



# **Russia in Revolution, 1881-1924**

# Russia in 1881

## What was life like in nineteenth century Russia?

### A. Political system

#### Central govt

- Autocracy - Romanovs ruling family since 1613
- 3 main ruling bodies: Imperial Council: Cabinet of Ministers; Senate
- Tsar believed he was divinely appointed
- Earlier Tsars Peter I & Catherine II modernised country, but not political systems
- No parliament, no official opposition – opposition treated as treason
- Tsar rule through imperial decree - ukaz
- State censorship
- Secret police (Okhrana)

### B. Regional govt

- Tsar appointed provincial governors to administer country
- Zemstva, elected regional governments ran local govt.
- Bureaucratic administration – nepotism & tax-farming were rife

### D. Other factors

| Geography  | Church   | Economic development   |
|--|--|--|
| Massive country - 8million square miles, 2.5x size of USA<br>St Petersburg & Moscow principal cities<br>Limited farmland | Russian Orthodox Church<br>Loyal supporters of royal family<br>Highly-conservative<br>'God commands us to love and obey' | Slow pace of industrialisation compared with Europe<br>Cottage industries & small-scale businesses<br>Infrastructure under-developed<br>Emancipation Decree (1861) offered peasants chance to buy land, but this was too costly<br>Strip system of farming |

## Nicholas II (1894-1917)

### What kind of leader was Nicholas II?

#### Strengths

Highly educated – reputed to have good memory, linguist – spoke French, German & some English

Family man – devoted to son Alexis (suffered from haemophilia)

#### Weaknesses

Viewed as 'soft' by his father

Inherited throne suddenly – father died of kidney disease aged 49

Strongly conservative – closest adviser & mentor, Constantin Pobedonostsev; inherited Romanov belief in divine appointment & moral rightness of autocracy

#### Opportunities

Return to reforms of Alex II to win favour of Russian people

1895 delegation of zemstva appealed to Tsar to extend franchise

### Threats

Growth of political opposition groups

Ethnic tension as result of Russification

## Sergei Witte & Great Spurt (1892-1903)

**How far did the Russian economy improve during the time of Sergei Witte?**

| Successes   | Failures   |
|---|--|
| <p>Work was sponsored and overseen by government, nicknamed 'Witte System'</p> <p>Government placed emphasis on production of capital goods, e.g. iron and steel, coal and machinery</p> <p>Much of the expansion was financed from loans from abroad</p> <p>Overseas loans and investments</p> <p>High domestic taxes interest rates to raise capital</p> <p>Limited import of foreign goods (to stop Russian money going abroad)</p> <p>Value of rouble linked to value of gold to keep it high</p> <p>Expansion of railway system, e.g. Trans-Siberian Railway (opened 1902)</p> <p>Improving balance of trade (e.g. 1901-10, Russia exporting 186m. roubles more than importing)</p> <p>Increasing industrial output, e.g. coal, iron, grain</p> <p>Rapid expansion of cities, as large-scale manufacture attracted people seeking employment,</p> <p>Exploited its natural resources, e.g. oil and gas from Siberia more effectively</p> | <p>Industrial expansion was a global phenomenon – not just work of Witte &amp; 'Great Spurt'</p> <p>Too dependent on foreign investment</p> <p>Light industry underinvested &amp; agriculture ignored</p> <p>Military requirements &amp; conservatism impeded progress</p> <p>Overcrowding in cities, led to poor living conditions and growth in dissent as a result</p> <p>Unemployment</p> <p>Poor working conditions, e.g. absence of trade unions</p> <p>High inflation (1908-1914, 40%)</p> <p>Still lagged behind other major powers, e.g. Austria-Hungary expanded national income by 79%, 1894-1913 and Britain 70% compared with Russia 50% in same period</p> |

# Growth of political opposition

## What evidence is there of growing political opposition?

|              | Populists   | Social Revolutionaries   | Social Democrats  | Liberals  |
|--------------|---|--|---|---|
| Aims & ideas | Future lay in hands of peasants   | Anarchist wing; to continue terrorism of 'People's Will'<br>Moderates: work with other parties to achieve immediate improvements in conditions                   | All Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (1898)<br>Marixst party – history dictated by class struggles between those in power and those without, resolved by revolution<br>Split between revolution & overthrow of capitalism and improvement of proletariat  | Supporters of moderate reform; endorsed October Manifesto, setting up key reforms after 1905<br>Revolution, e.g. dumas<br>Kadets wanted constitutional monarchy & democratically elected assembly; also wanted full equality & civil rights, ending of censorship, abolition of redemption payments on land, TUs, universal, free education |
| Membership   | Leaders drawn from middle & upper classes   | Victor Chernov, founder member & leader (1901), intellectual<br>From 1906 growing support from professional classes, trade unions, All Russian Union of Peasants | George Plekhanov, translated Marx in 1883 & founded 'Group for the Emancipation of Labour'<br>Valdimir Ulyanov (Lenin)<br>Julius Martov<br>Lenin fell out with Plekhanov & Martov over whether SR should be broad-based party or small, group of professional revolutionaries<br>Party split into Bolsheviks (the 'Majority') & Mensheviks (the 'Minority') | Middle-class, professional supporters of moderate reform; Supporters of 'Great Spurt'<br>2 main groups: Octobrists (October Manifesto) & Kadets ('Constitutional Democrats')<br>Leaders of Octobrists included, Guchkov & Rodzianko   |
| Methods      | Overthrow of Tsarism<br>Used terrorism – 'the propaganda of the deed', e.g. 'People's Will' | Provider a firmer ideological basis for a revolutionary movement<br>2000 assassination attempts (1901-5) including Interior Minister & Tsar's Uncle              | Use of propaganda – Lenin & Martov edited 'Iskra' (The Spark)<br>Violence & political activity – Lenin later founded his own Bolshevik paper, 'Pravda' (the 'Truth')  | Reform & constitutional means   |

## 1905 Revolution

### What factors led to the 1905 Revolution?

#### Factors – group the factors below in social, economic, political and military

##### Social

- There were social injustices, e.g. 80% population peasants living in poverty
- Rapid population expansion – 98 million (1885) to 125 million (1905)
- It became harder to grow enough food for peasants to support themselves as a result

##### Economic

- Due to emancipation, there were more serfs competing for land which led to a decrease in the size of peasant landholdings..
- Harvest failures – 1892, 1898, 1901

## **Political**

- There were frequent jacqueries – peasant attacks on govt. record offices
- Overcrowding in towns and cities due to rapid industrialisation
- Lack of a national assembly and opposition to autocracy led to a growth of political opposition groups BUT lacked organisation, many wanted different things
- Protest led by Orthodox Priest, Father Gapon to take a petition to Tsar, led to 200 protestors being shot dead and survivors being expelled from St Petersburg
- There were frequent strikes in the build up to and immediate aftermath of the uprising. In Feb 1905, 400,000 workers went on strike in protest at Bloody Sunday. A railway workers' strike paralysed the country
- Soviets – workers' councils, set up by striking workers to organise protests; St Petersburg Soviet had 400 members, representing 96 factories, Leon Trotsky (SDs) was a key player

## **Military**

- Russian Imperial Army & Navy suffered embarrassing defeats between 1904 & 5, e.g. forced to surrender Port Arthur and Japanese Army defeated Russia in Manchuria, also Battle of Tsushima, where Russian navy lost 25 out of 35 warships

# **Peter Stolypin (1906-11)**

## **What did Stolypin achieve?**

- October Manifesto (1905)
- 'Union of the Russian People' – political party with links to Black Hundreds helped govt
- Soviets incl. St P Soviet closed down
- Moscow rebellion (1905) put down
- Field courts martial (1906-7) led to 1144 death sentences
- 1906-12, 1000 newspapers & 600 TUs closed
- By 1908, political assassinations fell to 385 compared with 1200 in 1907
  
- Peasants could withdraw from their commune (mir) & set up on their own
- Peasants' Land Bank gave loans to peasants leaving communes
- Redemption payments abolished
- Communes dissolved which didn't redistribute land
- Incentives to move to Siberia
- 'Bet on the sober and the strong' – creation of new prosperous class of peasants loyal to the Tsar
  
- By 1915, peasant ownership of land increased from 20% to 50%
- Agricultural production increased from 45m tonnes (1906) to 61m tonnes (1913)

## What were his failures?

- System of justice considered too harsh, e.g. between 1908-9, 16,500 convicted of political crimes, 3,600 hanged, 4,500 sent to hard labour camps Hangman's noose nicknamed – 'Stolypin's Necktie'
- WWI interrupted progress
- Stolypin assassinated 1911
- Industrial & urban conditions ignored
- Industrial unrest put down mercilessly, e.g. Lena Goldfield (1912)
- Notable strikes & demonstrations, e.g. general strike in Moscow (1914)

## First World War

What impact did WWI have on the government of Russia?

| Inflation   | Food supplies   | Transport   | Army   |
|---|---|---|--|
| 17,000 m. roubles spent on War (1914-17)<br>Increased tax, loans, borrowing from abroad<br>Gold standard abandoned<br>Average earnings doubled, while price of food & fuel quadrupled | Manpower diverted to war effort – 15m men taken from countryside<br>By 1917 36.7m men conscripted in army<br>Requisitioning of farm horses & supplies, e.g. chemicals for fertilisers used to make ammunition<br>Peasants hoarded food<br>Army were first in queue for food supplies (at expense of cities) | Mobilising army put strain on supply chain<br>Integrated network caused delays across the country if lines were blocked<br>Archangel, supplies sank into ground due to build-up<br>Trucks tipped down embankments to make way for others<br>Moscow, wagons of food declined from 2,200 (1914) to 700 (1917) | 4,000,000 troops killed or wounded (1914)<br>Lack of ammunition, uniforms & equipment<br>Shipment of resources poorly organised<br>Desertions<br>Nicholas II assumed leadership of army<br>Possibility of 'Bolshevik fabrication' (Norman Stone) |

### Military achievements

- August 1914, patriotic support for the Tsar & the Russian Army
- August 1914, Russian army entered East Prussia & parts of Austro-Hungarian Empire
- September 1914, Russians captured Austro-Hungarian fortress town of Przemysl, taking 110,000 prisoners
- June to August 1916, Brusilov Offensive, initially successful, Romania joined Russians

### Military failures

- September 1914, Battle of Tannenberg, German Generals Hindenburg and Ludendorff won a crushing defeat over Russian Generals Rennenkampf & Samsonov; 30,000 Russians casualties, 95,000 captured, 500 guns captured
- December 1914, Battle of Lodz
- July 1915, Gorlice-Tarnow offensive

- September 1915, Nicholas II assumed control of army, leaving govt, to Tsarina
- December 1915, Russians driven out of Poland
- August 1916, Brusilov Offensive lost momentum, troops withdrew from Baltic to Black Sea
- December 1916, major desertions and shortages in army, 1.6m had died by this date, 3.9m wounded, 2.4 prisoners

### **Economic impact**

- Poor government – Tsarina in charge
- Industrial production focused arms production
- Factory workers & farm labourers conscripted into army – 5.3 m men mobilised
- Government spending increased 8x
- Taxes and loans increased
- Inflation – 200%, August 1914-Dec 1916
- Transport interrupted
- Famines in towns and cities – Moscow received 300 wagons of grain by Dec 1916 (2,200 in 1914)

### **Political impact**

- Success or organisations like Union of Zemstva & War Industries Committee highlighted incompetence of the Tsar
- ZEMGOR formed to help war effort, but became a focus for opposition group too
- Formation of ‘Progressive Bloc’ within Duma
- Appointment of ultra-conservative ministers

## **February Revolution 1917**

### **Decide if the following factors are social, economic, political or military**

|  |
|--|
| In August and September 1914, the Russian army was defeated at the Battles of Tannenburg and the Masurian Lakes                          |
| After the disaster at the Battle of Tannenburg, the Russian General Samonov shot himself rather than report the heavy losses to the Tsar |
| In September 1915, Nicholas II dismissed his uncle and took personal command of the Russian army   |
| Poor internal communications, in particular the railways, led to a shortage of supplies  |
| The National Budget rose eightfold in order to meet the demands of the military effort   |
| Inflation increased to over 200%   |
| Food reaching the capital declined from 2,200 wagons per month at the start of the War to less than 300 by 1916                          |
| A Central War Committee was set up by businessmen to help provide weapons and ammunition   |
|  |

|   |
|---|
| The Union of Zemstva organised medical facilities for the army  |
| Zemgor was formed to care for the casualties  |
| A 'Progressive Bloc' emerged in the Duma calling for a 'government of public confidence'  |
| A Siberian monk named Rasputin was gaining increasing influence over the Tsarina due to his magical healing powers              |
| The Tsarina was left to organise the government in the absence of Nicholas II   |
| The Tsarina often made appointments to ultra-conservatives  |
| Alexandra was suspected by many due to her German origins   |
| Strikes broke out in St Petersburg and across the country. There was a major strike by workers at the Putilov engineering works |
| Protests against food shortages merged with those being organised by striking workers   |
| International Women's Day coincided with the strikes in St Petersburg   |
| A Soviet or workers' council emerged, issuing Order No. 1   |
| The Progressive Bloc formed a new Provisional Government  |
| The Cossacks refused to fire on protestors  |
| Some regiments mutinied and joined the protestors   |
| Rationing increased, by 1916 bread was rationed to 50 grams a day   |
| Working conditions in factories remained very poor, and campaigning continued for an 8 hour working day                         |

### **Short term factors – events leading up to abdication of Tsar Nicholas II**

- Strikes - to commemorate 'Bloody Sunday', e.g. 9th Jan 1917, 140,000 workers in St P.; protests over food & working conditions
- Food shortages – attacks by Duma, increase in rationing (50g per day)
- Political opposition - International Women's Day merged with strike by Putilov engineering works in St P
- Soviets – committees of workers, eventually St P Soviet formed, issuing Order No. 1
- Response of govt – arrests of leaders of Workers' Group, stricter censorship (all newspapers shut down)
- Mutinies – Cossacks refused to fire on protestors, Volinsky Regiment joined protestors
- Formation of Provisional Government – following attempts to dissolve Duma under Mikhail Rodzhianko



# Provisional Government (Feb-Oct 1917)

**How well did the Provisional Government deal with the problems it faced?**

| Problem  | What action did the PG take?   | Success or failure? Why?  |
|--|--|---|
| <p><b>Government</b></p> <p>Lacked legitimacy, drawn from State Duma, dominated by Kadets &amp; Octobrists &amp; minority groups, Mensheviks &amp; Bolsheviks weren't included. Only radical was Alexander Kerensky</p> <p>Faced rival power – Soviet in Petrograd, by June 1917 it was called 'All-Russia Soviet'; claimed right to issue laws</p> <p>Increasing demands for self-government (autonomy) from Russia's nationalities</p> | <p>Failed to dissolve the Soviet</p> <p>Made links with the Soviet, e.g. 6 members of Soviet joined PG, including Skobelev (Minister of Labour), Kerensky became PM (from July 1917) and head of PG</p> <p>Improved diplomatic relations with Allies, as a fellow liberal democracy</p> <p>Introduced reforms, e.g. freedom of press, abolition of Okhrana, release of political prisoners, religious freedom, preparations for Constituent Assembly to draw up a new constitution</p> <p>Failed to hold swift elections to improve its legitimacy</p> <p>Self-government granted to Ukraine (July 1917) &amp; Finland</p> | <p>Soviet became increasingly radical and dominated by left-wing radicals including SRs and SDs, by Oct 1917, Bolsheviks were dominant group</p> <p>Radical representation in the PG steadily increased</p> <p>Political exiles, e.g. Lenin, returned from Switzerland, Stalin from Siberia</p> <p>Granting self-government to some would open flood gates to others in the former Russian Empire</p> |
| <p><b>Social &amp; economic problems</b></p> <p>Lacked funds to fight the War</p>  | <p>Increased financial support for War effort – GB &amp; French banks continued to offer loans</p>   | <p>Money would eventually need to be repaid, but it couldn't exact reparations from Germany because this would be unpopular with the SDs</p>  |
| <p><b>Peasants</b></p> <p>Needed to resolve issues of land ownership left unresolved by Tsars</p>  | <p>Committee set up to advise on future policy</p> <p>PG reluctant to reach a firm decision until Constituent Assembly elected</p> <p>Took no action</p>   | <p>Failed to extend its authority beyond St Petersburg &amp; other major cities</p> <p>Couldn't use army to re-establish its authority Peasants took law into their own hands and forcibly took land, e.g. June 1917, 700 complaints from landowners about illegal attacks on property</p>  |
| <p><b>First World War</b></p> <p>Major losses of land, including parts of Poland and Western Russia; millions of casualties, morale poor; regular mutinies</p> <p>Continued to support the War esp. from Milukov (foreign minister)</p>  | <p>Increased financial support for War effort – GB &amp; French banks continued to offer loans</p> <p>Temporary improvement in morale – military happier fighting for a democracy</p> <p>Hoped to gain territory from the Ottoman Empire</p> <p>Planned a June (or 'Summer') Offensive</p>   | <p>Morale eventually declined</p> <p>Intervention of the Soviets over military appointments may have affected expertise in the army</p> <p>Demonstrations against the War (Apr 1917)</p> <p>Milyukov forced to resign</p> <p>Failure of June Offensive led to mass desertions and 'July Days' on streets of Petrograd</p> <p>Prince Lvov stood down and was replaced by Kerensky</p>                  |