

Revolution and dictatorship: Russia, 1917-1953

Pre-1917 Summer Work

Key question - What were the problems facing the tsarist regime at the turn of the twentieth century?

For this work you will learn about:

- The Russian Empire and its people
- The social structure of tsarist Russia
- How Russia governed under the tsars
- Tsar Nicholas II, Tsarina Alexandra and Grigorii Rasputin
- Modernisation: Witte's economic policy, 1892-1903

The Russian Empire and its people

Read pages 4-5 of this scan and identify the aspects of Russia that made it a difficult country to govern at the end of the nineteenth century.

Tip-off: size, landscape, communications, diversity of people and national groups.

The social structure of tsarist Russia

Answer the following questions:

1. How was Russian society structured?

Read pages 6-7 of the scan and create an annotated pyramid to show how Russian society was structured. The following should feature:

- Peasants and urban workers (at the bottom)
- Middle classes (middle)
- Nobility (top)

Yes, it was very similar to our very own medieval feudal system!

2. What features of Russian society were likely to cause problems for the tsarist government in the first decade of the twentieth century?

How was Russia governed under the tsars?

Read pages 8-9 of the scan and make notes on:

- How Russia was governed under the tsars
- The three main principles underpinning the tsarist system
- The importance of the role of the Orthodox Church
- The difference between the Westerners and Slavophiles

Tsar Nicholas II, Tsarina Alexandra and Grigori Rasputin

Read Chapter 1 of Orlando Figes' book, *A People's Tragedy*. Entitled 'The Dynasty', this will provide you with an extremely useful grounding on Tsar Nicholas II as a ruler, the Tsarina, as well as the mysterious monk, Grigori Rasputin. It will also greatly assist with your understanding of the long-term sources of discontent which culminated in the overthrow of the Tsar during the February Revolution of 1917. Once you have read it, answer the following structured questions:

- Why, according to Orlando Figes, was Tsar Nicholas II an ineffective ruler?
- What was his style of governance (in order to preserve his autocratic/absolutist power)?
- Why was Tsarina Alexandra a problem?
- Who was Rasputin, and why was he able to exert such a huge influence over the Tsar and Tsarina? (Tip: The Spala miracle)
- How influential did Rasputin become at the royal court?
- Why, despite such widespread opposition to Rasputin's presence at the royal court, would the Tsar not get rid of him?

Modernisation: Witte's economic policy, 1892-1903

Key questions:

1. Who was Sergei Witte and how did he try to modernise the Russian economy?
2. How successful was he?
3. Why did modernisation pose a threat to the tsarist regime?

Task 1 - Read pages 15-17 of scan and fill out a table like this one to evaluate the policies of Witte.

Policy	Arguments for	Criticisms of
State encouragement for heavy industry	By heavy industry we mean resources such as oil, iron, coal. Witte believed that because Russia was so far behind other countries, the state had to play a large role in stimulating industrial growth.	
Massive expansion of the railways		
Foreign loans, investment and expertise		
Strong rouble, adoption of gold standard		
High tariffs on foreign industrial goods		
Raised levels of taxation		

Tasks 2 and 3 (1-2 paragraphs for each is all you need)

- How successful was Witte?
- Read page 17. Why did modernisation pose a threat to the tsarist regime?

Round-up

Explain whether or not you think that a revolution was inevitable at the turn of the twentieth century.

If you think that it was, where was it likely to come from?