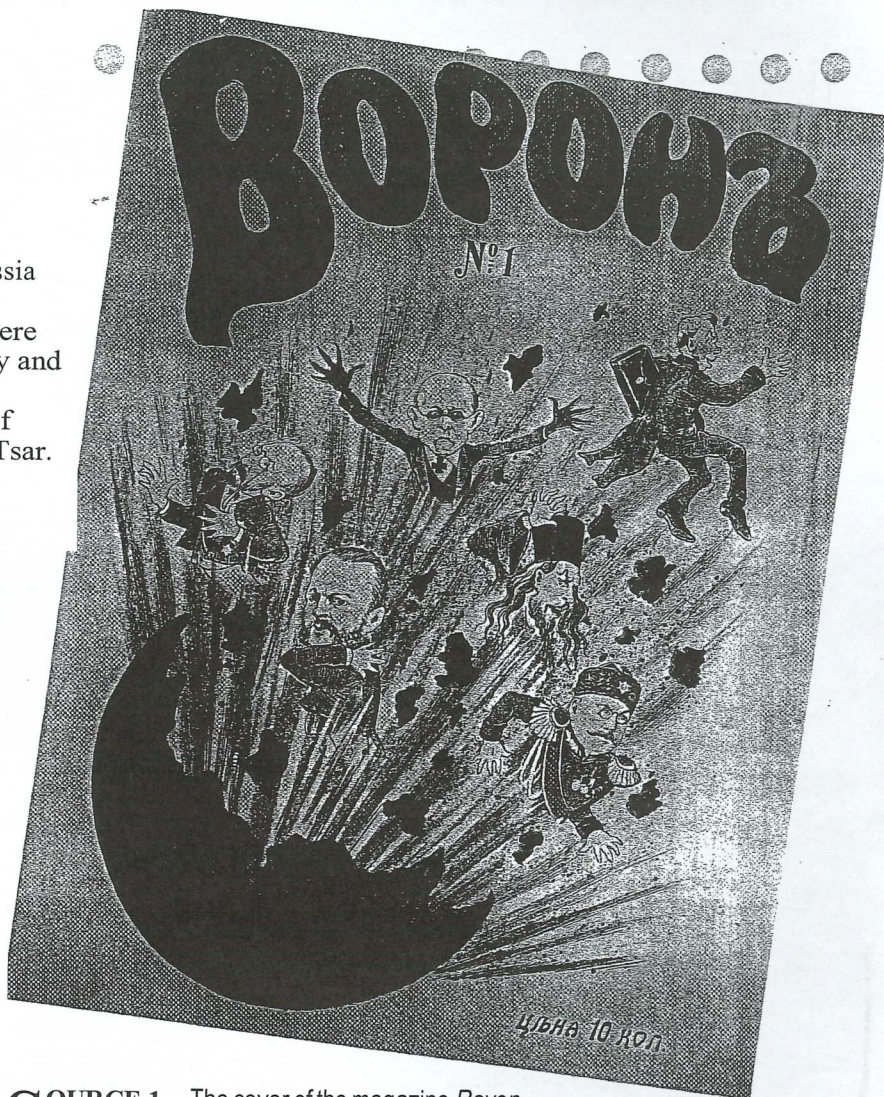
- To get rid of the Tsar and his government
- To give all the land to the peasants to farm collectively in communes - so forming thousands of small peasant communities.

Support

- Mainly appealed to the peasants, who supported the party which wanted to give them the land. Sometimes called the 'Peasants' Party'.

Tactics

- Propaganda to encourage revolution.
- Violent acts (terrorism) to bring about the collapse of the government Responsible for the deaths of several important government officials.



SOURCE 1 The cover of the magazine *Raven* (1906) showing tsarist ministers being blown up



Marie Spirodonova

Marie Spirodonova came from a well-to-do family. In 1906 she was a 19-year-old student in Tambov and was deeply affected by the suffering of the peasants around her. She became a Socialist Revolutionary and decided to kill the cruel governor of Tambov. He tortured peasants who could not pay their taxes and used his Cossacks to mistreat them. She

walked up to him at a railway station and shot him in the heart

The Cossacks beat her and threw her naked into a cold cell. When she would not give them the names of accomplices, they pulled out her hair and burnt her all over with cigarettes. For two nights she was passed around the Cossacks. She was sentenced to death but this was changed to life imprisonment in Siberia. She was freed by the 1917 revolution.

WHO OPPOSED THE TSAR?

Social Democrats

The Social Democratic Party, founded in 1895, followed the teachings of Karl Marx. They believed a revolution would be started by the workers concentrated in large cities.

SOCIAL DEMOCRATS

Aims

- To overthrow the Tsar.
- To create a SOCIALIST state.

Support

- Workers in cities and large towns.
- Students.

Tactics

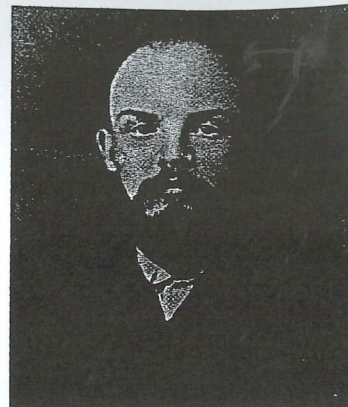
In 1903, the Social Democrats split over the tactics they thought would bring about revolution. One group became known as the MENSHEVIKS and the other as the BOLSHEVIKS.

Mensheviks believed the party should be a mass organisation which all workers could join. This mass party would grow until it eventually took power. It would work with other groups like trade unions to improve wages and working conditions.

Bolsheviks believed in a small, secret, tightly disciplined party of professional revolutionaries who would seize power when the time was right. They thought that a large party could always be infiltrated by police spies. They planned revolutionary cells of three or four people who would get into factories to organise strikes and demonstrations.

Lenin - real name Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov

Vladimir Ulyanov was born in Simbirsk in 1870, the son of a school inspector. He was deeply affected by the execution of his revolutionary brother, who had been involved in the assassination of Alexander II. He vowed that he would fight the injustice of Tsarism. He went to university to study law, but was expelled because he took part in demonstrations. Later he changed his name to Lenin.



SOURCE 2 A photograph of Lenin taken in around 1900

Lenin became more involved with Marxism, writing pamphlets and supporting strikes, and in 1894 formed a MARXIST group. His activities soon led to his arrest and exile to Siberia. Here he married Nadezhda Krupskaya, a fellow revolutionary.

On their release in 1900, Lenin and Nadezhda went abroad to work with the new Social Democratic Party in exile. They came to London, where Lenin helped edit the Party newspaper, *Iskra* ('The Spark'). He developed his ideas about revolution, which caused the split of the Social Democratic Party. The Bolsheviks followed his idea for a small, secret, highly disciplined party, which would seize power in the name of the workers. Lenin remained outside Russia, organising the Bolshevik Party, until the revolution broke out in 1917.

Trotsky - real name Lev Bronstein

Lev Bronstein was born in 1879 in the Ukraine, the son of a rich Jewish peasant. Angry at the mistreatment of the Jews, he joined a Marxist discussion group at the age of 16 and fell in love with Alexandra Sokolovska, who was the leader of the group. They were arrested for writing revolutionary pamphlets and leading strikes. Married in a Moscow prison, they were exiled to Siberia.

In 1902, his wife helped him escape abroad, using a false passport, which he signed in the name of Trotsky (it was the name of a prison warder). In Paris, he met a young Russian art student called Natalia Sedova. He lived with her for the rest of his life, and they had two sons, although he always kept on good terms with his first wife and family. He went to London to work with Lenin and his wife Krupskaya. They called him 'the Pen' because he was such a good writer. But at the Social Democratic conference in 1903, he sided with the Mensheviks.

In February 1905, he returned from exile to join in the revolution, becoming Menshevik chairman of the St Petersburg SOVIET in October. When the revolution collapsed, Trotsky was arrested and sent back to Siberia. But he escaped on the way and went to America.



SOURCE 3 Photograph of Trotsky in a prison cell after his arrest in 1905

Liberals

The liberal middle classes thought it was time the people had an opportunity to run the country through a parliament. In 1905, the liberals formed the Constitutional Democratic Party, the Cadets.

LIBERALS

Aims

- Free elections and a parliament to run the country..
- The Tsar to be a constitutional monarch like the one in England.
- Civil rights - freedom of speech, worship and conscience.

Support

- The middle and educated classes - teachers, doctors, lawyers, some industrialists.
- Some members of the gentry.

Tactics

- Meetings, speeches, discussions, publishing articles and books calling for change.

TASK

Look at the statements below. Match each one to the person you think would have said it, and say which opposition group you think they might have supported.

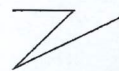
- Railwayman
- Peasant farmer
- Student
- Doctor
- Jewish teacher
- Factory worker

It is time the people had a say in the running of the country. There should be a parliament which is freely elected by all men.



The only way to bring down this evil government is to use terrorism against the Tsar and his officials.

The workers have suffered for too long. It is time they must overthrow the Tsar and build a state where people work co-operatively and share the fruits of their labour.



The capitalists squeeze as much work out of the working people as they can for the least amount of wages while they live well with lovely houses, clothes and food.

The land should be taken from the rich landlords and given to the people who work on it.



People should have equal civil rights, including their freedom to speak and write without censorship. They should have an equal chance to get jobs and set up businesses.

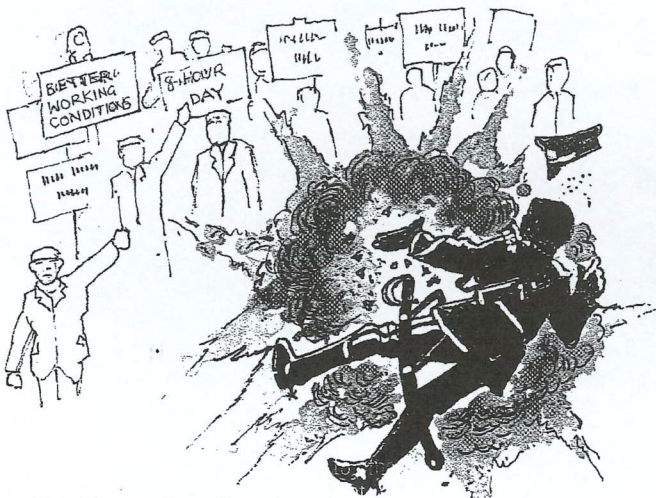
Discussion point

Do you think terrorism is ever justified in trying to change the way a country is governed?



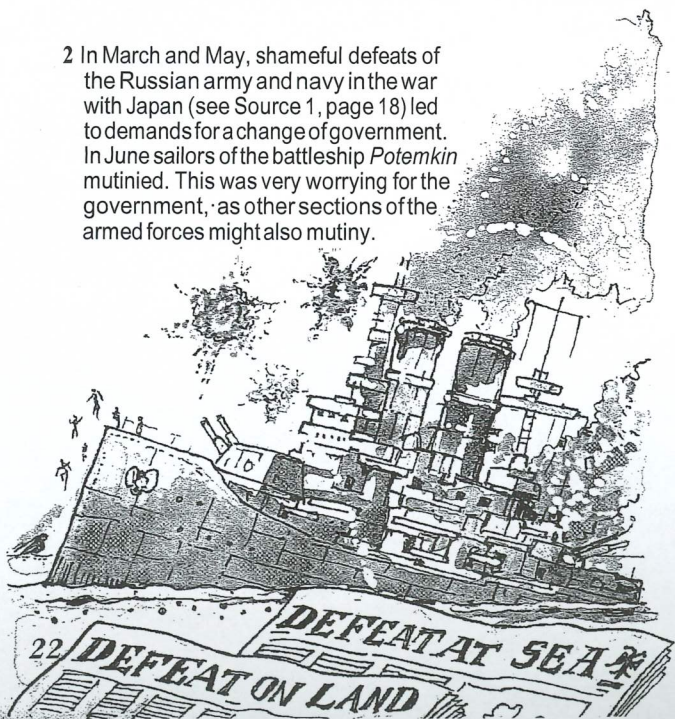
The 1905 revolution

By THE END of January, there were more than 400,000 workers out on strike. The 1905 Revolution was under way. For the rest of the year, the government had little control of events, as strikes, demonstrations, petitions, peasant uprisings, student riots and assassinations became commonplace. The Tsar was 'at war with his own people'.

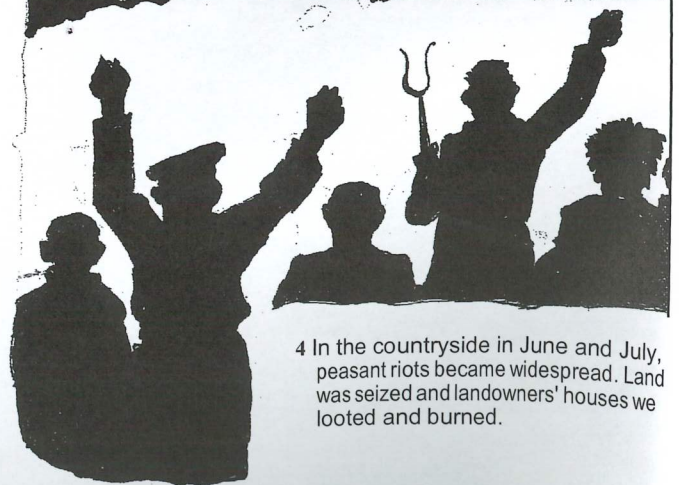
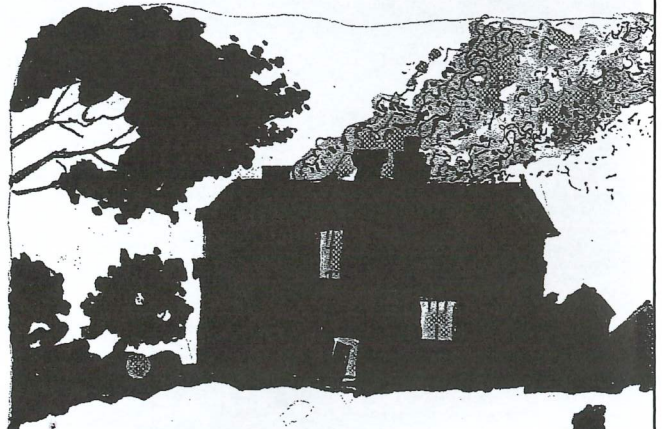


1 In February, the strikes spread to other cities. Workers demanded an eight-hour day, higher wages and better conditions. On 4 February, the Tsar's uncle, the Grand Duke Sergei, was assassinated in Moscow.

2 In March and May, shameful defeats of the Russian army and navy in the war with Japan (see Source 1, page 18) led to demands for a change of government. In June sailors of the battleship *Potemkin* mutinied. This was very worrying for the government, as other sections of the armed forces might also mutiny.



3 By May and June, different groups were demanding changes. Middle-class liberals demanded an elected parliament, freedom of speech and the right to form political parties. National groups, like the Poles and Finns, demanded their independence. The Jews wanted equal civil rights.

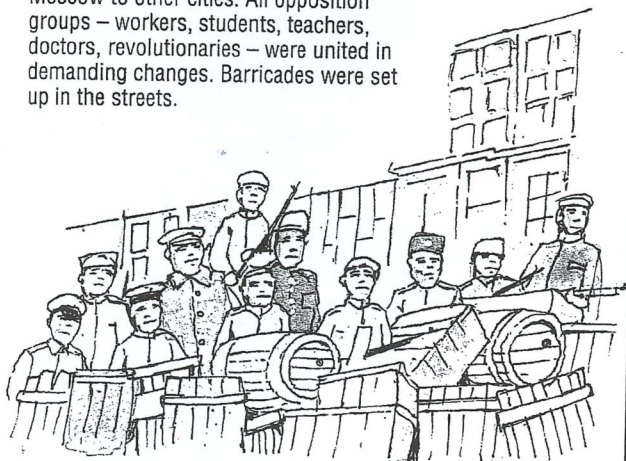


4 In the countryside in June and July, peasant riots became widespread. Land was seized and landowners' houses were looted and burned.

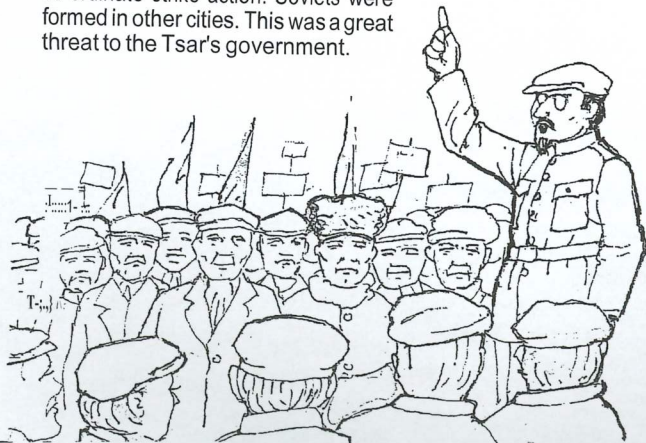
5 In September, a peace treaty was signed between the Russians and the Japanese. Thousands of troops were now free to help put down the unrest in European Russia. The government paid them all their back pay and promised better conditions of service so that they would remain loyal to the Tsar.



6 In October, a general strike spread from Moscow to other cities. All opposition groups – workers, students, teachers, doctors, revolutionaries – were united in demanding changes. Barricades were set up in the streets.



7 On 26 October, the St Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies was formed. Representatives from factories met to co-ordinate strike action. Soviets were formed in other cities. This was a great threat to the Tsar's government.

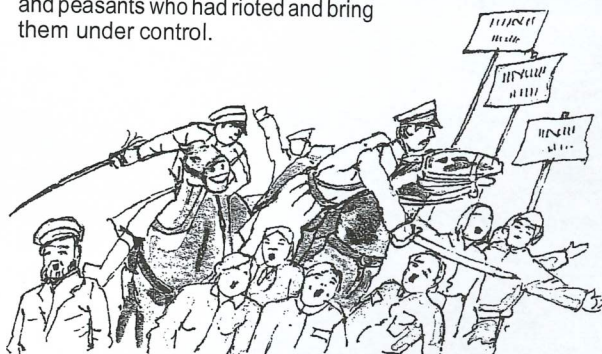


8 The Tsar had the choice of giving in or using force, with the likelihood of massive bloodshed. He gave in and issued the **October Manifesto** on 30 October. **This promised:**

- a parliament or Duma elected by the people
- civil rights - e.g. freedom of speech and conscience
- uncensored newspapers and the right to form political parties.

The liberals and middle classes believed they had won democratic government. They stopped their protests and supported the govern

9 By December, with all the troops back in Russia, the Tsar felt strong enough to take back control. He used force to close down the St Petersburg Soviet and crush an armed uprising in Moscow. He sent out troops to take revenge on workers and peasants who had rioted and bring them under control.



1. Draw a timeline for 1905, divided into months, to show the events of the year.
2. Take each of the following people in turn and write speech bubbles in which they say why they joined the protests and what they want:
 - an engineering worker
 - a peasant woman
 - a middle-class liberal lawyer
 - a Pole.
3. Choose three events or situations during 1905 which posed the greatest threat to the survival of the Tsar. Explain why you chose them.
4. What do you think were the main reasons why the Tsar survived the 1905 revolution?

Did life get better for Russian people after 1905?

THE TSAR SURVIVED the 1905 Revolution with the opportunity to make change, and to carry out the promises he had made. He managed to stay in power for another twelve years, but in 1917 he was forced to abdicate. Some historians think the First World War was the reason for this and that without the war he would have survived. Others argue that he was heading for disaster anyway. See what you think.

1. Who do you think is riding the horse in Source 1?
2. What is the attitude of the cartoonist to what was going on in Russia?



SOURCE 1 A cartoon captioned *Peace and Quiet*, 1906

Order and control

Although most of the trouble in the cities had stopped by the end of 1905, violent disturbances continued in the countryside well into 1906. The Tsar appointed Peter Stolypin as Prime Minister to deal with this. He had a reputation for being tough. He set up military courts, which could sentence and hang a person on the spot. Thousands were executed by these courts, and the hangman's noose became known as 'Stolypin's necktie'.

The Okhrana, the secret police, were still very active, with thousands of informers. Everybody had to carry internal passports and travellers had to register with the police outside their home districts. Freedom of the press had been guaranteed in 1905, but newspapers were often fined for writing articles offending the government, and frequently newspapers appeared with white spaces where material had been censored.

The Dumas

At the end of 1905, the Tsar had given way to demands for a parliament or DUMA elected by the people. But would it have any power, and how would it be elected? By the time the first Duma met in April 1906, the answers to these questions were clear. The Duma could not pass laws, could not appoint ministers and could not control finance in important areas such as defence, and the Tsar could dissolve it whenever he wished. Elections favoured the nobles: there was one representative for every 2,000 nobles, but one for every 90,000 workers.

Despite this, the first two Dumas of 1906 and 1907 were very radical, demanding more power for themselves and rights for ordinary people (e.g. freedom to strike, free education). They also demanded that more land should be given to the

SOURCE 2 What Nicholas said about the Duma in 1908

"I created the Duma not to have it instruct me, but to have it advise me." ¹

SOURCE 5 Count Kokovstov gives an eye-witness account of the opening of the Duma in the Tauride Palace on 26 April 1906

"The entire right side of the room was filled with uniformed people... the Tsar's retinue. The left side was crowded with the members of the Duma... the overwhelming majority... dressed in workers' blouses and cotton shirts, and behind them was a crowd of peasants in the most varied costumes, some in national dress;

... The first place among these representatives of the people was occupied by a man tall in stature, dressed in a worker's blouse and high, oiled boots, who examined the throne and those about it with a derisive and insolent air. ; . P.A. Stolypiri turned to me and said, 'I even have a feeling that this man might throw a bomb.' "

peasants. The Tsar would have none of this and dissolved both Dumas after a few weeks.

For the third Duma, Stolypin changed the way the members were elected to favour the gentry and urban rich even more. As a result, the third Duma was much more conservative. Even so, this Duma, which lasted from 1907 to 1912, was often critical of the government, and some good measures were passed on matters to do with the army and navy and accident insurance for workers. The fourth Duma (1912-14) achieved little before war was declared, but at least the Tsar was starting to work with it.

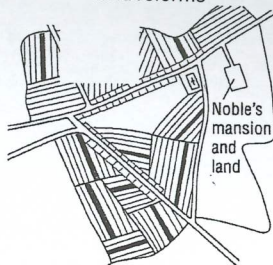
5. What power did the Duma have?
4. From the information in Sources 2 and 3:
 - a) Do you think the Duma had much chance of working successfully with the Tsar?
 - b) Whose fault do you think this was?

Changes in the countryside

To try to make agriculture more efficient, Stolypin introduced reforms to encourage the 'best elements' amongst the peasantry.

Peasants were allowed to buy up strips of land from their less enterprising neighbours to make one single land holding, which they owned individually. Stolypin

Diagram 1 A village before Stolypin's land reforms

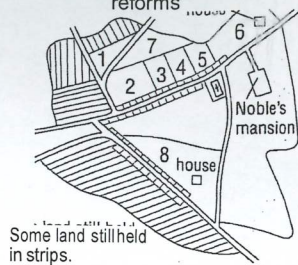


Peasants held land in strips.

- = strips held by one household

□ = houses

Diagram 2 The same village after the reforms



Some land still held in strips.

1-5 and 7 show blocks of land where one peasant's strips have been put together as a block.

Some peasants bought strips from poorer neighbours to form larger blocks (6 and 8). These peasants were called 'kulaks'.

SOURCE 4 Stolypin's land reform

set up a peasants' bank to provide loans for them to do this. He believed that peasants would want to improve their own land and use modern methods to produce more food. He also hoped this would create a new class of prosperous landowning peasants - KULAKS - who would be loyal to the government.

About fifteen per cent of peasants took up his offer and there were improvements. Production of grain did increase and there was a record harvest in 1913. Unfortunately, the outbreak of war in 1914 interrupted the reforms. The reforms did, however, have another consequence: a lot of poorer peasants were forced to sell their land and became labourers, wandering around the countryside seeking work. Some went to work in the cities, but many remained in the countryside, with not even a small patch of land to support their families.

Around four million peasants were encouraged by the government to settle on new lands along the Trans-Siberian Railway. They made long journeys, crammed into wagons, but when they arrived they found that the best land had been taken by rich land speculators. Over half of them returned to European Russia, very angry that they had been misled and with nothing to go back to.

5. Stolypin called his policy a 'wager on the strong and sober' among the peasants. What do you think he meant by this and why did he think this would solve problems in agriculture?
6. What consequences of the reforms could prove dangerous for the government?
7. Which peasants would think their situation was improving in 1914 and which would think it was getting worse?

Key question

What was Stolypin aiming to achieve in his dealings with the peasants?

3 | The Government's Response to 1905: Stolypin and Land Reform

Peter Stolypin was appointed President of the Council of Ministers in July 1906. Like Witte before him, he was dedicated to strengthening tsardom in a time of crisis. He was a political conservative, whose attitude was clearly expressed in the coercive measures he introduced between 1906 and 1911. He declared his guiding principle to be 'suppression first and then, and only then, reform'. However, he also considered that, where possible, reform should be introduced as a way of reducing the social bitterness on which opposition fed. It was in this spirit that he approached the land problem in Russia.

Stolypin started from the conviction that industrial progress by itself could not solve Russia's most pressing need - how to feed the nation's rapidly growing population. Russia had undergone a '**rural crisis**' in the late nineteenth century. The problem had been deepened by a series of bad harvests in the 1890s which left millions hungry; the years 1891 and 1897 had witnessed especially severe famines. The government's land policies following the emancipation of the serfs in 1861 had not helped. The scheme under which state mortgages were advanced to the freed serfs to enable them to buy their properties had not created the peace and harmony that the government had hoped for.

'De-revolutionising' the peasantry

The high price of land, which led to heavy mortgage repayments, had impoverished the peasants. They felt very insecure, which meant that they farmed inefficiently and were a dangerous social force. One of the reasons why the peasants joined the Revolution in 1905 was their fear that the government was about to seize the land of those many mortgage-holders who had fallen behind in their payments. When the government came to understand this fear, it bought off the peasants by announcing that the outstanding repayments would be cancelled. This tactic has been called 'de-revolutionising' the peasants.

The 'wager on the strong'

Stolypin planned to build upon this successful treatment of the peasantry. In 1906-7, he introduced measures to restore the peasants' sense of security. Farmers were urged to replace the inefficient strip system (see page 42) with fenced fields, based on the pattern that existed in western Europe. A special Land Bank was established to provide funds for the independent peasant to buy his land. Stolypin defined his policy as a 'wager on the strong'. His intention was to create a layer of prosperous, productive peasants whose new wealth would turn them into natural supporters of the tsarist system. His reforms also included schemes for large-scale voluntary resettlement of the peasants, the aim being to populate the empire's remoter areas, such as Siberia, and turn them into food-growing areas.

'Rural crisis'

Refers to the problem of land shortage and over-population in the countryside produced by the huge increase in the number of people living in Russia by the late nineteenth century.

E. Notional* Russian village before and after Stolypin Reforms.

(compare to map of same village in 1860 and 1870 in chart 3.1)

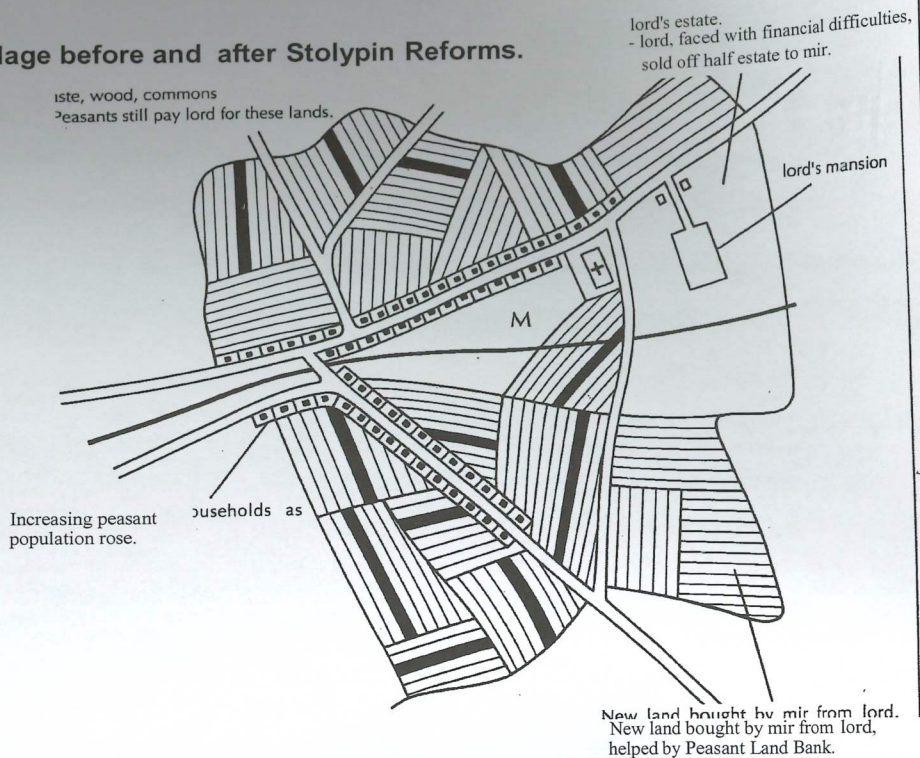
Map3. 1900

KEY

- Strips worked by one peasant household. Have been reallocated by mir since 1870, and number of strips reduced due to increased population in village.

M Meadow. Lord's section has been sold off to mir, and part turned over to arable to ease pressure on arable land.

Waste, wood, commons
Peasants still pay lord for these lands.



Map4.1913

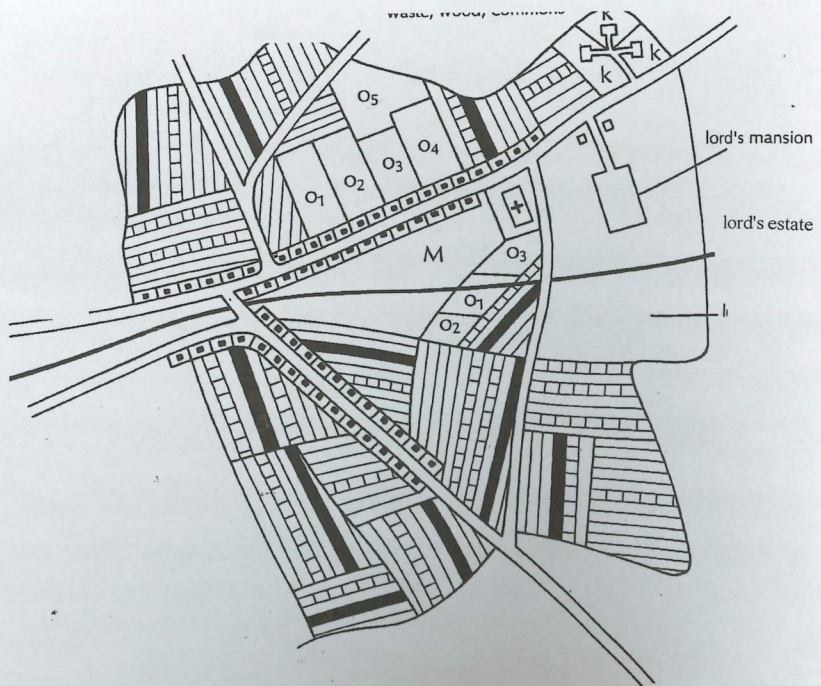
• The problem of drawing a typical village is even more difficult after the impact of Stolypin's reforms as this varied considerably. The diagram shows the four broad types of peasants land-holdings that would exist, though rarely, if at all, in the diagram) were more common in the south and south east. 'Khutor' farms were far more widespread in the north and more commercialised west; 'otrub' farms in the south and south east. In many central regions little reorganisation took place.

Key

M Meadow now no longer used by 'khutor' farmers; 'otrub' farmers might, and other peasants would, still use it.

Four possible farms of land holding:

- Strips of households still under old system.
- o [II] Strips now owned by head of peasant household but not consolidated; larger plots where more enterprising peasants bought up land of less enterprising ones.
- o 'Otrub' farms, ie peasant strips now consolidated into one or two plots, but house still in village; extra land bought from less enterprising peasants.
- k 'Khutor' farms, Stolypin ideal; ie strips consolidated into one independent farm based around new house outside mir; extra land bought from less enterprising peasants.



DID LIFE GET BETTER FOR RUSSIAN PEOPLE AFTER 1905?

Changes in the cities

Between 1906 and 1914, there was an industrial boom in Russia. Between 1905 and 1914, total industrial production increased by 100 per cent. Russia became the world's fourth largest producer of coal, pig iron and steel. The Baku oil fields were rivalled only by those in Texas. Many of the factories were very efficient, using the most up-to-date mass-production methods.

By 1914, two-fifths of factory workers were in factories with over 1,000 workers. This made the factories more efficient, but it also made it easier to organise strikes.

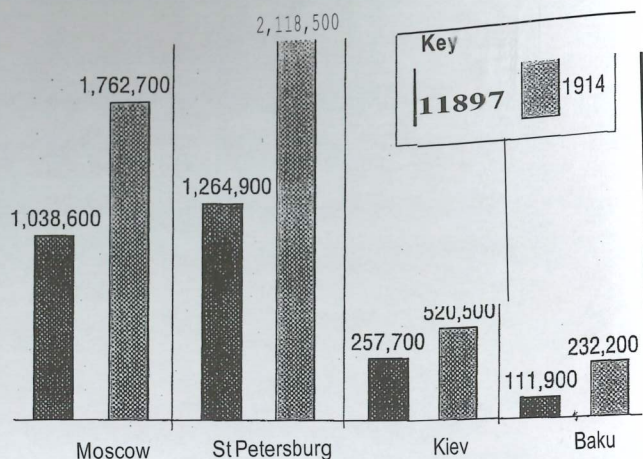
However, the workers did not benefit much from the boom. Working conditions improved little, if at all, over the period. Average wages were, in real terms, below the pitiful levels of 1903. Prices had risen so much that workers could only just manage to buy the bread they needed.

In 1912, an important strike took place in the Lena goldfields in Siberia. Striking workers protested about degrading working conditions, low wages and a working day which lasted from 5.00 a.m. to 7.00 p.m. They clashed with troops, and 170 workers were killed and 373 wounded. The Lena Goldfield Massacre had a similar effect to Bloody Sunday in 1905 and opened the floodgates for workers' protests.

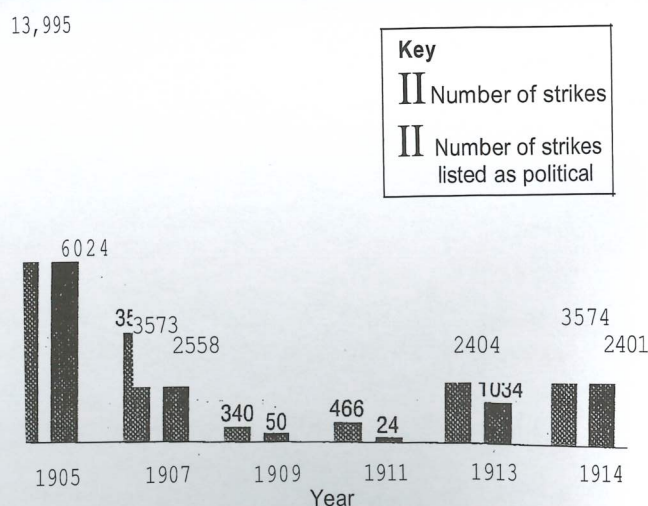
1. a) What does Source 5 tell you about changes in Russian cities?
b) What pressures might this create?
2. Study Source 6.
a) What is the pattern of strikes between 1905 and 1914?
b) What does the pattern for political strikes tell you?
3. What reasons can you suggest for the strikes?

ACTIVITY

You must argue that things were improving in Russia before 1914, using the evidence support this view. The other side must collect evidence to put the opposite case. 'fry to come to some agreement at the end of your discussion, then write your own balanced account whether life was improving before 1914 or not.



SOURCE 5 Populations of major cities in 1897 and 1914



SOURCE 6 Ministry of Trade and Industry figures on strikes in workplaces covered by factory inspection

In order to ensure its long term survival the government would need to bring about changes in policy to strengthen the regime. Repression would only work in the short-term. The underlying social, economic and political problems in Russia needed to be addressed.

THE TSARIST REGIME, 1906-14

After the shock of 1905 there were pressures from some ministers at court to make changes in order to guarantee the long-term survival of the regime. There was a choice between repression and reform. The most prominent minister in this period was **Pyotr Stolypin** who believed that some measures of reform and modernisation were necessary to strengthen the Tsarist regime. The Tsar and other ministers saw dangers in this approach and preferred to maintain the autocracy as it existed as the best guarantee of their power and privileges. Nonetheless, there were changes in policy during the period 1906 to 1914 in response to the Revolution of 1905. The implementation of these policies did, however, meet with mixed results. Russia was in a state of transition and this added to the stresses and strains already evident in Russian society.

The Dumas in practice

The call for a constitution with an elected parliament was one of the demands of the demonstrators during the Revolution of 1905. Any hopes that the constitution set up under the October Manifesto would be the first step towards **liberal democracy** were to be quickly disappointed. Witte, who had persuaded Nicholas to grant the constitution, was dismissed and when the Tsar opened the first **Duma** he announced his intention to maintain autocracy.

Elections for the first Duma, held in 1906, resulted in a parliament dominated by the Kadets, a group of liberals. The other main parties were the Octobrists, a conservative group that was willing to accept the October Manifesto, and the Trudoviki, a left-wing group with-peasant support. There were also numerous representatives of the national minorities. Most revolutionary groups boycotted the

KEY PEOPLE

Pyotr Stolypin

(1862-1911) One of the most able ministers to serve industrialisation. His agricultural reforms tried to create a more prosperous group of peasants who would be loyal to the regime. Stolypin wanted to make the Duma work as a parliament but tended to rely on decrees if it disagreed with his policies. He also used repression and had many revolutionaries executed. He was assassinated at the opera in 1911 by a revolutionary with police connections. Suspicions grew that Nicholas, worried about Stolypin's increasing power, was implicated in his murder.

KEY TERMS

Duma The parliament.

Liberal Democracy A political system, where power resides with the people. The people exercise this power by electing members of parliament to represent their interests. Liberal democracy also involved freedom of speech, freedom of religion and freedom to form a political organisation. These were freedoms not enjoyed in Tsarist Russia.

elections. The Duma soon clashed with the government over the issue of land reform for the peasants and the rights of minority nationalities. Faced with this opposition Nicholas dissolved the Duma and called for new elections. A different system was used to elect members of the second Duma (1907) and this led to, accusations of government 'rigging' of the results. Whether this was true or not, the result hardly pleased the Tsar as the second Duma contained more members from extreme political parties. This Duma lasted less than four months (February-June 1907) before Nicholas dissolved it.

In an attempt to produce a Duma more agreeable to the government, Stolypin decided to introduce a new Electoral Law in 1907. This law ensured that the landowners held 50 per cent of the votes and restricted those of the urban workers and peasants. The result of elections that followed was a third Duma dominated by the conservative Octobrists. Even this Duma was not prepared to blindly agree to the government's wishes and Stolypin often had to resort to using decrees in order to bypass them. Nonetheless, the third Duma lasted from 1907 until 1912.

Russia's experiment with a constitution had resulted in a bitter and frustrated parliament with little real power. The Tsar usually rejected any reform measures proposed by the Duma. Nicholas had therefore been one of the main obstacles preventing the Dumas developing into a parliament with any real power.

Industrialisation

Industrialisation, which had lagged behind that of the rest of Europe, had been promoted by two of the Tsar's most able politicians: Witte between 1892 and 1903 and, after 1905, by Stolypin. Industrialisation was seen as a way of modernising the Russian economy and, by generating wealth and making more use of Russia's resources, strengthening the Tsarist regime in the long term. There is no doubt that by its own standards the Tsarist regime achieved considerable success. The overall growth rate for industry between 1906 and 1913 was about 6 per cent per year-with heavy industry growing particularly rapidly. Foreign trade also increased with both exports and imports

doubling between 1900 and 1913. These figures show impressive growth, although from a small base. In the short term this programme of industrialisation produced problems of its own. It was only achieved by heavy taxation of the peasantry and it relied to a large extent on foreign investment. Although production of consumer goods rose, it lagged behind that of heavy industry. The rapid speed of industrialisation also produced tensions. Factory inspectors were few in number and this allowed employers to exploit their workers. Large industrial centres of over 2,000 workers, often working in appalling conditions reminiscent of early nineteenth-century Britain, provided a breeding ground for discontent.

Agricultural policy

In agriculture there was progress, with the land reforms put forward by Stolypin. **Peasants** were encouraged to leave the village commune and own their own land on consolidated farms. Two and a half million households took advantage of this. The aim of this reform was not only to improve agricultural efficiency but also to create a class of more prosperous peasants or **kulaks**, who would be more loyal to the Tsarist government. Agricultural production did rise from 45.9 million tonnes in 1906 to 61.7 million tonnes in 1913, although this was still inefficient when compared to the rest of Europe. In terms of creating a more loyal peasantry the results were mixed. Official statistics show a decline in peasant riots from 3,000 in 1905 to only 128 in 1913 but there is considerable evidence of increasing tension between the poorer peasants and the slightly more prosperous kulaks.

Developments in education

Improvements made in education could also be seen as an attempt by the government to reduce unrest and raise the conditions of the Russian people. The number of pupils in primary education doubled between 1904 and 1914, those in secondary education quadrupled and the number of students in higher education tripled in the same period. These figures indicate significant progress, but the reforms were criticised as being too little, too late. Education also made it easier to spread revolutionary ideas to an already discontented people.

KEY CONCEPT

The Russian peasantry A significant number of the Russian peasantry had been serfs (i.e. slaves, the property of rich landowners) until they were given their freedom in 1861. Most peasants remained dependent on rich landowners for agricultural work. They were controlled through the village commune or mir, an organisation made up of village elders. Living conditions were generally very primitive. Some peasants were able to own their own small farms and make a decent living. These slightly better off peasants were known as **kulaks**.

KEY TERM

Okhrana The Tsar's secret police. Their job was to get rid of opposition groups to the Tsar.

The growth of organised opposition after 1905

Given the subsequent events of the Bolshevik takeover, historians have focused a lot of attention on the role of revolutionary groups in the opposition to Tsarism but in the unrest of 1905, sparked off by the hardships of the war against Japan, the revolutionary groups were largely unorganised, small in number and divided amongst themselves. The period after 1905 saw a decline in both organised and spontaneous unrest as economic recovery took place. The **Okhrana** used ruthless tactics to deal with the revolutionaries. Stolypin set up field court martials, which resulted in the execution of 1,144 people in 1907. The hangman's noose was referred to as 'Stolypin's necktie'.

Although the industrial workers were more passive after 1905, it was clear that tension was not far below the surface. A strike in the Lena goldfields in 1912, when 270 strikers were killed by the army and a wave of sympathy strikes followed, showed how volatile the situation could be. Police and army action was often brutal, causing further resentment, which helped the revolutionary groups gain support. Nonetheless, it would be misleading to give the impression of a strong and well-organised labour movement. Trade unions had little influence outside St Petersburg and Moscow and in total only had a membership of about 31,000 out of an industrial



Peasants during the Tsarist period, 1900-14.

workforce of two and a half million. Strikes were common, with a rise from 2,400 in 1913 to 4,000 in the first seven months of 1914, but it should be remembered that most strikes were over working conditions rather than aiming to overthrow the government. The Tsar's secret police, the Okhrana, was successful in infiltrating a lot of these groups. Russia, on the eve of the First World War, was far from the brink of a workers' revolution: Lenin himself had stated: 'We will not see the Revolution in our lifetime'.

CONCLUSIONS

After 1905 the Tsar's government had introduced some reforms, for example in economic policy, which were aimed at strengthening the regime in the long-term. Yet these changes were to produce tensions of their own, as they were still heavily restricted by the confines of an autocratic system.

The tensions in Russia at the beginning of 1914, coupled with the weaknesses of Nicholas II, have led some historians to see the collapse of Tsarism as inevitable. Tsarism was perhaps an outmoded system given the modernisation of the economy and the social changes it was bringing about. But even weak autocratic governments can have a very long life. What was needed to bring the Tsarist system down was a catalyst and that was provided by the First World War.

SUMMARY QUESTIONS

- 1 Explain what is meant by 'autocracy'. Why might Tsar Nicholas II have been considered unsuitable for the role of autocrat?
- 2 What were the immediate causes of the 1905 Revolution?
- 3 What policy changes did Nicholas II and his government make between 1905 and 1914 in response to the 1905 Revolution?

TASK: Highlight and annotate the sources below to answer the following A Level style question 'Assess the value of these sources to an historian studying why the Tsar had become so unpopular by the early 1900s.' (Hint: Provenance, Content, Context, Tone and Language)

Source A

Declaration by the first дума before its dismissal by the tsar in July 1906.

The government has absolutely no desire to satisfy the demands of the people and their expectations of land, rights and freedom. By refusing to fulfil the people's demands, the government is displaying obvious contempt for the true interests of the people. The present government should resign immediately and be replaced by a government enjoying the trust of the дума.

Source B

Nicholas II's manifesto dismissing the second дума, June 1907.

To my great sorrow, a significant part of the second дума did not live up to my expectations. Many of the deputies did not desire to strengthen Russia and improve its administration, but instead aimed at increasing chaos and assisting in the destruction of the state. A significant section of the дума changed the right to demand explanations from the government into a method of attacking the government and of provoking mistrust of it amongst the population.

Source C

Adapted from: D. Christian, Power and Privilege, 1986.

Put simply, Stolypin's strategy was to retain the support of much of the old ruling elite* by taking the дума seriously; to build support in the countryside through a land reform that would satisfy the wealthier peasants without upsetting the landlords; and to deal with any remaining discontent by repression.

*Elite: those leading members of the nobility and administration who traditionally supported the tsar.