

Transition work from GCSE to A Level History

AQA '2N Russia Revolution and dictatorship 1917-1953'



The aim of this booklet is to help prepare you for A Level History, give you a background into Russian life at the time and explain what happened in the 1905 Revolution.

Documentaries you can watch:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3HPWxCC9xPQ>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QpWyFch-1tE>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LDRmZ3NI7qA>

Articles you can read online:

- <https://www.history.com/topics/russia/russian-revolution>
- <https://spartacus-educational.com/FWWtsar.htm>

Resource list provided by AQA:

<https://filestore.aqa.org.uk/resources/history/AQA-70412N-70422N-RL.PDF>

Background Information to the topic – Life in Russia

before 1905

The Background

Russian Geography

- 8 million sq miles: 2 x size Europe and 1/6th world surface
- Mainly rural – 11:1 village to town ratio
- Natural resources: timber, coal, oil, gold, precious minerals/metals
- Most of Russia inhospitable
- North and East had many barren lands
- Beyond the Ural Mountains, Russia was a wild place with frontier settlements.
- Transport and communication across the empire poor and difficult
- ¾ population lived within European Russia (west of Urals) – this is on less than ¼ of the total land mass!

Nationalities

- 130 million population - Less than ½ population of the empire were Russian
- Nationalities: Romanian, Polish, Finns, Jews, Georgians etc.
- Religions: Slav/Orthodox (state religion), Muslim, Catholic, Jewish
- Each had own customs, culture, language and sometimes religion
- Many resented Russian control (Tsar's often introduced policies which discriminated against nationalities)

Towns and cities

- St Petersburg capital
- The Tsar and his Ministers ruled the country from there. (pop. 500,000 = size of Liverpool's, London was 3.5 million!)
- Towns were mainly small market centres or admin centres
- Middle class and intelligentsia almost non-existent

Agriculture

- Only 25% of Russia was really good farmland.
- Most of this was in the South and West of the country, especially in the Ukraine, the "Bread basket" of Russia.
- The rest of Russia was either desert, arctic tundra, or taiga (woods).
- 4 out of 5 Russians were peasants. They had a hard life and there was often starvation and disease.

Peasants

- Peasants had been emancipated in 1861 – no long had to live on mirs (communes).
- Hoped by freeing them they would become either entrepreneurial private farmers or become mobile workers who would go to work in cities.
- Did not work as hoped; entrepreneurial class did not emerge and most continued strip method of farming on their allotted strip using wooden tools, and lived primitive lifestyles. Still had to ask village elders for permission to leave.
- They were generally illiterate, deeply religious, superstitious and hostile to change
- If peasants protested (for example during times of famine), the Tsar would use his feared Cossack soldiers against them.

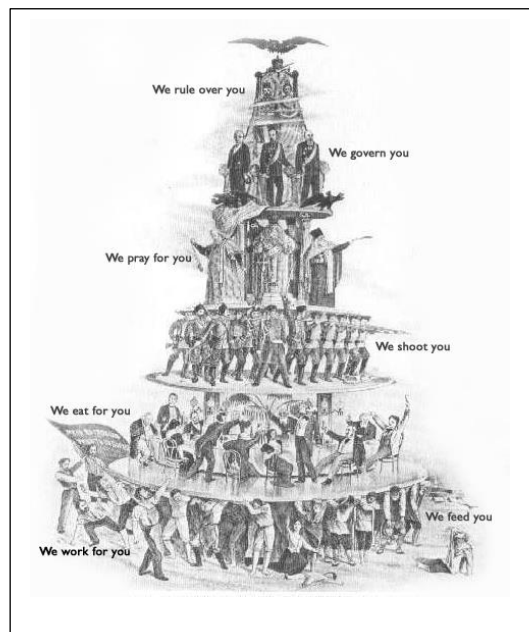
Middle Class and Intelligentsia

- Based in towns and cities
- Almost non-existent class – had grown during reformist era of Alexander II thanks to university and education reforms
- Generally more educated
- Doctors, lawyers, teachers

Nobility

- 10% population yet owned 75%
- Held positions in government, army, provincial governors or administration
- Not obliged to obey Tsar but generally did
- Landowners so controlled the mirs

TASK: For each category, identify why this would make Russia difficult to rule effectively:



Task: Russian society:

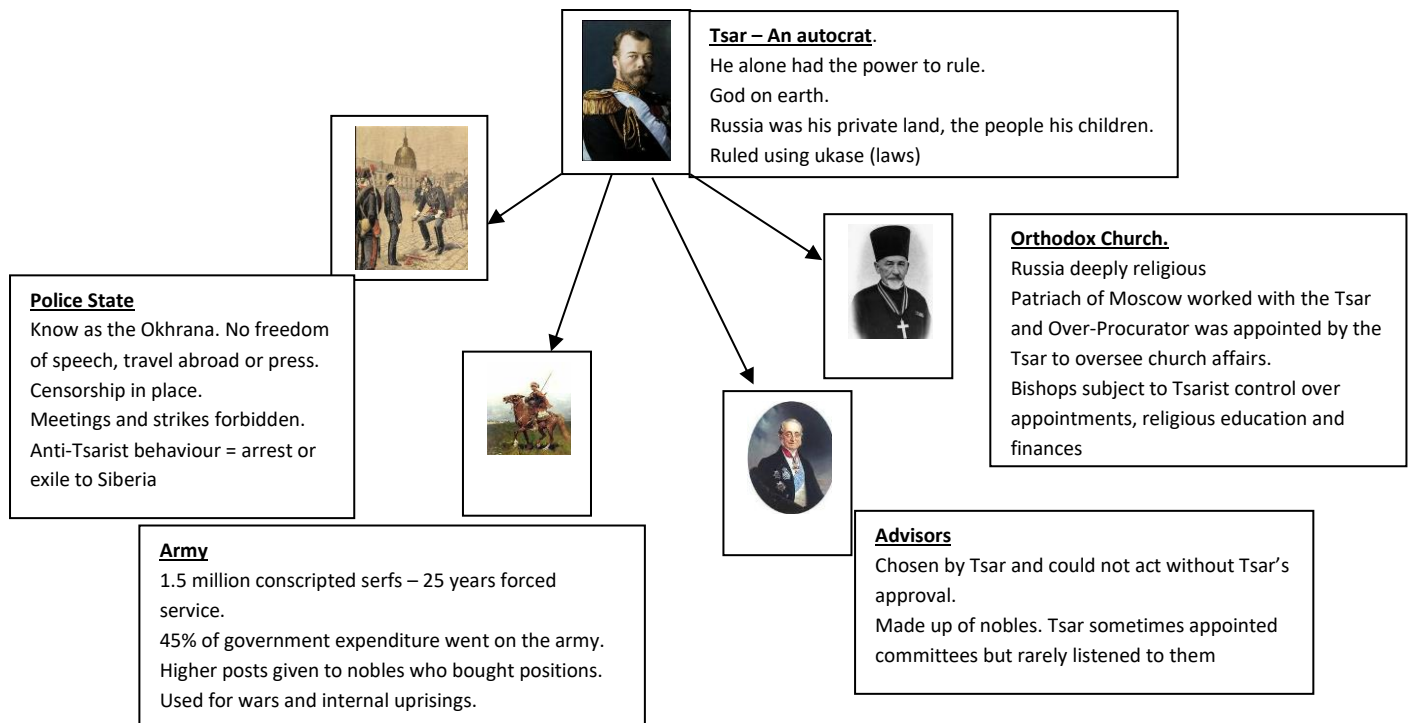
Annotate the above source to explain what you can learn about Russian society in 1900?

Use the information below to annotate the key people and the position that they had in the social hierarchy.

Consider:

- The flag of resistance at the bottom
- Pyramid shape and power – who holds the most power and how many? (UNSTUCK)
- What is happening to each layer as we go down (UNSTUCK)

AUTOCRACY IN ACTION (How the Tsar maintained control)



Task: Prioritise the factors from most to least significant for the Tsar to maintain control and justify your reasoning.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Who was Tsar Nicholas II?

(1868-1918)



Beliefs

- Deeply influenced by his father and committed to preserving his policies when he took over in 1894.
- Maintenance of autocracy – although his personality was not suited to such a strong willed role = Rejection of constitutional monarchy ideas (UNSTUCK - Queen Elizabeth in the UK rules within a constitutional monarchy)
- Devoutly religious – educated by Procurator of Holy Synod (Pobedonostsev: Repressive attitude, arch-conservative with dislike of democracy, dismissed idea of representative government as 'great lie of our time') – played major part in shaping Nicholas II's reactionary attitude.
- Lacked strength and imagination like predecessors; had a limited outlook. Lacked realism and meant there was no effective leadership at the top. Easily influenced by reactionary ministers.
- Indecisive – changed ministers and policies often e.g. Dismissed Witte in 1903 (TIF – Who is Witte and why is he significant?)

Determining aspects of rule:

Came to power when it was a critical stage in Russian history and when there was a growth of opposition to Tsars.

- Failed to develop domestic policy programme and failed to delegate power (too much for one man to deal with by this point)
- Avoided calling Council of Ministers > prevent members uniting against him. Concerned by anyone showing initiative/expressed unconventional ideas
- Ignored disturbances by growing urban working class in towns and illegal strikes – should have seen they were striking against working conditions and wages which he could have resolved.
- Repressive –surveillance and repression increased including recruiting more policemen and using the army to put down strikes with arrests and death without trial (1893: 19 times by 1902: 522 times)

Modernity:

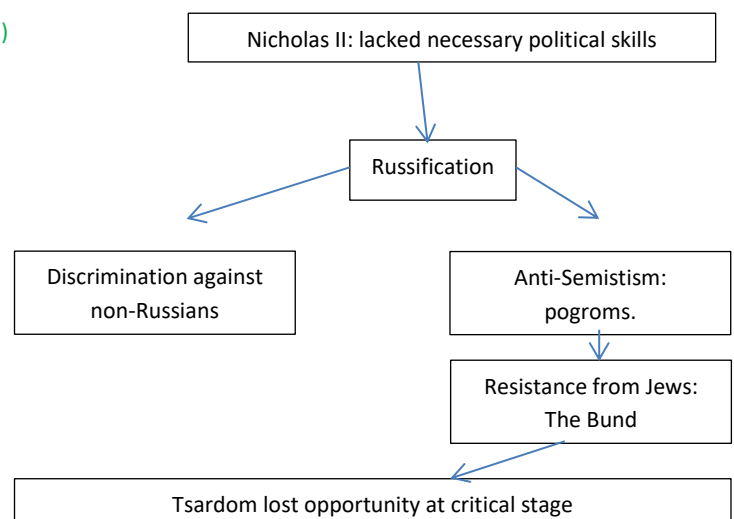
Could Russia modernise to compete with other European powers? Russia was the biggest country in the world but only the 5th largest industrial power. Despite the vast sum of natural resources at their disposal Russia was still considered to be a backward economy relying too heavily on agriculture while the rest of Europe had experienced a rise in industrialisation through the Industrial Revolution.

Russification:

- Aim = impose Russian ways on all the peoples within the empire.
 - Started by Tsar Alexander III → Nicholas II continues it.
 - Severely enforced policy to restrict influence of non-Russian national minorities by emphasising superiority of all things Russian.
 - How: state interference in their education and culture – widespread, systematic.
 - Impact: officials everywhere vested interest in maintaining dominance of Russian values. Nationalities who suffered most: Baltic Germans, Poles, Finns, Ukrainians.
 - Anti-Semitism. Chief victim – Jews. 600 new measures introduced. Targets for scapegoating especially as they lived in ghettos/easily identifiable. Pogroms (fierce, state organised persecutions – kill, destroy property) against them – Black Hundreds used to do this. Nicholas II reign saw sharp increase in pogroms. Proof of active encouragement by Tsarist regime to terrorise Jews.
 - Failings of Russification were:
 - timing – Russia needed cohesion and unity at this critical phase of development, but regime chose to treat ½ of its population as inferior or potential enemies.
 - Alienated great mass of 5 million Jews. 1980s saw large influx of Jews into various anti-Tsarist movement e.g. 1897 Jewish Union ('Bund') created against regime.
- Leon Trotsky (UNSTUCK - Key figure in the October Revolution) was a Jew = political activism against the Tsar.

Further Domestic Policies

- Failed to develop domestic policy programme to improve the lives of the Russian people
- Discontent met with repression rather than reform e.g. Urban discontent in the cities dealt with by Okhrana
- Continued father's educational policies including crushing student demonstrations with heavy police force which radicalised students who may have been appeased with reforms



Task: Complete the notes activity on Nicholas II

<p>Key questions and queries about Nicholas II.</p>	<p>Nicholas II Key Notes</p>
<p>Key words with definitions (Use Goggle)</p> <p>E.g. Okhrana – Secret police under the Tsar</p>	
<p>Summary</p>	

Causes of the 1905 Revolution

Before the Tsar was removed from power, he faced a Revolution in 1905 that has consequences later on.

Task - Trash or treasure?

Read through the information below and cross out anything which you don't need (trash) to answer the question: **'What were the background/longer reasons to the 1905 revolution?'** you will then be left with the treasure.

Unlike the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, the 1905 Revolution was spontaneous. It was not planned but took place as a result of considerable resentment about the social, economic and political situation in Russia. Before 1905 the vast majority of the Russia population was made up of peasants with most living in poverty. To make matters worse, the Russian population was growing rapidly from 98 million in 1885 to 125 million in 1905. The size of land available to peasants fell because there were so many of them and each needed land. Even though they lived in poverty peasants could survive as long as harvests were good. Harvest failures occurred in 1892, 1898 and 1901 which caused widespread famine. Peasants reacted violently and attacked government officials and destroyed government records on landholdings – especially those documents which referred to unpaid rents on land. By 1905 the Russian countryside seemed on the verge of revolution. While Russian agriculture was still very backwards, Russian Industry began to grow very quickly under Sergei Witte, the Finance Minister. This meant that towns and cities grew as peasants moved from the countryside to the cities to find jobs in factories. When they got there they found very poor living and working conditions.

All of this social and economic discontent led to demands for political change having a very wide and willing audience. At the beginning of 1905 Russia was still an autocracy with the Tsar possessing complete political power. There was no parliament, just the Zemstva (Council) which had no political power. By 1905 the demand for reform was growing. The reformers were a very mixed group with little in common. The liberal parties wanted to keep to Tsar but have an elected Parliament as well, while the radicals wanted to get rid of the Tsar completely. There were several radical political parties. The Social Revolutionaries wanted to give political power to the peasants and were prepared to use violence to achieve this. The most extreme radical group were the Social Democrats. They were also prepared to use violence and wanted political power to be held by the workers and peasants in a completely new type of society. In 1905, the Social Democrats split into two groups, the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks, however most of their leaders were in exile or prison. Once the revolution started many of the exiled leaders returned to Russia in an attempt to use the widespread unrest to force political change.

How the 1905 Revolution started and finished

Task: Watch the clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Jxzolu4Vbo> and read the information below to complete the 13 questions.

The Russo-Japanese War

Russia like many of the great powers had been trying to expand its empire in the nineteenth century. Whilst Great Britain and France concentrated on Africa Russia was attempting to expand its control in the Far East. In doing so they came into direct conflict with Japan who also wanted to expand their power. From 1904 to 1905 Russia and Japan went to war over control of northern China and Korea. Although Russians saw themselves as a far superior military power, they suffered a humiliating defeat. In January 1905 they were forced to surrender their Port Arthur naval base in China and in the following months were defeated in Manchuria.

Russian defeats were seen as a national humiliation and helped cause unrest against the government. The greatest military humiliation took place on 27 May 1905 at the Battle of Tsushima. The Russian Baltic fleet had sailed almost half way around the world from northern Europe to the Far East only to lose 25 out of its 35 warships. These defeats led to loss of support for the Tsar. They also prolonged the Revolution as many of the events of the war took place after the Revolution had begun. Further defeats during 1905 made the Tsar look even weaker and the encouraged the revolutionaries to act out. In August 1905 Russia was forced to seek peace. The Treaty of Portsmouth was signed and gave Korea and Port Arthur to the Japanese and Russian forces left Manchuria.

Bloody Sunday

On Sunday 9th January 1905 a large crowd of 150,000 workers demonstrated outside the Tsar's winter palace in the Russian capital of St Petersburg. It was a peaceful demonstration of men, women and children wearing their best clothes, singing hymns and carrying religious icons and portraits of the Tsar and Tsarina. They were led by Father Gapon, a Russian Orthodox Priest. The demonstrators wanted to give a petition to the Tsar asking for reforms such as an end to the Russo Japanese War, voting rights for more, an 8 hour working day, higher pay and the end to forced overtime in factories. The Tsar was not in the Winter palace at the time and the Cossacks on guard, fearing trouble fired into the crowds. 96 people were killed and 331 injured although this figure has been debated and is likely to be much higher with modern historians saying 200 were killed and 800 injured. Bloody Sunday seriously damaged the popularity of the Tsar losing him his 'Little Father' label. Sympathy strikes soon broke out when it was heard that the surviving demonstrators were expelled from St Petersburg.

The spread of revolutionary activity among peasants, workers and national minorities

Revolutionary activity took many forms. As it was an unplanned revolution it was made up of a variety of protests by workers, peasants and members of the armed forces. It was this lack of coordination that ultimately led to the failure of the revolution. However, even if it didn't work the revolution caused problems for the government which did not know when and where the next threat to its authority would be.

Peasants

Faced with poor harvests and high taxes, peasants rose in revolt across Russia. The first major uprising occurred in February 1905 in Kursk province and by the end of the year most of the European Russia had been affected by peasant unrest.

Workers

One of the most important aspects of the revolution was the outbreak of strikes by industrial workers. In February 1905 some 400,000 workers went on strike in response to Bloody Sunday and by the end of the year 2.7 million workers had been on strike. The wave of workers strikes developed into an organised general strike from 20 September to 30 October 1905. These strikes were organised by the workers themselves rather than the revolutionaries. The workers and peasants had developed some organising abilities through their strikes and riots before 1905. Strikers set up soviets (workers councils) to direct the strike – first in St Petersburg then in Moscow and other industrial cities. This was the first, greatest and most successful general strike ever carried out in Russia, the whole country was paralysed. When the railway workers went on strike in October the governments were seriously threatened. In a country as large as Russia the railways were crucial for the movement of troops to be put down to deal with unrest.

National minorities

There had been long term issues with national minorities in Russia about forcing them to speak Russian and the imposition of Russian culture and religion (Russification) as well as lack of regard for their demands of self-rule. During January and February 1905 resentment against Russification policies provoked rebellion in the Ukraine, Poland, the Baltic States, Finland and the Caucasus. Jews were also playing a big part in the unrest. The Poles wanted self-governance, and the Jews wanted equality. Witte, reporting on the disturbances in 1905 that, 'All of them longed for destruction of the system of deliberate oppression that embittered their lives'.

The Armed Forces

The key to success of the failure of the revolution was the armed forces. After Bloody Sunday mutinies occurred in some army units and parts of the navy. The most famous was in June 1905 when the crew of the battleship Potemkin killed some of their officers, took control of the ship and bombarded the Black Sea Port of Odessa before making their way to the neutral country of Romania. Although mutinies were not widespread, they received publicity and helped undermine the Tsar's authority. However, at no time during the 1905 Revolution was the army likely to turn against the Tsar.

The St Petersburg Soviet

An important feature of the 1905 revolution was the creation of an assembly of workers, the St Petersburg Soviet (Soviet is a Russian word for advice or counsel). This was a product of the general strike of October. Groups of workers from the capital elected representatives to the Soviet and at its height it had over 400 members representing 96 factories. One of its leading members was the SD Leon Trotsky. Although the Soviet published demands for radical social change, most of its work was organising strikes and ensuring that striking workers received food. The most important group linked to it was the Mensheviks with the Bolsheviks forming a minority. The Soviet came to an end 3 December 1905 when government troops arrested its leaders. Although the Soviet was closed down, its very existence (along with that of other Soviets) showed that the workers were capable of organising themselves and challenging the government.

Armed uprising

The strikes continued through the late autumn and early winter of 1905 with many turning violent. On 5 December a General Strike took place in Moscow but by 7 December it had become an armed uprising. During the next 9 days several thousand armed workers fought against the government troops and police. By 18 December with around 1000 people dead and parts of the city in ruins, the revolutionaries surrendered. The 1905 Revolution was over and the Tsar was still in power.

The 1905 Revolution	
Q1. Why did Russia and Japan end up at war?	
Q2. Give details about two of the defeats Russia suffered.	
Q3. Why is the Russo Japanese War a reason for revolution in 1905?	
Q4. What happened on 9 January 1905?	

Q5. Who was involved the incident?	
Q6. How did Bloody Sunday lead to revolution in Russia?	
Q7. Describe peasant activities at this time	
Q8. Describe workers activities at this time	
Q9. What did national minorities want?	
Q10. What was Potemkin?	
Q11. What was the St Petersburg Soviet?	
Q12. What did the St Petersburg Soviet show the government?	
Q13. How did the 1905 Revolution end?	