

Russia 1894-1924 Summer tasks

Read the information you have been provided. Use it to complete the activities

1. Social structure of Russia

Read each section. In the boxes to the right, summarise the information into 20 words or less

SOURCE 1.2 The major nationalities in Russia by mother tongue in 1897

Nationality	Millions
Russian	55.6
Ukrainian	22.4
Polish	7.9
White Russian	5.8
Jewish	5.0
Kingiz	4.0
Tartar	3.4
Finnish	3.1
German	1.8
Latvian	1.4
Bashkir	1.3
Lithuanian	1.2
Armenian	1.2
Romanian/Moldavian	1.1
Estonian	1.0
Murdinian	1.0
Georgian	0.8
Turkmenian	0.3
Tadzhik	0.3

The people

From the fifteenth century onwards, the Russians who lived in the area around Moscow gradually conquered the peoples around them. They were ruled by a leader called the tsar. The area they controlled expanded and developed into the Russian Empire. Large slabs were added only in the nineteenth century. Vladivostok and the most easterly part on the Pacific Ocean became part of the Empire in 1859. The Caucasus region, which included the Georgian and Chechen people, was secured as late as 1864, and the central Asian area of Russia including Turkistan was conquered in the 1860s and 1870s.

Tsarist Russia at the turn of the century was a vast sprawling empire containing a patchwork quilt of different national groups (see Source 1.2). The Russians themselves formed about half of the population, the vast majority of whom lived in the European part of Russia west of the Ural mountains. The diversity of culture and religion and language throughout the Empire was astonishing, from sophisticated European Russians living in St Petersburg to nomadic Muslim peoples living in the desert areas of the south, to the tribes who wandered the vast spaces of Siberia living and dressing very much like native American Indians.

National minorities

NOBILITY

- Made up just over one per cent of population but owned 25 per cent of all the land. Some were extremely rich, with enormous country estates.
- Few spent much time on their estates. For most of the year they lived in St Petersburg or Moscow doing the round of social events that constituted 'society'.
- Some had important jobs in government or in the army but this was often more because of their position in society than on merit.
- An increasing number of nobles were selling their land to peasants and moving to the cities.



SOURCE 1.4 The ball of the coloured wigs at Countess Shavalova's palace, 1914

Nobility

■ IB The social structure of tsarist Russia continued

MIDDLE CLASSES

- Although small in number, there was a growing class of merchants, bankers and industrialists as industry and commerce developed.
- The more progressive were sitting on town councils, supporting schools and becoming art patrons and founding museums and art galleries.
- There was a burgeoning cultural life (theatres, ballets and operas) in the major cities in which the middle classes participated.
- The lifestyle of the middle class was very good. They owned large houses and enjoyed a wide variety of food.
- The professional class (doctors, lawyers, teachers) was growing and beginning to play a significant role in local government. Lawyers in particular were becoming active in politics.

URBAN WORKERS

- Most workers were young and male. Although many were ex-peasants, by 1900 over a third were young men whose fathers had worked in factories, mines and railways.
- There were large numbers of women working in the textile factories in St Petersburg and Moscow.
- Wages were generally very low and working conditions very poor. There were a high number of deaths from accidents and work-related health problems.
- Living conditions were generally appalling. Many shared rooms in tenement blocks or in barrack-style buildings next to factories or mines. People had no privacy or private space: men, women and children often lived in rooms divided by curtains.



SOURCE 1.5 Inside a workers' lodging house, c. 1900

PEASANTS

- Before 1861, Russian peasants had been serfs, virtually owned by their masters, the nobility. In 1861 they had been emancipated (freed) and given plots of land from the estates of the nobility.
- Although emancipated, the peasants were subject to restrictions in the commune or 'mir' in which they lived. These affected the way they farmed and their personal freedom, e.g. they could not leave the village without permission.
- Life for most peasants was hard and unremitting. They slogged out their lives on small patches of land that they owned and worked on the estates of the nobility.
- Most were poor, illiterate and uneducated.
- Some peasants – KULAKS – were quite well off. They hired labour, rented and bought land.
- Most peasants got by in good years, but in years of bad harvests there was widespread starvation, e.g. 400,000 died in 1891.
- Disease was widespread, with regular epidemics of typhus and diphtheria.
- Many peasants lived in debt and squalor, prone to drunkenness and sexually transmitted diseases, especially syphilis.



SOURCE 1.6 Peasants in a village near Nizhny-Novgorod, c. 1891

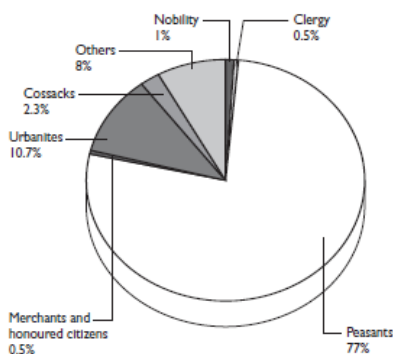
KULAK
Rich peasant who hired labour and owned animals.

Middle classes

Urban workers

Peasants

The social structure of tsarist Russia



SOURCE 1.3 A breakdown of Russia by class, based on the census of 1897

2. Key principles of Tsarism

Read the information. Use it to complete the table

Three key principles underpinning tsarist rule

1 Autocracy

As far as the tsars were concerned they had been appointed by God to lead and guide their people. Article 1 of the Fundamental Laws, 1832, makes it clear: 'The Emperor of all the Russias is an autocratic and unlimited monarch; God himself ordains that all must bow before his supreme power, not only out of fear but also out of conscience.' The autocrat could rule the country without constraints according to his own idea of duty and what was right. The tsars rejected any hint that their power rested on the consent of the people.

2 Nationality

There was a strong belief that Russians had a distinctive way of life, values, beliefs and customs that were superior to the people around them and should predominate throughout the Empire. This 'Russianness' was emphasised by the Orthodox Church and practised in the policy of Russification (see page 19). The Tsar had an obligation to preserve and strengthen national identity.

3 Orthodoxy

The Russian Orthodox Church was an offshoot of the Christian Church, which, for historical reasons, had become independent of the Pope and Rome and saw itself as the upholder of the 'true' Christian faith. It supported the divine right of the tsar to rule and exhorted believers to obey the tsar as the agent of God. The Church believed there was a mystical bond between the god-like tsar and the people – he was the father and they were the children.

Principle	What	Why
Autocracy		
Nationality		
Orthodoxy (Russian)		

Using three different colours, highlight the information below according to which Tsarist principle it would help uphold

Opposition was not tolerated. Political parties were illegal. Newspapers, periodicals and books were censored. The government made use of an extensive secret police network, the *Okhrana*, to root out dissidents (opposition) and people likely to cause trouble. People who were deemed dangerous or hostile to the regime were put in prison or exiled to Siberia. Large scale protests, demonstrations and riots, which often broke out in times of famine, were suppressed by the army.

Many of the national minorities resented Russian control, particularly Russification. This policy, began by Nicholas III and continued by Nicholas II, involved making non-Russians use the Russian language instead of their own and adopt Russian customs and habits. The Russian language was used in schools, law courts and regional government. Usually it was Russians who got the important jobs in government and state sponsored industry. The minorities also had to pay large sums to the imperial treasury.

The army was crucial to the survival of the tsarist regime. Most officers were from noble backgrounds. Ordinary soldiers were conscripts taken from the villages who were required to serve for seven years actively and in the reserves for eight. The most reliable section of the army for the regime were the Cossacks. They came from the Don area of Russia and were loyal supporters of the Tsar. Cossacks could be trusted to act against other peoples in the empire, including the Russians. They formed the best cavalry units in the Russian army and were feared because they could be brutal and ruthless.

The Russian Orthodox Church both supported and was supported by Russian autocracy. The church's governing council, the Holy Synod, was run as a *de facto* government department and the tsar, a deeply religious man, consulted regularly with its archbishops. The church encouraged ordinary Russians to accept and embrace autocracy; its catechisms taught worshippers that God's will was that they should love and obey the Tsar. The Catholic Church in Poland, the Georgian Orthodox Church, the Lutherans in Lithuania and other religious sects all resented government interference in their religious practices. The Jews, who formed a sizeable ethnic group, were forced to live in an area known as the Pale of the Settlement. They suffered from a deliberate policy of anti-Semitism which placed social, economic and political restrictions on them. Encouraged by the authorities, they were subject to frequent pogroms (organised attacks on their homes and businesses by ultra-conservative nationalists).

3. Opposition to Tsarism before 1905

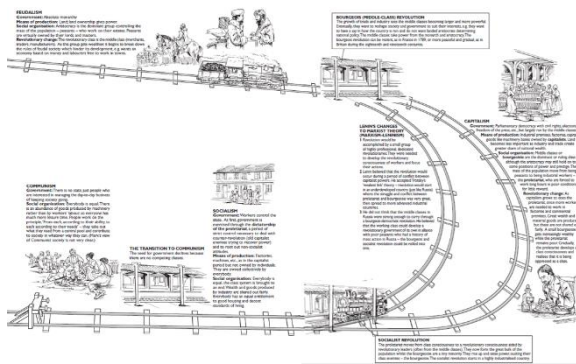
As a result of the Tsar's unlimited power the only way to challenge Tsarist autocracy was through acts of rebellion. Opposition groups began to grow as a consequence of successive Tsars' refusal to grant reform and improve living conditions

Liberalism

Liberalism is a political and moral philosophy that emphasizes individual rights and freedoms, limited government, and equality under the law. Liberals wanted the emerging middle class to have increased political influence. Western European countries had developed constitutional governments and increased political rights for their citizens. Many liberal thinkers wanted the same for Russia.

Populism

Populism is a political program or movement that champions, or claims to champion, the common person, usually by favourable contrast with a real or perceived elite or establishment. Populism usually combines elements of the left and the right, opposing large business and financial interests but also frequently being hostile to established liberal, socialist, and labour parties. Radical populist groups often carried out political assassinations. Populism existed in the universities, while the People's Will tried to assassinate Alexander III in 1887.



Marxism

Marxist thinking had developed in Russia in the late 1800s. Karl Marx had promoted the idea that power should be in the hands of the masses. Revolutionary groups which combined Marx's aims with their own goals developed.

Socialism

Socialism is an economic and political system where the people collectively own or control the means of production, rather than private individuals or corporations. The Social Revolutionaries adopted a combination of Marxist and

Populist beliefs. They wanted to overthrow the government in favour of giving power to the peasants. Although they were greatly uncoordinated in their efforts, they carried out approximately 2,000 political assassinations in the years leading up to the 1905 Revolution.

The Social Democrats' beliefs were based on Marxism. They did not expect the peasants to rise in revolution. They focused on agitation amongst the workers in the cities. In 1903, the group split after an ideological disagreement.

In the space below make brief notes on opposition in Russia before 1905

4. The Last Tsars of Russia

Read the information on Tsars Alexander II, Alexander III and Nicholas II. Use it to complete the fact files

Alexander II (ruled -1855 1881)

The Crimean War (see page 15) had confirmed how backward Russia was in comparison with some western European countries. To remedy this, Alexander II had introduced major reforms in Russia during his reign (1855–81).

- In 1861 he had emancipated (freed) the serfs.
- He had brought new ideas to the antiquated judicial system, including better trained independent judges, trial by jury, and Justices of the Peace who took over the judicial powers of the nobility in country districts.
- He started the process of modernising the army.
- He brought in a new form of local government – zemstva – town and district councils, which had some autonomy to manage their own affairs. The councils were elected but the vote was heavily weighted in favour of the nobles.
- He had reformed education, with primary and secondary schools open to a wider section of the population, and he gave greater independence to the universities.

Alexander was in no sense a liberal. He thought his reforms were the best way to maintain tsarist rule in Russia and prevent 'revolution from below'. However, for many in Russia the reforms did not go far enough and in the second part of his reign he had faced mounting criticism and unrest. When he was assassinated in 1881, his son, Alexander III, decided on a different course and Russia entered a period of repression and reaction.

On 1 March 1881, the Russian Tsar, Alexander II, was travelling by coach through the snow to the Winter Palace in St Petersburg. An armed Cossack sat with the coach driver while another six Cossacks followed on horseback. Two sledges carrying the Chief of Police for St Petersburg and other police officers followed on behind. That very day, the Tsar had signed a document that granted the first ever constitution to the Russian people.

Watching the Tsar's journey was a group of radicals called 'Narodnaya Volya' or 'The People's Will'. Eighteen months earlier they had condemned him to death at a secret meeting and had already made six unsuccessful attempts on his life. On a street corner near the Catherine Canal, one of them hurled a bomb to halt the fast moving, iron-clad coach. Despite an explosion under the back axle, the carriage held together and the coachman drove on. But several of the Cossacks had been fatally injured and the Tsar, ignoring advice, ordered the coach to stop. He climbed out to comfort them. When asked how he was, the Tsar replied, 'Thank God I am safe'. Not so. A second assassin threw his bomb, which landed at the Tsar's feet and exploded. The dying Tsar insisted on being taken to the Winter Palace where he died just over an hour later. The bomber, also fatally wounded, died that night in hospital.

Five members of The People's Will were convicted and sentenced to death. The nineteen-year old who had thrown the first bomb had told the police all he knew about his comrades. On 3 April, wearing the word 'TSARICIDE' on a placard on their chests, they were led out for public execution before a vast crowd and ten thousand troops. The four men and one woman were hanged incompetently – one victim had to be re-hanged three times.

The assassination of Alexander II in 1881 marked an important point in Russian history. Tsarist Russia was looking increasingly creaky and vulnerable. This vast Empire was undeveloped in comparison with the industrialised nations of Western Europe. The world was changing and the tsarist regime needed to come to terms with the modern industrial age. The fate of the Romanov tsars rested on their ability to deal with the challenges posed by the modern world. Were they up to the job? To consider this question, we first need

GREAT POWER STATUS

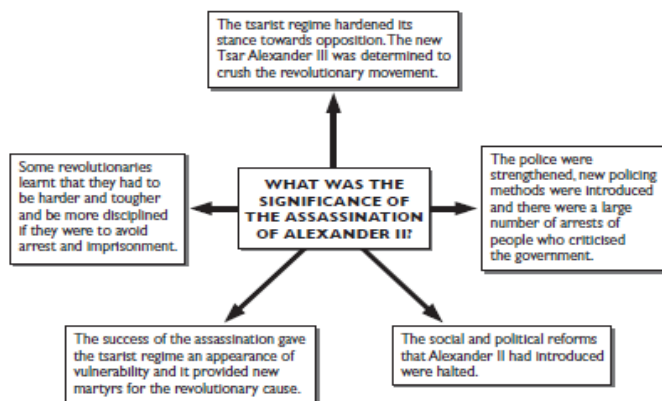
In 1815 Russia was the leading power in Europe. Napoleon's invasion in 1812 had been repulsed and the Russian army, the most powerful in the world, had liberated Europe. In 1814, Alexander I had ridden through Paris in triumph and had dominated the Congress of Vienna, which produced a settlement for Europe after twenty years of war. In the hundred years after 1815, maintaining great power status was a high priority for the Russians. However, defeat in the Crimean War (1854–56) was a huge blow to Russian prestige: Russia had been fighting on her own territory against Britain and France. The inadequacies of Russian rifles and supplies highlighted the shortcomings of her industry and communications. The case for modernisation was unanswerable and the reforms of Alexander II followed. Russia had prospective enemies to the west, south and east. The unification of Germany in 1871 created a potential threat from what was one of the fastest growing industrial states. To counter this threat, in 1891 Russia formed an alliance with France with the added bonus of French loans to help finance modernisation. Alec Nove points out that Witte's public statements and papers make it clear that the dominant motive behind his industrialisation policy was to allow Russia to catch up with the more developed powers 'particularly in her potential to produce the means of national power, above all armaments'.

Reasons for reforms:

What were the reforms:

Assassination: who and how?

Significance of assassination:



Alexander III (ruled 1881-1894)

Alexander III

Alexander III represented the very image of an autocrat. He was 6ft 4ins tall, broad-shouldered and extremely strong. His favourite trick was to unbend horseshoes to amuse his children. When he came to the throne, he made it clear that he was going to affirm the principle of autocracy in no uncertain terms. On 29 April 1881, in The Manifesto on Unshakable Autocracy, he announced that the Tsar would 'rule with faith in the strength and truth of the autocratic power that we have been called upon to affirm and safeguard for the popular good from infringement.' He gave the impression of immense power and in this sense fulfilled the role of the autocrat perfectly. Unfortunately, he was limited in intellect and advised by a divided collection of ministers.

Repressive measures

Alexander III rejected his father's reforms as 'ill-advised, tantamount to revolution and pushing Russia on to the wrong road' and considered that they had contributed to his father's assassination. He 'would not grant Russia a constitution for anything on earth' and set about turning the clock back.

- 1 In 1881 The Statute of State Security was passed giving the government powers to:
 - a) prohibit gatherings of more than 12 people
 - b) prosecute any individual for political crimes
 - c) introduce emergency police rule where public order was threatened
 - d) set up special courts outside the legal system
 - e) close schools, universities and newspapers.

Most of these measures remained in force until 1917.

- 2 He brought in strict controls on the universities, reducing student freedom.
- 3 In 1890, the independence of the zemstva was reduced and control became more centralised. The number of people eligible to vote in elections was cut drastically. For instance, in Moscow and St Petersburg only 0.7 per cent of the population could vote.
- 4 Justices of the Peace, an important feature of the previous tsar's reforms, were abolished in 1889 and replaced in the countryside by Land Captains. These were members of the gentry chosen to control the peasants and were deeply resented.

Economic progress

A more progressive approach was adopted on the economy. Bunge, the finance minister and later Prime Minister, laid



Commissioned by Nicholas II, this statue was known as the 'Hippopotamus'. Rather than pull it down the Bolsheviks carved these lines on the pedestal:

"Their well-deserved hangman's fee
My son and sire received.
But, a spectre of ancient slavery,
I ride, through all eternity
Derided by humanity."

down the basis for future development, encouraging railway building as an economic stimulus and using tariff protection to help several industries to grow. A factory inspectorate was introduced and peasants' redemption payments were reduced. He also established an income tax on businesses. At the end of the reign in 1892, Sergei Witte was appointed Finance Minister and took these policies forward to create the industrial boom of the 1890s (see page 15). Alexander had great faith in Witte, who in turn admired the Tsar.

Significance of Manifesto of Unshakeable Autocracy:

Ability to rule:

Use of repression:

Nicholas II (ruled 1894-1917)

Nicholas II came to the throne in 1894, after his father had died unexpectedly, and lacked the training and experience for leadership. He admired his father greatly and was initially rather overwhelmed at the prospect of succeeding him. His private letters and diary are revealing. They provide evidence of his strong religious convictions and his deep affection for his wife and family (he had photographs of them everywhere, including the lavatory) but they also display a remarkable indifference to the world around him. He was deeply moved by the death of his favourite dog but the events of the 1905 revolution received little attention. He was charming and kind to those around him and could command respect and loyalty. He found it difficult to say unpleasant things to people to their face. However, he could also be vicious and merciless. He was very anti-Semitic and praised regiments that put down disorders. Nicholas was particularly attached to the army because of his upbringing and loved the superficialities of military life. He saw it as his personal domain and appointed grand dukes and members of his family to high positions. Often these were incompetents who damaged the army.

The problem for Nicholas was that he had to manage Russia through a time of major social and economic change. He was not really equipped for this. His many inadequacies have been well documented: his inability to make decisions; his unwillingness to engage in politics – even to read government reports; his lack of organisational skills ('Unfit to run a village post office' was the comment of an unknown cabinet minister); his weakness; his obstinacy. Yet it was his job to bring Russia into the twentieth century. Would he rule Russia in the same way as his father or would he embrace change and be prepared to modify the institutions of the autocracy?

From the beginning, he made his intentions clear: 'Let it be known to all that I shall devote all my strength, for the good of the whole nation, to maintaining the principle of autocracy just as firmly and unflinchingly as it was preserved by my unforgettable father.' Influenced by his tutor, Pobedonostsev, he believed that democracy, with its elections and parliaments, would bring about the collapse of the Russian Empire. Nicholas was ideologically incapable of accommodating the new middle class let alone a more demanding peasantry and working class.

The Tsarina

Alexandra was never liked by the Russian people or the Russian court. She was born of a German royal house and was a Protestant. She converted to the Orthodox Church and threw herself into learning Russian customs and traditions. However, she was always regarded as an outsider – the 'German woman'. What made it worse was that she was shy and hated grand court occasions, preferring to remain at home with her family. She appeared cold and aloof. Unfortunately, her mother-in-law, Marie, loved court life, which continued to revolve around her. Alexandra kept away as often as she could.

She loved Nicholas and her family deeply and sought to create a private world, demanding that the Tsar spend the evenings with the family. More and more, the family retreated to their palace at Tsarskoe Selo just outside St Petersburg. Although shy, Alexandra was strong-willed and obstinate. She was also very religious. She believed firmly that the Tsar had been appointed by God to be the autocratic ruler of Russia. She was adamant that he should keep his powers and not share them with the people who were his servants. Her influence on him was great and not always helpful. At crucial moments she would always argue against any move towards constitutional monarchy and urge Nicholas to assert his autocratic will without regard for the constraints of the law.



Konstantin Pobedonostsev

Called 'the pace-setter of reaction' by liberals, Pobedonostsev was a strong influence on Alexander III and Nicholas II as their tutor and Chief Procurator of the Holy Synod, the lay administrator of the Orthodox Church, and a key figure between 1881 and 1905. He was convinced that firmness was the essential characteristic of good government. He warned Alexander III: 'if the direction of policy passes to some kind of assembly, it will mean revolution and the end, not only of government, but of Russia itself.' He called representative democracy 'the great lie of our time'.

He was instrumental in driving Alexander III's repressive measures and the Russification policy (see page 19). He sought to re-educate the people by increasing the number of clergy, churches and church schools, particularly in the outlying parts of the Empire. He was deeply anti-Semitic and encouraged the fierce pogroms launched against the Jews during the 1880s. Alexander's government introduced measures restricting the political and economic activities of the Jews.

Personality:

Ability to rule:

Intentions for Russia:

Influence of Pobedonostsev:

Influence of Alexandra: