

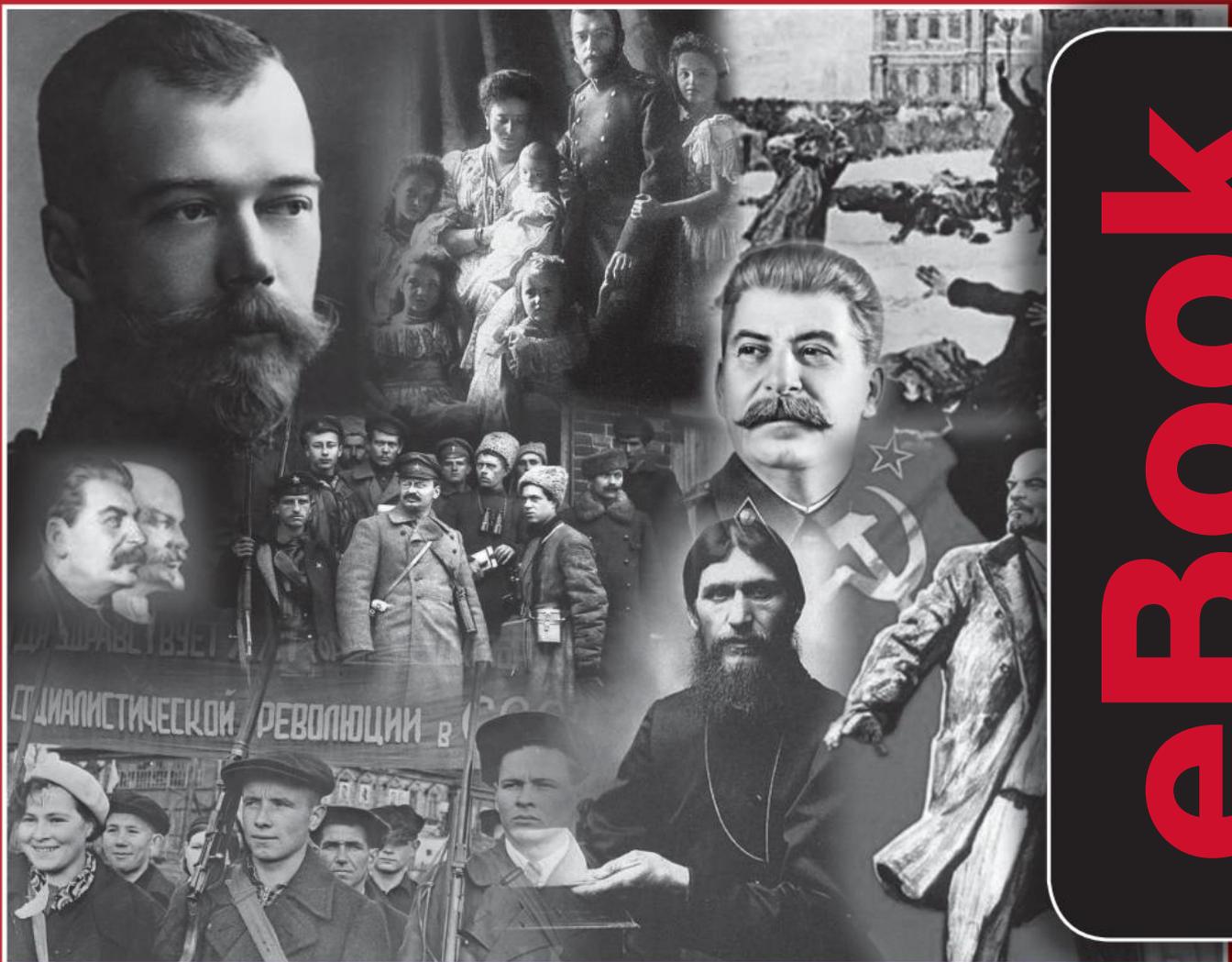
REVOLUTIONS

CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION OF OCTOBER 1917

by Ken Webb

Here it is: the factual detail, historiography, revision exercises and advice on how to write examination-style responses on the
THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION OF OCTOBER 1917



*"Everything you wanted to know about THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION OF OCTOBER 1917
but were afraid to ask."*

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by Ken Webb M.A. (Oxon), C.Ed

*“Everything you wanted to know about
‘THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION OF OCTOBER 1917’,
but were afraid to ask.”*

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About the author

Ken Webb was educated in the United Kingdom and graduated from the University of Oxford. He taught in several state schools before moving to Pymble Ladies' College where he taught Modern, Ancient and Extension History. In March 2008, he moved to Ravenswood School for Girls where he also taught the International Baccalaureate course in History. He is a member of the NSW Independent Schools Examination Committee for Modern History. He frequently lectures and runs workshops for Year 12 and teacher groups. In addition to his own work, Ken Webb has contributed to colleagues' work and to newspapers and periodicals. He has also been a consultant on various history video documentaries. Ken Webb is past NSW state winner of the "National Excellence in Teaching" award.

Over the years, Ken Webb has written a very wide range of study guides and textbooks Australia wide. Some of these include:

- *"Russia and the Soviet Union: 1917-1941"* (Nelson: A Cengage Company)
- *"The Age of Imperialism"* (Nelson: A Cengage Learning)
- *"Analysing Australian History"* (CUP)
- *"Monumental Humanities"* (CUP)
- *"Conflict in Europe 1935-1945"* (Get Smart Education)
- *"The Cold War 1945-1991"* (Get Smart Education)
- *"Power and Authority in the Modern World 1919-1946"* (Get Smart Education)
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"THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION OF OCTOBER 1917" has been specifically written for VCE History. It is one of two titles written for the VCE History. The other title is:

- *"The French Revolution of 1789"*

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Author's note

The purpose of this book – as with all titles in the “*Everything you wanted to know about... but were afraid to ask*” series – is to make life easy for students and teachers working their way through THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION OF OCTOBER 1917. It is not intended to be the final word on The Russian Revolution of October 1917; nothing beats wide-reading and going back to the primary sources!

However, neither teachers nor students always have the time for such luxuries. Teachers have several other classes to worry about, not to mention a growing multitude of administrative and bureaucratic tasks to fulfill! Students have other subjects to study, and may also be burdened with a series of major works. Thus, “Everything you want to know...” steps in to make life easy.

The principal aims of this book are to:

- provide the essential factual detail needed to understand the topic;
- provide some experience in dealing with sources;
- provide references to major modern written and visual sources;
- provide an introduction to the essence of historiographical debate
- provide ideas for approaching the types of questions that can be expected when examined on *The Russian Revolution of October 1917*.

UNITS 3 AND 4: REVOLUTIONS

Students studying “Revolutions” will develop an understanding of the complex nature of the causes and consequences of revolutions. Teachers have to select two revolutions from the list of revolutions below, one is for Unit 3 and one is for Unit 4.

- The American Revolution of 1776
- The French Revolution of 1789
- The Russian Revolution of October 1917
- The Chinese Revolution of 1949

Chapter One

The autocracy at the end of the nineteenth century

The geography of the Russian Empire

The empire which Tsar Nicholas II ruled at the end of the 19th century was vast. The Russian empire was both European and Asian, as is Russia today, and covered one sixth of the earth's land surface. It stretched from Poland in the west, to the Ural Mountains, to Siberia and to the Pacific coast: a distance of 8000 kms and an area of over 20 000 square kms. From the Arctic Ocean to the borders of British India, from central Europe to the Far East. The Russian empire crossed eleven time zones. In the west, the land is flat, part of the north European plain. However, the empire also comprised the treeless permafrost of the north, the grassland of the steppes and the vast forests of the taiga.

Martin Sixsmith was the long-time BBC correspondent in Moscow. This is how he described his experience of Russia's vastness.

*"...Siberia took me aback. The vastness of it is staggering, almost incomprehensible. Before I ever went there, Siberian friends had tried to explain the character of their native land to me, but words cannot capture it... Siberia breeds stoicism, endurance and quietude, qualities born and nurtured in a place of herculean geography, where the extremes of beauty and suffering are the stuff of daily life... Standing on the eastern edge of the Ural mountains, I find the distances hard to take in. In shades of green and yellow, the steppe stretches in all directions to the infinity of a barely discernible horizon..."*¹

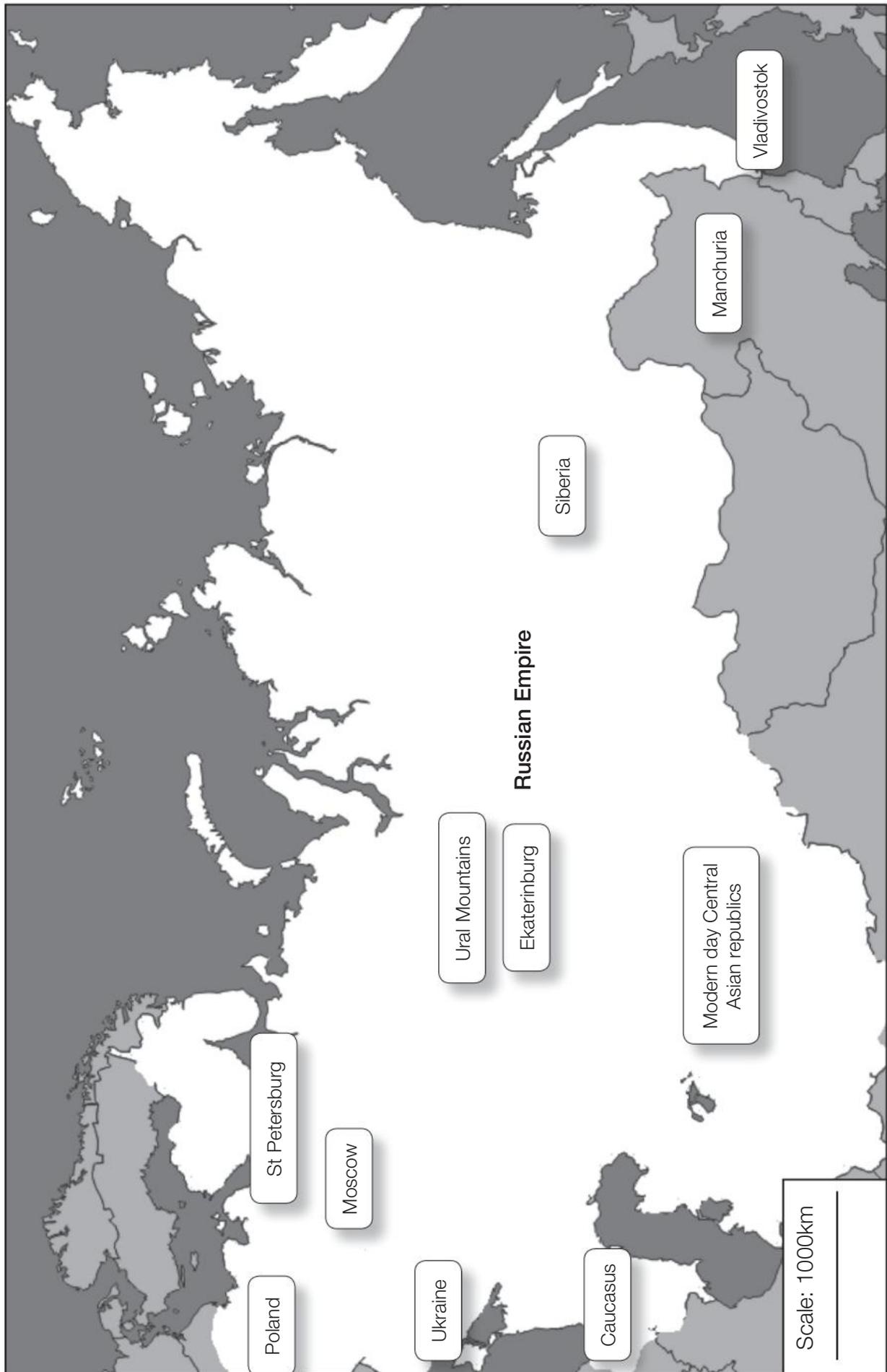
The diversity of the Russian empire

The extent of the Russian empire meant that there was obviously enormous geographical diversity as was described above. However, Russian expansion also had a major human dimension. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Russian empire encompassed a wide range of races, cultures, languages and religions. It was a truly multi-national and multi-ethnic nation.

- About 50% of the empire's population was Russian.
- However, the other 50% comprised a bewildering array of other national groups that included Poles, Finns, Ukrainians, Armenians, Azeris, Mongols, Georgians, Kazakhs.
- Russian was the official language but across the empire could be heard people speaking Polish, Uzbek, and a host of other tongues.
- The people of the Russian empire worshipped their god in Orthodox Christian and Roman Catholic churches, synagogues and mosques.
- The dress, behaviour, eating habits and culture of a middle-class St Petersburg resident bore little similarity to that of a Kazakh peasant living in central Asia.

¹ Sixsmith, M, Russia: A 1000-Year Chronicle of the Wild East, BBC Books, St Ives, 2012, p 59

Figure 1.1 The Russian Empire at the end of the nineteenth century

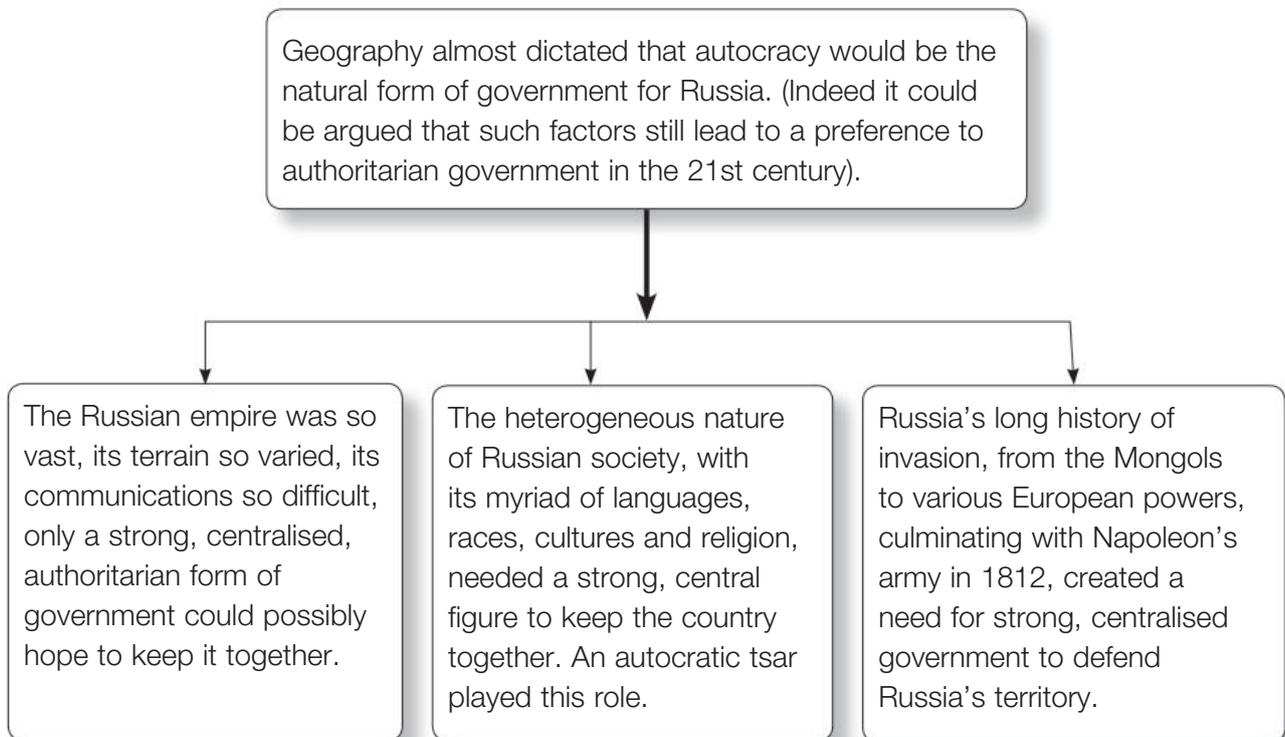


Apart from rare, brief moments such as the early years of Tsar Alexander II's reform period in the 1860s, and in the immediate aftermath of the 1905 revolution, little tolerance was granted to the cultural aspirations of the non-Russian national groups. A strict policy of Russification tended to be the norm. All national groups were forced to learn Russian and to operate in the Russian language. There was strict censorship of the non-Russian press. As education began to spread, schools were forced to operate in Russian.

- From 1906, the Polish language was banned even in the fire brigade and welfare organisations.
- During the period of Stolypin's land reforms from 1906², non-Russians were prevented from buying land and the Peasant Land Bank selected clients on the basis of their Russian nationality.

Has geography been partly responsible for a certain paranoia that perhaps exists in the Russian psyche – the ever-present fear of invasion and the insecurity that such thinking breeds? Arguably these feelings continue today in President Putin's Russia. However, it is easy to understand the origins of such national paranoia. The Tatar invasions of the 13th century all but destroyed the Kievan Rus state. From the 16th century onwards, Russia had faced western attacks across the difficult to defend north European plain from Sweden, Lithuania and Poland. At the beginning of the 19th century Napoleon led 600 000 troops into Russia and burned down Moscow. In the 20th century, Russia would be invaded twice by Germany. Figure 1.2 illustrates how geographical issues might have made autocracy the logical, perhaps even natural form of government.³

Figure 1.2 Geography and autocracy



² See Chapter Seven

³ The political aspects of autocracy will be examined more fully below.

The economics of the empire

In economic terms, at the turn of the twentieth century Russia was well behind the west. Indeed, some aspects of its economic and social structure were reminiscent of feudal Western Europe. However, in the late 19th century, Russia underwent an economic spurt and was beginning to experience its own industrial revolution.

Russian agriculture was backward and grossly inefficient.

- In 1900, 80% of the population was directly working in agriculture.
- Farming methods were primitive, scientific innovation in farming was rare and agriculture was carried out in a labour-intensive manner by ill-educated, over-taxed, often hungry peasants.
- In many parts of the empire, farming was still of a subsistent variety. In 1906, there were 5.5 million households which held two hectares of land or less.
- Yield per hectare by 1914 remained one of the lowest in the world.

Industrial production was also well behind the west. Tsar Peter the Great had introduced some industrial growth to Russia at the start of the 18th century but it was not until the last two decades of the 19th century that any real progress was made. However, Russia did have certain things working in its favour:

- Thanks to the efforts of its Finance Minister, Sergei Witte, much foreign capital flowed into Russia, particularly from France.
 - In 1897, Witte had placed the Russian rouble on the gold standard to provide financial stability and attract foreign investment.
- Russia was blessed with abundant natural resources.
- Following the “Emancipation of the Serfs” in 1861, there was a steady flow of peasants into the towns which provided an industrial labour force.

Witte enforced a policy of protectionism which shielded Russian industry from foreign competition.

Russian industrial development was mixed as the following table illustrates.

Russian industry: the positive picture	Russian industry: the negative picture
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Between 1850 and 1913, railways grew from 500 to 93 000 kms, second only to the United States. ■ In 1913, Russia was producing 9.2 million tonnes of iron and 29.5 million tonnes of coal. ■ In 1900, Russia had almost 2.5 million factory and mine workers. ■ Textiles, mining, iron and steel were all growing fast. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The key industrial indicators showed that Russia remained well behind the west. ■ In 1913, coal production was a tenth of Britain’s, a seventeenth of the United States. ■ Steel production was half of Britain’s and a third of the US. ■ Cotton textiles production was a quarter of Britain’s and a third of the United States.

Exercise 1.1 Answer the following questions in the spaces provided.

1	How big was the Russian empire in 1900?	
2	Name three different religions practised in the Russian Empire.	
3	Name three different non-Russian national groups in the empire.	
4	What term means the enforcement of the Russian language and culture onto non-Russians?	
5	What has been a constant fear throughout Russian history?	
6	Suggest three factors which might suggest autocracy as an appropriate form of government for Russia.	
7	Name Russia's finance minister who tried to stimulate foreign investment in Russian industry?	
8	What is subsistence farming?	
9	List three advantages Russian industrial growth had in the late 19th century.	
10	What was Russia's relative economic position in the world by 1914?	

The political system of tsarist Russia

From November 1894, Russia's head of state was Tsar Nicholas II. Nicholas II was a "Romanov", a member of the dynasty which had been ruling Russia since 1613. The tsar headed a system of government called "autocracy". Most European countries had been autocratic at some time in their history, but by the early 20th century, their autocracies had largely disappeared.

- Great Britain had gradually evolved in a constitutional monarchy where the power of parliament was paramount.
- France had experienced a series of revolutions to end autocracy.

- Even the autocracies of Prussia and Austria-Hungary had mellowed into a form of authoritarian government which tolerated parties and parliaments.

However, Russia stuck to autocracy. In an autocracy the tsar's powers were unlimited. Politically, he was the head of state and had the power to choose and dismiss his ministers at will, without recourse to a parliament. The tsar was also the ultimate head of Russia's large, peasant army. Autocracy did not allow any opposition to the will of the tsar.

There was also an important religious element to autocracy. The tsar ruled because this was what god wanted. In other words, the tsar ruled by "divine right". English kings had once ruled in this manner but this belief had faded many years earlier. "Divine right" meant that opposition to the tsar implied opposition to god. The head of the Russian Orthodox Church⁴ was the patriarch but the church taught submission to the tsar.

The tsar's regime allowed no opposition. There was strict censorship of newspapers and books, especially works from outside of Russia. A secret police – the okhrana - maintained close surveillance of the enemies of autocracy, real and potential. Opponents of the regime were flogged, sent to penal camps in the most inhospitable parts of the empire, or could be hanged.

The autocratic system had evolved over several centuries. Figure 1.3 explains some of the milestones in the story of the development of autocracy.

The structure of Russia society

The make-up of Russian society in 1900 stood in stark contrast to highly developed, capitalist societies such as Britain, Germany and the United States. In terms of social structure, Russia retained all the key elements of a feudal society. There were five clearly identifiable groups that comprised Russian society.

The Tsar and the ruling class

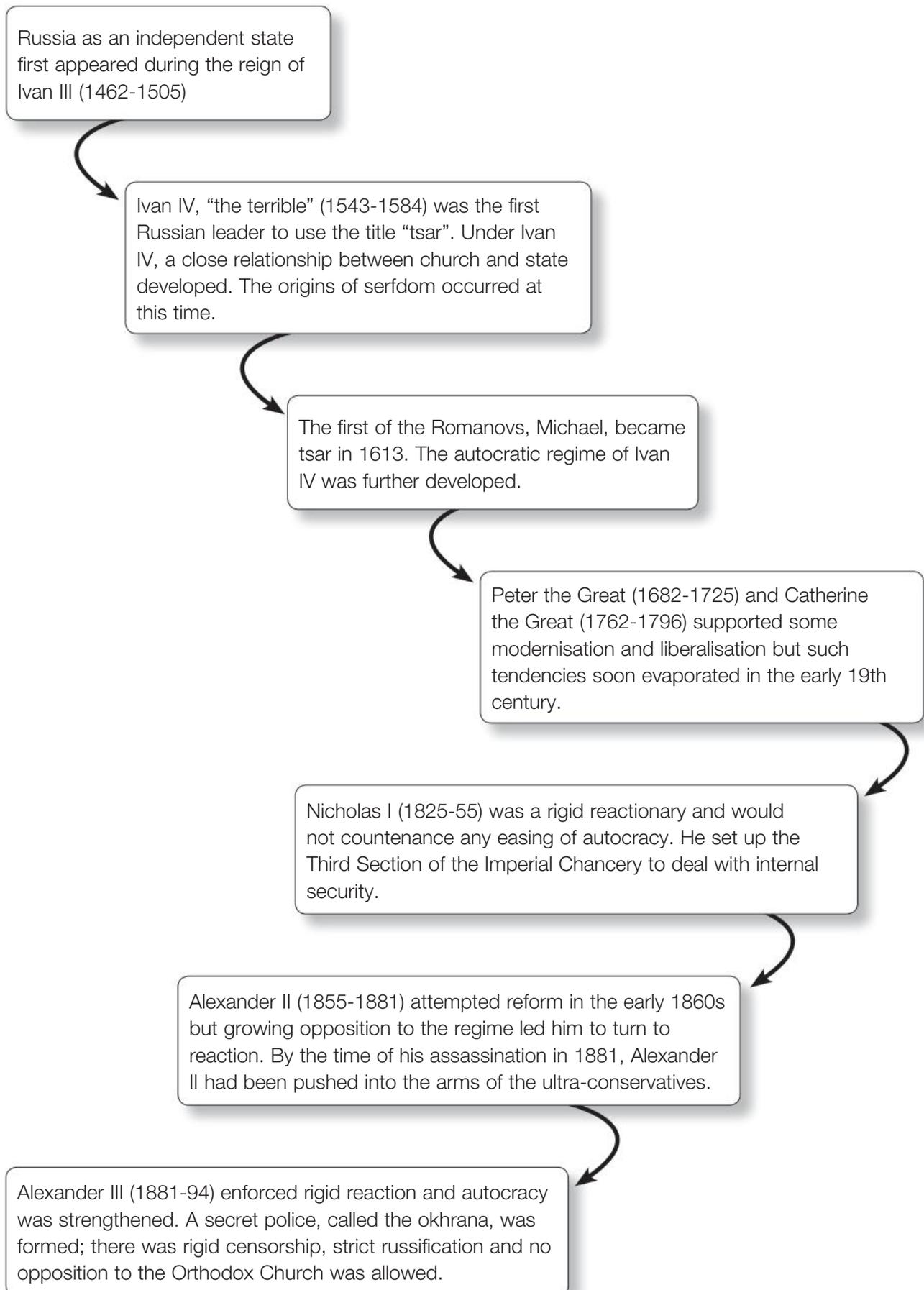
At the apex of the social system was the tsar who wielded his absolute, autocratic power. The tsar was surrounded by a small, elite group which comprised the royal family and the nation's decision makers. This group lived in great luxury, and were shielded from the poverty of the nation. Its aim was to maintain the autocracy and resist any diminution of the tsar's autocratic powers. This small group probably made up no more than 0.5% of Russia's population.

The gentry class

Below the ruling class came a small group which we might refer to as the gentry. This group comprised noble landowners, leading figures in the church and the military, and senior figures in the imperial bureaucracy. This group lived well and in comfort but they were given virtually no political power. This group made up about 10% of the total population.

⁴ See below in this chapter.

Figure 1.3 Milestones in the story of autocracy



The bourgeoisie

In a modern capitalist society such as Great Britain of the time, the bourgeoisie, or middle class, was quite a large group and was extremely influential. Members of the bourgeoisie were those who were engaged in commerce such as banking, manufacturing and commerce, or came from the professions such as the law and medicine. However, the lack of industrial development in Russia, combined with people's limited access to education, meant that the bourgeoisie was both small in number and without much influence. In Russia, at the end of the nineteenth century, this group made up about 2% of the population.

The proletariat

In a modern capitalist society such as Great Britain of the time, the proletariat, or working class, was the largest social group. This group worked in factories and mines, and tended to be concentrated in large urban centres. Russia's limited industrial development, and lack of major industrial cities, meant that this group was also small in Russia, and not surprisingly, without influence. In Russia, this group made up about 6% of the population.

The peasantry

By far the biggest social group in Russia was the peasantry. Until 1861, the vast majority of peasants had been serfs, owned by their noble lord or the state. Tsar Alexander II's Emancipation Proclamation of that year gave them their freedom. However, in 1900, most peasants still lived in poverty and were politically powerless. The peasantry comprised between 80 and 85% of Russia's population.

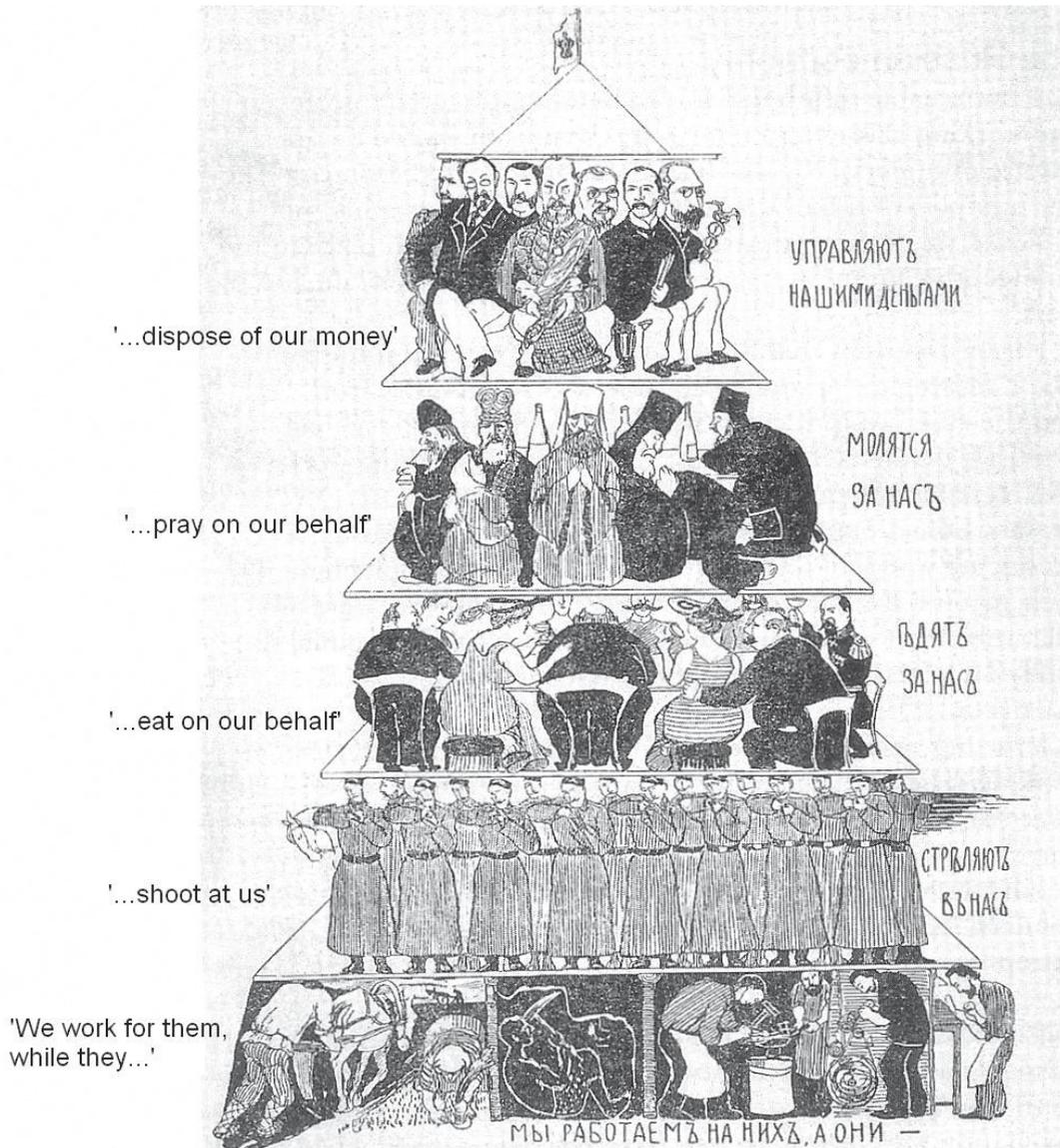
The Church

The Orthodox Church was a powerful and influential institution in tsarist Russia. The tsar ruled as a result of "divine right" and so the church strongly backed his position and the entire structure of the autocracy.

- The Russian people were told by their priests that it was their religious duty to support the tsar.
 - As the majority of the population were ill-educated, ignorant, superstitious peasants, this direction from the church did much to maintain the tsar's position.
 - Personal salvation could be achieved only through obedience to the autocracy.
- In return the tsar ensured the primacy of the Orthodox Church.
 - The leading figures of the church lived in luxury while lowly village priests were often little better off than their flock.

Opponents of the tsarist regime produced cartoons to illustrate the unequal social structure of Russia of the time. The one shown in Figure 1.4 is a variation of one of these.

Figure 1.4 Russian Social Structure in 1900



Identify the different groups in the cartoon. What point is being made in the cartoon? Do you think the cartoonist succeeds?

What do the historians have to say about the autocratic regime?

1. Orlando Figes: *Revolutionary Russia, 1891-1991*

Figes describes the situation when Nicholas II came to the throne. Leaders of the “zemstvos” (local councils) wanted to convene a national conference with the aim of involving the zemstvos more in the running of the country. There was hope that the new tsar might be open to a more collaborative form of governing following the strict, reactionary rule of his father, Alexander III. However, Nicholas II disappointed those hoping for change by saying that he would never give up the autocratic powers that he had sworn to uphold.

*“...The Tsar’s sovereignty was absolute, unlimited by laws or parliaments, by bureaucrats and public opinion, and his personal rule was guided only by his conscience before god. Nicholas believed it was his sacred mission to emulate his father’s autocratic rule...”*⁵

2. Robert Service: *Russia – From Tsarism to the Twenty-First Century*

Service explains that since the mid-17th century, the Russian Orthodox Church had experienced divisions. One sect was called The Old Believers as they opposed a new form of ritual that had been introduced in 1633. Other breakaway sects included the Khlysty and the Dukhobors. New foreign denominations, such as the Baptists, also appeared in the 19th century. Service argues the church harassed the sects and that this had a significant impact on any unifying role the church might have been able to play.

*“...This situation limited the Russian orthodox Church’s ability to act as the unifying promoter of Russian national values... The tsar and his ecclesiastical hierarchy wanted an obedient, obscurantist traditionalism from the Russian Orthodox Church, and had the authority to secure just that...”*⁶

5 Figes, O, *Revolutionary Russia, 1891-1991*, Pelican, London, 2014, p 6

6 Service, R, *Russia: From Tsarism to the Twenty-First Century*, Penguin, London, 1997, p 11

Exercise 1.2 Answer “true” or “false” for each of the following statements.

1	Russia's political system had evolved in a similar manner to that of Great Britain.	TRUE/ FALSE
2	The power of the tsar over all aspects of Russian life was effectively unlimited.	TRUE/ FALSE
3	The belief in “divine right” had disappeared in Russia long before 1900.	TRUE/ FALSE
4	The tsarist regime exercised a strict system of repression as a means of maintaining its power.	TRUE/ FALSE
5	Russia's gentry class comprised only 10% of the population but it wielded enormous political power.	TRUE/ FALSE
6	Russia's bourgeoisie had grown considerably during the years before 1900.	TRUE/ FALSE
7	Russia's lack of industrialisation meant that the size of the proletariat remained fairly small.	TRUE/ FALSE
8	The Orthodox Church strongly supported the autocratic system.	TRUE/ FALSE
9	When he came to the throne, Nicholas II was open to the idea of making changes to the autocracy.	TRUE/ FALSE
10	The Church inside Russia was not united and smaller, breakaway sects often suffered harassment.	TRUE/ FALSE

Exercise 1.3 Match the description on the left with the term on the right.

1	The tsar who introduced the Emancipation Proclamation		The Dukhobors
2	A tsar who supported the introduction of some modernisation		Ivan IV (the terrible)
3	Local councils which sought increased powers in governing		Alexander II
4	The tsar who introduced the Third Section of the Imperial Chancery		zemstvos
5	Term describing a ruler with an ultra-conservative outlook		the okhrana
6	A religious sect that broke away from the Orthodox Church		Peter the Great
7	Belief that the tsar had been chosen to rule Russia by God		Nicholas I
8	A secret police created by Tsar Alexander III		Reactionary
9	The first ruler of Russia to use the title "tsar"		Tsar Michael
10	The first of the Romanov rulers		divine right

Chapter Two

The Romanovs: Nicholas II, Alexandra, the family, Rasputin

Nicholas II

Nicholas II came to the throne in 1894 at the age of twenty-six. His father, Alexander III, died unexpectedly from nephritis at the age of forty-nine. Alexander had expected to rule for many years to come and as a result he had not properly prepared his son for the enormous task of ruling the Russian empire. Nicholas was reported to have wept on hearing news of his father's death. This was not an indication of affection for his father, as father and son had not been close. Rather it was due to Nicholas' realisation of what lay ahead for him. Nicholas is alleged to have said on hearing of Alexander's death:

*"...What is going to happen to me...to all of Russia? I am not prepared to be a tsar. I never wanted to become one. I know nothing of the business of ruling. I have no idea of how even to talk to ministers...."*¹

Figure 2.1 Tsar Nicholas II and Tsar Alexander III



NICHOLAS II (Tsar 1894-1917)



ALEXANDER III (Tsar 1881-1894)

Alexander III's father, Alexander II, was assassinated in 1881. Not surprisingly, the new tsar pursued a repressive and reactionary style of rule;

- He listened closely to his key reactionary advisor, Pobedonostev, procurator of the Holy Synod. Pobedonostev urged no concessions to those demanding a liberalisation of the regime.
- The Police Department was merged with the Judicial Department. This would speed up the process of dealing with opponents of the regime.
- A new and much tougher secret police force – the okhrana – was established.
- Conditions in the penal camps were toughened by Interior Minister Tolstoy.

¹ Massie, RK, Nicholas and Alexandra, World Books, London, 1969, p 57

- The hardening of the regime under Alexander III could be seen on other areas:
 - The policy of Russification was tightened.
 - There was increased censorship.
 - Non-Orthodox Christians, such as Lutherans, were persecuted.
 - There was a notable increase in anti-Semitic policies including state-organised pogroms and forcing Jews to live separately in ghettos or in the Pale of Settlement.

Alexander was swift to deal with opposition, demanded respect and cared nothing for personal popularity. Not only was Alexander's rule severe, he was also an imposing, giant of a man. Tall, broad-shouldered, bearded and with a booming voice, Alexander looked the sort of man who should be tsar. Russia was a giant empire beset with major social, political and economic problems. ² It arguably needed a tough ruler like Alexander III to keep it together.

Nicholas II could not have been more different. Those who knew Nicholas were all agreed that he was charming, intelligent, affable, a loving husband and a devoted family man. Quietly-spoken, slender and slight in stature, Nicholas II was a complete contrast to his domineering father. It was Russia's misfortune that at a time:

- when the empire was experiencing major social, economic and political challenges
- when terrorist violence was on the increase
- when firm, decisive leadership was required

It had a tsar who was vacillating, diffident, indecisive and likely to accept the advice he had been given by the last person to whom he spoke. Nicholas preferred spending time with his family rather than in cabinet meetings with his ministers.

Nicholas II would probably have made a very good constitutional monarch like the English king, Edward VII, his nephew by marriage. Edward VII was essentially a figurehead ruler, leaving his ministers to actually run the country. However, Nicholas II was determined to maintain the autocracy he had inherited from his father.

- He was a confirmed reactionary and had no intention of making any concession to demands for a constitution.
- He believed firmly in "divine right" and was determined to uphold the position of the Orthodox Church.
- Nicholas II gladly accepted the paternalistic image of himself as "the father of his people".
- His belief in autocracy, and his personality failings meant that Nicholas II was easily dominated by his conservative advisors such as Durnovo and Goremykin, and later Rasputin.
- Nicholas' lack of a personal secretariat and his pride in dealing with minutiae, only exacerbated the situation. ³

² See Chapters Three and Four.

³ Nicholas even did his own filing and sealed his own envelopes.

Exercise 2.1

In the left-hand column, list aspects of the leadership styles about which you have just read. Then indicate – yes or no – whether or not Alexander III and Nicholas II exhibited these. A couple of terms have been provided as an example.

Aspect of leadership style	Alexander III	Nicholas II
Decisiveness	yes	no
Belief in autocracy	yes	yes
Attention to minutiae	no	yes

Tsarina Alexandra

In November 1895, Nicholas married Princess Alix of Hesse who became Tsarina Alexandra. Theirs was a rare royal marriage of the time – they were genuinely and deeply in love with each other. A supportive wife is normally a great asset to a male political leader. However, Alexandra’s devotion to her husband would prove to be a disaster. Princess Alix had had to convert from her Lutheranism to Orthodoxy. From this moment she became obsessively religious. She was a strong-willed woman, easily able to dominate her gentle husband. She reinforced Nicholas’ belief in autocracy and divine right, and convinced him not to surrender any of his powers. Alexandra’s German heritage was resented by the Russian people. She was often referred to as “that German woman” and during World War I, many Russians believed that she was a German spy.

Figure 2.2 Nicholas, Alexandra and their children

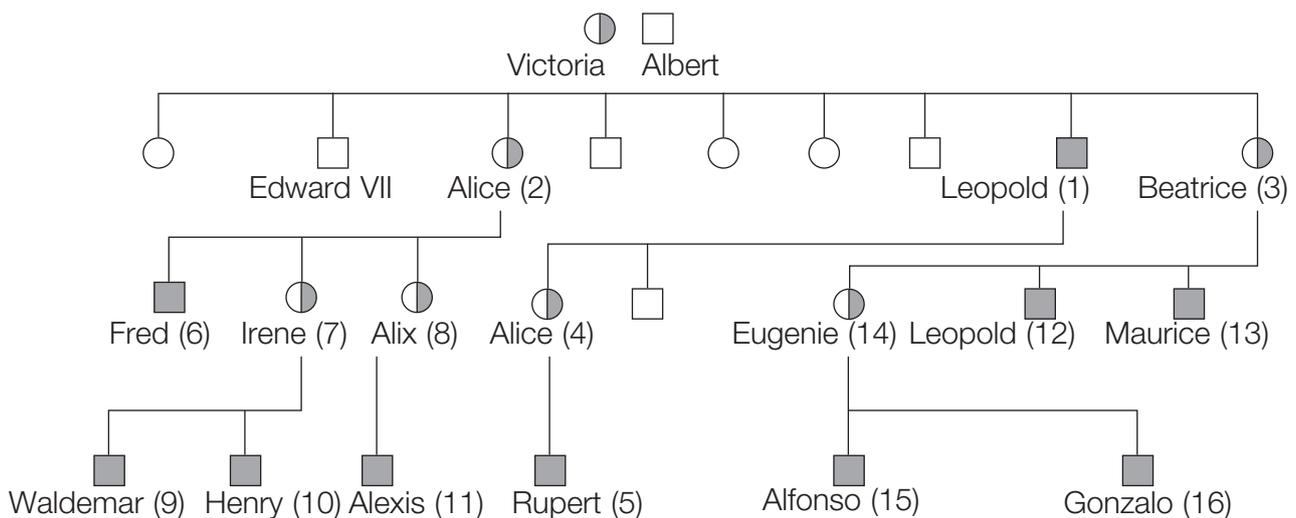


As tsar, it was taken for granted that one of Nicholas’ principal duties was to provide a male heir, for the good of the empire and the good of the dynasty. At the time, it was taken for granted that Russia’s future could be secured only with a male heir. Nicholas and Alexandra had four daughters: Olga, Tatiana, Maria and Anastasia, but a son eluded them. Alexandra believed that her failure to produce a son was a punishment from god for changing her faith. The couple finally had a son, Alexi, on 12 August, 1904.

The unbridled joy that the birth of a male heir brought was tempered by the discovery that Alexi had been born with haemophilia.

- Haemophilia is a blood disease which makes naturally occurring clotting of the blood very difficult.
 - It behaves in an inconsistent way.
 - A small cut could be life threatening, major bruising could pass and leave the sufferer unaffected.
- The disease is passed to males but comes through the female line. Figure 2.3 shows how the disease was passed on.
 - Queen Victoria was a “carrier” and passed it on to her son Leopold.
 - Her daughter Alice became a carrier.
 - Alice passed it on to her son Frederick while her daughter Alix (Tsarina Alexandra) became a carrier.
 - Alexandra passed it on to her son, the tsarevitch, Alexi.

Figure 2.3 The haemophilia line from Queen Victoria to Alexi



Rasputin ⁴

Alexandra’s religiosity became unbounded once Alexi’s disease had become diagnosed. Believing it was a punishment from god, she sought divine help to save her son. It was this that brought the royal family into contact with a wandering Siberian “holy man”, Grigori Rasputin. Such “holy men” were not unusual in Russia. They would travel the land preaching, evangelising and sometimes claimed to be able to cure the sick.

Rasputin managed to ingratiate himself in upper class St Petersburg society. Aristocratic women were particularly keen to spend time with Rasputin, either to receive spiritual nourishment or to share physical pleasures with him. He soon developed a reputation for drunkenness and debauchery.

⁴ Rasputin’s influence became most significant during the war. This will be dealt with in Chapter Nine.

Figure 2.4 Rasputin



A police report from February 1913 gave some indication of Rasputin's lifestyle.

...On leaving the prostitutes Botvinkina and Kozlova (house no 11, Sviecheny alley), Rasputin went straight to the Golovins' (an aristocratic Russian family) in the company of some others. He left there after two hours and went to the Nevsky prospect where he again picked up a prostitute and went with her to the baths on Koniushennaya street...

Despite his behaviour, Rasputin became close to the royal family, especially Alexandra. She was convinced that he was able to stop her son's bleeding on those occasions that Alexi injured himself. Her conviction meant that she would not allow criticism of Rasputin. In later years,

rumours abounded about a possible sexual relationship between the tsarina and the holy man. One of the crucial realities of history is that "it is not the truth that counts but what people believe is the truth". Alexandra "believed" that Rasputin could stop her son's bleeding. Many Russians "believed" that the tsarina and Rasputin were lovers.

What do the historians have to say about the Romanovs?

1. Sir George Buchanan: *My mission to Russia and other Diplomatic Memories*

George Buchanan was the British ambassador to Moscow between 1910 and 1917. He developed close relations with Nicholas and was able to provide a first-hand account of events at the Romanov court. He believed that though Alexandra was a good woman who truly wanted the best for her husband and her family, she was to be a disastrous influence on him due to her excessive religiosity and her unquestioned faith in the autocracy. As for Nicholas II himself:

*"...(Nicholas was) diffident and irresolute... It was his misfortune to have been born an autocrat, when he was by nature so unfitted for the role..."*⁵

2. Robert K Massie: *Nicholas and Alexandra*

Nicholas and Alexandra celebrated their coronation 26 May 1896. Massie describes what happened the day after. A traditional open-air feast was laid on for the ordinary people of Moscow by the Moscow Governor-General, Grand Duke Serge. Enamelled cups stamped with the imperial seal were to be given away – along with free beer. However, on the day, as thousands gathered, some already drunk, a rumour spread that there was not enough beer to go around. In the ensuing rush to reach the cartloads of cups and beer, women and children were knocked down, thousands were trampled underfoot and the authorities were unable to control the crowd. In the aftermath, it was

5 Buchanan, G, *My mission to Russia and other Diplomatic Memories*, Cassell and Co, London, 1923

discovered that hundreds had died and thousands had been injured. The tsar ordered the dead to be buried in separate coffins and from his own money, he gave each victim's family a thousand roubles. However, the tsar's actions would count for little.

*"...Masses of simple Russians took the disaster as an omen that the reign would be unhappy. Other Russians, more sophisticated, or more vengeful, used the tragedy to underscore the heartlessness of the autocracy and the contemptible shallowness of the young Tsar and his 'German woman'..."*⁶

Exercise 2.2

Indicate whether each of the following statements is a "fact" or an "opinion".

1	Tsar Alexander III held reactionary views and pursued a tough line with any opponents of the regime.	FACT/ OPINION
2	Tsar Alexander III was just the sort of man that a nation like Russia needed in the late nineteenth century.	FACT/ OPINION
3	Tsar Nicholas II was always going to be an ineffective tsar due to his character traits.	FACT/ OPINION
4	At the moment of his accession, Tsar Nicholas II believed that he was not ready to rule Russia.	FACT/ OPINION
5	Tsarina Alexandra was a woman who took her religious beliefs extremely seriously.	FACT/ OPINION
6	Tsarina Alexandra and Rasputin were most definitely lovers.	FACT/ OPINION
7	Alexi's haemophilia was passed on to him from his mother	FACT/ OPINION
8	There is little doubt that Rasputin was able to stop Alexi's bleeding when the tsarevitch injured himself.	FACT/ OPINION

⁶ Massie, R K, Nicholas and Alexandra, World Books, London, 1967, p 72

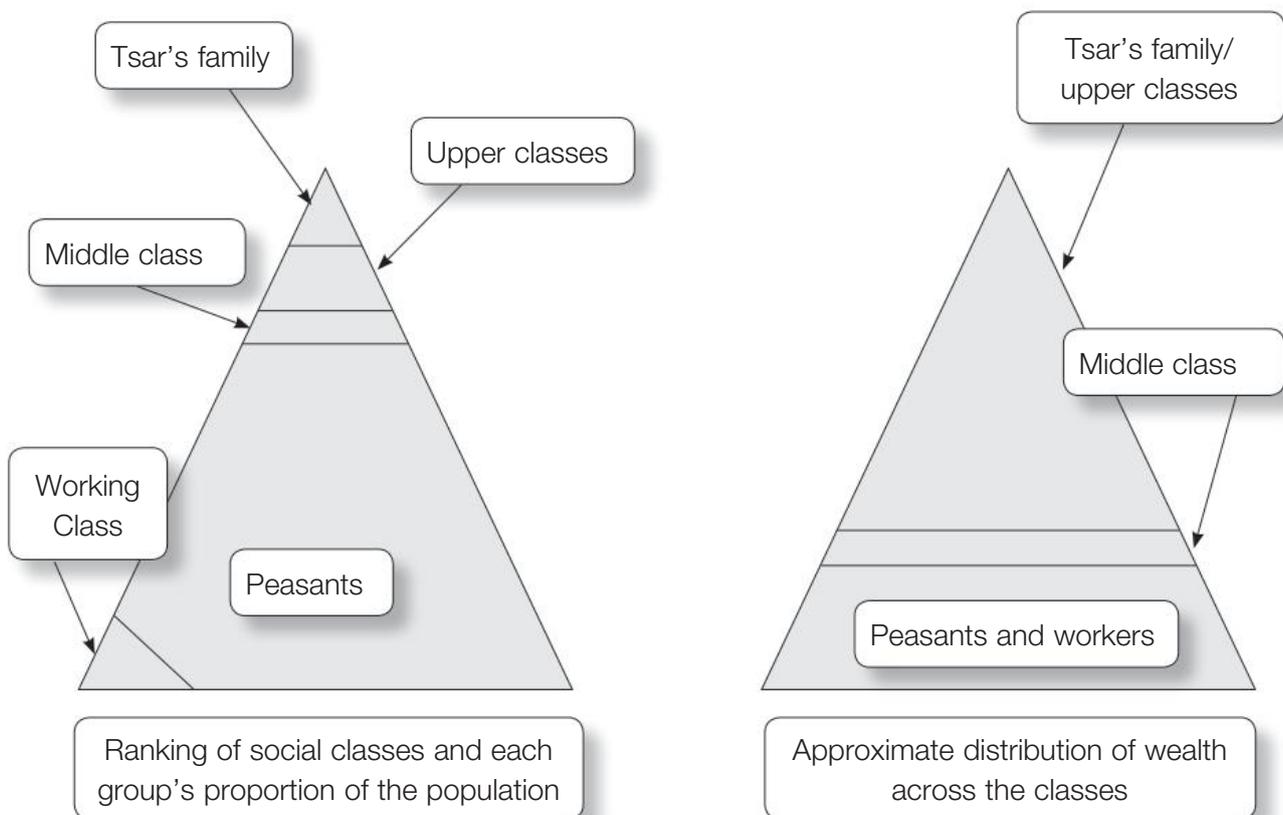
Chapter Three

Economic and social grievances

During the early years of the twentieth century, Russia was a country that seemed to be on the brink of revolution. The autocratic rule of Nicholas II would not consider any concessions for political reform. Violent terrorist activities had been a feature of Russian political life for several decades. ¹ The disastrous war with Japan would prove to be the catalyst to revolution. ²

In the background was Russia's incredibly unequal distribution of wealth and social inequality. Whether one was a destitute peasant eking out a desperate existence in the countryside or a worker slaving away in a miserable factory or mine, life was dire for most Russians at turn of the century. Figure 3.1 illustrates the gross inequality of Russian society of the time.

Figure 3.1 Russia's wealth and class system in 1900 ³



The gross inequality of Russia's distribution of wealth permeated all aspects of society. Life expectancy for workers and peasants was far below "their betters". In terms of health, educational opportunity and general living conditions, the majority of the country experienced squalor while a small minority lived in varying degrees of great comfort.

The countryside

Until 1861, the vast majority of Russia's peasants living in the countryside were serfs. They were effectively the property of the local noble lord or of the state. Tsar Alexander II's

¹ See Chapter Four.

² See Chapter Five.

³ See Chapter One for details on social structure.

Emancipation Proclamation of that year gave the serfs their freedom. However, though this action certainly added to a peasant's self-respect, it did not lead to an improvement in his living conditions.

- Advantages that the serfs had experienced before emancipation, such as rights to timber and pasture on the lord's land, were ended.
- The land that the peasants received after emancipation was often of the poorest quality which made making a living next to impossible.
 - Household serfs did not receive any land at all.
- Peasants had to pay for their small piece of land they received in the form of "redemption payments". Some peasants were still indebted in this manner at the turn of the century.
- The plots of land that peasants received were often so small that even a subsistence existence proved impossible for some.
 - In 1878 only 50% of former serfs had enough land to sustain a living and this percentage steadily declined as the rural population grew.
- Poorer peasants sometimes sold their piece of land to a richer peasant and became either a landless farm labourer or moved to the cities to find work in the new factories and mines.

Peasant revolts in the countryside were not unusual and were always suppressed with the utmost severity by the authorities. However, in the nineteenth century, such peasant opposition was the result of desperation rather than any systematic effort to challenge the regime. For all their misery, Russia's peasants remained loyal to the tsar, to whom they referred as 'the little father'. The church sustained them in their misery with the guarantee of better times to come in the next life, provided they obeyed the authorities, listened to their priests and prayed.

The cities

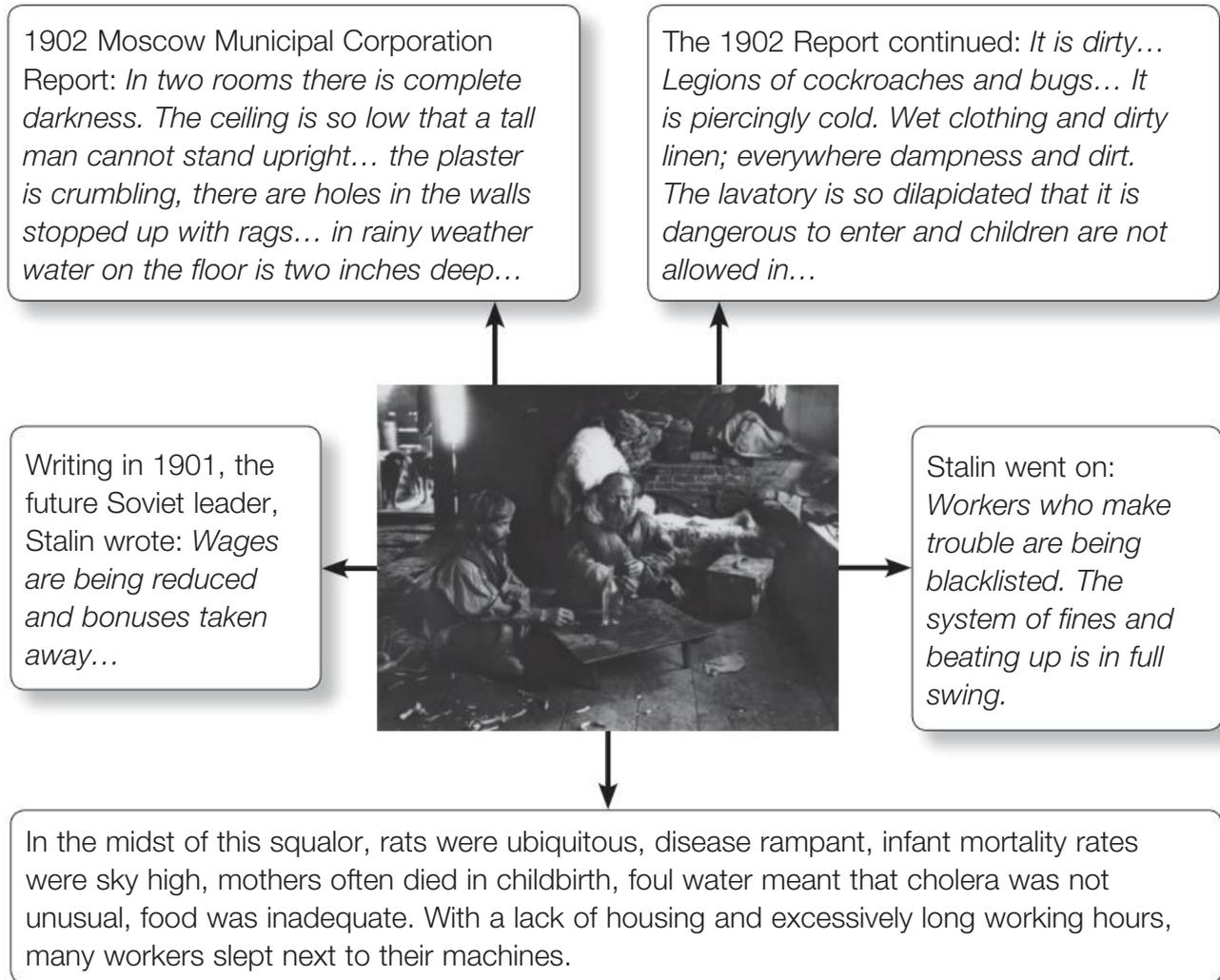
Russia began to industrialise much later than western countries such as Britain. However, by the end of the nineteenth century, the country was experiencing its own industrial revolution. Major industrial centres began to appear in some of the major cities such as St Petersburg and Moscow, and in mining areas such as the Donets Basin. As factory construction and mining began to expand, landless peasants began to move to the cities. This movement of people from the country to the cities is typical of developing nations across the world.

- It had happened in Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the conditions which the city dwellers were to experience were often diabolical.
- In his novels, Charles Dickens often described the dreadful state of life of Britain's city dwellers, so much so that the term "Dickensian" has entered the language to describe such things.

However, the conditions faced by workers in early twentieth century Russia were considerably worse than those Dickens had witnessed. These conditions are outlined in Figure 3.2. Some of the quotations come from people living in Russia at the time, some from later historians.⁴

⁴ For a detailed description of working and living conditions in Russia at this time see: Pre-revolution living standards: Russia 1888-1917 by Ekaterina Khaustova (Russian State Social University (Kursk Branch)); <http://www.ehs.org.uk/dotAsset/62d8a367-8beb-4dd0-b21f-d98b425c6ef3.pdf>

Figure 3.2 Urban living conditions in Russia around 1900



While the peasants and the workers lived in squalor, the upper classes continued to live in luxury. The extremes of wealth and privilege were no more apparent than within the armed services. Tsar Alexander II's War Minister, Milyutin, had attempted to reform the army during the reform era of the 1860s. Army service was reduced from twenty-five years to six years, brutal disciplinary methods were ended and the hiring of substitutes to avoid military service was banned. Alexander II's brother, Admiral Grand Duke Konstantin, attempted similar reform in the Russia navy.

However, it is one thing to pass laws; it is quite another to have those laws implemented. The vast majority of Russia's army and navy comprised peasants. Well into the twentieth century, they continued to experience terrible conditions. The following extract comes from a Russian soldier reminiscing about his time in the tsarist army.

...These noblemen's sons, well cared for and fragile, were capable only of decking themselves out in tunics and epaulettes... Corporal punishment was forbidden on paper only... The sailors were beaten for all kinds of reasons and often... We were compelled to eat rotten biscuits and stinking decaying meat while our officers fattened themselves with the best foods and drank the most expensive wines...

What do the historians have to say about social and economic grievances?

1. Richard Charques: *The Twilight of Imperial Russia*

Charques places much of the blame for the plight of the peasants at the turn of the twentieth century at the door of the Russian Finance Minister, Sergei Witte. Witte believed that Russia had to industrialise, and towards this goal he sought foreign investment, placed high tariffs on imports to protect Russian industry and tried to develop Russia's vast resources. In January 1897, Witte placed the Russian rouble on the Gold Standard. This helped to increase the rate of Russian industrial expansion as more foreign capital entered the country. However, these foreign loans had to be serviced and by 1900, Russia was having to pay 150 million roubles a year just on the interest on the foreign loans. To deal with this situation, Witte strove to achieve a favourable balance of trade. As a result, protective tariffs were increased and grain exports boosted. Such policies were to have a punishing effect on Russia's peasants.

*"...The price of the barest necessities in manufactured goods was thus raised to a level which put them beyond the reach of the vast majority of the peasant population, who were already penalised by the heavy indirect taxes on such things as sugar, tea, tobacco, vodka, paraffin and matches, and more grain was shipped abroad even though Russians starved..."*⁵

2. Edward Crankshaw: *The Shadow of the Winter Palace – The Drift to Revolution 1825-1917*

Crankshaw refers to Witte's grand 1902 commission to investigate peasant and worker grievances. However, the commission was slow to get off the ground, and by 1905, it had been overtaken by the events of that year.⁶ Even as Witte's commission was holding its first meetings, outbreaks of peasant violence, arson and pillage were occurring on a greater scale than had ever been seen. Crankshaw makes the point that the unrest spread into the cities and that political demands now began to appear with what had previously only been economic demands.

*"...The workers, the peasants in the towns, were on the move too... They went on strike again and again all over the land, and more and more frequently the cry for better pay, better living conditions, reduced working hours, was mingled with quite new demands – for freedom of speech, for freedom of assembly, for the overthrow of the autocracy itself. They could be intimidated now by nothing short of the Cossack's whip or the rifle bullet..."*⁷

5 Charques, R, *The Twilight of Imperial Russia*, OUP, Oxford, 1958, p 61

6 Witte's dismissal, the Russo-Japanese War and Bloody Sunday

7 Crankshaw, E, *The Shadow of the Winter Palace – The Drift to Revolution 1825-1917*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1976, pp 370-1

Exercise 3.1 Answer “true” or “false” for each of the following statements.

1	During the reign of Nicholas II, the distribution of wealth throughout Russian society roughly matched the make-up of Russian society.	TRUE/ FALSE
2	The Emancipation Proclamation of 1861 not only gave the peasants self-esteem but also improved their standard of life.	TRUE/ FALSE
3	By 1900, there were still many peasants who were paying for the land they had been granted after emancipation.	TRUE/ FALSE
4	By the end of the nineteenth century, many of the poorer peasants had become landless farm labourers or were moving into the cities to find work.	TRUE/ FALSE
5	The living and working conditions experienced by Russian workers were considerably worse than those experienced by English workers in the nineteenth century.	TRUE/ FALSE
6	Rates of infant mortality and women dying in childbirth were extremely high in turn of the century Russia.	TRUE/ FALSE
7	By 1900, conditions in the Russian military had improved considerably and army service was popular.	TRUE/ FALSE
8	Sergei’s Witte’s policy of placing the rouble on the Gold Standard did little to stimulate industrial growth.	TRUE/ FALSE
9	By 1900, Russian grain exports were increasing despite the existence of starvation in parts of the country.	TRUE/ FALSE
10	Workers’ protests in the early years of the twentieth century were always limited to economic demands.	TRUE/ FALSE

Exercise 3.2

Answer the following questions in the spaces provided.

1	Name the two social groups at the bottom of the Russian social pyramid of 1900.	
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2	List three obvious ways in which life for peasants was far inferior to that of the middle class and the gentry.	
3	Why were peasants leaving the land after Emancipation?	
4	What seems surprising about the peasants' attitude to the tsar despite the awful life they lived?	
5	What was the church's role in Russian society?	
6	Describe wages and working hours for most Russian workers.	
7	What was Grand Duke Konstantin's role in Alexander II's reform program of the 1860s?	
8	Despite its obvious benefits, what problem did foreign investment cause Russia?	
9	How did Witte try to protect Russian industrial development?	
10	What does Crankshaw suggest was the only way the authorities could control the workers?	

Chapter Four

The challenge of ideas and the role of minorities

Demands for liberal reform

The nineteenth century had seen major developments in political institutions in many countries. Since 1832, Great Britain had been gradually democratising its political system. By 1900, most working men had the vote, there was a secret ballot and property qualifications for members of parliament had been removed. France had evolved into a democratic republic following a series of sometimes, violent steps, since 1789. The American democracy had grown strongly since gaining independence from Britain at the end of the eighteenth century and was gradually overcoming the trauma of its Civil War. Even authoritarian Germany had a parliament and allowed the formation of political parties.

However, none of this was happening in Russia. The autocracy of Nicholas II was in most ways indistinguishable from that of his predecessors throughout the nineteenth century. As explained in Chapters One and Two, Nicholas swore to uphold the system that he had inherited from his father and considered that it was his god-given duty to behave this way.

The tsar's uncompromising attitude held major implications for the development of politics inside the Russian empire.

- It meant that there was no possibility of achieving political change in a peaceful, evolutionary manner.
 - In Britain the aim of those seeking political change, from the radicals of the early nineteenth century, to the suffragettes of the early twentieth century, had always been to change the system, not to overthrow it.
 - Though Britain's political evolution was not without some violence, those seeking changes to the political system – reform bill advocates, Chartists, the Independent Labour Party – sought reform not revolution.
 - A free press and the existence of basic liberties made possible peaceful political agitation.
- This was not the case in Russia. Demands for political change were seen as threats to the existence of the entire regime and were met with the sternest of repressive measures.
 - The reactionary policies of Alexander III, including the establishment of the okhrana, were continued by Nicholas II.
 - As a result, those seeking political change were driven underground.
 - It also meant that those seeking change were forced to resort to violent protests, which by the end of the nineteenth century involved frequent acts of terrorism.

- The refusal of the autocracy to even listen to those groups which wanted to bring about political change meant that those groups were led to seek unrealistic, often “romantic” solutions to Russia’s problems.
 - In a country like Britain, problems were discussed in parliament, open-air meetings, letters to the press and trade union activism.
 - Activists sought to extend the vote, improve working conditions and make parliament responsive to the people.
 - In Russia, opponents of the autocracy dabbled in romantic notions such as the establishment of rural socialism, anarchism and Marxism.

Hopes for political change were raised in the 1860s during Tsar Alexander II’s reform period. In the countryside, organs of local self-government, called zemstvos, were established. The members of each zemstvo were elected for a three year period, though the franchise greatly favoured the nobility. The zemstvo had no real executive power but it worked alongside the central administration dealing with local social issues such as schools, roads and medical services. In 1870, the system was extended to urban areas. However, later efforts to use the zemstvo system as a springboard for real political reform were strenuously rejected by the regime.

Russian revolutionary movements

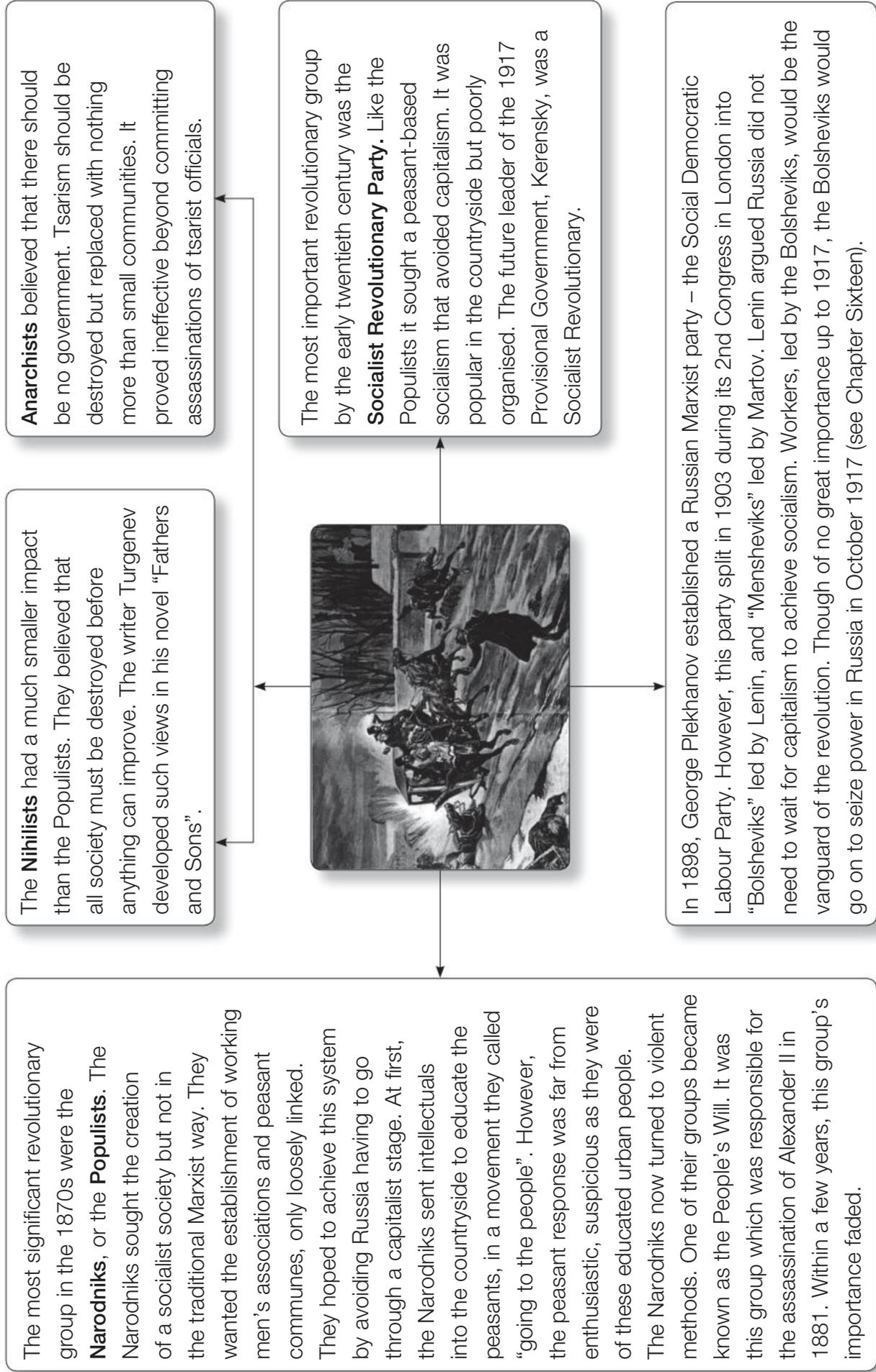
The second half of the nineteenth century saw the appearance of several violent revolutionary groups. This was the result of three key factors:

- the injustices of the tsarist system
- dissatisfaction with the reforms of the 1860s
- and as explained above, the lack of any alternative form of protest.

Though the actions of the revolutionary groups could be shocking and dramatic – in 1881 Tsar Alexander II was assassinated by the ‘People’s Will’ – the regime’s existence was never seriously threatened by them, certainly not during the oppressive years of Alexander III’s reign. Once the upheavals of 1905 had been overcome, these groups remained irritants rather than fundamental threats to the regime in the years to 1914.

There were five main revolutionary groups agitating against the autocracy: the Populists, the Socialist Revolutionary Party, the Nihilists, the Anarchists and the Social Democratic Party. Figure 4.1 summarises the key ideas and activities of these groups.

Figure 4.1 The main revolutionary groups in Russia at the turn of the century



What do the historians have to say about Demands for Political Change?

1. Richard Charques: *The Twilight of Imperial Russia*

Various Socialist Revolutionary groups coalesced in 1900 to form the Socialist Revolutionary Party. The party announced an agrarian program which argued that the land should be “social property”, held by those who worked it, but not owned by them. Holdings would be equalised. In the towns, the party argued the case for producers’ cooperatives on the lines of existing craft associations. The party’s program was probably naïve but it proved popular to peasants across Russia. One of the key Socialist Revolutionary figures, Victor Chernov, argued that in the ultimate struggle against the regime, the brunt of the fighting would fall on the shoulders of the peasantry.

*“...At the same time, it was argued, Russian capitalism was as yet so weak that the overthrow of autocracy would by itself create the immediate conditions for a socialist order of society throughout Russia. It was this simple vision of a millennial future founded upon peasant collectivism which kindled the imagination of perhaps the bravest of a rebellious younger generation...”*¹

2. David Christian: *Power and Privilege*

Christian shows that in the decade before 1905, peasant and worker unrest was on the increase. However, though neither workers nor peasants were totally immune from revolutionary propaganda, their demands and violent actions were essentially economic in nature. Successive famines in the 1890s drove some peasants to sporadic attacks on landlords’ property but their real aim was always to increase their land holdings. Workers sought lower taxes, and improved living and working conditions such as a shorter working day and higher wages.

*“...(workers) were by no means uninterested in political aims; on the contrary, they also demanded the right to organise unions and strikes, and basic civil and political rights necessary to defend their economic situation. But political rights were for most of them a means to an end, not an end in themselves...”*²

1 Charques, R, *The Twilight of Imperial Russia*, OUP, Oxford, 1958, p 69

2 Christian, D, *Power and Privilege*, Pitman, Melbourne, 1986, p 99

Exercise 4.1

Select the term on the right which best fits the person described on the left.

1	I hate all government; I want the tsarist regime destroyed so we can just live in small communities.		BOLSHEVIK
2	If we are ever going to create a new just society, we must first of all destroy everything that exists.		NARODNIK
3	I spend as much time as I can educating the peasants about how a new socialist society.		ANARCHIST
4	Despite what Marx said, I believe we can achieve socialism in Russia without having to wait for capitalism.		NIHILIST
5	I want a peasant-based socialism in the country, I believe we can bypass capitalism.		SOCIALIST REVOLUTIONARY

Exercise 4.2

Rewrite the following paragraph so that each sentence follows on logically from the one before it and consequently manages to summarise the argument laid out at the beginning of this chapter.

This included the work of the okhrana. Not only were these groups violent, they also embraced romantic and totally unrealistic notions for Russia's future. Nicholas II made it clear when he came to the throne that he had no intention of diluting his autocratic powers. Consequently, revolutionary movements were formed which often engaged in violent, terrorist activities. This meant that those agitating for change had no peaceful means of achieving their aims. As a result of this, he maintained the reactionary policies of his father, Alexander III.

The role of ethnic minorities in the Russian Empire under Nicholas II

Russia was an empire which over the course of almost a thousand years had grown to cover a sixth of the world's land surface. However, the empire was not just Russian; it was multi-national. The dominant nationality was certainly Russian but the empire Nicholas II ruled also contained a host of different nationalities with their own languages, religions, cultures and customs. Since the time of Catherine the Great in the 18th century, Russian policy towards its ethnic minorities had generally been repressive. There were occasional moments when the regime tolerated ethnic difference. There was a brief time when Tsar Alexander I gave concessions to the Poles after 1815, and Tsar Alexander II's regime behaved in a similar way during that tsar's reform period.

However, repression returned with a vengeance in Russia during the later years of Alexander II's reign and during Alexander III's rule. Any concessions that had been granted, for example to the Poles, disappeared. Russification was the official, uncompromising policy of the regime. This was the attitude of the regime to the ethnic minorities when Nicholas II became tsar, and which continued for the first ten years of his reign.

The early years of Nicholas II's reign

It is impossible to separate the role of the ethnic minorities from the government promotion of Russian nationalism. The two could not co-exist. Despite odd moments of reform, a policy of Russification was enforced upon the ethnic groups across Russia. This involved:

- the use of the Russian language in all official business
- the use of the Cyrillic alphabet rather than the Latin alphabet
- schools and universities were forced to operate in Russian
- there was widespread censorship of non-Russian literature
- the interests of the Orthodox Church were promoted and there was widespread interference in the affairs of different Christian denominations and other religions

In Western Europe, nationalism was strong in the early 20th century. However, in the west, nationalism operated differently than in Russia. In the west, nationalist fervour permeated all levels of society. Working class slum dwellers in London waved their union jacks as fervently as the upper class might extol the virtues of the British Empire. Nationalist (and imperialist) groups often operated autonomously without being controlled by the government.³

In Russia it was different. Nationalism was imposed from the top down. This does not mean that Russian peasants were totally lacking in patriotism; the enthusiasm with which they marched off to war in 1914 to defend god, tsar and mother Russia attests to that. However, from the later years of Alexander II's reign, independent nationalist action, such as the Slavic Welfare Committees in the late 1870s, were repressed. Grass-roots nationalism was stifled.

The political activist Peter Struve, writing in 1910, suggested that the government's promotion of Russification and its denial of the rights of the ethnic minorities had clear political motives.

1. He suggested that the promotion of Russification and persecution of minorities deflected attention of the masses from the failures and tensions of the tsarist system.

³ The government would of course approve of such nationalist feeling. British education certainly promoted nationalist and imperialist feeling.

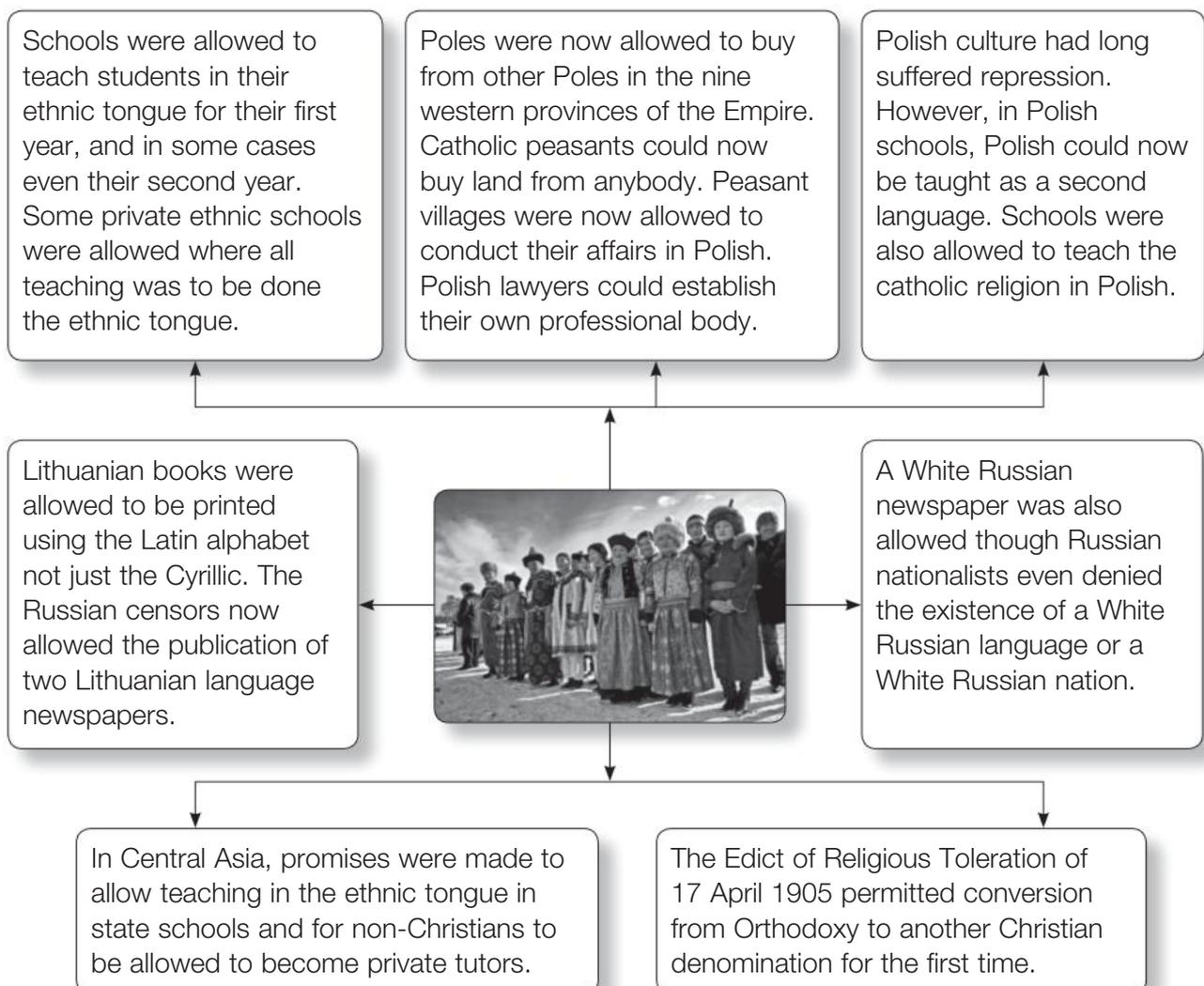
2. By playing up the largely imagined threat to “Russians” from “non-Russians”, the regime was able to justify its more hardline policies.
3. Ethnic minorities could always be used as scapegoats for the failings of the regime.
 - a. Turn the people’s attention to an easily targeted minority is a method governments have employed from time immemorial.
 - b. The rise of officially government-sponsored pogroms against Jewish communities during Nicholas’ reign can probably be seen in this light.

Struve further suggested that the weakness of Russian nationalism was because it ultimately was aimed at merely maintaining the autocracy and the privileges of those in power.

The impact of 1905

Official policy towards the nationalities softened during the traumatic events of 1905. As the tsar’s regime came under increasing pressure from those demanding change against the background of the disastrous war against Japan, the government sought cooperation of various groups, including the nationalities. The lack of sincerity in these overtures to Russia’s ethnic minorities is evident in the speed with which concessions made in 1905 were cancelled.

Figure 4.2 Concessions to the ethnic minorities



However, at least for a short time, the regime did seem to be willing to tolerate the demands of the ethnic minorities in a manner which had not been seen before. Figure 4.2 outlines some of the concessions made at this time.

After 1905

The easing of restrictions on the ethnic minorities did not last long. Once the regime had regained control of the country after the trauma of 1905 and tsarist authority had been reimposed⁴, the concessions which had been granted to the ethnic minorities began to evaporate.

The Duma electoral law of 3 June 1907 was introduced with an aim being to filter out non-Russian elements from the parliament. The law stated:

“...The Duma must be Russian in spirit, since it was created to safeguard the Russian Empire...”

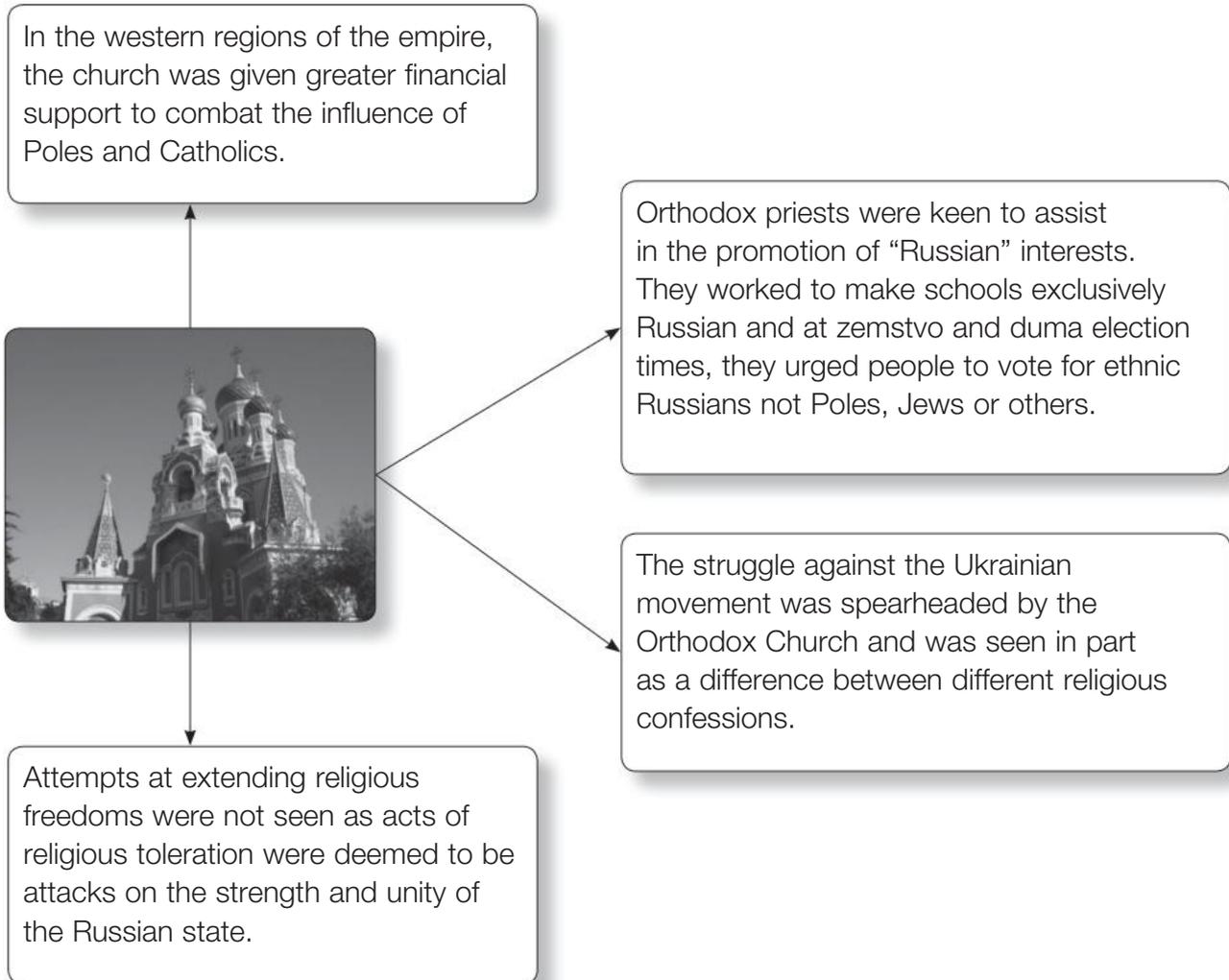
- Duma elections in border regions were suspended until the people living there had “attained a sufficient level of civil education”.
- Prime Minister Stolypin stated on several occasions that one of the purposes of modernisation was to secure the Russian element in the provinces.
- In the provinces, Russian nationalist groups began to appear demanding ‘the supremacy of the Russians and the Orthodox Church’.
- The Ukrainian language came under attack.
 - Schools in the Ukraine had to be entirely Russian in nature.
 - Local authorities tried to stop the reading of Ukrainian books.
 - Even the use of the Ukrainian language in private conversations at teacher-training seminars was forbidden.
- Restrictions were reimposed on the use of Polish and the Catholic religion could once again be taught only in Russian.
 - Catholic peasants again could no longer buy land.
 - The use of Polish was forbidden in various organisations ranging from the fire brigade to primary schools.
- Restrictions were imposed on Jewish educational institutions.

Restrictions against ethnic minorities were introduced in relation to land purchases. The Peasant Land Bank openly favoured Russian over non-Russian clients. In the Caucasus, Central Asia and Siberia, in the years before 1914 land was being taken from the local population and given to orthodox settlers.

Stolypin was keen for the Orthodox Church to play a role in dealing with the non-Russian nationalities. Figure 4.3 summarises some of the elements of this aspect of policies towards the ethnic minorities.

⁴ See Chapter Seven.

Figure 4.3 The Orthodox Church and the ethnic minorities



The situation by 1914

The regime’s policies towards the ethnic minorities and the promotion of Russification seemed to have been ineffective by 1914. Even amongst the intelligentsia of the ethnic minorities, Russification was failing as they were becoming aware of their roots. Peasants stubbornly clung to their faith and their native tongue. The regime came to rely more and more on the Orthodox Church to mobilise the people to celebrate national occasions and participate in elections.

*“...In its state-sponsored version at least, nationalism needed to lean on the crutches of the Orthodox Church and the growing prevalence of violent anti-Semitism, with the Jews, as always, providing a useful scapegoat...”*⁵

⁵ Webb, K, Russia and the Soviet Union, Nelson Cengage Learning, South Melbourne, 2015, p 46

Exercise 4.3

Answer the following questions

1	What was the traditional attitude of the tsarist regime to ethnic minorities?	
2	What was Russification?	
3	Which style of alphabet was imposed on ethnic minorities?	
4	Explain Struve's scapegoat theory.	
5	How did the events of 1905 affect policy towards ethnic minorities?	
6	Identify three concessions made to ethnic minorities in 1905.	
7	What was the aim of 3 June 1907 electoral law?	
8	To what extent was Stolypin sympathetic to ethnic minorities?	
9	What was the attitude of the Orthodox Church to Russification?	
10	How successful had policy towards ethnic minorities been by 1914?	

Chapter Five

The Russo-Japanese War

In February 1904, Russia found itself at war with Japan. Despite Japan's modernisation drive and a successful war against China a decade earlier, it was assumed that the European giant would easily defeat the Asian nation. Racist notions of superiority had much to do with this attitude. The war proved to be a catastrophe for Russia, with both its military and naval forces suffering ignominious defeats. Japan's military triumph heralded its arrival on the world stage as a great power. Internally, the consequences for Russia of its humiliation were enormous as events escalated beyond the regime's control. Throughout 1905, the very continued existence of the tsarist regime came into question. However, by early 1906, the regime had recovered.

The causes of the Russo-Japanese War

Imperialism was one of the dominant forces affecting international relations in the late nineteenth century.

*"...from the mid-century onwards, and particularly from the 1870s until the start of the First World War, the major European powers, the United States and Japan eagerly sought to build up their imperial possessions. They were motivated by a range of factors: economics, idealism, glory, national prestige and misplaced racist theory..."*¹

Russia's eastward expansion and its growing interest in Manchuria brought it into direct conflict with Japan whose domination of the Korean peninsula fostered its growing desire to also gain a foothold in Manchuria. As tensions between the two powers developed in the early years of the twentieth century, a major conflict between them seemed to be only a matter of time.

Russia's main interests in the Far East were economic and strategic. There were vast resources to be exploited in the east and strategically Russia's position would be greatly strengthened by a military presence on the Pacific.

- Russia took control of Tashkent in 1865 and Samarkand in 1868.
- By the mid-1870s, Russia had established a port at Vladivostok and had gained possession of the island of Sakhalin, north of the Japanese island of Hokkaido.
- Manchuria was a centre of interest for Russia. Manchuria was nominally a part of China but China's steady decline in the nineteenth century meant that its control of its northerly province was always problematical.
 - Russia was keen to exploit Manchuria's mineral wealth.
 - The construction of the Trans-Siberian railway saw an additional line stretch into Manchuria.
 - A Russo-Chinese bank was established.
 - Land along the Amur River and the Sea of Japan was taken.

¹ Webb, K, Age of Imperialism, Nelson Cengage, Melbourne, 2014, p 36

- In 1898, Russia annexed the Liaodong Peninsula, much to Japan's anger (see below).
- Following the Boxer Rebellion of 1900², Russia stationed a significant number of troops inside Manchuria.

Clearly, Russia had every intention of establishing a permanent presence in Manchuria. However, this clashed with plans that Japan had for the area.

- Since 1868,³ Japan had deliberately modernised and westernised its economy and society to make itself strong enough to stand up to western imperialist powers. It was determined to avoid the experience of continual humiliation which had been the fate of China in the nineteenth century.
- By the 1880s and early 1890s, Japan's main interest was in Korea. Though nominally independent, Korea was effectively a Chinese vassal state. A need for raw materials, markets and space for its ever-growing population combined to make Korea a major source of interest for Japan.
- In August 1894, hostilities broke out between Japan and China. During this Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95:
 - The Chinese fleet was almost totally destroyed at the Battle of the Yellow River.
 - A Japanese army entered Manchuria and was poised to march on the Chinese capital, Peking. China immediately sued for peace.
 - The resulting Treaty of Shimonoseki (April 1895) forced China to pay an indemnity to Japan and to cede territories including the Pescadores (Penghu) Islands, Formosa (Taiwan) and the Liaodong Peninsula.
- However, Russia, Germany and France forced Japan to hand back the Liaodong Peninsula. This humiliation was made worse when Russia itself annexed the peninsula in 1898.
- As Russian influence in Manchuria began to grow (see above), nationalist forces inside Japan were pushing for a showdown with Russia.
- In 1902, Japan signed an alliance with Great Britain.
 - Each power promised neutrality in the event of either power being involved in a war, and assistance to the other if either was facing two or more powers.
 - The combination of patriotic pressure at home and diplomatic security encouraged Japan to remove the Russians once and for all.
- Talks between Russia and Japan broke down in early 1904.
 - On 6 February, Japan broke off diplomatic relations with Russia.
 - On 8 February, Japanese forces attacked the Russian base at Port Arthur.
 - The Russo-Japanese War had begun.

² A rising against the ruling Chinese dynasty metamorphosed into the violent Boxer Rebellion against foreign interests. It was eventually put down by combined foreign armies. The episode further weakened China.

³ The period known as the Meiji Restoration.

Figure 5.1 The Russo-Japanese War 1904-05



The course of the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-05

Figure 5.2 The course of the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-05

On 8 February 1904, Japan attacked the Russian naval base of Port Arthur. There was no formal declaration of war. Port Arthur was placed under siege which would last for ten months.

Between April and September, Russian forces suffered a series of defeats at the Yalu River (April), the Battle of Liaoyang (September), the Battle of Shaho (October 1904).

In January 1905, Japanese forces finally captured Port Arthur.

In March, a Russian army of 320 000 suffered a massive defeat at Mukden. This was one of the biggest land battles in history up to this point.

In May, the Russian Baltic Fleet reached the Straits of Tsushima. After an eight month voyage, it was destroyed in less than an hour by Japanese naval forces.

The consequences of the Russo-Japanese War

1. The war was finally brought to end in September 1905 with the Treaty of Portsmouth (New Hampshire, US), following the intervention of US President Theodore Roosevelt. By the terms of the treaty:

- Japan's supremacy in Korea was recognised by Russia.
- Japan received Port Arthur, the Liaodong Peninsula (taken from it in 1895), the South Manchurian Railway and Karafuto (the southern half of Sakhalin).
- An indemnity was imposed on Russia but the tsarist regime refused to pay it. Japan did not pursue this issue. By this point, both nations had been exhausted by the war.

2. The war had major international implications.

- Japan's humiliation of a major European power added greatly to its prestige. Britain renewed its alliance with Japan in 1905 and again in 1908. During World War I, Japan would become an ally of the entente powers.
- Japan was able to receive concessions from China in Manchuria.
- In 1910 it felt confident enough to annex Korea.
- Defeat at the hands of Japan (and the subsequent 1905 Revolution) greatly weakened Russia's European position. It would take almost a decade before it felt strong enough to stand up to Germany in European affairs.⁴

3. Humiliation at the hands of Japan brought the tsarist regime to the brink of collapse. Internal tensions had been building up and terrorist activity was on the increase. Some tsarist officials had hoped that a successful war in the Far East would spark a wave of patriotic fervour and rally the people behind the tsar. Instead, Russia's disastrous performance sparked a revolution.

- The massacre of workers in St Petersburg in January 1905 (Bloody Sunday) set in train a series of events that included mass strikes and peasant rebellions across the empire.
- Worse was to come when naval and military forces mutinied. For a short time, the very existence of the tsarist regime was in question.⁵

⁴ See Chapter Eight.

⁵ See Chapter Six.

What do the historians have to say about the Russo-Japanese War?

1. Adam Ulam: *Lenin and the Bolsheviks*

Ulam's study concentrates on Lenin's activities at the time of the Russo-Japanese War. However, he makes two pertinent points regarding the war and how it affected Russia. Firstly, the defeat at the hands of Japan was far more humiliating and complete than that suffered at the hands of Britain and France during the Crimean War half a century earlier. Society greeted the defeat with some indifference, suggests Ulam, but liberals and revolutionaries were 'exultant'. Ulam also comments on Russia's motive for its aggression in the Far East.

*"...It had widely been believed that the regime had embarked upon its aggressive policies in the Far East in order to offset internal pressure. "What we need is a splendid little war," the late unlamented Plehve was quoted as saying. And the Emperor had been wont to refer to the Japanese as the "little monkeys"..."*⁶

2. Orlando Figes: *Revolutionary Russia – 1891-1991*

Figes comments on the disastrous internal impact of the war. If Russia had been successful in the war, it would no doubt have been able to make some political capital out of the victory. Regimes rarely suffer from a short, victorious war. However, a war could not be conducted effectively 10 000 kms away, the army command was incompetent and thousands of Russian soldiers were massacred as they were ordered to charge entrenched artillery positions with their bayonets. A foretaste of World War I. Figes comments:

*"...Even the country's main industrialists, who had in the past relied on the state for protection, joined the chorus of criticism as they suffered from the economic dislocations of the war. So unpopular had the government become that in July 1904, when Viacheslav von Plehve, its reactionary Minister of the Interior, was blown to pieces by a terrorist bomber, there was hardly a word of public regret..."*⁷

Exercise 5.1 Place the following events in the correct chronological order.

1st event		
2nd event		
3rd event		
4th event		
5th event		
6th event		
7th event		
8th event		

The Treaty of Portsmouth
 Japan attacks Port Arthur
 Assassination of Plehve
 Russia annexes the Liaodong Peninsula
 The Battle of Tsushima
 The Battle of Mukden
 Japan captures Port Arthur
 The Treaty of Shimonoseki

⁶ Ulam, A, *Lenin and the Bolsheviks*, Fontana, London, 1969, p 289

⁷ Figes, O, *Revolutionary Russia, 1891-1991*, Pelican, London, 2014, p 33

Exercise 5.2 Answer “true” or “false” for each of the following statements.

1	Russia’s annexation of the Liaodong Peninsula in 1898 was accepted without question by the Japanese.	TRUE/ FALSE
2	Senior figures in the tsarist regime considered a short war in the Far East as a good political move.	TRUE/ FALSE
3	The signing of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902 increased Japanese confidence in dealing with Russia.	TRUE/ FALSE
4	The Japanese siege of Port Arthur lasted almost a year.	TRUE/ FALSE
5	The Russian army acquitted itself extremely well during the war and the Japanese were fortunate to win.	TRUE/ FALSE
6	A Russian force of 320 000 succeeded in overwhelming the Japanese at the Battle of Mukden.	TRUE/ FALSE
7	The naval battle of Tsushima in May 1905 lasted about an hour.	TRUE/ FALSE
8	The Japanese were eager to continue hostilities as they were unhappy with the results of the Treaty of Portsmouth.	TRUE/ FALSE
9	Despite the extent of the military defeat experienced by Russia, its internal ramifications were quite limited.	TRUE/ FALSE
10	The tsarist regime expected to achieve an easy victory against what they saw as the inferior Japanese.	TRUE/ FALSE

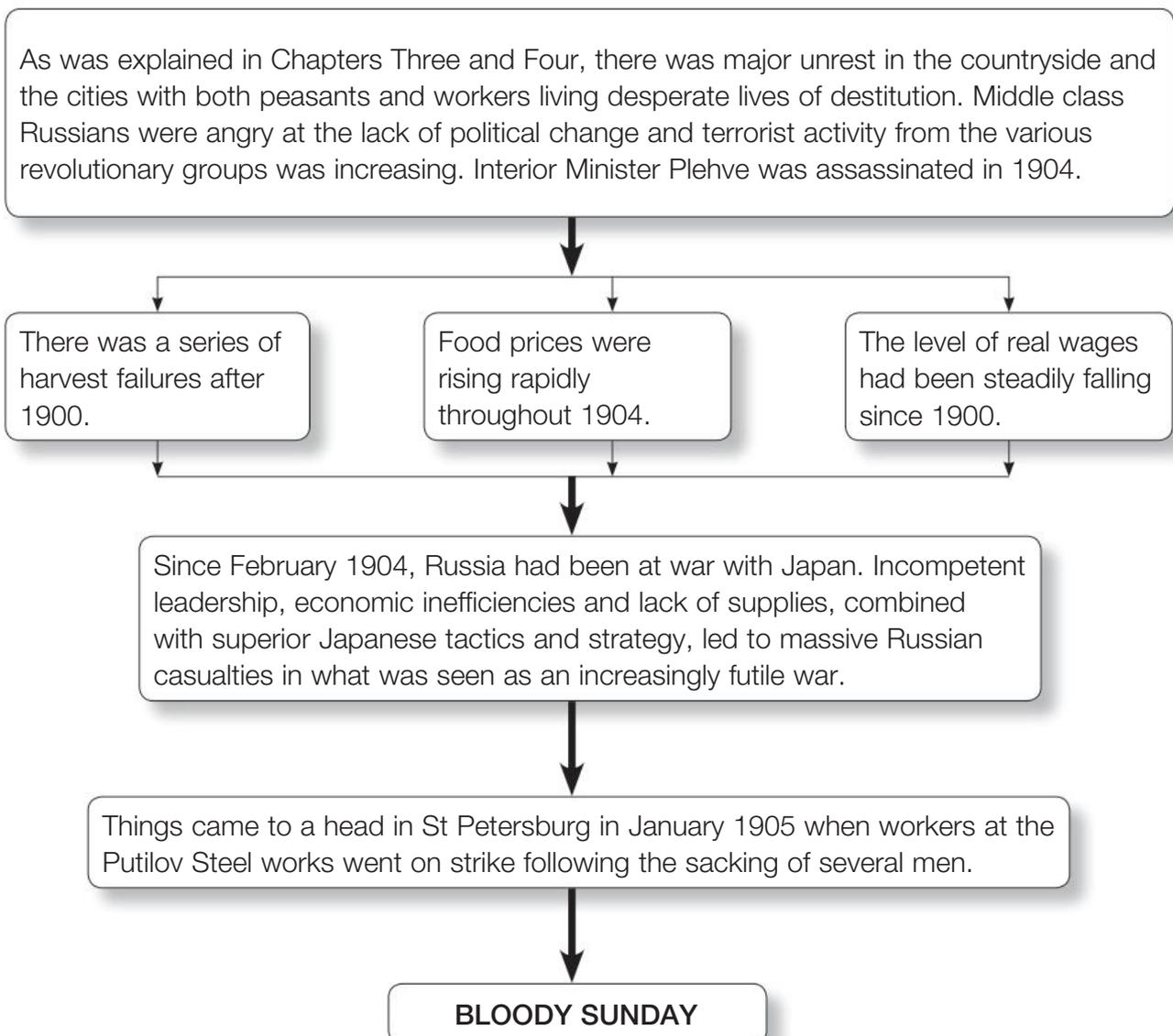
Chapter Six

1905: The revolution and the survival of the tsar

Rebellions, protests, strikes and swift repression by the authorities were nothing new in the Russia of Alexander III and his son, Nicholas II. However, what happened in 1905 was quite different. The events of “Bloody Sunday” broke the emotional bond between the tsar and his people. The level and geographical spread of violent opposition to the regime was on a scale never seen before. Most serious of all for the authorities, the military turned against the regime. At one stage, the existence of the autocracy was in question. However, actions by the tsar and his ministers later in the year had the effect of bringing the situation back under control.

As Russia became increasingly bogged down in the war with Japan, the situation inside Russia was reaching boiling point. Figure 6.1 summarises the factors leading to the explosion in Russia in 1905.

Figure 6.1 Background to the 1905 Revolution



Bloody Sunday

By early January, there were over 120 000 workers out on strike in St Petersburg. On 9 January, a protest march of about 100 000 people, including many women and children, made its way to the tsar's Winter Palace. The march was led by an Orthodox priest, Father Georgi Gapon.¹ Gapon was carrying a petition which he wished to deliver, personally, to the tsar. The contents of the petition (see below) and the behaviour of the crowd clearly showed that this was a peaceful march. The people were singing hymns and the national anthem. They were carrying pictures of the tsar and the tsarina, and many held icons in their hands.

As the crowd approached the Winter Palace, they were ordered to stop and go home by troops guarding the building. The tsar was not in residence at the time and so was unaware of the march. Faced with what they feared was an angry mob, some of those in the ranks of the soldiers panicked and fired into the crowd. The shooting continued and what had started out as a peaceful Sunday march ended up in a bloody massacre.

Some American newspapers of the time put the death toll at 2000 with 5000 wounded. Official police figures stated that 96 people had been killed and 333 wounded. The generally accepted figure is 200 dead and about 800 wounded.

- The actual figures were of course unimportant. News spread rapidly that the tsar's troops had massacred unarmed, innocent marchers.
- The tsar was not present and so of course had not given the order to fire. However, this was of no importance. It was widely "believed" that the tsar had given such an order.
- Almost overnight, in the eyes of the Russian people, the tsar had changed from being "the little father" to "Nicholas the bloody murderer".
- Most Russians were loyal to their tsar and accepted his divine status, no matter how terrible their lives were. This now ended. The sacred bond of loyalty between the tsar and his subjects was broken, and would never be restored.

What follows are some extracts from the Workers' Petition that Father Gapon wanted the tsar to read.

...We, workers and inhabitants of the city of St Petersburg, members of the various sosloviia, our wives, children and helpless old parents, have come to you, Sovereign, to seek justice and protection. We are impoverished and oppressed, we are burdened with work, and insulted. We are treated not like humans... we only get pushed deeper and deeper into a gulf of misery, ignorance and lack of rights... Sovereign, we have no strength left. We have reached the limit of our patience. We have come to that terrible moment when it is better to die than to continue unbearable sufferings...

The petition was quite a long document. It also included demands for measures that would improve the rights of the Russian people, measures to deal with the people's poverty and measures to end the oppression of workers by factory owners.

¹ Gapon was actually a double-agent, working for the government. He often reported on union activities and acted as a kind of 'agent provocateur'. Witte later admitted this but said that Gapon began to sympathise with the workers. Gapon fled to London, returning to Russia in 1906. He was hanged as a traitor by the SRs.

Exercise 6.1

Answer the following questions.

1	Is this a revolutionary document? Was the march a revolutionary act? Are the petitioners seeking the overthrow of the tsarist regime? Give reasons.
2	Sum up in a few words what the petitioners are seeking.
3	What do you think the tsar's reaction to the petition would have been had he been in the Winter Palace at the time? Give reasons.

Revolution spreads

The events of Bloody Sunday sparked violent anti-government actions across the country. The disastrous conduct of the war with Japan only added to the rising political temperature.

- By March the strike movement had spread to Moscow, the Caucasus region in southern Russia and beyond the Urals to Siberia.
- Revolutionary groups took advantage of the situation and in February Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich was assassinated by a Socialist Revolutionary.
- By April, specific political demands were being made. The first ever National Congress of Zemstvos demanded a constitution and basic civil rights.
- By August, anti-tsarist forces were beginning to become more organised. The first Conference of the Peasants Union met as did the first Congress of the Muslim Union.
- By October there were large-scale strikes in St Petersburg, Moscow and other cities.
- In October, St Petersburg workers established a workers' council, or "soviet". The Soviet had about 400 delegates representing workers from over 100 factories in the city.
 - Leon Trotsky eventually became Chairman of the St Petersburg Soviet. His charisma, oratory and organisational skills briefly threw the Soviet into the forefront of the revolutionary events of 1905.
 - Trotsky and other Soviet leaders were arrested in December and the okhrana was able to close down the Soviet.
 - However, as a symbol of working-class action, the St Petersburg Soviet remained a potent symbol. ²

However, the most critical moment for the regime came in June. At the end of the month, sailors on the Battleship Potemkin mutinied and killed some of their officers. ³ The mutineers

² It would reappear again in March 1917 (see Chapter Eleven).

³ One of the greatest films of the Russian director, Sergei Eisenstein, was "Battleship Potemkin", produced in 1925. This amazing film is often ranked

took the ship to Odessa. By early July there were major clashes in Odessa which left hundreds of people dead. The Potemkin eventually ended up in Constanza in Romania. There would be more naval mutinies in October in the Kronstadt naval base near St Petersburg, and at Vladivostok in the Far East. There were also sporadic outbreaks of unrest amongst the troops still fighting what most saw as a futile war against Japan.

The actions of Russia's sailors and soldiers were absolutely crucial. Any regime, no matter how corrupt, inefficient and repressive can maintain its power provided it has the unquestioning support of the military. ⁴ Once it appeared that the loyalty and unquestioning obedience of the armed forces could not be relied upon, the very existence of the tsarist regime was in question.

The tsar survives

Unrest would continue into 1906 with repressive measures from the regime swift to follow. By the middle of the year, the regime was in serious trouble. However, by the end of 1906, the fires of revolution had been dampened, the regime had recovered. Several factors combined to ensure the survival of the autocracy. These are summarised in Figure 6.2.

Figure 6.2 How did the tsar survive 1905?



In October the regime announced "**The October Manifesto**". The hopes raised by this document were to be quickly dashed (see Chapter Nine). However, at the time, those seeking a form of constitutional government were greatly encouraged by the tsar's move. The October Manifesto split the opposition forces. Many middle class people had been shocked by the violence of 1905 and for them the announcement of the October Manifesto meant their aims had been achieved. It was a classic tactic of political survival – divide and rule. Though unrest would continue for some months, the October Manifesto took the steam out of the revolutionary movement.

The revolutionary forces were disunited. For some the aim was full-scale revolution, for others a constitutional government, for others still simply an improvement in living conditions. The size of Russia meant that any possible geographical coordination was next to impossible. The anti-tsarist forces lacked clear leadership.

The most important factor that enabled the regime to survive was that the loyalty of the armed forces remained intact. Despite the Potemkin mutiny and other pockets of military unrest, the troops remained loyal. The regime was quick to provide improved conditions, pay increases and settle back pay claims. Once the war with Japan ended, the tsar was able to bring the troops home to deal with the domestic unrest.

⁴ among the all-time best films by critics.

⁴ The future Chinese communist leader, Mao Zedong, summed this up well when he said: "Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun".

Was there a revolution in Russia in 1905?

Nearly all books dealing with the events of 1905 refer to 'The Revolution of 1905'. However, this is a point that perhaps requires some discussion. A revolution is the successful overthrow of the entire socio-economic-political structure of a regime and its replacement by something new. This certainly happened in France after 1789, in China after 1949 and of course in Russia after October 1917. However, this did not happen in Russia in 1905. On the surface at least, the tsarist regime not only survived the trauma of 1905, but in some ways even became stronger. So, was there a revolution in 1905?

What do the historians have to say about The 1905 Revolution?

1. Martin Sixsmith: *Russia – A 1000 Year Chronicle of the Wild East*

Sixsmith suggests that the petition that was at the centre of the Bloody Sunday march was a mixed document, part humble but also with an aggressive tone. He suggests that the ambiguous nature of the petition was the result of Gapon's own ambiguous role as both leader of the people and as a government agent. He also suggests that the tsar had been advised not to consider any petition, which was academic as the tsar was not in the Winter Palace on that fateful morning. Sixsmith comments on the impact of Bloody Sunday on the Russian people.

*"...Like the marchers, the vast majority of Russians had regarded the tsar as their friend and protector; the peasants called him their "Little Father", second in veneration only to God himself. So the massacre of those who had come to seek his help was seen as a fatal betrayal..."*⁵

2. Robert Service: *Russia – From Tsarism to the Twenty-First Century*

Service explains how opposition to the regime steadily grew. Secret parties like the Social Democratic Labour Party and the Socialist Revolutionaries came into the open, liberals grouped themselves in the Constitutional –Democratic Party, and meanwhile violence and terrorism continued. From all directions the regime was "under siege". Service points out the significance of the announcement of the October Manifesto.

*"...The Manifesto drew off the steam of urban middle-class hostility and permitted Nicholas II to suppress open rebellion. Many liberals urged that the Emperor should be supported..."*⁶

5 Sixsmith, M, *Russia: A 1000 Year Chronicle of the Wild East*, BBC Books, London, 2011, p 161

6 Service, R, *Russia – From Tsarism to the Twenty-First Century*, Penguin, London, 1997, p 14

Exercise 6.2

Place the following events in the correct chronological order.

1st event		The Potemkin Mutiny
2nd event		End of the Russo-Japanese War
3rd event		Bloody Sunday
4th event		Assassination of Plehve
5th event		Closing down of the St Petersburg Soviet
6th event		Issuing of the October Manifest
7th event		Start of the Russo-Japanese War
8th event		National Congress of Zemstvos

Chapter Seven

1905-1914: Reform and repression

The October Manifesto

The announcement of the October Manifesto had an immediate impact on Russia. As was explained in Chapter Six, it had the effect of dividing the opposition and thus giving the regime a breathing space as it attempted to reassert its authority. It is easy to be cynical about the October Manifesto and the tsar's later actions; hindsight is a wonderful thing. However, at the time, the Manifesto was received with genuine enthusiasm.

*"...In St Petersburg and elsewhere there were fresh demonstrations in which men wept in hope and relief and strangers kissed in the streets. The gates of the prison-house, it seemed, were open and the people of Russia might now walk in freedom..."*¹

On paper, the October Manifesto was, indeed, a potentially transformative document for the people of Russia.

- For the first time it promised the people of Russia a series of basic rights:
 - freedom from arbitrary arrest and imprisonment without a trial
 - freedom of conscience
 - freedom of speech
 - freedom of association
- A wide franchise was promised for upcoming elections to the state Duma (parliament).
- No law would be valid without the approval of the Duma.

The issue in Russia now became: 'would the regime honour the promises made in the October Manifesto?' The government's attitude was ambiguous to say the least. On 24 November a set of provisional rules for how the press should behave was introduced which had the effect of virtually removing press censorship. However, two days later it arrested Khrustalev-Nosar, the chairman of the St Petersburg Soviet. He was succeeded by Trotsky, who was also soon arrested. The government's main concern was neither the October Manifesto nor the St Petersburg Soviet. Its main concern was the growing lawlessness across the country as peasants sought to seize land, and national groups were demanding greater autonomy.

By the end of the year, and into 1906, the government was gradually reasserting its control over the country. The principle of unchallenged autocracy had certainly been questioned by the October Manifesto. However, it remained to be seen if the regime would indeed honour its promises once the trauma of 1905 receded into the past.

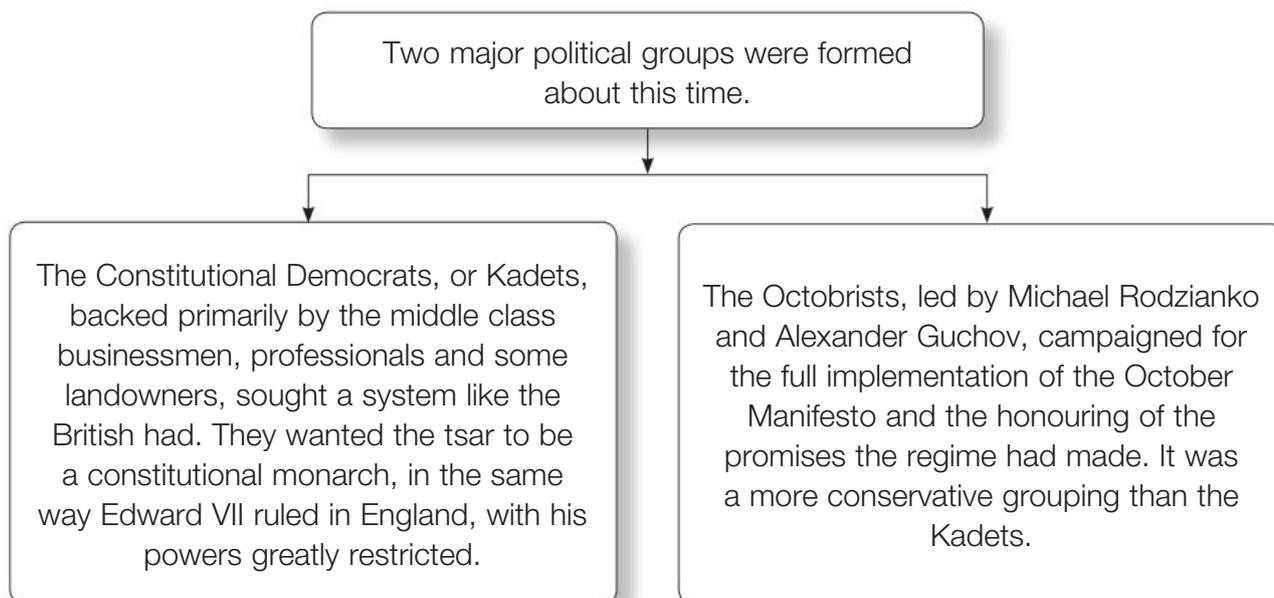
The signs were not good as a closer look at the country would reveal that nothing had in fact changed.

¹ Charques, R, *The Twilight of Imperial Russia*, OUP, Oxford, 1958, pp 129-30

- The imperial bureaucracy was back in control, its authority unchanged.
- The 'alliance' which seemed to have been formed between the educated classes and the masses quickly began to break down once the October Manifesto had been announced.
- The arbitrary power of the police (and the okhrana) remained unchecked.

Two significant political groups appeared at this time.

Figure 7.1 The Kadets and the Octobrists



The re-assertion of autocratic power

As the autocracy regained control of the country, it became clear liberal hopes for a true constitutional monarchy were to remain just that, hopes. Before any measure passed by the Duma could become law, it had to pass through the State Council and then receive the tsar's consent. The clearest signal of this came in early 1906 with the promulgation of "The Fundamental Law of 23 April".

"...To the emperor of all the Russias belongs supreme autocratic power..."

This was a fairly unambiguous statement.

The true intentions of the regime became apparent when the voting rules for the **First Duma** were announced. The weighted system clearly favoured the countryside, in the belief that rural voters would be more conservative. In the Duma, landowners would have 31% of seats, peasants 42% and the towns 27%. However, despite this, the First Duma proved to be an opposition Duma, and in May it passed a vote of no-confidence in the tsar's government, led by Goremykin. The Duma was immediately dissolved.

Shortly after the dissolution of the Duma, two hundred members went to Vyborg in Finland and called for a campaign of public disobedience. These members were denied permission to stand for the **Second Duma**. Following elections, the second Duma opened in February 1907. It proved to be even more oppositional and so, it too was dissolved in June 1907.

The franchise rules were altered so that the next Duma would be much more conservative, pliant and happy to do the regime's bidding. It now took 230 votes to elect one landowner while it took 125 000 votes to elect one worker. Consequently, the **Third Duma** (1907-1912) and the Fourth Duma (1912-17) were allowed to run their full course. The Duma ceased to cause the tsar any more trouble. ²

Nothing is inevitable, but...

The French writer, Alexis de Tocqueville once wrote: “The most dangerous moment for a bad government is when it begins to reform.”

- Was this the case for the tsar's government in 1905?
- It could be argued that without the October Manifesto, the tsar would not have survived the crisis of that revolutionary year.
- However, having given the Russia people a taste of freedom and reform, their appetite was wetted and inevitably they would demand more. The behaviour of the first two dumas certainly suggested this.
- However, it could also be argued that the advent of war in 1914 made such discussions academic.

Another fundamental issue concerning Russia at this time is the conflict that arises between a socio-economic system that is modernising, often with government backing, and a governmental system that refuses to modernise.

- After 1905, the Russian economy was undergoing significant economic changes, thanks to the efforts of Stolypin. ³
- However, the tsar made it very clear that the fundamental nature of the autocracy was not going to change. The regime made it clear that it would not allow society to become more involved in Russia's governance, yet at the same time it was being forced to become more interventionist.
- Eventually, the pressure from below to be given the opportunity and the responsibility to be a part of the nation's decision-making processes would become irresistible.
- However, it could again be argued that the coming of war made this issue merely academic. ⁴

² The Provisional Government of 1917 grew out of the Fourth Duma (see Chapter Sixteen).

³ See below.

⁴ Could a modern parallel be 21st century China? China has undergone massive modernisation and economic growth in recent decades, yet the Communist Party refuses to cede any of its power. It remains to be seen how long this situation can last.

What do the historians have to say about The Constitutional Experiment?

1. Richard Charques: *The Twilight of Imperial Russia*

Charques tells the amusing story of the end of the First Duma. Never a decisive man, Nicholas moved from demanding the closure of the Duma, to allowing the Duma to function, to suspending the dissolution decree temporarily. He eventually decided on the last course of action. Unfortunately for the tsar, Goremykin had gone to bed and instructed that he was not to be disturbed under any circumstances. As a result, he never knew of the tsar's latest decision until it was too late. On a more serious note, Charques suggests that the dissolution of the First Duma was a possible turning-point in the reign.

*"...If the emperor had in truth been willing to consent to the experiment, if he had chosen to entrust the liberals with temporary responsibility in a half-autocratic, half-constitutional order of government, Russia could scarcely have failed to travel a somewhat different road in the years before 1917..."*⁵

2. David Christian: *Power and Privilege*

Christian argues that the tsar had a chance to reassert the regime if he was able to rebuild a new ruling group with those groups that the government shared common interests. This would clearly be difficult as Russian society and economy were changing rapidly. Clearly, it needed a man of political skill and finesse. Such a man was not Nicholas II as he was incapable of thinking in such terms.

*"...For him, the central issue was to preserve what he could of the autocratic powers granted to him by God. Any thought of building coalitions through concessions was anathema..."*⁶

Exercise 7.1

Answer the following questions in the spaces provided.

1	What was the immediate popular reaction to the granting of the October Manifesto?	
2	What key things did the October Manifesto grant to the Russian people?	
3	Name the two main political groupings that were formed at the time of the October Manifesto.	

⁵ Charques, R, *The Twilight of Imperial Russia*, OUP, Oxford, 1958, p 156-7

⁶ Christian, D, *Power and Privilege*, Pitman, Melbourne, 1986, p 114

4	What had to happen before a Duma decision became law?	
5	What did the Fundamental Law of 23 April state?	
6	What happened to the first two Dumas?	
7	How long did the Third and Fourth Dumas last?	
8	Why were the Third and Fourth Dumas able to last so long?	
9	What aspects of Nicholas' ruling style were highlighted by the closure of the First Duma?	
10	What was Nicholas' fundamental aim after 1905?	

Exercise 7.2

Indicate whether each of the following statements is a "fact" or an "opinion".

1	After the announcement of the October Manifesto, many liberal elements dropped their opposition to the regime.	FACT/ OPINION
2	There was a genuine chance that the tsarist regime would evolve into a constitutional monarchy with the October Manifesto.	FACT/ OPINION
3	The Octobrists expected the full implementation of the promises contained in the October Manifesto.	FACT/ OPINION
4	The tsarist regime made it clear that it had little intention of giving up the autocratic power of the tsar.	FACT/ OPINION
5	The tsar's behaviour after the events of 1905 revealed him to be nothing more than a self-serving hypocrite.	FACT/ OPINION
6	The First Duma became an opposition Duma and was quickly dissolved.	FACT/ OPINION
7	The First Duma deserved to be dissolved due to its immature oppositional attitude as soon as it was created.	FACT/ OPINION
8	It was unlikely that the Russian people would be satisfied with the changes introduced by the October Manifesto.	FACT/ OPINION

Pyotr Stolypin

- Pyotr Stolypin was born in 1862 in Dresden.
- His father was a general in the Russian army while his mother was the daughter of a foreign minister. He was born into a family that counted major figures in the military, government and the arts among its number.
- Educated in Lithuania, Stolypin graduated in 1881 and entered St Petersburg University to study physics and mathematics.
- After university, he entered the Ministry of the Interior and until the turn of the century, Stolypin served in various remote locations.
- In 1902 he became Governor of Grodno (in modern day Belarus). In 1905 he was moved to Saratov province in southern Russia.
- In May 1906, he became Minister of the Interior. In July 1906, the tsar appointed Stolypin as Prime Minister.



Pyotr Stolypin has always been a controversial figure in Russian history. To some, he is viewed as a far-sighted reformer who understood the problems that Russia was facing as it was attempting the transition from a backward agricultural society to a modern industrial one. Stolypin's reforms are viewed as being wise and offering the tsarist state a bright future. However, to others he is seen a typical, reactionary member of the autocracy's ruling class, a man who should be best remembered for the number of people he sent to the scaffold. His assassination in 1911 is mourned by some who believe the loss of this man robbed the tsarist regime of its last real chance to reform. To others, his assassination is seen as both inevitable and deserved.⁷

Stolypin and repression

Stolypin came to power in the wake of the traumatic events of 1905. By the time of his appointment as Prime Minister in July 1906, the regime was gradually reasserting its control. However, the events of the previous year were not quickly forgotten and throughout 1906 and 1907, there were widespread acts of terrorist violence.

- 'Official' figures stated that in 1906, there were 1600 victims of SR violence, ranging from generals to minor village police. In 1907 the figure was over 2000.
- In 1906, there was rioting on board a ship of the Baltic fleet at Kronstadt and an attempted general strike in Moscow.
- In August 1906, while Stolypin was meeting officials in a villa on Aptekarsky island in the capital, two terrorists disguised as police threw a bomb into the reception room. The villa

⁷ Stolypin is a historical figure whose career is subject to much debate in Russia today. He is compared to Russia's Vladimir Putin. Both men are portrayed as tough, no-nonsense leaders but also as men of vision. It is argued that like Stolypin, Putin understands his nation's problems and is not afraid to tackle those problems head-on, forcefully if necessary.

was destroyed, twenty-seven people were killed, and many were injured, including Stolypin's daughter and two-year old son.

- During the next few months there were many more assassinations of government officials at all levels.

It was in this atmosphere that a state of emergency was declared on 19 August. Under Article 87 of the Fundamental laws, provincial governors and other legally appointed authorities were granted the power to hand out justice by means of field courts-martial. A suspect could be arrested, tried, sentenced and executed within twenty-four hours. Between September 1906 and April 1907, 683 death sentences were handed out under this system, though it is likely that the number was much higher.

By the time of his death in 1911, over a million people had been investigated either by the regular police or the okhrana, and thousands had been hanged. The hanging of suspected opponents of the regime became so associated with the person of Pyotr Stolypin that the hangman's noose became referred to as "Stolypin's necktie".

Stolypin and reform

The other side of Stolypin's time in power was his attempt to drag Russia into the twentieth century. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when Britain was undergoing its industrial revolution, there was a steady movement of people from the land into the cities and a consolidation of land holdings in the countryside. Such developments were fundamental for Britain's industrial development. Movement into the towns provided the new factories with a labour force, while land consolidation made possible increased food production to feed Britain's ever-growing population.

Stolypin realised that the same things were needed in Russia.

- He wanted the peasantry to become prosperous landowners. He wanted them to consolidate their holdings, and to allow richer, more prosperous peasants to buy the land of poorer or less efficient peasants.
 - This, he believed, would allow for more productive farming such as the increased use of machinery.
 - Landless peasants might become farm labourers or move into the growing industrial areas.
- Many peasants lived in communes or mirs, and their land was divided into separated strips.
 - This system was similar to that of Britain before its Enclosure Movement in the eighteenth century.
 - Stolypin wanted these peasants to consolidate their strips which he believed could lead to increased production.

Stolypin did have some success with his land reforms. By 1914 almost two million peasants had left the mir and had become prosperous peasants known as kulaks.⁸ Stolypin said just before his death that if Russia could have twenty years of domestic peace, Russia's

8 The kulaks were to be targeted by Stalin during the collectivisation of agriculture in the late 1920s/ 1930s.

countryside would be completely transformed. This was not to be. Stolypin was assassinated in 1911 and war came in 1914.

Stolypin also realised that if Russia was to become a modern power it needed to update its systems of education, health and taxation. Measures were introduced to spread primary education, to provide protection against old age and sickness and to make the taxation system fairer. He also tried to improve workers' conditions. However, the task was far too big and he died before real change could be achieved. It remains a matter of speculation whether or not Stolypin's reforms could have changed Russia if the war had not intervened.

The assassination of Stolypin

Despite his success in consolidating the regime and his efforts in reforming Russia, Stolypin was not a popular figure.

- The privileged classes resented his reforms.
- By 1911, Stolypin was facing determined opposition from the State Council.
 - Many members of the Council were from the extreme right and had just been appointed by the tsar.
- He was also losing the confidence of the tsar, possibly due to the malign influence of Rasputin.
 - Stolypin had given Nicholas a detailed report on the drunken and sexual activities of Rasputin.
 - For this action, Stolypin earned the undying hatred of the tsarina.

On 1st September, 1911, Pyotr Stolypin attended the Kiev opera to see a production of Rimsky-Korsakov's opera, 'Tsar Sultan'. During the second interval, Stolypin was stood in the stalls with his back to the stage. A young man approached him and fired two shots at point blank range into his back. He died in hospital four days later. The assassin was a man called Dmitry Bogrov.

Evidence suggests that the secret police was complicit in Stolypin's murder.

- Bogrov was a revolutionary turned police spy.
- He was given his ticket of admission to the opera by the Kiev police chief.
- Authorities in Kiev had been warned that an attempt on Stolypin's life might occur but no additional security measures were taken.
- Bogrov was hanged before any investigation of Stolypin's murder could take place.

What do the historians think of Stolypin?

1. Orlando Figes: *Revolutionary Russia 1891-1991*

Figes comments on the problems Stolypin had trying to impose western capitalist farming methods on a backward society like rural Russia. The commune might have been “defunct and inefficient” but it was still capable of responding to the peasants’ needs. Stolypin believed that the peasants were poor because of the commune; however, the commune existed because the peasants were poor. For people living on the edge, like Russia’s peasants, the commune provided one of the few means of helping them in their destitution, and so there was little incentive for peasants to leave it.

*“...For better or worse, the commune’s egalitarian customs had come to embody the peasantry’s basic notions of social justice and as 1917 would prove, these were ideals for which they would fight long and hard...”*⁹

2. Daniel J Mahoney: *Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn – The Ascent from Ideology*

Mahoney examines the policies of Stolypin and reaches a different conclusion to Figes about the role of the commune. Stolypin believed, argues Mahoney, that the hard-working peasant could be trusted to take advantage of the opportunities being granted to him. Stolypin rejected liberal views that the peasant would merely drink away any gains he made. Evidence of Stolypin’s success was his resettlement of peasants on vacant land east of the Urals. With some help from the government, these peasants were able to become independent and free *“from the residual tyranny of the peasant commune”*.

*“...For Stolypin, the Siberian resettlement was proof of what the “strong and sober” were capable of if they were liberated from the restraints imposed by antiquated tradition and counterproductive egalitarian passions...”*¹⁰

⁹ Figes, O, *Revolutionary Russia, 1891-1991*, Pelican, London, 2014, p 60

¹⁰ Mahoney, D, *Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn: The Ascent from Ideology*, Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham Maryland, 2001, p 82

Exercise 7.3

Answer “true” or “false” for each of the following statements.

1	Stolypin had a meteoric rise to high office and had clearly been marked out for great things early in his life.	TRUE/ FALSE
2	Historians remain greatly divided on the impact of Stolypin's work as Interior Minister and later Prime Minister.	TRUE/ FALSE
3	Stolypin believed that opponents of the regime should be accommodated and that the regime should discover what their grievances were.	TRUE/ FALSE
4	An assassination attempt was made on the life of Stolypin in August 1906, shortly after he became Prime Minister.	TRUE/ FALSE
5	Justice was handed out extremely quickly to people suspected, tried and found guilty of terrorist activity.	TRUE/ FALSE
6	Stolypin's agricultural reforms had immediate and widespread success in transforming the Russian economy.	TRUE/ FALSE
7	Stolypin concerned himself not only with land reform, but also realised that education, health and living conditions also had to be improved inside Russia.	TRUE/ FALSE
8	Stolypin was fortunate in that he also had the unquestioning support of Nicholas II.	TRUE/ FALSE
9	Arguably, what prevented Stolypin's reforms from achieving a high level of success, was a lack of time.	TRUE/ FALSE
10	There is little doubt that Stolypin's death was the result of a random act of violence.	TRUE/ FALSE

Exercise 7.4

In the film “Nicholas and Alexandra”, the role of Stolypin is played by the British actor Eric Porter. The film portrays Stolypin with a degree of accuracy. However, as with all movies, the director and the writer take some liberties with the history. View the brief section of the film that involves Stolypin, and answer the following questions.

1. How is Stolypin depicted in the film? How does the director attempt to create some humour in his depiction of Stolypin?

2. What is Alexandra’s view of Stolypin? How do you account for this?

3. What is the reaction of the tsar to Stolypin’s report on Rasputin? How does the film explain this reaction?

4. Watch the scenes relating to the assassination of Stolypin. In what ways does it agree with the history? In what ways does it not?

Chapter Eight

Russia goes to war: background and conduct

Russia and the background to World War I

(i) The Franco-Russian Alliance

The main goal of the German statesman, Bismarck ¹ was to reduce tensions in Europe and maintain the peace of the continent. In 1871, Prussia had decisively defeated France in the Franco-Prussian War, a conflict which completed the unification of Germany. Bismarck needed a stable, peaceful Europe so that the new Germany had a chance to develop and reach its potential as the leading power in Europe.

Bismarck believed that there were two things which threatened the peace of Europe after 1871. The first was the desire of a humiliated France to seek revenge against Germany. A catchcry of French politics after 1871 had been the desire for “une guerre de revanche” – a war of revenge. Bismarck was well aware of this.

France had been decisively defeated in 1871, had been forced to surrender territory to the new German state ² and to pay reparations. It then suffered the ultimate humiliation of having the new German Empire proclaimed in the Palace of Versailles. Figure 8.1 shows the crowning of William I as German Emperor.

Figure 8.1 William I being crowned Germany emperor.



However, Bismarck also knew that France was weak and would not dare take on the new German state alone. It would need an ally. As a result, Bismarck sought to ensure the diplomatic isolation of France. Once German and Austria-Hungary had become allies in 1879, Bismarck realised that the nation most likely to ally with France was Russia.

To prevent this happening, Bismarck persuaded Russia to sign The Re-Insurance Treaty with Germany in 1887.

- The basis of this agreement was that Russia and Germany would support each other if either was attacked by Austria-Hungary.

¹ Otto von Bismarck became Chancellor of Prussia in 1862. Under his leadership, Prussia fought three wars between 1864 and 1871 – against Denmark in 1864, against Austria in 1866 and against France in 1870-71. The result of these conflicts was the unification of the various German states into a German empire under the leadership of Prussia.

² Alsace-Lorraine

- Bismarck organised this treaty despite the fact that the 1879 “Dual Alliance” between Germany and Austria-Hungary stated that both those powers would support each other if either was attacked by Russia.
- Contradictory though such diplomacy obviously was:
 - it satisfied Russia
 - and more importantly pre-empted any possible alliance between Russia and France.

Thus, France remained isolated and the peace of Europe was secured.

However, in 1888, Germany had a new emperor, the young, ambitious, self-confident Kaiser Wilhelm II. By 1890, eager to assume more direct control, Wilhelm II managed to force the resignation of the experienced and skilful Bismarck. This was to prove disastrous. In 1890, the Re-Insurance was due to be renewed. Unable to understand the complexity of Bismarck’s diplomacy, the new Kaiser refused to renew the treaty. As a result, Russia now felt itself vulnerable faced as it was with the Dual Alliance along its western frontier.

With both France and Russia now isolated, the two powers began secret negotiations which culminated in the 1893 Franco-Russian Alliance. By this treaty:

- Russia and France promised to assist each in the event of either power being attacked by Germany.
- Each promised to assist the other if it was attacked by two or more powers.

Bismarck’s “nightmare” had become a reality. Should Germany ever find itself at war with France, it would face the certainty of a war on two fronts: against France in the west and against Russia in the east.

In 1904, Britain and France settled some of their colonial differences and signed “The Entente Cordiale” or friendly agreement. In 1907, Britain signed a similar agreement with Russia. Britain, France and Russia were now grouped into what became known as “The Triple Entente”.

(ii) The Balkans

The most dangerous region in Europe was the Balkans, the area which occupies south-eastern Europe.³ Bismarck understood clearly that if a European war was to break out, it would almost certainly originate here. For centuries, much of this region had been controlled by the Ottoman Empire (Turkey). However, the people who lived here, the Slavs, resented Ottoman rule and sought their independence. This ongoing struggle between the Ottoman Empire and the Slav nationalists created a volatile situation.

- It often led to open conflict. As early as the 1820s, the Greeks had fought an eight-year war of independence against Ottoman rule.
- Throughout the nineteenth century, economic and military weakness led to the gradual expulsion of the Ottomans from the Balkan region. This led to the emergence of independent Slav states, most significantly Serbia and Bulgaria.

³ Today, the Balkans comprises the nations of Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Albania, Serbia, Macedonia, Greece, Bulgaria and Romania.

- In 1875, the Slavs rose up in revolt against Ottoman rule. As the Ottoman forces were gaining the upper hand, Russia intervened on the side of the Slavs in 1877 and a year later, the Ottomans were forced to seek peace.

Why did Russia intervene in this region?

- The Balkans Slavs and the Russians shared many things.
 - They were of the same race – Slavs.
 - They shared a similar culture, similar language and they also believed in the same form of Christianity – orthodoxy.
 - As a result, Russia felt an emotional bond to the Balkan Slavs and an obligation to assist their weaker brothers.
- There were some inside Russia, known as Pan-Slavists, who had dreams of creating a giant “Pan-Slav state” which would bring the Balkan Slavs and the Russian Slavs together.
- Arguably, Russia’s main interest in the Balkans was more hard-headed - Russia wanted a warm-sea port.
 - Russia’s European ports were located in the Baltic Sea which was ice-bound for several months a year.
 - If Russia could gain a port in the Balkans – which would never ice up - this would greatly enhance the strategic value of its naval forces.

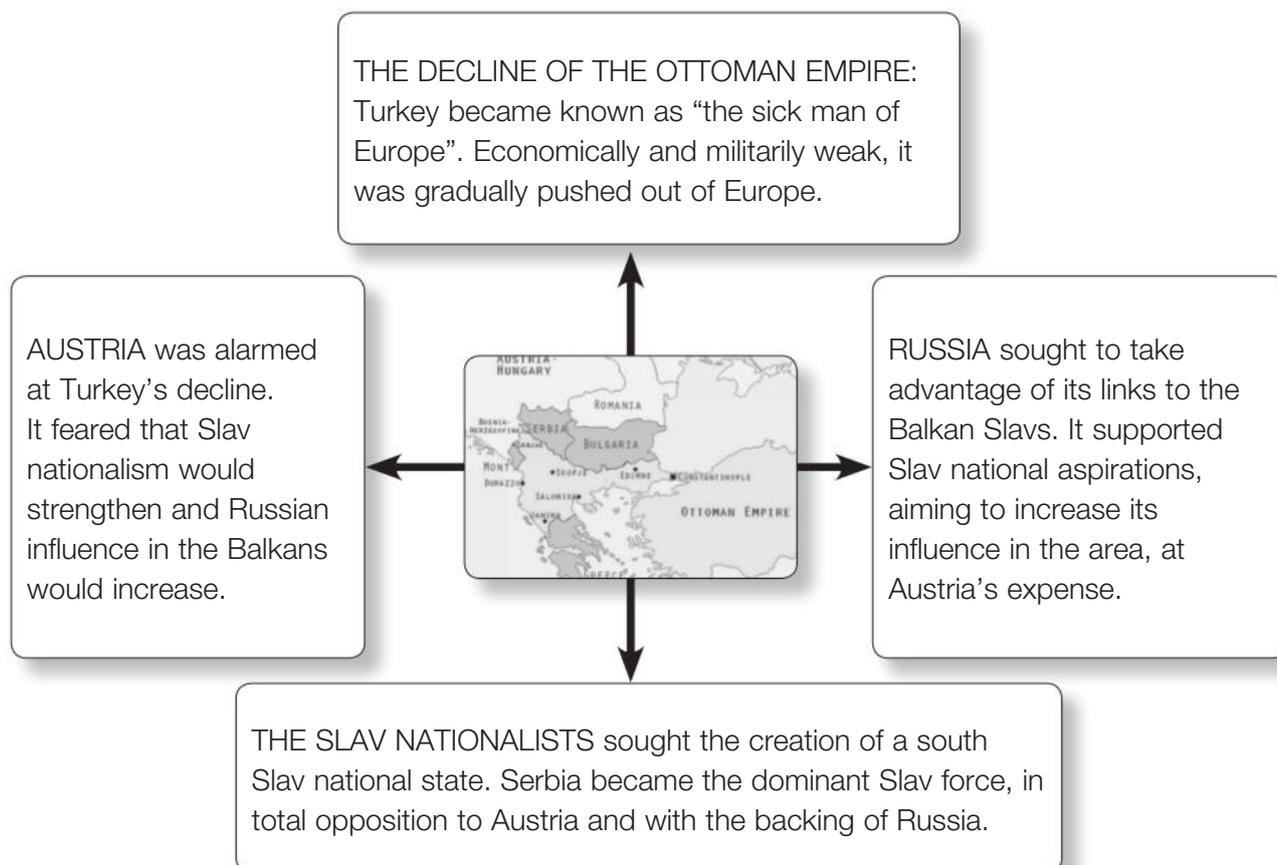
However, Russia had a major rival in the Balkans – Austria. **Why was Austria so interested in this region?**

- Austria was a multi-national empire. The Austrians were German but their empire contained Poles, Czechs, Hungarians and Slavs. If Slav nationalism was ever successful, it could result in the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian empire. ⁴ As a result, Austria viewed the rise of new Slav states, in particular Serbia, with great alarm.
- Austria’s goal was to suppress Slav nationalism both within and without its empire. However, this was likely to bring it into direct conflict with Russia.
- In 1878, Russia attempted to impose on a defeated Ottoman Empire the Treaty of San Stefano. Bismarck and other European leaders were alarmed as the impact of the treaty would have been to allow Russia its warm-sea port.
 - Bismarck called a conference at Berlin where the earlier treaty was set aside and Russia’s gains were reduced.
 - Russia was allowed some territorial gains and Austria was allowed to “administer” Bosnia-Herzegovina, though the region officially remained part of the Ottoman Empire.
 - For the time being, Bismarck had managed to defuse a dangerous region.

Bismarck had understood the dangerous nature of the Balkans region. The issues involved in the Balkans region are summarised in Figure 8.2.

⁴ This is of course what was to happen in the aftermath of World War I.

Figure 8.2 The issues in the Balkans.



In 1908, Austria outraged Slav national feeling when it annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina. Russia briefly considered intervening on behalf of the Slavs but was warned off in no uncertain terms by Germany. In 1908, Russia was reeling from the impact of the 1905 Revolution and the war with Japan. As a result, it meekly withdrew. Russia’s leaders vowed that they would not be humiliated in that manner again.

In 1912 and 1913, there were two Balkan Wars. These wars had several key results:

- Turkey was almost completely pushed out of Europe.
- Serbia almost doubled in size. Its confidence was sky high and many in Serbia were demanding the freeing of Slavs forced to live under Austrian rule, including those in Bosnia-Herzegovina.
- Austria was rightly very fearful of Serbia’s ambitions. Many in the Austrian leadership wanted to destroy Serbia “before it was too late”.
- Several Slav “patriotic” or “terrorist” groups, secretly backed by Serbian authorities, were conspiring to act against Austria.
- By 1914, Russia had recovered from its troubles a decade earlier. If a crisis in the Balkans ensued, it was not going to back down as it had in 1908.

Figure 8.3 The Balkans region in 1914



Sarajevo: 28 June 1914

The heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, was visiting Bosnia in late June to observe manoeuvres by the XV and XVI Army Corps. On 28 June, the Archduke and his wife Sophie visited the town of Sarajevo. Security for the Archduke's visit was poorly organised. His activities and his route through the town had been published well in advance. A group of Serb nationalists, including a young Gavrilo Princip, developed a plan to assassinate the Archduke. Princip and his comrades were connected to "The Black Hand", an extreme nationalist Slav organisation whose goal was to drive the Austrians out of Bosnia. It had a record of carrying out terrorist acts against its Austrian enemies.

As the Archduke's car drove through the town, there was a failed attempt to bomb it. However, the official party continued on to Sarajevo town hall to attend a function. The Archduke and his police escort left the town hall at about 11.00 am and drove along the Appelquai. At the Lateiner Bridge, the cars were supposed to hit full speed but instead slowed down to turn into Franz Josef Strasse. Once the driver had realised his mistake, he stopped and attempted to reverse. After the earlier failed attempt to kill Franz Ferdinand, Princip had become despondent at the group's failure. However, the Archduke's car stopped just where Princip was standing. Princip took out his Browning pistol and fired two shots. Archduke Ferdinand and his wife Sophie were dead by 11.30 am.

The July Crisis

Europe was shocked at the murder of Franz Ferdinand. However, terrorist violence in the Balkans was not unknown. The usual condolences were given, a state funeral was held, and Europe's leaders returned home to continue their summer holidays. Sarajevo did not mean war. However, the mood in the Austrian capital Vienna was quite different. The Austrians

believed that Serbia was behind the Archduke's murder and decided that now was the time to act against its Slav neighbour.

- 6 July – Austria sought and gained an assurance from Germany that it would support Austrian action against Serbia should Russia move to support the Serbs. This guarantee became known as “the blank cheque”.
- 18 July – Russian Foreign Minister Sazanov warned the Austrians that Russia would defend Serbia if it was attacked.
- 20 July – Austrian Foreign Minister Berchtold sent the contents of an ultimatum, that Austria intended giving to Serbia, to his minister in the Serbian capital Belgrade. Only Berchtold knew the contents of the ultimatum and its terms were tough.
- 21 July – Sazanov threatened Austria: do not send an ultimatum or else!
- 23 July – Austria delivered a ten-point ultimatum to Serbia. The intent was clear – Serbia must accept the ‘humiliating’ terms of the ultimatum or face an attack.
- 24 July – Sazanov was privately predicting a European war was imminent even before he knew the full details of the ultimatum.
- 24 July – Russian Finance Minister, Peter Bark, moved all Russian funds out of Berlin banks to Paris and St Petersburg.
- 24 July – Sazanov told Serbia that Russia would fight on Serbia's behalf if necessary. He also informed the French that Russia was mobilising its forces.
- 25 July – Serbia accepted nine of the ten points of the ultimatum.
- 26 July – Russian began its war preparations.
- 28 July – Arguing that Serbia had rejected the ultimatum, Austria declared war on Serbia.
- 29 July – Tsar Nicholas II ordered a general mobilisation. ⁵ The Tsar then changed his mind.
- 30 July – Russia finally decided on a general mobilisation. ⁶ There had been disagreements at the top level in Russia over whether to order a general or a partial mobilisation.
- 31 July – Germany ordered Russia to cease its mobilisation. Russia refused.
- 1 August – Germany declared war on Russia.
- 3 August – Germany declared war on France.
- 4 August – Following Germany's move into Belgium, Britain declared war on Germany.

⁵ Mobilisation places an army in a state of readiness for war.

⁶ A general mobilisation meant that Russia prepared its army for war along both its frontier with Germany and Austria-Hungary. Partial mobilisation would have prepared the army only along the frontier with Austria-Hungary.

What do the historians have to say about Russia goes to war?

1. Sean McMeekin: July 1914 – Countdown to War

McMeekin shows that Russian Foreign Minister Sazanov was playing a secretive game at the end of July. Following Austria's declaration of war against Serbia on 28 July, Sazanov at last admitted that Russia had started a partial mobilisation. This announcement was in fact done in secret to Russian diplomats abroad. He deliberately did not tell the British ambassador, Sir George Buchanan. In fact, Russia's forces were mobilising all across the empire from Siberia to the Black Sea to the Baltic and to Poland. McMeekin argues that Sazanov did not want the British to see Russia as an aggressor.

*"...Sazanov perceived that the key diplomatic question in July 1914 was British belligerence or neutrality. (British Foreign Minister) Grey, the cabinet, and above all the British public still had no idea that Russia was mobilising against the Central Powers (Germany and Austria), and Russia's foreign minister saw no reason to disabuse them of their ignorance..."*⁷

2. Sean McMeekin: July 1914 – Countdown to War

McMeekin is in no doubt about the responsibility that Tsar Nicholas II bore for the outbreak of war in 1914. When Nicholas signed the General Mobilisation Order on 29 July, he knew it meant war. This was clearly evident when, after receiving a telegram from the Kaiser, he rescinded the order, stating, *"I will not be responsible for this monstrous slaughter"*. This comment of the Tsar's:

*"...shows that the tsar...knew exactly what he was doing when he did it again, sixteen hours later, agonising all day about it. Sazanov knew it, which is why he told Yanushkevitch (Chief of Russian army general staff) to 'smash the telephone' so that the tsar could not change his mind again..."*⁸

Exercise 8.1

Match the description on the left with the personality on the right.

1	British ambassador to Russia		BISMARCK
2	German Chancellor to 1890		WILHELM II
3	Austrian Foreign Minister		FRANZ FERDINAND
4	The Sarajevo assassin		GEORGE BUCHANAN
5	British Foreign Secretary		BERCHTOLD
6	Heir to the Austrian throne		GREY
7	German Emperor from 1888		YANUSHKEVITCH
8	Russian Tsar in 1914		GAVRILO PRINCIP
9	Chief of Russian army general staff		NICHOLAS II

⁷ McMeekin, S, July 1914: Countdown to War, Icon, London, 2014, p 249

⁸ McMeekin, S, July 1914: Countdown to War, Icon, London, 2014, p 398

Exercise 8.2

Place the events listed on the right in the correct chronological order.

1st event		Serbia accepts nine of the ten points
2nd event		Germany declares war on Russia
3rd event		Austria annexes Bosnia-Herzegovina
4th event		Austria delivers its ultimatum
5th event		Assassination of Franz Ferdinand
6th event		Sazanov tells Serbia that Russia will support it
7th event		The Balkan Wars
8th event		The tsar orders general mobilisation
9th event		The "blank cheque"
10th event		Austria declares war on Serbia

Russia at war – *Tannenberg to Brest Litovsk*

The outbreak of war

Russia's entry into the war saw the nation moved to a "religious fervour of patriotism". The first half of 1914 had found the country more divided than it had been since 1905. However, these divisions evaporated almost overnight. People from all classes and from all parts of the empire were united in their devotion to god, tsar and country. The strike movement which was threatening to bring the country to a standstill disappeared. In a special session of the Duma on 26 July, all but the far-left groups in the Duma pledged their loyalty to the government.

The course of the war

1914

- In August, the Russians took offensive action against both Germany and Austria.
 - Russians troops invaded Galicia and soon experienced great success against the Austrian forces.
 - Within a few months, over 100 000 Austrians had been captured, along with 400 artillery guns.

Figure 8.4 Russian soldiers captured after the Battle of Tannenberg



- Two Russian armies invaded East Prussia. Russian forces outnumbered the Germans by two to one. However, a lack of coordination between the two armies allowed the Germans to strike quickly.
 - General Samsonov's 2nd Imperial Army was attacked by German forces led by Hindenburg and Ludendorff.
- A four-day battle was fought at **Tannenberg** which resulted in a major Russian defeat.
- Russia suffered 150 000 casualties, had 95 000 men captured and lost 500 artillery guns.
- In the aftermath of such a catastrophic defeat, the Russian commander, General Samsonov, committed suicide.
- In early September, General Rennenkampf's 1st Imperial Army was decisively defeated at **Massurian Lakes** and his forces retreated in disorderly fashion.
 - Russia suffered 100 000 casualties and lost several hundred artillery guns.
- By the end of 1914, Russia had lost over 1.2 million men either killed, wounded or captured.

1915

- In March, Russian forces resumed their attack in Galicia and captured the town of Przemysl, capturing 120 000 prisoners.

- In April and May, a joint German-Austrian offensive was launched.
 - Russian forces fell back in confusion, with many deserting or surrendering.
 - By the end of June, the Russians had been driven out of Austria.
- In August, German forces captured Warsaw, Novogeorgieysk and Brest Litovsk.
- In August, Tsar Nicholas II assumed command of the army, though in operational matters he usually deferred to his new Chief of Staff, General Alekseev.⁹
- German forces captured Vilna in September.
- By the end of 1915 over two million Russians had been killed or captured.

1916

- In June, General Brusilov launched a major offensive against Austria, crossing into Galicia.
 - 130 000 Austrian troops were captured and 400 artillery guns taken.
- In September, Brusilov continued his offensive. However, by now the economic inadequacies of the Russian war effort and the rapid breakdown on the home front were becoming all too apparent.
- Disillusionment, desertion and mutiny now permeated Russia's army.

1917

- In early March, the tsar was forced to abdicate. The Russian army was disintegrating. The new Provisional Government, from July led by Kerensky, decided to continue the war.
 - This decision would be the fundamental reason for the failure of the Provisional Government.¹⁰
- In July Brusilov attempted another offensive but this soon failed.
- In October, the Bolsheviks seized power, and Bolshevik leader Lenin immediately called for peace with Germany.

1918

- Peace negotiations between Germany and the new Bolshevik regime dragged on for three months. A treaty was finally signed at Brest Litovsk in March.

⁹ The full significance of the tsar's decision will be dealt with in Chapter 9.

¹⁰ See Chapters 11 and 13.

What do the historians have to say about Russia at war?

1. Richard Charques: *The Twilight of Imperial Russia*

Charques highlights the incredible burst of patriotic enthusiasm which greeted Russia's entry into the war. Even the Socialist Revolutionary, Alexander Kerensky, expressed support for the war, though he was only approving a war with a 'defensive' purpose, not one with an 'imperialistic' purpose.

*"...for the country as a whole the war in which Russia was engaged was indeed a defensive war. With 'society' in the foremost ranks, the nation was resolutely bent on victory. The patriotism of the masses in the early days of the war was wholly spontaneous..."*¹¹

2. Alexander Solzhenitsyn: *August 1914*

The Russian novelist Alexander Solzhenitsyn uses the technique of non-fiction inside a fictional framework to tell the story of Russia's great defeats at the beginning of the war at Tannenberg and Massurian Lakes. Solzhenitsyn asks the question 'when was the decisive battle that was to bring the nation to breaking point'? He makes the point that Russia would suffer worse defeats than Tannenberg, but that Tannenberg showed what the whole war would be like for Russia. He argues that the poor generalship, poor logistics and callous disregard for life were all in place in August 1914. Solzhenitsyn argues:

*"...it can be claimed that it was the first defeat which set the tone for the whole course of the war for Russia... From the very first our spirits were damped, and our self-assurance was never regained; from the very first both our enemies and our allies were disappointed by our poor showing, and with the stigma of that contempt we had to battle on until we collapsed; from the very first, too, the doubt was awakened in us: did we have the right generals, did they know what they were doing?..."*¹²

3. Ian Kershaw: *To Hell and Back – Europe 1914-1949*

Kershaw describes the Brusilov offensive that began in June 1916. He shows clearly that as a result of Brusilov's careful preparations – not always a feature of Russian military action – the Russian army was able to inflict major losses on both Austrian and German forces. So successful was Brusilov, that the Austrians had to withdraw troops from the Italian Front and German reserves had to be introduced to boost the Austrian forces. However, successful though Brusilov had been, the cost for Russia had been enormous. In the first ten days, Russian losses neared half a million and reached almost a million by the end of the campaign. Kershaw points out that Brusilov's costly success could not hide what was happening at home.

*"...The jubilation in Russia at the great victory hid the widening cracks behind the façade. Russia, as events were soon to prove, was nearing the end even faster than Austria-Hungary..."*¹³

¹¹ Charques, R, *The Twilight of Imperial Russia*, OUP, Oxford, 1958, p 212

¹² Solzhenitsyn, A, *August 1914*, Book Club Associates, London, 1972, p 399

¹³ Kershaw, I, *To Hell and Back: Europe 1914-1949*, Penguin, 2015, p 53

Exercise 8.3

Answer the following questions in the spaces provided.

1	Describe the reaction of the majority of Russians to the outbreak of war in August 1914.	
2	Why might it be argued that the reaction of the Russian people in August 1914 was surprising?	
3	Where and against whom did the Russians achieve early success?	
4	Where did the Russian army suffer major defeats in August and September 1914?	
5	Who took command of the Russian armed forces in August 1915?	
6	Who was arguably Russia's most successful general during the war?	
7	What was the condition of the Russian army in early 1917?	
8	In what fundamental way did the Provisional Government and the Bolsheviks differ about the war?	
9	Where and when did the war between Russia and Germany formally come to an end?	
10	What does Solzhenitsyn see as the fundamental significance of the Russian defeat at Tannenberg?	

Chapter Nine

The economic and political impact of the war

(A) The economic impact of the war

Napoleon Bonaparte is reputed to have said:

“An army marches on its stomach”.

In this regard, Napoleon understood one of the fundamentals of military activity: the army cannot function without being properly fed and properly supplied. During World War I, the Russian army was neither properly fed nor properly supplied.

The American World War II general, George Patton stated:

“Wars may be fought with weapons, but they are won by men. It is the spirit of men who follow and of the man who leads that gains the victory”.

Patton of course wanted to emphasise his alleged inspirational leadership. However, his comment could be said to apply doubly to Russia in World War I. The Russian army was disastrously led; it was equally disastrously supplied.

Arguably the fundamental reason for the collapse of Russian forces in World War I was due to the backward state and eventual collapse of the Russian economy. The Russian economy could never match the size and efficiency of Germany’s modern, sophisticated, twentieth century economy. The war would bring the Russian economy to its knees which would have disastrous military implications.

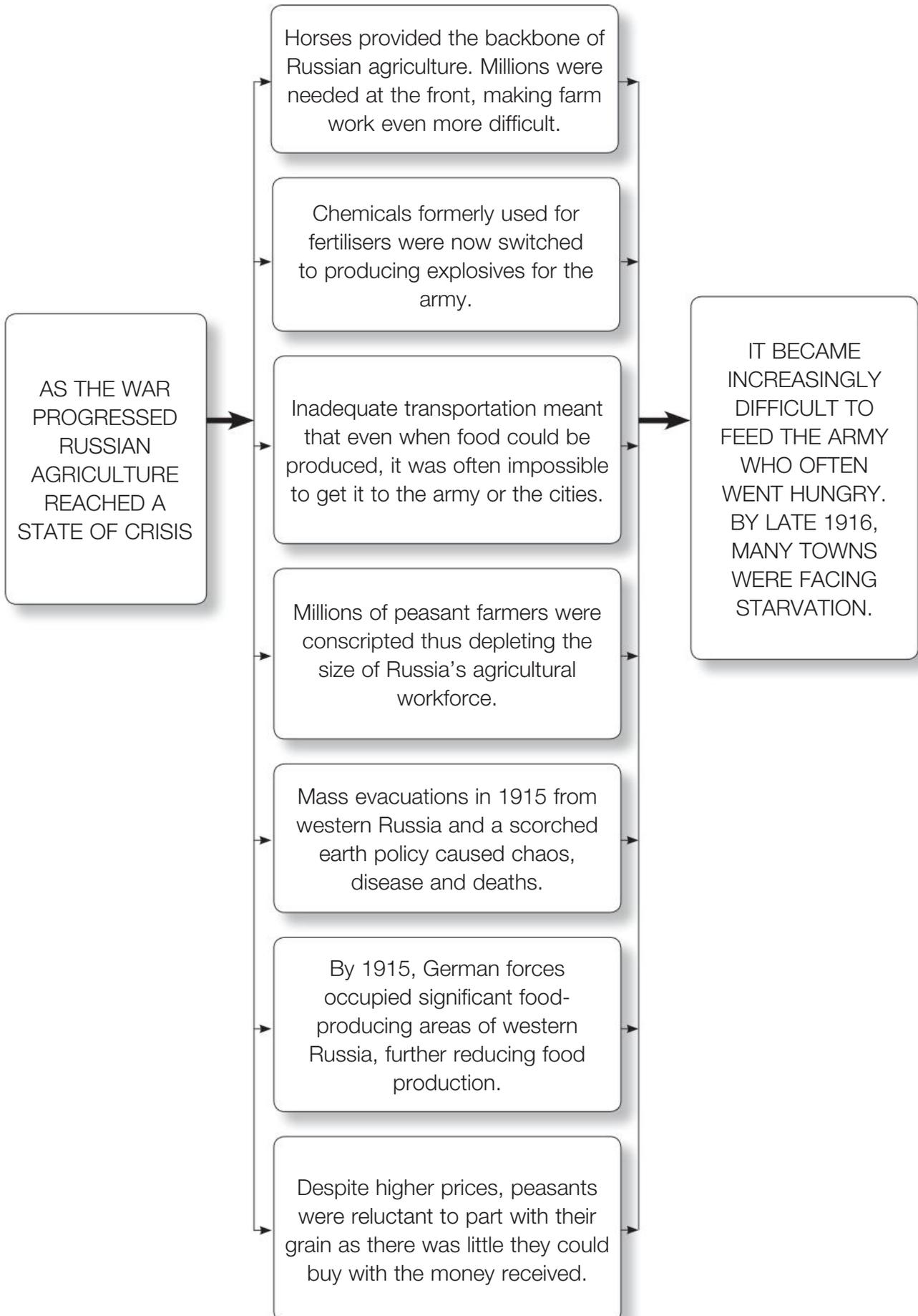
Agriculture

During his time as Prime Minister, Peter Stolypin had endeavoured to drag the Russian economy into the twentieth century. The key element of Stolypin’s program was his land reforms. These aimed to consolidate peasant holdings in the countryside and so increase output by improving agricultural efficiency. Peasants would also move into the cities to provide a labour force for Russia’s fast-growing industries. Some limited success had been achieved by 1914 (see Chapter Seven for details of Stolypin’s reforms).

The war destroyed any chance of Stolypin’s program achieving long-term success. Russian agriculture suffered disastrously due to the war. This is detailed in Figure 9.1. By late 1916/ early 1917 the army was ill-fed and the cities were facing major food shortages. It was food riots in Petrograd¹ that sparked the February Revolution.

¹ St Petersburg’s name was changed to Petrograd at the beginning of the war. The name ‘St Petersburg’ was considered to be “too German”.

Figure 9.1 Agriculture in World War I

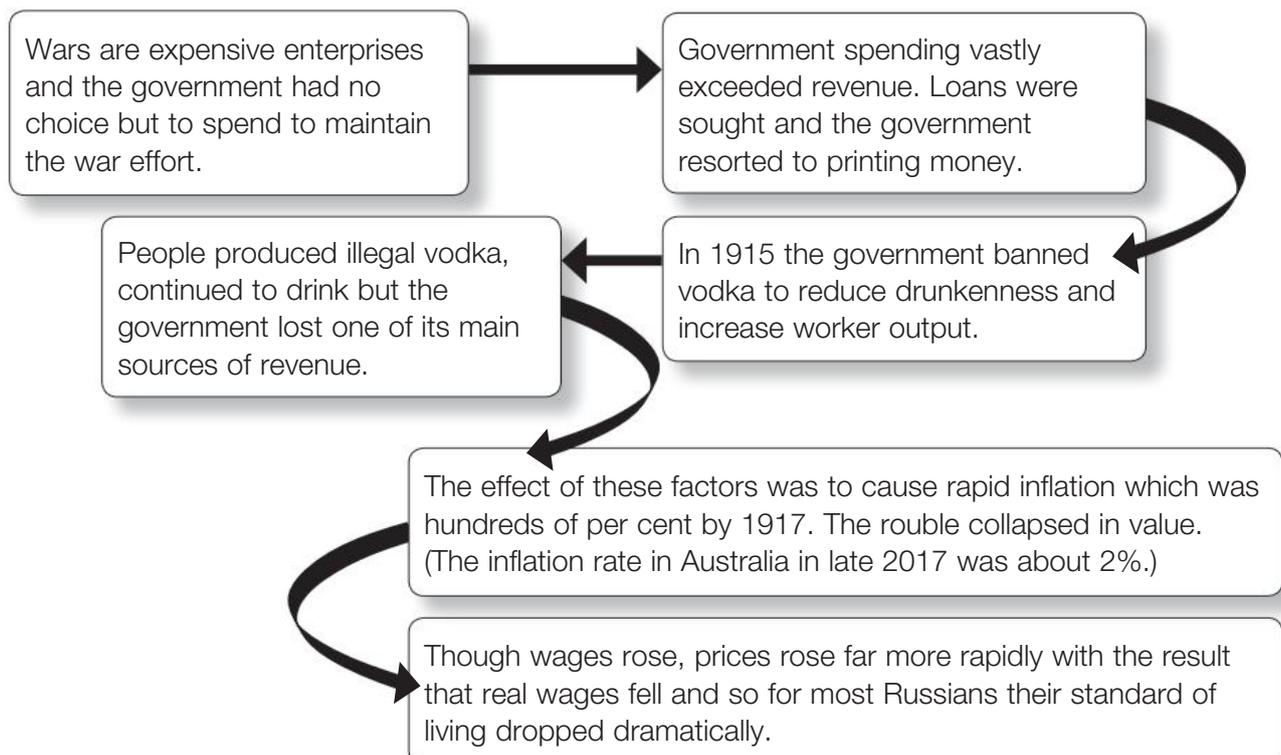


Industry

Russian industrial development had made great progress in the quarter of a century before the outbreak of war in 1914. However, Russia was still no match for Germany's modern, well-organised and modern economy. Strains soon began to appear in the Russian economy's industrial sector which quickly translated into an inability to properly supply the army.

- The fundamental impact of Russian industrial weakness was the inability of the economy to provide the army with its essential needs.
 - The army suffered shortages of rations, rifles, medical supplies, artillery pieces. Troops were sometimes limited to three bullets a day.
 - The second wave of infantry thrown against the German machine guns often left their positions with no weapons. They were told to pick the rifle of a fallen comrade from the first wave.
 - It was estimated that the army needed on average one million shells a day; it was lucky to receive 100 000.
- German naval action in the Baltic and the failure of the Dardanelles campaign to open the Straits meant that Russia's imports were drastically reduced.
- By 1916, 151 blast furnaces across the country had totally broken down.
- The rapid expansion of the army absorbed many skilled workers who should have remained at home.
 - This resulted in a lack of skilled labour on the home front which meant machines could not be fixed, faulty mine equipment remained untouched.
 - Power shortages became a common feature at home.

Figure 9.2 Finance in World War I



Transport

Russia's transport system was always inadequate. The war served to exacerbate an already disastrous situation.

- The limited nature of the railway system made rapid troop movements difficult to achieve.
 - Many trucks were immovable.
 - Engines broke down and the lack of skilled labour meant they could not be repaired.
 - Railway trucks often had to be thrown over an embankment to make way for other trucks.
- British supplies might reach Archangel in the north of the country but the lack of adequate transport meant these supplies would simply rot, due to the lack of transport and a lack of adequate storage.
- There was little coordination between the different sectors of the economy.

The combination of economic breakdown, massive inflation, food shortages, incompetent military leadership and enormous casualties led to war-weariness which by early 1917 was verging on revolution.

Exercise 9.1

Using the terms in the box below, complete the following passage.

Despite the efforts of _____, food production could not keep pace with demand especially once the war began. _____, used due to the lack of machinery, were sent to the front and fertiliser production was sacrificed to make way for _____. Chaotic mass _____ in 1915 and the government's _____ caused misery. Russia's economy was no match for that of _____, and soon the army faced _____ of everything from bullets to shells to even _____. Mass conscription meant that there was a shortage of skilled _____ in factories and _____. Russia's _____ system was totally inadequate and so even when supplies had been produced, they often could not reach the _____ at the front. To finance the war, the government often resorted to raising _____ and _____ money. This caused _____. The ban on _____ in 1915 merely denied the government essential tax _____. Wages _____ but _____ rose more rapidly, and so _____ wages fell dramatically. By early 1917, Russia was on the verge of _____.

LOANS - REAL - SCORCHED EARTH POLICY - HORSES - REVENUE
BOOTS - PRICES - SHORTAGES - EXPLOSIVES - ROSE - MINES -
STOLYPIN - INFLATION - TROOPS - GERMANY - EVACUATION -
PRINTING - LABOUR - TRANSPORT - VODKA - REVOLUTION

What do the historians have to say about the economic impact of the war?

1. Orlando Figes: *Revolutionary Russia 1891-1991*

Figes highlights the major problems Russia experienced with a lack of supplies and poor transportation. The major shortage was that of munitions. Figes explains that the War Ministry had run down the armaments industry in the belief that it could make do with existing stocks. This was a major error and so armaments had to be brought in from overseas but Russia soon found itself cut off from its allies.

*“...By the spring of 1915, whole battalions were being trained without rifles, while many second-line troops were relying on rifles picked up from the men who had been shot in front of them...”*²

2. Robert Service: *Stalin*

Russia's economic failures were not a foregone conclusion, suggests Robert Service. In his biography of the future Soviet dictator, Stalin, Service tells the story of Stalin's near conscription in 1916 into the tsarist army.³ Stalin certainly did not relish the possibility of being conscripted and it is unlikely he would have accepted the demands of the government. However, as Service points out, the economic situation for the Russian army in late 1916 had improved, though such improvement would not last long.

*“...morale in the imperial (Russian) army remained robust. The early bottlenecks in military production, transport and supply had been unblocked. The Supreme Command was planning to innovate in a bid to organise a successful offensive, and General Brusilov was being given his chance to prove himself. There was no shortage of food or equipment at the front...”*⁴

(A) Political impact of the war

Political collapse

At the beginning of the war, the nation rallied behind the tsar in the face of the German military machine. Troops marched off to war willingly with the cheering of ecstatic crowds echoing in their ears. Duma members gave their almost unanimous support for the war in August 1914. The Duma's members wanted to play a major role in the running of the war but were rejected by the tsar. Nicholas suspended Duma sittings and refused to consider working with the Progressive Bloc which had been formed in 1915 calling for a 'government of confidence'.

In June 1915, the tsar compromised slightly. Arch-reactionary ministers such as Interior Minister Maklakov, Justice Minister Shcheglovitov and Chief Procurator of the Holy Synod Sabler were removed and replaced by the slightly more moderate Prince Shcherbatov, Khvostov and Samarin respectively.

² Figes, O, *Revolutionary Russia, 1891-1991*, Pelican, London, 2014, p 77

³ Stalin would avoid this fate on medical grounds due to his damaged right arm.

⁴ Service, R, *Stalin*, Pan Books, London, 2004, p 113

In August, the tsar even allowed one of the founders of the Octobrist Party, Alexander Guchov,⁵ to attend meetings of the Council of Ministers to present his proposals for the establishment of special councils dealing with defence, transport fuel, food supplies and refugees.

- These councils contained people from government departments of the Duma, the State Council and the War Industries Committee.
- Under Guchov's guidance, there were improvements in the supply of military materials.
- However, even this good work was marred by bungling, duplication and a vast increase in the growth of the bureaucracy.

On 24 August 1915, the tsar took the fateful decision of assuming supreme command of the army. He was encouraged to do this by Empress Alexandra, who was persuaded by Rasputin that this was a sound move. All but two of Nicholas' ministers signed a letter begging the tsar not to do this but he remained unmoved. Alexandra wrote to him arguing that by assuming command he had "*opened up the writing of a glorious page in the history of your reign and in Russian history*".

The tsar's decision was a disastrous one on several levels.

- The tsar had no knowledge of military tactics and strategy. In fact, he often based himself up to 800 kilometres from the front line. This probably mattered little because in reality he left key decision-making to his Chief of Staff, General Alexeev.
- By assuming command, the tsar had now combined the political and military leadership. As tsar, he was of course ultimate commander of the army but by not assuming direct command, he had managed to keep the monarchy above military affairs.
 - Disasters were thus the fault of the generals not of the tsar.
 - However, the tsar's formal assumption of command changed that.
- Even more significantly, Nicholas now left Alexandra in Petrograd in effective control of the government, though she had not been formally designated regent.
 - She wrote to her husband saying that she was resolved to "*wake people up, to put order into all, and unite all forces*".
 - By now, the empress was fully under the influence of Rasputin, a fact immediately apparent when she told her husband that she had in mind a better Minister of the Interior, approved of by "our friend", ie Rasputin.

(The foolishness of the tsar's decision is conveyed effectively in the film *Nicholas and Alexandra* in the scene where he is visited at military headquarters by his mother.⁶)

Nicholas, Alexandra and Rasputin

Was Rasputin as influential and as detrimental to the running of Russia during the war as legend would have us believe? In a real sense, the answer to this question does not matter.

⁵ Formed in late 1905, see Chapter Seven.

⁶ For a dialogue of this scene and questions based on it, see: Webb, K, *Russia and the Soviet Union*. Nelson Cengage Learning, Melbourne, 2015, pp 60-61

Figure 9.3 Anti-tsarist poster suggesting Alexandra and Rasputin were lovers.



Many people in Russia believed that he was. Not only that, many believed that he and the Empress were intimate. The anti-tsarist poster shown in Figure 9.3 certainly tried to propagate this idea.

The personal correspondence between Nicholas and Alexandra during the war years clearly suggested that Rasputin was influential. In late August 1915, Alexandra wrote to Nicholas:

“Forgive me but I do not like the choice of Minister of War Polivanov. Is he not our Friend’s enemy?”

In July 1916, Alexandra was passing on to her husband Rasputin’s advice on matters of strategy:

“Our Friend... finds it better not to advance too obstinately as the losses will be too great.”

In a letter of Nicholas to Alexandra, he wrote:

“Thank you for your long letter in which you pass on our Friend’s instructions.”

By the middle of 1916, the system of government in Russia was completely breaking down. Often on the advice of Rasputin, the Empress was dismissing and appointing ministers in rapid succession. One commentator coined the phrase “a government of tumblers” to describe Russia’s administration at this time. The extreme right-wing Duma member, V M Purishkevich, coined the phrase “ministerial leapfrog” to describe the frequent changes in government personnel that were occurring. In the twelve months between the autumn of 1915 and the autumn of 1916, Russia had:

- five Ministers of the Interior
- four Ministers of Agriculture
- three Ministers of War

For some of Russia’s aristocrats, the behaviour of Rasputin finally became too much, though many of them had been quite willing to ingratiate themselves with ‘the man of god’ for their own ends. In December 1916, Rasputin was invited to the palace of Prince Yusupov who was married to a niece of the tsar. During the course of a drunken and debauched evening, Rasputin was fed cakes and wine laced with potassium cyanide. When these did not kill him, he was shot several times. His body was dropped in Petrograd’s River Neva.⁷

Though the assassination of Rasputin is often considered as being a significant moment in Russia’s history, this is doubtful for two main reasons.

⁷ The story of Rasputin’s murder is the stuff of legend. The account that has been passed down is that of Prince Yusupov contained in his memoirs, “Lost Splendour” written some years later. True or not, Yusupov’s account makes for great reading. It can be found at <http://www.alexanderpalace.org/lostsplendor/XXIII.html>

- The murder of Rasputin changed nothing.
 - Russia was already on its knees militarily and nothing could change that. It was not a matter of whether Russia would lose the war but when.
 - The chaotic state of the government and the incompetence of the tsar were so deeply embedded, Rasputin being dead or alive mattered little.
 - Removing Rasputin had no impact on the events that began to unfold in early 1917.⁸
- Rasputin was not so much the cause of the decay, ineptitude and chaos of Russia's government by 1916 but rather he was a symptom of that decay, ineptitude and chaos. The fact that a man like Rasputin could infiltrate the highest levels of the imperial family and government showed the rottenness of the Romanov regime.

What do the historians have to say about the political impact of the war?

1. Graeme Gill: *Twentieth Century Russia*

Gill highlights the point that Nicholas' behaviour, and his stubborn refusal to compromise on his 'divine right', alienated those members of the Duma who sought a genuine accommodation with the regime. Sincere cooperation between the tsar, his ministers and the Duma might have had a major positive impact on the way Russia was governed during the war.

*"...The liberals... argued (that they should be) given some part in the direction of (the) war... But Nicholas' government... continued to try to exclude (them) from any meaningful part in political decision-making."*⁹

2. Richard Charques: *The Twilight of Imperial Russia*

Charques describes the chaos that had enveloped Russia's government by the middle of 1916. He suggests that each new appointment proved to be even more incompetent and more corrupt than the previous. Ministers came and went in a "dizzy and grotesque succession".

*"...During the last months of all, when not a single figure of note was left to whom those of good will in the Duma could rally, the sequence of change was even more kaleidoscopic."*¹⁰

⁸ See Chapter 10.

⁹ Gill, G, *Twentieth Century Russia*, Nelson, Melbourne, 1989, p 23

¹⁰ Charques, R, *The Twilight of Imperial Russia*, OUP, Oxford, 1958, p 230

Exercise 9.2

Answer “true” or “false” for each of the following statements.

1	From the very start of the war, the tsar was eager to work closely with the members of the Duma.	TRUE/ FALSE
2	The tsar was urged by the majority of his ministers to assume command of the army in August 1915.	TRUE/ FALSE
3	Alexandra believed that the tsar’s decision to assume command in August 1915 was wise and far-sighted.	TRUE/ FALSE
4	By assuming command of the army, Nicholas could not divorce himself from Russia’s military disasters.	TRUE/ FALSE
5	Popular belief inside Russia was that Rasputin was influential, indeed even on intimate terms with Empress Alexandra.	TRUE/ FALSE
6	Rasputin had extremely little say in government appointments during the war.	TRUE/ FALSE
7	Personal correspondence between Nicholas and Alexandra suggests that they were indeed influenced by the opinions of Rasputin.	TRUE/ FALSE
8	There was considerable instability inside the Russian government throughout 1916.	TRUE/ FALSE
9	Rasputin’s death in December 1916 was the result of natural causes.	TRUE/ FALSE
10	The removal of Rasputin from the Russian political scene had the immediate effect of improving the way the country was governed.	TRUE/ FALSE

Chapter Ten

The February Revolution

Calendars

Is it the February Revolution or the March Revolution? Since the time of Julius Caesar, the western world had used what became known as the 'Julian' calendar. The Julian calendar contained an error which meant that a day was in error each 128 years. By the middle of the 16th century, there was a ten-day gap between the solar calendar and the Julian calendar. To correct this, the Gregorian calendar was introduced in 1582, named after Pope Gregory XIII. This moved the calendar forward ten days and introduced new rules regarding leap years. The Gregorian calendar was soon adopted by western nations. However, Orthodox Christian countries, such as Russia, kept the Julian calendar. As a result, by the early twentieth century, the Russian calendar was thirteen days behind the west. Thus, Tsar Nicholas II's abdication took place on 2 March (15 March). Russia came in line with the west in early 1918. ¹

The February Revolution

The illustration shown in Figure 10.1 is a poster advertisement for a recent production of the musical *Les Misérables*, based on the novel by Victor Hugo. Victor Hugo's story culminates in the June 1832 rebellion in Paris.

Figure 10.1 *Les Misérables* promotion poster



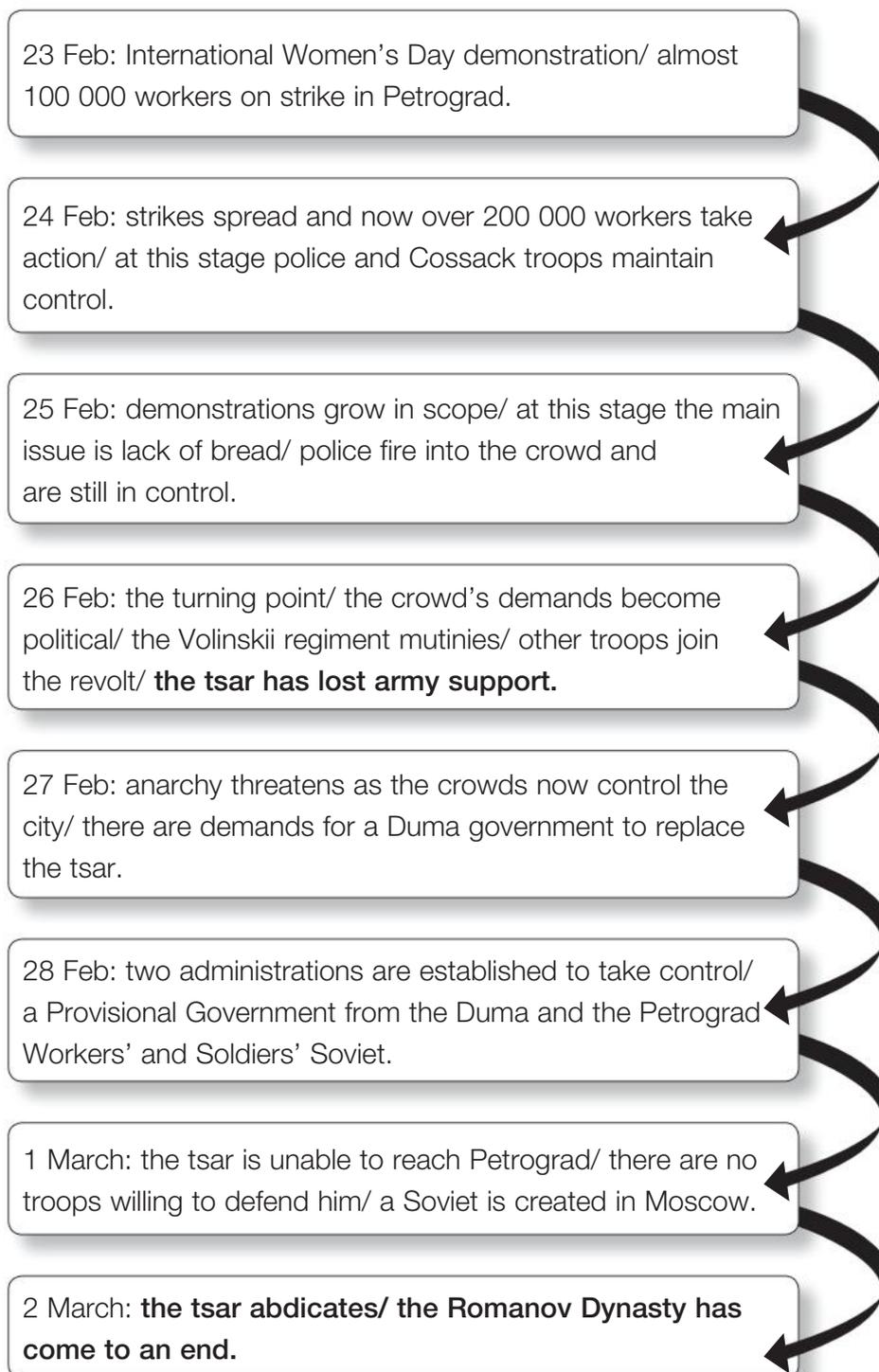
The poster shows all the features which we have come to associate with revolutionary action. The main protagonists are young, idealistic, fearless. The fist is raised; the rifle is held high and flags fly, often red. The scene is dramatic, exciting and promises change. Revolutions are expected to be violent affairs. After all, isn't a revolution the violent overthrow of the existing order?

Does such an image of revolution fit the events of February 1917 in Russia? It would be wrong to argue that the February Revolution was totally bloodless, but considering that a regime that had been in power for over three hundred years was about to be toppled, there was surprisingly little violence. The end of the tsarist regime came about with some ease. Some historians in fact argue the regime was not so much "overthrown" but rather it simply "collapsed". ² The actual revolution took about a week. On 23 February there was a demonstration in support of

¹ For the purpose of this book, the Julian calendar has been used for Russian dates for the period to early 1918 when Russia's calendar system changed.
² The views of various historians will be considered below.

International Women's Day. A week later the tsar had abdicated. Figure 10.2 summarises the key events of the February Revolution.

Figure 10.2 The February Revolution



The Abdication

Many expected that the abdication of Nicholas II would result in his son, Alexi assuming the throne, and that the tsar and his wife would leave Russia, probably for England.

- However, Nicholas insisted that he abdicate not only for himself but also for his son.

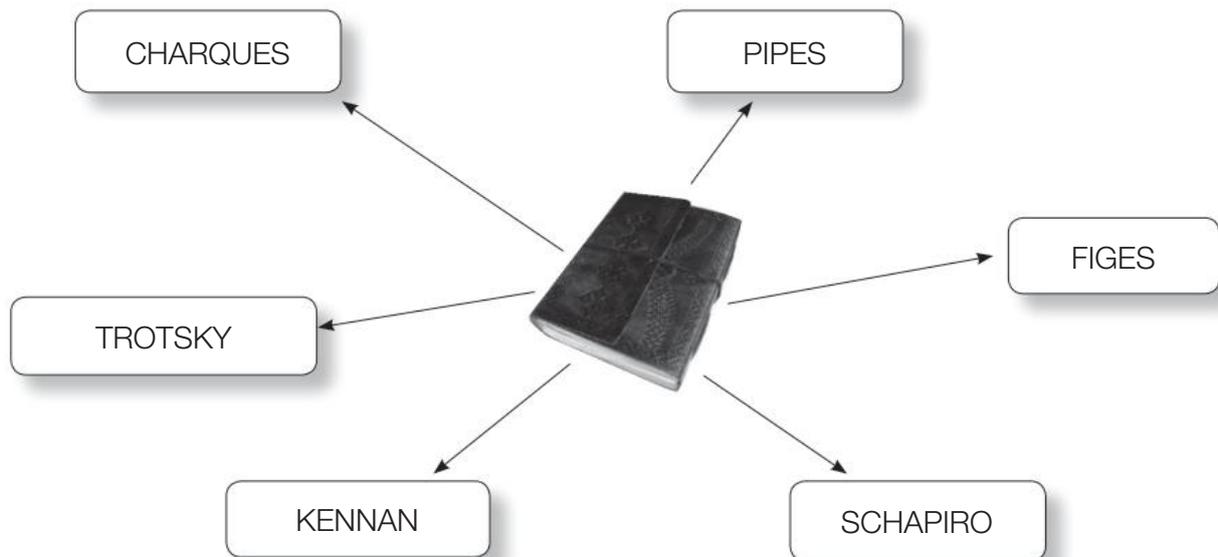
- The perilous state of the tsarevich's health probably accounts for Nicholas' action.
- Without the family's constant care and attention, Alexi's survival would have been in doubt.
- Nicholas passed the throne to his brother, Grand Duke Michael Alexandrovich.
 - The Grand Duke refused to accept the throne.

The historians argue their case

The fundamental reasons for the February Revolution are not much in doubt. The war had brought the regime to its knees, the political system was riddled with corruption and incompetence, and Nicholas was the worst kind of leader to have in power at such a time. The specific events of February 1917 are not in question.

However, a deeper examination of the fall of the Romanov Dynasty suggests that there is much more to this dramatic event than a simple retelling of events might suggest. Historians have varying views about the end of the Romanov Dynasty. What follows is a brief look at the views of some historians who have researched this.

Figure 10.3 The historians



1. Richard Charques (1958)

Charques is typical of the liberal western view that sees that the revolution as a result of the war. Before 1914, Russia was developing steadily, if slowly, into a modern capitalist, and eventually more democratic state. The war stopped all such developments in their tracks. *"Driven by elemental passion, by hatred of the war, by feelings of rancour and revenge which could no longer be endured passively, the mass moved of itself"*.

Charques makes the point that February was a leaderless and spontaneous revolution. All the key revolutionary leaders were out of the country or in Siberia. It was the *"loss and suffering of the war (that) had inflamed deep-lying discontent"*. The revolution *"for all its spontaneity..."*

sprang not so much from the will of the people as from the mere decomposition and collapse of the tsar's government".

2. Leon Trotsky (1930)

Trotsky was not only an active revolutionary but also a historian of the Russian revolution. Like later official Soviet historians, Trotsky argues that the revolution was not spontaneous but was led by a proletariat propagandised by the Bolshevik Party. He suggests that it was not enough to have worker discontent, the mass of workers needed to be propagandised to understand the role they were playing. Clearly there are elements of later Bolshevik/ Soviet propaganda here as an attempt is made to play up the role of the Bolshevik Party. *"The peasants and the workers – those are the two social classes which made the Russian Revolution".*

3. George Kennan (1956)

The American diplomat, George Kennan, argues that revolution was the result of the collapse of the autocracy. However, he argues that the war merely determined the timing of this collapse and that the collapse was inevitable. The signs of the demise were present before 1914 and the impact of the war was to delay revolution. Kennan points to such things as Russia's failure to develop a meaningful parliamentary system, the excesses of industrialisation, Russia's reckless foreign policy, its persecution of minorities and the reactionary nature of Tsar Nicholas.

4. Leonard Schapiro (1984)

Schapiro argues that the real impetus for the revolution came from the proletariat and the military garrison in Petrograd. He concedes that the peasants had major reasons for seeking changes but it was the better-paid, young skilled workers who were behind the revolution. These workers were relatively well-educated and had a strong class consciousness. However, Schapiro does not accept Trotsky's view that this class consciousness was the result of Bolshevik propaganda. Instead, he is closer to Charques' view of the spontaneity and leaderless nature of the revolution.

5. Orlando Figes (2014)

Figes highlights the crucial role of the military garrison in Petrograd and their mutinous actions. This deprived the tsarist regime of the only thing that could protect it. Unable to trust the troops, the tsar decided against bringing in troops from the north for fear that they would simply join the mutineers in Petrograd. The rebel troops in the capital were able to give strength and organisation to the crowds in the streets. *"They turned disordered protest into battles for the capture of strategic targets for the 'people's side': the arsenal, the telephone exchange, railway stations, the police headquarters and prisons."*

There was no leadership but rather the 'street' generated its own leaders, nearly all of whose names have never made it into the history books. These revolutionary leaders were fed by ordinary people and given refuge when fired upon. Children ran errands for these 'leaders'. *"It was as if the people on the streets had suddenly become united by a vast network of invisible threads. And this secured victory."*

6. Richard Pipes (1994)

Richard Pipes takes quite a different line to the other historians. Most historians argue that it is the war which brought about the revolution and the abdication of the tsar. Pipes argues instead that the move against the monarchy was not a result of hatred of the war, but rather a desire to conduct the war in a more effective manner. Pipes suggests that the idea of workers and soldiers bringing down the regime is a myth. Rather the tsar's abdication was the result of pressure from politicians and generals who sought his removal for the good of Russia. *"The social revolution followed rather than preceded the act of abdication."*

7. Oleg Khlevniuk: Stalin (2015)

In his new biography of Stalin, Khlevniuk makes only a passing reference to the February Revolution. He sits on the fence and suggests that nobody can argue for certain whether the events of February were spontaneous actions (as Charques suggests) or the result of professional revolutionaries (more along the lines of Trotsky). He concludes that the revolution broke out without warning due to the social and economic impact of the war and that *"the tsar and his advisors did not immediately grasp the gravity of the situation."*

Exercise 10.1

Match the name of the historian with the ideas given on the left.

1	The revolution came about because of the effective propogandising efforts of the Bolshevik Party.	
2	It was not the war that brought about the fall of the tsar but rather the desire of politicians and generals to conduct the war more effectively.	
3	The revolution was a direct result of the impact of the war and was marked by its spontaneity and its lack of leadership.	
4	The role of the mutinous troops in Petrograd was the crucial factor. There were no leaders; the street almost generated its leaders.	
5	The war did not cause the collapse of the regime but rather determined its timing. The evidence of demise was in place before 1914.	
6	The events of February took the tsar by surprise and the authorities did not understand the seriousness of the situation.	
7	The key group in bringing about the revolution was the skilled and relatively well-educated workers in Petrograd.	

CHARQUES TROTSKY KHLEVNIUK KENNAN
SCHAPIRO FIGES PIPES

Was the Romanov dynasty doomed?

1914: On the road to a modern state or on the brink of revolution?

The debate

Stolypin always maintained that given a generation of peace at home and abroad, his reform program would have transformed Russia. Indeed, at the time of the tercentenary celebrations of Romanov rule in 1913, Russia seemed on the brink of a bright future. Or was it?

- What was the true state of the Russian empire on the eve of World War I?
- Poised for greatness or on the brink of revolution?

Figures 10.4 and 10.5 summarise the contrasting arguments.

Figure 10.4 Russia 1914: Poised for greatness?

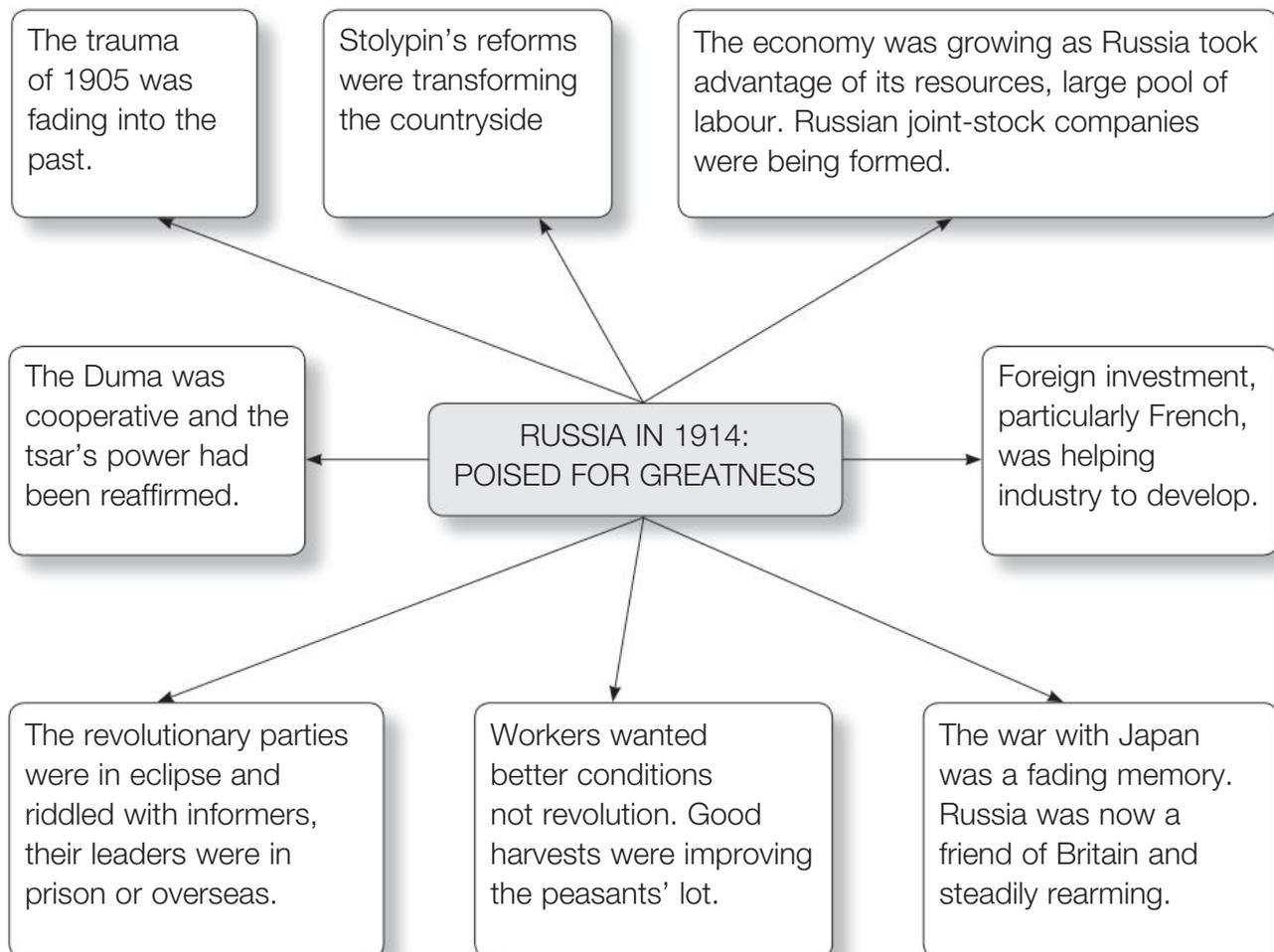
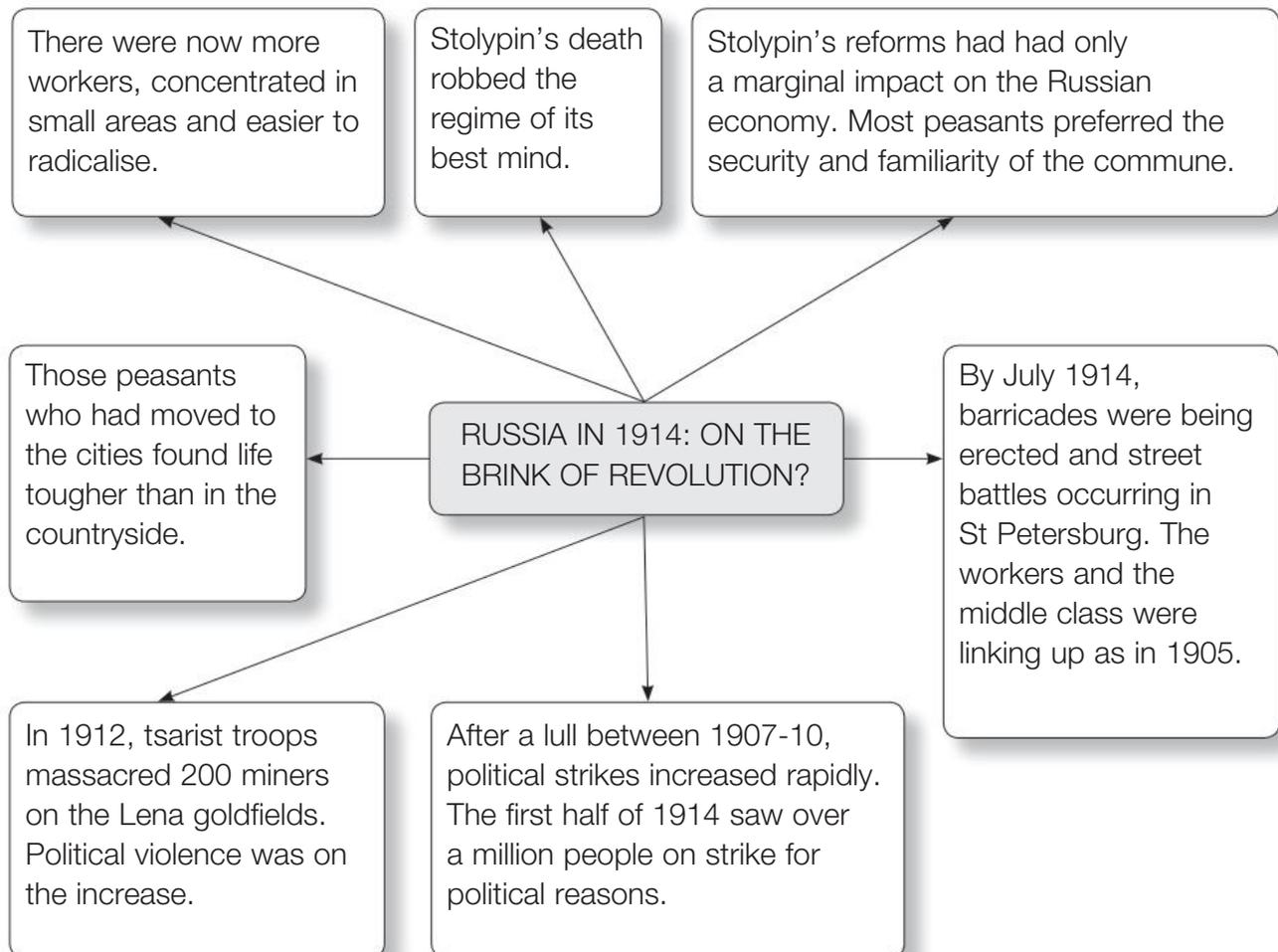


Figure 10.5 Russia 1914: On the brink of revolution?



In July 1914, a revolutionary situation was brewing on the streets of St Petersburg and in other centres.

- Political violence was increasing; strikes had become more frequent, more widespread and more violent.
- The demands of the people were now both political and industrial.
- 1914 was looking like a repeat of 1905.
- The outbreak of war with Germany put an immediate end to revolutionary thinking as the country rallied behind its tsar. The people had to pull together to protect Mother Russia.

However, could such patriotic enthusiasm last if the war went badly?

What do the historians say about Russia in 1914?

1. David Christian: *Power and Privilege*

Christian highlights the fact that the level of strikes had increased greatly between 1912 and 1914. The Lena goldfields massacre sparked many sympathy strikes. What made the situation much more serious for the government was the fact that the size of the proletariat by 1914 was much greater than it had been in 1905. Christian points out that the Bolsheviks were making ground in spreading their propaganda, and that the new radicalism of many workers was a product of the unhappiness of peasants who had had to sell their land and move to the city.

*“...In this way, the Stolypin reforms ensured that the discontents of the villages resurfaced in the towns, where they had a far greater political impact...”*³

2. David Christian: *Power and Privilege*

However, Christian also points out the other side of the argument. He argues that there was still a great tradition of loyalty to the regime which became apparent when the war started. He also points out that army loyalty was unquestioned, and recent reforms and rearmament had placed the military in a much better position than it had been in 1905. The bureaucracy was also totally loyal. In addition to these political factors, the regime was strengthened by steady economic growth of 6% per annum. Agriculture was also improving.

*“...rising world prices, a string of good harvests, and rapid growth in the use of artificial fertilisers and agricultural machinery led to an increase in agricultural productivity during the years of the Stolypin reforms...”*⁴

3. Edmond Théry: *Contemporary French economist*

In 1913, the French economist, Edmond Théry, spent several months in Russia, investigating economic, social and political conditions. Théry predicted a massively growing Russian population and suggested that Russia had overcome its recent difficulties. He concluded:

*“...If things continue between 1912 and 1950 as they have done between 1900 and 1912, Russia will dominate Europe by the middle of the current century, politically as much as economically and financially...”*⁵

3 Christian, D, *Power and Privilege*, Pitman, Melbourne, 1986, p 121

4 Christian, D, *Power and Privilege*, Pitman, Melbourne, 1986, p 122

5 Found in Charles Emmerson, 'The future's bright, the future's Russian', *History Today*, October 2013, p 12

Chapter Eleven

Dual Authority: The Provisional Government and the Soviet

The advent of Dual Authority

Even before the tsar had formally abdicated, two bodies appeared seeking to fill the vacuum of power left by the collapse of the autocracy:

- the Provisional Government
- the Soviet of Workers and Soldiers.

Throughout 1917, these two bodies co-existed uneasily: each claiming legitimacy, each seeking the loyalty of the Russian people. This was the essence of Dual Authority throughout 1917.

The Provisional Government was formed from the remnants of the Fourth Duma which had been elected in 1912.

- It comprised mainly landowners and middle-class members, liberals and moderates.
- The Provisional Government was dominated by the ‘right’ (the Kadets and the Octobrists) ¹ or independent members.
- It was headed by an independent member, Prince Lvov and also contained Miliukov as Foreign Minister and Guchkov as Minister of War.
- The only leftist member of the Provisional Government was the Minister of Justice, Alexander Kerensky.

The **Petrograd Soviet of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies** was a more radical body.

- The Soviet comprised factory workers and soldiers, though its executive was primarily composed of moderate socialist intellectuals.
- Headed by the Menshevik Nikolay Chkheidze, its numbers fluctuated and sometimes reached as many as 3000.
- The Soviet’s popularity made it the most powerful body in Petrograd. The general strike only stopped following instructions from the Soviet.
- Under Soviet Order Number One, all troops were placed under the control of the Soviet. More Soviets soon appeared in other cities such as Moscow.

Though the government could claim “authority” as it had evolved from the Duma, it lacked “power”. The Soviet was in a different situation. It arguably lacked “authority” but it had “power”. This was the result of its Order Number One which instructed members of Russia’s armed forces to obey only those decisions of the Provisional Government with which the Soviet agreed.

The two bodies had some areas of agreement, such as dissolving the Okhrana and introducing basic liberties such as freedom of speech and the press. However, as time went on,

¹ See Chapter Seven

differences between the two arose such as how to deal with Germany and what to do about the issue of land. The Provisional Government made an immediate fateful decision which arguably signed its death warrant: it decided to continue the war against Germany.

Throughout 1917, the Provisional Government struggled to assert its authority. However, it faced monumental problems and had to satisfy a wide variety of desires: soldiers wanted peace, peasants wanted land, workers wanted bread. As time went on, it became apparent that the Provisional Government was unable to cope with this myriad of issues. Across the country, peasants were not waiting for a settlement of land issues but instead were seizing land. Landowners were often attacked and killed. As stories of land seizures spread, Russia's largely peasant army began to desert in large numbers.

Figure 11.1 summarises the events inside Russia from March to November 1917.

In April, the Bolshevik leader, Lenin, returned to Russia. He quickly announced his "April Theses". He called for opposition to the Provisional Government. His slogans resonated with many Russian people – "all power to the Soviets" and "peace, land and bread".² (The role of Lenin will be examined more fully in Chapter Twelve).

In July, Alexander Kerensky took over as head of the Provisional Government. Kerensky was a dynamic and charismatic, if somewhat vain and arrogant, leader. Though he added energy to the government, he was soon faced with major problems of his own.

A major offensive launched against German forces ended in disaster.

- In July, some sailors of the Kronstadt naval base revolted. There was a major attempt to overthrow the government which at the time was blamed on the Bolsheviks. This incident is often referred to as "the July Days". Lenin fled to Finland, and Trotsky was imprisoned briefly.
- More serious for Kerensky was an attempt in August by his Commander-in-Chief, General Kornilov, to lead a coup against the Provisional Government. Kornilov believed he could be Russia's saviour.
- Kornilov's attempted coup was defeated as soldiers, sailors and workers rallied behind the government. However, much of the defence was organised by the Bolsheviks and their Red Guard Militias.

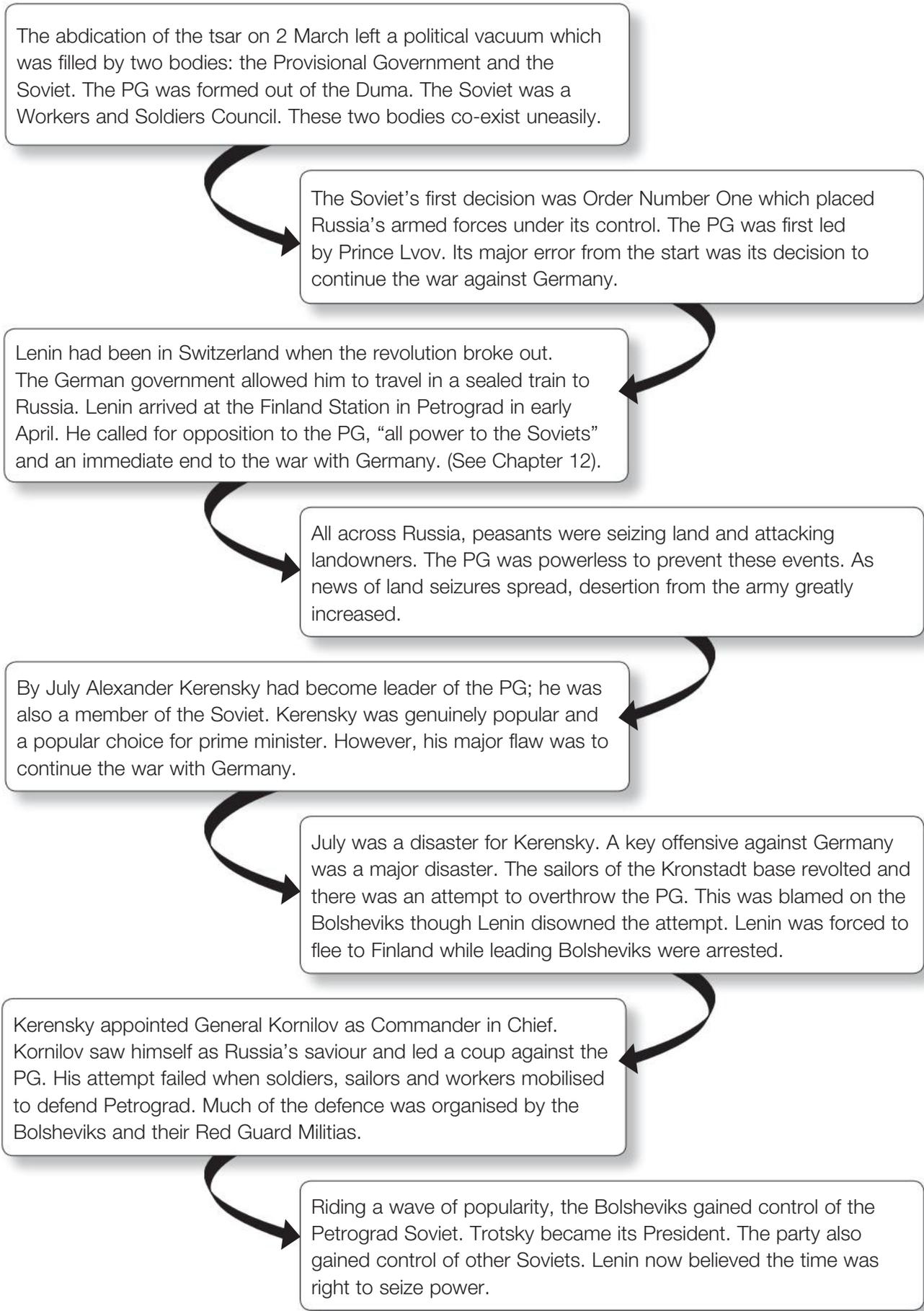
Bolshevik action in preventing Kornilov's seizure of power made them the real winners of the Kornilov Affair even though the Provisional Government had survived. Riding a wave of popularity, the Bolsheviks gained control of many Soviets across the country. Trotsky became Chairman of the Petrograd Soviet.³ Lenin believed that the time was right for the Bolsheviks to attempt to seize power. Elections for a Constituent Assembly were due in January, and Lenin did not believe the Bolsheviks would be successful here. The decision was taken to overthrow the Provisional Government. The Bolsheviks moved in late October.

Trotsky persuaded Lenin to delay the takeover by two weeks, and to wait for a sitting of the All Russian Congress of Soviets. Trotsky argued that the seizure of power could then be

² Lenin was in Switzerland at the time of the abdication. He had been allowed to cross Europe in a sealed train by German authorities.

³ This was the same position he had at the time of the 1905 Revolution.

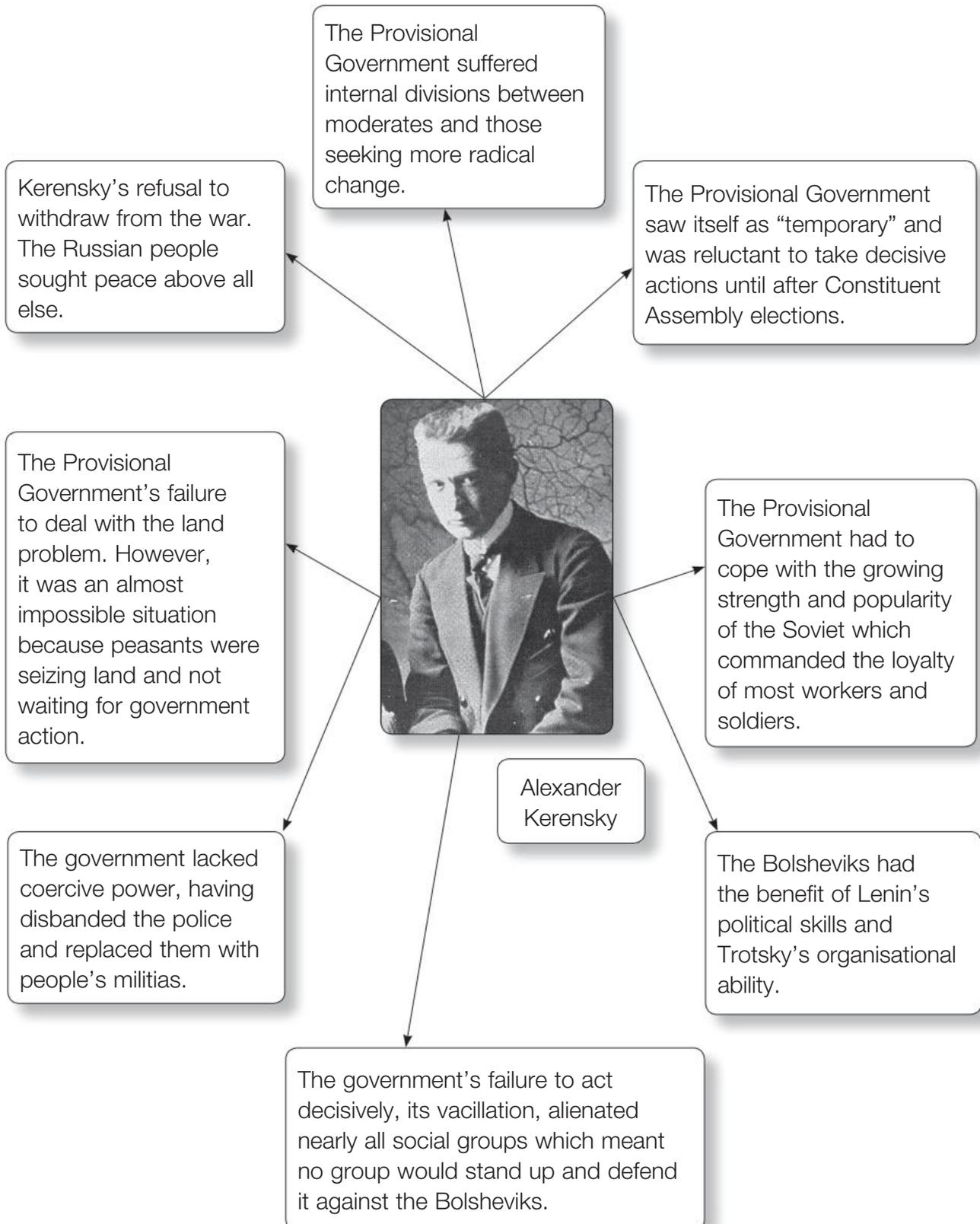
Figure 11.1 March to November 1917



presented as being done in the name of the Soviets and not just a Bolshevik grab for power.

The Bolshevik coup of October 1917 brought to an end the brief life of the Provisional Government. (The October Revolution will be discussed in Chapter Thirteen).

Figure 11.2 summarises the reasons for the fall of the Provisional Government.



What do the historians say about the Provisional Government and the Soviet?

1. Sheila Fitzpatrick: *The Russian Revolution*

Fitzpatrick comments on the significance of the failure of the Kornilov coup and how this benefitted the Bolsheviks. The coup failed fundamentally because of the unreliability of the troops and the quick actions of Petrograd workers. Kerensky's standing suffered because of his poor handling of the affair but the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet gained little credit as resistance was organised primarily at a local union and factory level. Many of the Bolshevik leaders were still in hiding or in prison and had played little role in opposing Kornilov. However, Fitzgerald argues that they benefitted from the creation of workers' militia units or 'Red Guards' against Kornilov. She concludes:

*"...The Bolsheviks' strength was that they were the only party uncompromised by association with the bourgeoisie and the February regime, and the party most firmly identified with ideas of workers' power and armed uprising..."*⁴

2. Sarah Badcock: *The Russian Revolution*

Badcock argues that to use the "Dual Authority" to describe Russia's governance throughout 1917 is a mistake. She suggests that a better term would be "dual powerlessness". The Provisional Government attempted to form local executive committees across the country but its control of these was at best loose. Soviets appeared across the country, and often declared some loyalty to the Petrograd Soviet but they usually operated in an independent manner. Also, across the country, it was not always correct to consider two bodies in competition as in many cases, the membership of a Provisional Government body and a Soviet in a particular location was almost identical. There were examples of independent soldier activity. Badcock gives the example of a mutinous rising in Nizhnii Novgorod on 4-5 July. The mutinous soldiers broke up the Soviet of soldiers' deputies. This was an example of men acting autonomously and challenging the prevailing power structures. Badcock comments:

*"...What is however apparent is that authorities, be they central, regional or party political, struggled and ultimately failed to define revolutionary discourse and control political power. Recognising the blurred lines and ambiguity of locations of power helps us move towards a more nuanced understanding of 1917..."*⁵

4 Fitzpatrick, S, *The Russian Revolution*, OUP, Oxford, 2008, p 61

5 Badcock, S, *The Russian Revolution*, *The Twentieth Century Russia Reader*, ed Alastair Kocho-Williams, Routledge, London, 2012, pp 94-5

Exercise 11.1

Place the events listed on the right in the correct chronological order.

1st event		THE JULY DAYS
2nd event		ABDICATION OF THE TSAR
3rd event		BOLSHEVIK COUP
4th event		KERENSKY BECOMES LEADER OF THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT
5th event		LENIN ANNOUNCES THE APRIL THESES
6th event		KORNILOV'S ATTEMPTED COUP
7th event		ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT
8th event		BOLSHEVIKS GAIN MAJORITIES IN PETROGRAD AND MOSCOW SOVIETS
9th event		BRUSILOV'S JUNE OFFENSIVE
10th event		LENIN RETURNS TO RUSSIA

Chapter Twelve

The role of Lenin: Ideology and the Bolshevik Party

An overview of Bolshevik ideology

An idealistic introduction

Lenin and the Bolshevik Party wanted more than to just seize power, though this of course was of prime concern. Lenin and his colleagues had a vision of a future communist society in which people would be equal, in which there was no poverty, in which goods would be produced by machines rather than by manual labour, and where there would be no repression, largely because there would be no state. Instead, there would merely be people managing day to day business that kept society functioning.

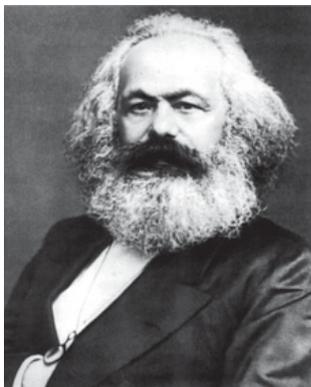
The kind of idealistic society that Lenin and people like him ultimately had in mind can be summed up in Karl Marx's statement:

*"...From each according to his ability, to each according to his need."*¹

As a communist society would be capable of producing an abundance of goods, people would only take that which they needed, while at the same time contribute to society to the best of their ability, whether that be in a physical or other way. (It might be argued that the idealism envisioned by communists differs little from the actions of the early Christians in the Bible. This might be the basis of an interesting class debate).²

The ideas of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels:

The origins of the thinking of Lenin and the Bolsheviks are found in the works of the 19th century writers and thinkers Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.



- Karl Marx was born into a Christianised German-Jewish family in Trier in 1818.
- Following involvement in revolutionary activity in 1848, Marx and his family fled to London.
- He was the London correspondent for a New York paper for some years, but spent most of his time researching and writing in the confines of the British Museum.
- Volume 1 of *Das Kapital* was published in 1867.
- Karl Marx died in 1883.

¹ Marx, K, Critique of the Gotha Program, 1875

² See Acts the Apostles, Chapter 2, verses 44-45, and Chapter 4, verses 34-35.



- Friedrich Engels was born in Germany in 1820, the son of a textile manufacturer.
- By the 1840s, he was running his father's textile business in Manchester where he became deeply involved in the problems of England's new working class.
- He became a close friend of Karl Marx and assisted him both financially and in the literary field.
- He outlived Marx; he died in 1895. It was Engels who completed Marx's *Das Kapital*.

Marx and Engels worked together closely but the first great communist work, "The Communist Manifesto", which appeared in 1848, was solely Marx's work, though he generously named Engels as co-author. It was at the very end of the Manifesto that the great clarion call to all oppressed peoples around the world was first heard:

*"...Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communist revolution. The proletarians (working class) have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. WORKING MEN OF ALL COUNTRIES UNITE!"*³

Karl Marx presented the development of history in a scientific manner, something which appealed to the logical mind of a man like Lenin. Marx argued that human society was gradually moving towards the perfect state of communism through a series of stages. Each stage was reached by means of a violent clash between competing groups within society. Marx summed up his theory at the beginning of "The Communist Manifesto":

*"...The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large or in the common ruin of the contending classes."*⁴

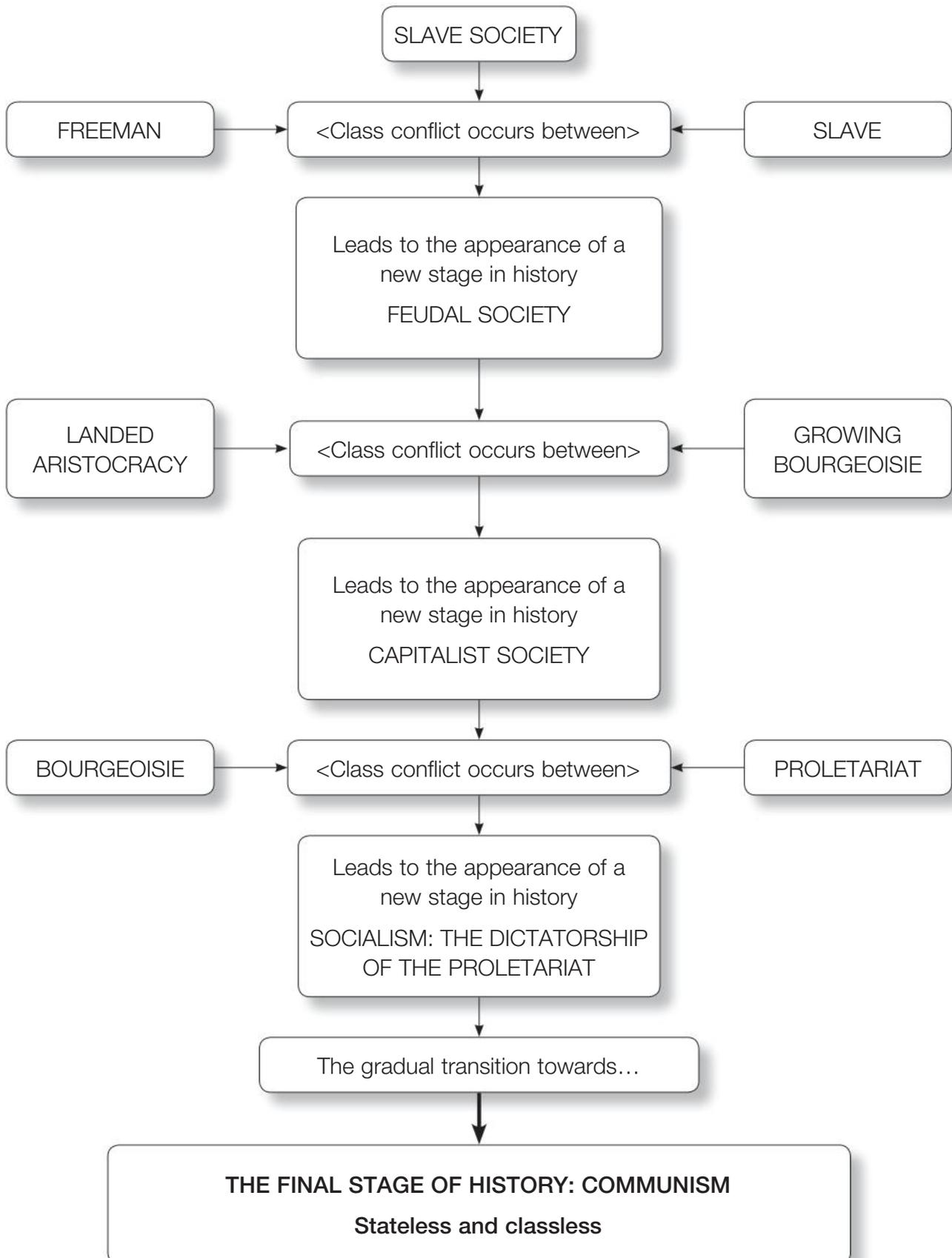
In essence, what Marx argued is that at each stage of society there will be conflict between an "oppressor class" and an "oppressed class". Another way of describing this is a conflict between "the haves in a society" and "the have-nots".

- Marx argued that the "oppressed" grow to resent the power and wealth of their "oppressors"; they develop a consciousness of this inequality and eventually rise up against their oppressors.
- The outcome of this conflict would be the creation of a new stage of society. However, this new society would produce a new conflict and the process would be repeated.
- Eventually the "dictatorship of the proletariat" stage (socialism) would be reached where workers controlled the state and counter-revolutionaries would be dealt with and non-socialist attitudes rooted out. Society would then gradually move towards the ideal of communism.

³ Marx, K, *The Communist Manifesto*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1967 edition, pp 120-1

⁴ Marx, p 79

Figure 12.1 Summary of Marx's view of class struggle ⁵



5 Adapted from Webb, K, Extension History: the historians, HTA of NSW, 2006, p 71

To Marxists, the development of history as described above is both scientific and inevitable. This makes Marxist thinkers “determinists”, ie the course of history is determined by overriding forces. For Marx the key overriding force at play in history is that of economics. It is economic development which drives history. Marx was willing to concede that individuals could play a role in history but at best all they are able to do is to have an impact on the course of events. They are not able to alter the general pattern of history.

Exercise 12.1

Using the terms in the box below, complete the following passage.

Marx believed that history was the story of _____ and that conflict between _____ was inevitable. Following this conflict, a new stage of history would be reached. In feudal society, he saw conflict as occurring between _____ and a growing _____. This would result in the creation of _____ society. There would then be conflict between the bourgeoisie and the _____. This conflict would lead to socialism and _____. Gradually all classes would _____ and there would be no need for a _____. Marx was a _____ who argued that though _____ could play a role in history, the general pattern of events was the result of mainly _____ factors

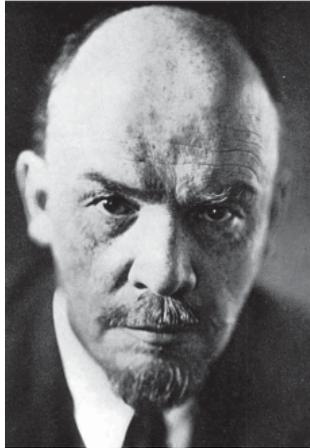
THE LANDED ARISTOCRACY	ECONOMIC	CLASS STRUGGLE
BOURGEOISIE	PROLETARIAT	CLASSES
STATE	INDIVIDUALS	DISAPPEAR
	THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT	CAPITALIST

Lenin, Marxism and the creation of the Bolshevik Party

For **Lenin** and other Russian Marxists, Marxist theory threw up some major problems:

1. Though Marx believed he had explained the development of history, he had not been able to explain the process. How were movements from one stage of history to another and on to classless communism to occur?
2. What was an economically and socially backward country like Russia supposed to do? After all, for socialism to be reached, the capitalist stage has to be achieved first. In a strictly Marxist sense, Russia’s revolutionaries should be trying to push Russia towards capitalism, so that at some time in the future, it can then be overthrown in a revolution.
3. Where did this leave Russia’s Marxists? Were they to dedicate their lives to achieving a goal which in their hearts they detested – capitalism - and which, had they been born in an economically advanced western country, they would be trying to destroy?

Lenin’s major contribution to Marxist ideology was to provide solutions to these problems. (see below).



- Lenin was born Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov in 1870 in Simbirsk (900kms east of Moscow).
- His father was an inspector of schools while his mother was the daughter of a doctor and a landowner. His was a comfortable background and the family might be described today as “upwardly mobile”.
- However, Lenin’s elder brother, Alexander, was involved in revolutionary activity. In 1887 he was hanged for attempting to assassinate the tsar.
- Though a gifted student, Lenin’s entry into university was delayed because of his brother’s activities. He eventually gained entry to Kazan University where he studied law. He was expelled due to involvement in a student revolt but was eventually allowed to sit his exams.
- For a brief time in the early 1890s, he practised as a lawyer.

Lenin and the Bolshevik Party

- In 1893, Lenin moved to St Petersburg. By now he had been strongly drawn to the scientific ideas of Marxism and became involved in various Marxist discussion groups. ⁶
- It was at this time that he met his future wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya. In 1895, Lenin became involved in a major anti-government strike movement. Following his arrest and trial, he spent the next four years in prison and then Siberian exile. In Siberia he married Krupskaya.
- In 1900, Lenin and Krupskaya moved to London. He set up a newspaper called Iskra (the Spark) to promote the ideas of the (Marxist) Russian Social Democratic Labour Party.
- Between 1900 and 1917, Lenin spent only a few months inside Russia. During these years, he developed his ideas on Marxist theory which were to have such a profound effect on Russia (see below).

The key moment for the Social Democratic Party came at the party’s Second Congress in 1903. **The party split** into two separate factions that were to become known as the **Bolsheviks** and the **Mensheviks**.

Lenin led the **Bolshevik** faction. He argued:

- The party should comprise a small number of dedicated, highly disciplined revolutionaries.
- The party should be centralised and hierarchical.
- The party’s purpose was to educate the working class about socialist ideals and then lead it towards revolution.

The leading figure of the **Menshevik** faction was Martov. He and others argued:

- The party should be broad based and take in a wide membership.
- The party should have a democratic structure and allow party members to argue against the ideas of the leadership.

⁶ Bolshevik ideology, its roots in Marxism and Lenin’s development of Marxist theory will be dealt with below.

- It also sought to improve the conditions of the working class in the period before a revolution.
- The Mensheviks were actually “more Marxist” than the Bolsheviks, arguing that it would take a long time for the Russian working class to grow, and for it to develop a revolutionary consciousness.

In 1905, revolution broke out in Russia. Lenin returned in October but the tsarist regime was soon back in control ⁷; Lenin was forced to flee. He spent the next twelve years in useless exile. Bolshevik numbers declined, the party was infiltrated by the tsarist secret police (the okhrana), there were petty internal squabbles. Lenin wrote articles that few seemed to read. ⁸ However, he believed that the outbreak of war in 1914 offered an opportunity for the revolution. Once the early patriotic fervour had subsided, Lenin believed that Russia’s armies could become fertile ground for Bolshevik propaganda. He strongly opposed those who believed the workers should take up arms against German workers. Instead he believed they should take up arms against Russian officers and capitalists.

Lenin’s critics who attacked the non-democratic nature of the eventual Bolshevik regime have suggested that he was never a sincere Marxist but merely used Marxism as a cover for his greed for power. The fact that Lenin modified Marxist principles might be a further reason to suggest that this was so. However, consider the following view:

“...we must not underestimate the influence of Marx’s ideas on Lenin... he firmly believed in Marx, and above all in the most fundamental of the Marxist principles that if a workers’ movement is not revolutionary, it is nothing.” ⁹

However, it is one thing to believe in Marxism; it is quite another to put it into practice and as was mentioned earlier,

- Marx gave no instructions on how this was to be done.
- It was Lenin’s key contribution that he was to provide some practicality to the theory.
 - From Marxism came what can loosely be termed **Marxism-Leninism**.

Lenin’s writings

Lenin was an inveterate writer. He was constantly putting his thinking into pamphlets, newspaper articles and books. It is beyond the scope of this book to delve into the detail of each of his works. Thus, what follows is a summary of some of the key works of Lenin and how these affected the main features of Communist (Bolshevik) ideology at the time of the revolution.

The main works that will be considered are:

- *What Is To Be Done?* (1902)
- *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916)
- *The State and Revolution* (1917)

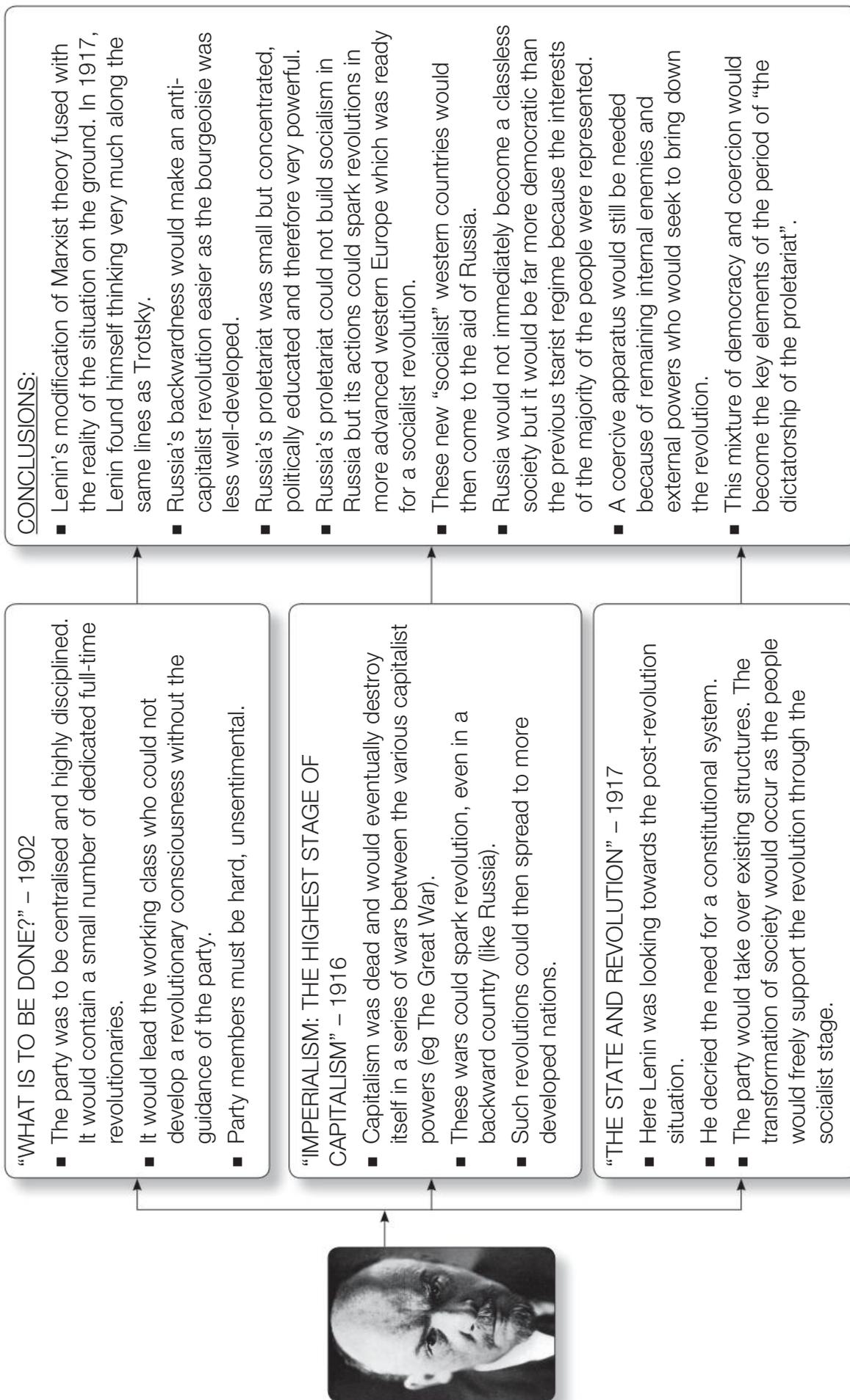
The main ideas contained in these works and the conclusions that were drawn from these are summarised in Figure 12.2.

⁷ See Chapter Six.

⁸ The 1970 movie *Nicholas and Alexandra* provides a Hollywood view of the collapse of the tsarist regime. It includes several scenes of Lenin’s time in exile and back in Russia in 1917 which succinctly illustrate the fortunes of the Bolshevik Party. Lenin is played effectively by the actor Michael Bryant.

⁹ Carew Hunt, R N, *The Theory and Practice of Communism*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1963 ed, p 171

Figure 12.2 The development of Lenin's thinking: a summary



Exercise 12.2

Correctly match each of the terms listed in the box on the right, with the description provided on the left.

1	The middle class in capitalist society		
2	Lenin's work where he argues for a small conspiratorial party		DAS KAPITAL
3	The process which explained the development of history		DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT STATE AND REVOLUTION
4	Period of transition on the way to classless communism		PROLETARIAT
5	The working class in a capitalist society		WHAT IS TO BE DONE?
6	Marx's multi-volume work which explained his theories		THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO
7	Marx's intellectual partner who completed his work after the former's death		FRIEDRICH ENGELS
8	Lenin's revolutionary partner who thinking coincided with his in 1917		LEON TROTSKY
9	Marx's brief ground-breaking treatise of 1848		BOURGEOISIE THE CLASS STRUGGLE
10	Here Lenin outlined his ideas for the state's organisation post revolution		

What do the historians have to say about the Main features of Communist (Bolshevik) ideology at the time of the revolution?

1. David Christian: Power and Privilege

Christian explains the situation facing Russia in 1917 and shows how the Provisional Government had failed to provide an effective solution to the problems facing the country. This reflected its impractical attempt to try to gain the support of all sections of the population. Christian then suggests that in 1917 Russia faced two key political alternatives: a right-wing solution, probably in the form of a military dictatorship, and Lenin's left-wing alternative. On his return to Russia, Lenin outlined his strategy in The April Theses. He had modified Marxist ideas to fit the situation facing Russia. Lenin's thinking meant that:

"...rather than supporting bourgeois governments, proletarian parties should try to overthrow them... Above all, it meant that they should take seriously the task of organizing an anti-capitalist revolution, rather than postponing it to an indefinite future." ¹⁰

2. Lenin's April Theses, 1917 ¹¹



There must be no parliamentary republic... but a republic of Soviets of Workers', Agricultural Labourers', and Peasants' Deputies throughout the country, from top to bottom.. It isn't our immediate task to 'introduce Socialism', but only to bring social production and distribution of products under the control of the Soviets of Workers' Deputies.

3. Elyse Topalian: V I Lenin

Topalian argues Lenin realized that the idea of mass revolt in Russia was not developing in the way that Marx had suggested. It was this which prompted him to produce "What is to be done?" in 1902. The title was borrowed from the 1860s novel of Chernyshevsky which Lenin's executed brother, Alexander, had given Lenin to read. Lenin added a subtitle: "The Burning Questions of our Movement." Lenin argued against the Marxist line that the workers would rise up spontaneously and instead that their beliefs would have to be moulded. Calling "What is to be done?" one of the "most important works of the twentieth century", Topalian says of Lenin's work:

"...It was a purely practical approach. It was his style to deal only in immediate practical issues. Lenin left only one issue rather vague – how to govern in the aftermath of the revolution when the time came." ¹²

¹⁰ Christian, D, Power and Privilege, Pitman, Melbourne, 1986, p 146

¹¹ Lenin's Selected Works, vol 2, part 1, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1952, pp13-7

¹² Topalian, E, V I Lenin, Franklin Watts, New York, 1983, p 55

Chapter Thirteen

The October Revolution

Lenin and the Bolshevik Party in 1917

The major difference between the February and October Revolutions is that February was “leaderless and spontaneous” (according to Charques), while **October was a “carefully planned coup d’ état”**. In his later works on the events of 1917, the leading Bolshevik activist and writer, Leon Trotsky, would try to argue that the Bolshevik Party also played a major role in the events of February. This was of course simply propaganda. In fact, the leading members of the party were not even in Petrograd when the revolution occurred:

- Lenin was in Switzerland
- Trotsky (who formerly joined the party later in 1917) was in New York
- Stalin and other leading figures were in exile in Siberia.

In fact, in early 1917, the Bolshevik Party was very much a minor feature of Russian political life. However, soon after Lenin’s return to Russia, the Bolshevik Party became a key player, and ultimately victor in the political battles of 1917.

Lenin and the October Revolution 1917

Lenin played a pivotal role in the events of 1917 which culminated in the Bolshevik seizure of power in November.

- He ordered party members to **end all cooperation with the Provisional Government** on his return to Petrograd in April 1917.
 - Party leaders who made it back to Petrograd before Lenin, including Stalin, had backed the new regime.
 - Lenin outlined what was to become the basis of future Bolshevik policy in **The April Theses**.
- Lenin insisted on total opposition. His chief catch-cry of the time was **“all power to the Soviets”**. This proved to be a shrewd move on Lenin’s part:
 - It disassociated the Bolsheviks completely from the string of failures which beset the PG throughout 1917.
 - It allowed the party to establish its own clear identity.
- Lenin proved to be **an able propagandist**. At the time of the February Revolution, the Bolsheviks were a minor force in Russian politics. However, Lenin’s use of simple sloganeering and willingness to adopt populist positions, did much to win over popular support.
 - “All power to the Soviets” appealed to workers and soldiers who saw their interests more clearly represented there than in the PG.
 - “Land, peace and bread” tapped into the main concerns of the Russian people at the time.

- The only interest of the peasants was acquiring land. It did not matter that this might conflict with Marxist principles, support of this desire would gain the Bolsheviks support.
- All Russians longed for peace. Lenin promised this peace, though the price of that peace was never spelled out.
- He promised the workers bread though where it was coming from was another matter.
- Lenin realised that in the aftermath of the collapse of the Kornilov coup in September, the Bolsheviks had a **one and only opportunity** to take power. Lenin's reasoning was:
 - They had gained control of the Petrograd (and other) Soviets following September elections. Trotsky had become President in September.
 - The Bolsheviks' efforts in quelling the Kornilov coup had presented the party as the true defenders of the revolution.
 - The Provisional Government was demoralised following the failure of the July Offensive against the Germans and Kornilov's actions.
- Lenin had to **work hard convincing his colleagues** that the time was right to take action.
 - In late September he wrote to the party's Central Committee arguing that if they did not seize power now "History will never forgive us".
 - On 10 October he returned secretly to Petrograd. Following an all-night session, he finally gained his colleagues' agreement, though Zinoviev and Kamenev remained opposed, fearing that civil war might break out.
- **Lenin accepted Trotsky's argument** that any seizure of power be delayed until the meeting of the Second Congress of All Russian Soviets on 25 October. Trotsky's view was that the Bolsheviks' action could then be presented as being taken in the name of the Soviets rather than merely as the Bolsheviks acting alone.

Though it was Lenin who took the lead and presented the arguments for a coup, it was Trotsky who actually planned the takeover. Trotsky's key role is summarised in Figure 13.1.

Figure 13.1 Trotsky's role in the October coup 1917



October 1917

On 24 October, the Provisional Government attempted to close down the Bolshevik newspaper *Rabochy Put* (*Workers Path*). Bolshevik soldiers retook it later in the morning.

- Kerensky then ordered all but one of Petrograd's bridges raised (as had been down during the July Days).
- This led to armed clashes between government and pro-Bolshevik forces.
- By 5.00 pm, the Bolsheviks had seized the Central Telegraph Office.

Early on 25 October, Bolshevik forces seized various government facilities across the city. Most military units joined the revolt.

- The Provisional Government had no control of communications and no troops to defend it. Kerensky later lamented that all he needed was 500 men to quell the Bolshevik revolt.
- He managed to escape before the assault on the Winter Palace.
- Lenin sent out a proclamation across Russia declaring the removal of the Provisional Government by the Military Revolutionary Committee.

Figure 13.2: Scene from Eisenstein's 1927 film "October"



The few remaining pro-PG troops fled the Winter Palace which was occupied late on the 25 October in an almost bloodless takeover. The cruiser *Aurora* fired a blank shell at the Palace later in the evening. Later Bolshevik accounts of the taking of the Winter Palace would depict the action in dramatic, heroic terms, seen most clearly in Sergei Eisenstein's 1927 film, "October".

Kerensky's private secretary, Dr David Soskice, gave this eye-witness account of the storming of the Winter Palace.

*"...The Aurora discharged a number of shots at the Palace. A violent fusillade of machine guns and light artillery were also directed against it. A battle ensued, during which there were some hundred casualties on either side. Gradually the Bolsheviks forced an entry and invaded the palace.... The Palace was pillaged and devastated from top to bottom by the Bolshevik armed mob, as though by a horde of barbarians... The library of Alexander III was forced open and ransacked, books and manuscripts destroyed... I will refrain from describing the hideous scenes which took place in the wine cellars, and the fate to which some of the captured women soldiers were submitted. Such was the inaugural ceremony of the new Bolshevik regime..."*¹

For a more romanticised version of the events refer to John Reed's book *"Ten Days that shook the world"*. Reed was an American communist, close to Lenin. Stalin later had Reed's book banned because in it, Reed did not make a single reference to Stalin's role in the revolution.

¹ The Guardian, 15 November 1987

Hollywood turned Reed's book into an Oscar-winning movie in the 1980s, "Reds" starring Warren Beatty.

Reed's book can be found at: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/reed/1919/10days/10days/>



On the evening of 25 October, members of the Congress of Soviets attacked the Bolshevik actions and many deputies walked out in protest. Trotsky ridiculed them, telling them that they could now go *"into the dustbin of history"*. Lenin arrived later and announced the formation of a Bolshevik government. He immediately called for peace with Germany and land for the peasants. The coup in Petrograd was almost bloodless but in other centres, such as Moscow, the Bolsheviks had a harder time taking control.

Exercise 13.1

Place the events listed in the box below in the correct chronological order.

- Following the failure of the July Days uprising, Lenin flees to Finland.
- Lenin opposes the patriotic calls for Russians to join the war effort against Germany.
- Lenin contacts his Bolshevik allies and says the time is right to take power.
- Trotsky organises the Bolshevik November coup.
- Kerensky's Commander-in-Chief, General Kornilov attempts to seize power.
- Lenin returns to Petrograd to convince the Central Committee on the wisdom of taking power.
- Lenin announces "The April Theses" and calls for "all power to the Soviets".
- Lenin announces the formation of a Bolshevik government.
- Bolshevik popularity increases following their role in the suppression of the Kornilov coup.
- Lenin returns to Russia thanks to a sealed train trip across German-occupied Europe.

1st event	
2nd event	
3rd event	
4th event	
5th event	
6th event	
7th event	
8th event	
9th event	
10th event	

What do the historians have to say about Lenin and the October Revolution of 1917?

1. Adam Ulam: *Lenin and the Bolsheviks*

Ulam highlights Lenin's authority within the Bolshevik Party. This was apparent at the time of the April Theses. When Lenin enunciated his policies in early April, he was at first roundly attacked. The April Theses were considered anti-Marxist. Others complained that Lenin was out of touch with the reality of Russia of mid-1917 and argued that once he understood the true situation, he would modify his ideas. Yet, as Ulam points at, after early protests, Lenin was able to bend the party organisation to his will, a pattern that would be repeated in the future.

*"...This was the legacy of the years of isolation and defiance, 1907-17; he now dominated his Party morally and intellectually. Bolshevism without him was unimaginable."*²

² Ulam, A, *Lenin and the Bolsheviks*, Collins, London, 1965, p 433

2. Christopher Hill: Lenin and the Russian Revolution

Hill provides an explanation for Lenin's haste in seeking a takeover of power in late 1917. He argues that Lenin had two main fears: firstly, that the army command might give up Petrograd and the fleet to the Germans, as a lesser evil to surrendering it to Soviet control; and secondly, a fear of anarchy in the countryside as peasants continued to seize land, as this might play into the hands of a military dictator who could argue the need to "restore order".

*"...hence Lenin's own continual insistence on the necessity both for firm government and for good relations with the mass of the peasantry, and hence the eternally vigilant eye which he kept on generals with "Bonapartist" tendencies."*³

3. Robert V Daniels: Lenin gambled wildly and won

Daniels suggests that Lenin was gambling wildly in seeking power. He argues Lenin's opponents were right in arguing the Bolsheviks had little chance against the PG's military forces. In late October, argues Daniels, Lenin was failing to win over his colleagues, who preferred to wait for a multi-party revolution by the Congress of Soviets. It was Kerensky's error on 23 October of moving against the Bolsheviks and sparking fears of a right-wing coup which galvanised them:

*"...and brought out their utmost effort to defend themselves. The Bolsheviks could not calculate... that the forces of the government would apathetically collapse. With... no intention before the fact, they had the city in the palms of their hands."*⁴

³ Hill, C, Lenin and the Russian Revolution, English Universities Press, London, 1947, pp 124-5

⁴ Daniels, RV, Lenin gambled wildly and won, from The Russian Revolution and Bolshevik Victory, ed Adams EA, DC Heath and Co, Lexington, 1972, p 185

Chapter Fourteen

SOVNARKOM and the early Bolshevik regime

The new government

In October 1917, the Bolsheviks claimed that they had seized power in the name of the Soviets. It had been Trotsky's idea to delay the coup until the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets met. The announcement of the overthrow of the Provisional Government was made in the Smolny Institute where the Congress was meeting. Few tears were shed for the demise of the Provisional Government. It had been fully discredited since the days of the Kornilov coup attempt in September. However, it was one thing to welcome the collapse of the Provisional Government; it was quite another to entertain the prospect of a fully Bolshevik government.

- Most Russian workers in the cities supported the idea of Soviet power, but not necessarily that of Bolshevik power.
- It was expected that after the fall of the Provisional Government, a coalition socialist government would be formed. Even some of the leading Bolsheviks believed this would be the case.

However, Lenin had no intention of sharing power. The future government of Russia was to be a Bolshevik government, sharing power with none!

When the All Russian Congress of Soviets met on the evening of 25 October, the Bolsheviks announced that power had been seized in its name. The other socialist parties protested at what had happened, arguing that the Bolsheviks did not represent the Russian people. Many non-Bolshevik deputies stormed out of the Congress in protest. Trotsky's reply to these parties was:

"...you are miserable bankrupts; your role is played out; go where you ought to be – into the dustbin of history!"

This meant that only the Bolsheviks and the left-wing Socialist Revolutionaries were left. The Bolsheviks thus had a majority in the congress.

*"...When Lenin... rose to address the Congress, he was greeted with an indescribable ovation... These were the halcyon days of the Revolution..."*¹

For one who was received so ecstatically, Lenin's appearance and demeanour did not suggest the appearance of an all-conquering hero, if John Reed is to be believed.² This is how Reed describes Lenin's appearance at the Congress:

"...a short stocky figure, with a big head set down in his shoulders, bald and bulging. Little eyes, a snubbish nose, wide generous mouth and heavy chin.. Dressed in shabby clothes, his

¹ Kochan, L, *The Making of Modern Russia*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1962, p 253

² John Reed was a radical American journalist who was present in Russia in 1917, became close to the leading Bolsheviks and for a while even fought with Red Guard units. His book, *Ten Days That Shook The World*, became the basis for the Oscar-winning film *Reds*, starring Warren Beatty.

trousers much too long for him. Unimpressive, to be the idol of a mob, loved and revered as perhaps few leaders in history have been..."³

Lenin declared that a Bolshevik government had been formed. The new government was called "The Council of People's Commissars" or the SOVNARKOM.

The more important members of the SOVARKOM were:

- Lenin – Chairman
- Trotsky – Commissar of Foreign Affairs (till February 1918)
Commissar of War (from February 1918)
- Rykov – Commissar of Internal Affairs
- Kollantai – Commissar of Social Welfare
- Lunacharsky – Commissar of Popular Enlightenment
- Stalin – Commissar of Nationalities

The weakness of the Bolsheviks in late 1917

It was one thing to seize power as the Bolsheviks succeeded in doing in October 1917; it was quite another to be able to hold on to that power, and a distant dream to be able to build socialism. Figure 14.1 illustrates the parlous state of the new Bolshevik regime at the end of 1917.

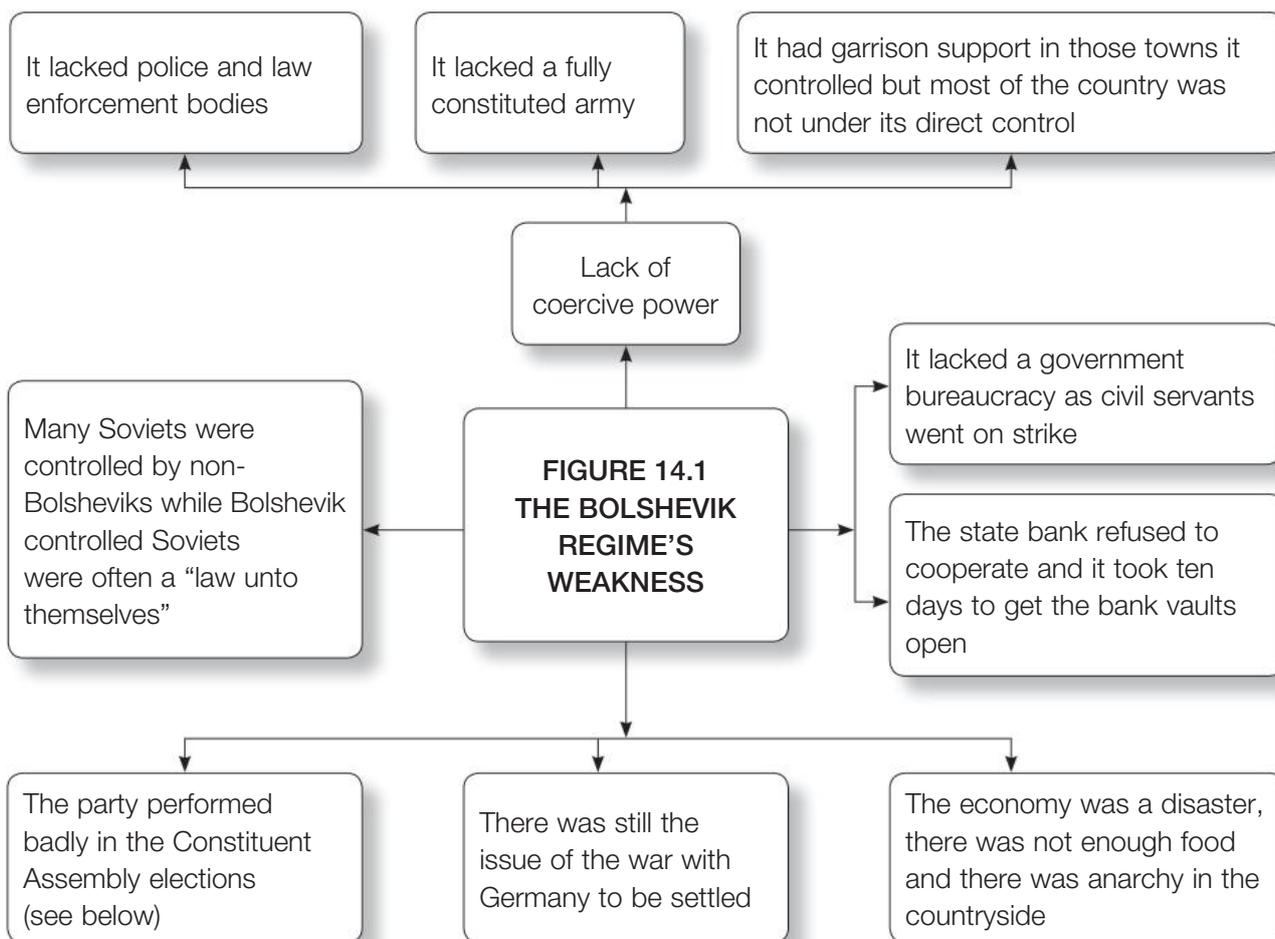
Writing just before the October coup 1917, Lenin had declared in "*State and Revolution*" that the new regime would be very popular, that the people would recognize it was ruling in their name and that there would be a genuine expansion of democracy. In the early months of the new regime, this is essentially what happened. Early Bolshevik measures (see below) emphasized local control, such as worker control of factories and the recognition of peasant land seizures.

However, this view needs to be qualified by two key factors:

1. The initial weakness of the new regime gave Lenin no choice but to pass measures of a populist nature.
2. Accompanying the series of populist measures introduced by the SOVNARKOM was the creation of an authoritarian coercive apparatus (see below).

³ Reed, J, *Ten Days That Shook The World*, New York, 1960 ed, p 170

Figure 14.1 The Bolshevik regime's weaknesses



The early measures passed by the SOVNARKOM

The SOVNARKOM did not bother gaining the sanction of the Soviet for its early measures; it ruled by decree. The new regime wasted no time in introducing its program. What follows is a list of the main decrees passed between November 1917 and March 1918.

- Lenin's first measure was the **Peace Decree**.
 - Lenin had been well aware that the main reason for the failure of the Provisional Government had been its decision to continue the war with Germany. Lenin was prepared to pay any price in the short term to end hostilities with Germany.
 - Lenin's decree invited *"all the belligerent peoples and their governments to open immediate negotiations for an honest democratic peace"*.
 - The current Russian Commander-in Chief, General Dukhonin refused to obey the instruction to offer an immediate armistice. He was dismissed and replaced by a Bolshevik lawyer, Krylenko.
 - Still fearing opposition from the army command, Lenin broadcast on 26 October to Russia's soldiers and sailors: *"...The question of peace is in your hands. Do not let the counter-revolutionary generals wreck the great cause of peace."*

- The second measure was the **Land Decree**.
 - Peasants were given the right to seize the land of the gentry and there was to be no compensation. The land was to belong to the entire people.
 - This was not what the Bolsheviks wanted in the long term. Private land ownership was a decidedly capitalist notion and hardly the goal of a socialist revolution.
 - However, they had no choice but to accede to what was already taking place in the country and over which they had little control. To have opposed the peasants at this point would have almost certainly have brought down the new regime.
- There was a series of measures passed in **favour of the workers**. These included:
 - a maximum eight hour working day
 - unemployment pay, old age pensions and sickness benefits
 - workers' control of factories
 - from early 1918 workers' control of the railway.
- There were measures to **break the power and wealth of the church**:
 - church lands were confiscated
 - civil marriage was introduced
 - in January 1918 church and state were formally separated
- There were moves to bring about **equality between men and women**:
 - the 1918 Marriage Code gave women legal equality with their husbands
 - divorce was made much easier
 - in 1920 abortion was legalised
 - in 1921 a Women's Department was set up called the Zhenontdel
- The organisation of the **armed forces** was also democratised:
 - army officers were now to be elected
 - officers would be under the control of army soviets and soldiers' committees
 - ranks were abolished
 - there was an end to uniforms and saluting.

Exercise 14.1

Answer the following questions. Place your answer in the space provided.

1	Why was the creation of SOVNARKOM not universally welcomed throughout Russia?	
2	Where did Trotsky suggest opponents of the revolution should go?	

3	Who was John Reed?	
4	What reason might a cynic give for the populist nature of the SOVNARKOM's early measures?	
5	Why was Lenin so insistent on the Peace Decree?	
6	What was the Land Decree?	
7	Why might Lenin have had mixed feelings about the Land Decree?	
8	How was industrial life in Russia democratised?	
9	How was the power of the church weakened?	
10	Identify four ways in which the armed forces were democratised.	

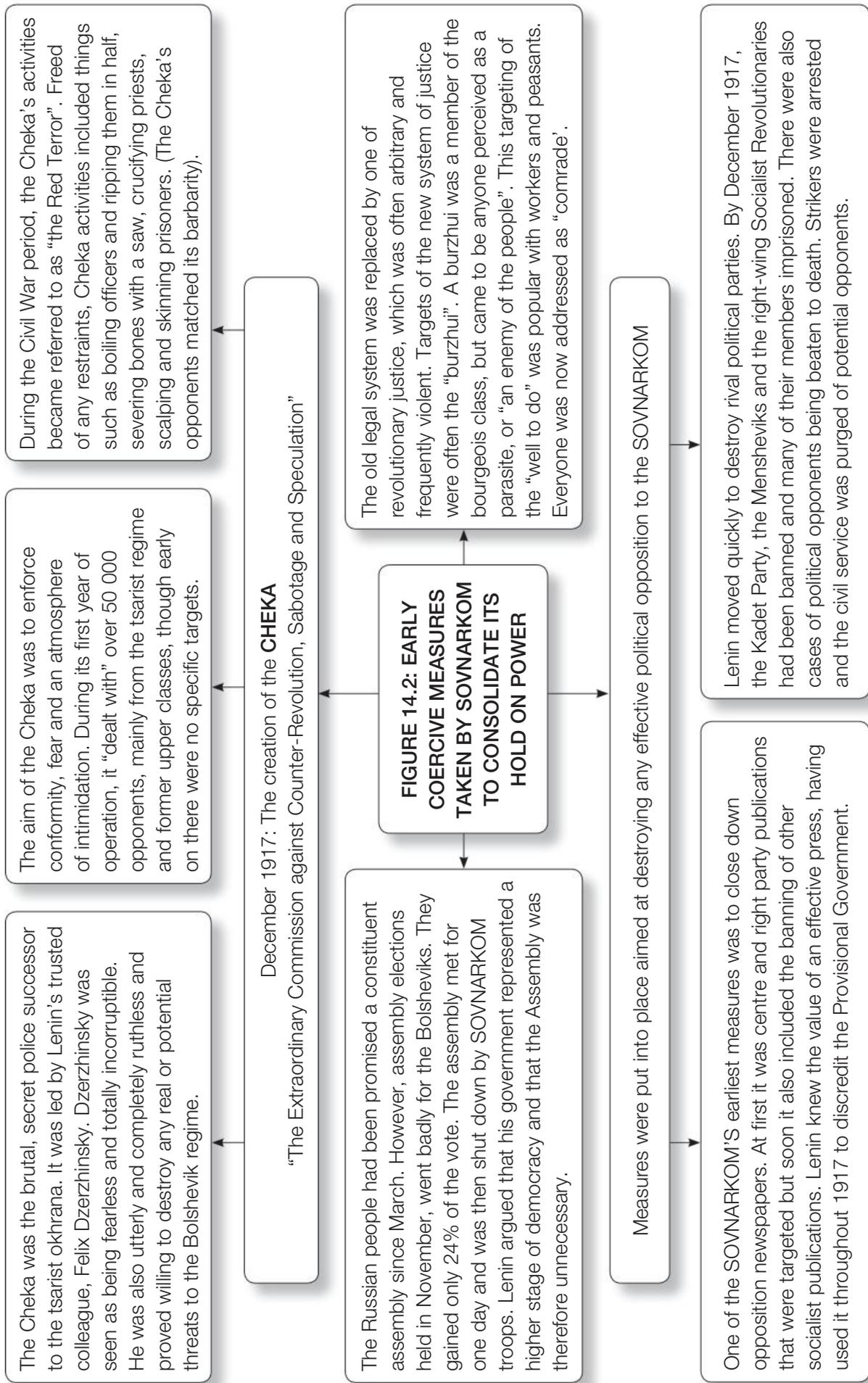
The coercive nature of the new Bolshevik regime

In *“State and Revolution”*:

- Lenin had expressed his expectation that the new regime would be popular and able to rule in the name of the people.
- However, in the same work he expressed his belief that a continuing and strong coercive apparatus would also be essential if the regime was to survive. He held no illusions that counter-revolutionary forces would do their very best to bring down his infant regime.

Figure 14.2 highlights some of the early measures taken by the SOVNARKOM to consolidate its power.

Figure 14.2: Early coercive measures taken by SOVNARKOM to consolidate its hold on power



Exercise 14.2

Match the descriptions on the left with the terms listed on the right.

1	The head of the new Bolshevik secret police		SOVNARKOM
2	Women's department set up in 1921		THE RED TERROR
3	Term used to describe a member of "the bourgeois class"		STALIN
4	Bolshevik secret police established in December 1917		CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY
5	One of the first political parties banned by the Bolsheviks in December 1917		DZERZINSKY
6	Term used as the standard form of greeting in revolutionary Russia		ZHENONTDEL
7	The Council of People's Commissars		COMRADE
8	Body elected in November 1917		BURZHUI
9	The Commissar of Nationalities		KADETS
10	Term used to describe the activities of the Bolshevik secret police during the Civil War		THE CHEKA

What do the historians have to say about the social and political reforms of the early Soviet government?

1. R H B Lockhart: *Reports on Bolshevism in Russia*

Lockhart was a British consular official in Russia at the time of the revolution. Today we might be more candid and call him a spy or a secret agent. It was part of Lockhart's brief to keep the British government informed about developments inside Russia after the revolution. Britain was most concerned that Russia might withdraw from the war with Germany. Lockhart highlights some of the ways the new regime coped with its early months in office, though bear in mind that he is clearly no friend of the Bolshevik regime.

*"...The Bolsheviks have established a rule of force and oppression unequalled in the history of any autocracy... The worst crimes of the Bolsheviks have been against their socialist opponents... (they) have abolished even the most primitive forms of justice... (they) have restored the barbarous methods of torture..."*⁴

2. Martin McCauley: *The Soviet Union Since 1917*

McCauley argues that, though the Bolsheviks' main source of support was from the workers not the peasants, it was the peasants who made the greater gains early in the regime. Lenin and Trotsky both supported the idea of state capitalism early on, ie the idea of guiding the economy from the centre while leaving it in private hands. Even the Workers' Control decree did not change this. The situation remained thus until late June 1918 when War Communism was ushered in (see Chapter seventeen).

*"...Hence between November 1917 and June 1918 the peasants and the workers were treated quite differently. The land decree afforded the peasants all they wanted from the revolution but the aspirations of the workers, the backbone of Bolshevik support, were not satisfied until June 1918."*⁵

3. Adam Ulam: *Lenin and the Bolsheviks*

When describing the period immediately after the November coup, Ulam is at pains to highlight the desperate situation in the country. Food was even scarce in the Kremlin and anti-Bolshevik generals were preparing their counter-revolution. However, the general exhaustion in the country worked against any immediate attempt to snatch power from the Bolsheviks. Thus, in early 1918, Lenin's government was probably as popular as it would ever get.

*"...The industrial worker was in the main behind it. The peasant, if not converted to Bolshevism, was at least pacified by the land decree. The spectre of Civil War was still not imminent."*⁶

4 Lockhart, RHB, from A Collection of Reports on Bolshevism in Russia, Parliamentary Paper No 157 (Australia), vol 58, pp 7-8

5 McCauley, M, The Soviet Union Since 1917, Longman, Harlow, 1981, p 19

6 Ulam, A, Lenin and the Bolsheviks, Collins, London, 1965, pp 506-7

Chapter Fifteen

The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk

Introduction

For Lenin, the immediate crucial issue facing his new government was the conclusion of peace with Germany. It is no accident that the first act of the new regime was the issuing of the Peace Decree. Lenin knew that the decision of the Provisional Government after it came to power to continue the war with Germany was the fundamental reason for its ultimate failure. For Lenin peace was indispensable:

- He knew that the country was in a desperate situation. The economy was in chaos and millions were starving.
- He knew that his hold on power in late 1917 was hanging by a thread.
- He was certain that counter-revolutionary elements would soon be organising to bring down his regime.

As a result, he insisted on peace with Germany at any price. He had to use all his persuasive powers and authority to enforce his view on the party. Bukharin believed that Russia should launch a revolutionary war against Germany which would then ignite revolutions across Europe and thus end Russia's isolation. The Commissar for Foreign Affairs in the SOVNARKOM was Trotsky. Trotsky believed that the Germans were in a weak state and would relish being rid of an Eastern Front. He proposed his "no war, no peace" strategy. The ineffectiveness of this was soon shown when, after being briefly stunned, the German High Command proceeded to move on Petrograd. It was then that Lenin stepped in and demanded peace negotiations be pursued in earnest.

The Peace Process

- Appeals were sent to the major allied powers (Britain, France and the US) to open immediate peace talks with Germany. These appeals were quickly ignored, though the United States had shown interest.
- By mid-November the new Bolshevik army commander, Krylenko, had reached army GHQ, having removed several opposition generals along the way. The former Commander-in Chief, Dukhonin was arrested. Krylenko was unable to control a crowd of soldiers and sailors which proceeded to beat Dukhonin to death.
- The first talks with the Central Powers (Germany and Austria-Hungary) began on 3 December and an armistice was signed on 15 December.
- Formal peace talks began on 22 December at Brest Litovsk. The main participants were the German and Austrian Foreign Ministers, General Max Hoffmann of the German Supreme Command, while the main Bolshevik representative early on was A A Ioffe.
- Ioffe was soon replaced by Trotsky who tried to slow down the negotiations.
- Lenin realised that the Germans might resume hostilities with the aim of bringing down his regime and so on 20 January argued strongly that the German terms must be accepted, no matter how "annexationist".

- A Party Central Committee meeting of 22 January voted against the naïve revolutionary war strategy but they could not bring themselves to accept Lenin’s view and backed Trotsky’s “no war, no peace” line.
- On 10 February, the Russians stopped their talks with the Germans.
- On 18 February, the German army resumed its attack.

“...As they had foreseen, the Bolsheviks were forced to sue for peace for fear that if they attempted resistance they would be overthrown by the anti-Bolshevik elements of the army. An onerous peace was eventually signed on 3 March.”¹

Figure 15.1 The main terms of the Treaty of Brest Litovsk

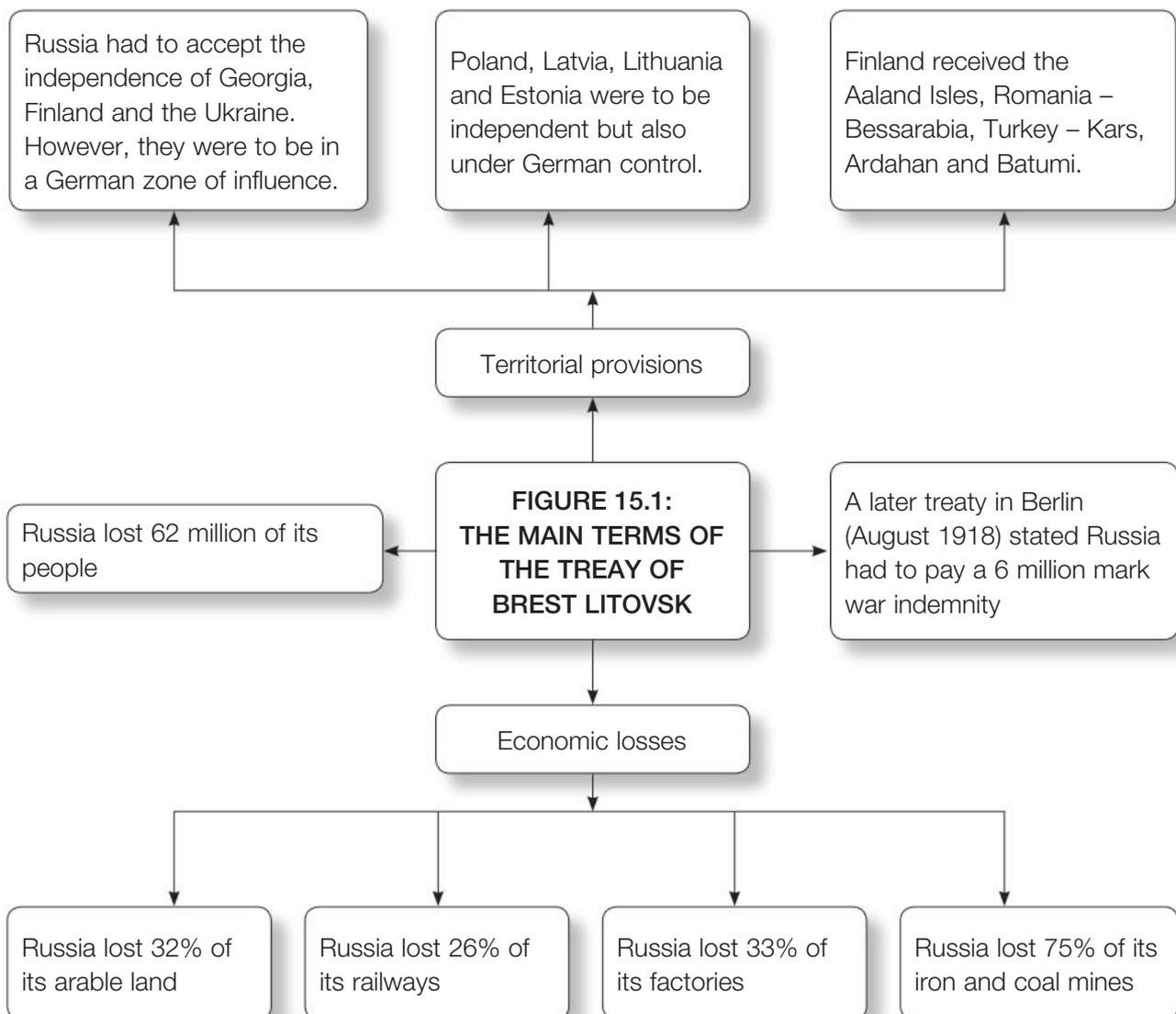
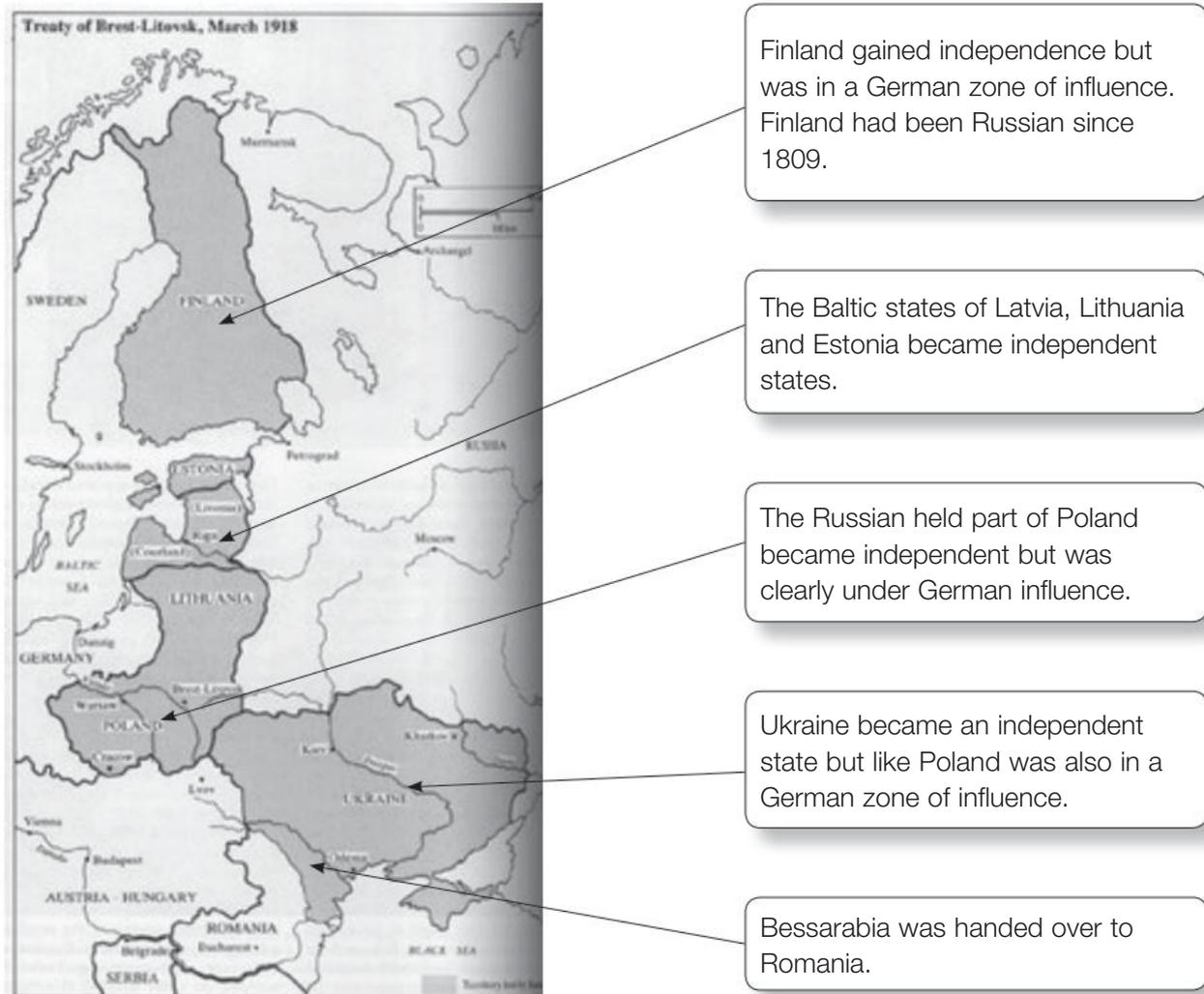


Figure 15.2 illustrates the main territorial losses suffered by Russia at Brest Litovsk.

¹ Schapiro, L, 1917, Temple Smith, Hounslow, 1984, pp 169-70

Figure 15.2 Russia's main territorial losses at Brest Litovsk



"...The Bolsheviks, it is true, had exercised little control over the territory they had ceded. The Russian heartland, where they were strongest, was hardly touched. The communists could soothe their hurt pride with the hope that, come the socialist revolution in Germany, the treaty would be torn up."²

The significance of the Treaty of Brest Litovsk

In a sense, the Treaty of Brest Litovsk had no real long-term significance. The defeat of Germany at the hands of the allies in November 1918 meant that the provisions of the treaty became null and void.³ However, the treaty was of major significance in the short to medium term.

On an immediate political level, it removed one major concern for the Bolshevik government – the German threat. However, it also caused major consternation inside Russia.

- It was one thing to be the standard-bearer of anti-imperialism in the world, but it was quite something else to hand over vast territories and 62 million people to one's enemies.
- There were major arguments inside the Bolshevik party over the treaty.

² McCauley, M, *The Soviet Union Since 1917*, Longman, Harlow, 1981, pp 25-6

³ In the 1922 Treaty of Rapallo, Germany and the Soviet Union agreed to mutually declare Brest Litovsk nullified, and cancelled any claims each might have on the other because of the war.

“...In the crucial Central Committee meeting of 23 February, the voting went seven for acceptance, four against, and four abstainers.”⁴

- However, following Lenin’s entreaties, the party soon succumbed to reality and agreed to the treaty terms.
- However, Brest Litovsk destroyed the relations between the left Socialist Revolutionaries and the Bolsheviks:
 - The left SRs voted against ratification of the treaty and left the SOVNARKOM. They maintained romantic notions of a revolutionary war.
 - On 6 July, the German ambassador to the new Russian capital, Moscow, Count von Mirbach was murdered by the left SR, Bliumkin. A left SR revolt ensued which saw the arrest of Felix Dzerzinsky. A left SR commander on the River Volga even declared war on Germany but he was soon killed.
 - The revolt broke the link between the left SRs and the Bolsheviks. The Bolsheviks now changed their name to the All-Russian Communist Party.

The Treaty of Brest Litovsk was also a **stimulus to the possibility of civil war**, which with the benefit of hindsight was probably inevitable. There were many pockets of resistance to the Bolsheviks.

- Apart from the left SRs who attempted revolt, there were those parties who had been banned in 1917, such as the Kadets and the right SRs.
- There were still many who were angered at the treatment which had been meted out to the Constituent Assembly.
- Counter-revolutionary forces were gathering to remove the Bolsheviks. It might be argued that the treaty was also the final straw for them as, what was at stake now, was Russia’s sovereignty. The Bolsheviks had to be removed for the sake of restoring Russia territorial integrity.

The whole point of the Treaty of Brest Litovsk had been to end the war with Germany. This might have been a wise strategy for an impoverished and broken Russia, but it spelled potential disaster to Russia’s former western allies who were still fighting Germany on the Western Front. Brest Litovsk thus led to the **Allied Intervention** against the Bolshevik regime.

- The alleged purpose of the allied intervention in 1918 was to bring Russia back into the war against Germany. By year’s end, there were British, French, American and Japanese troops on Russian territory. The Japanese would not fully evacuate the Far East of Russia until 1922.
- However, the true purpose of the allied intervention can be seen with the fact that allied forces remained in Russia assisting the Bolsheviks’ “white” enemies in the Civil War, long after the war with Germany was over.

⁴ Kochan, L, The Making of Modern Russia, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1962, p 257

Exercise 15.1

Indicate whether or not each of the following statements is a fact or an opinion.

1	The Russians found it difficult to present a totally united front during the peace negotiations.	FACT/ OPINION
2	The Treaty of Brest Litovsk resulted in major economic and territorial losses for Russia.	FACT/ OPINION
3	Trotsky negotiated in a skillful manner at Brest Litovsk.	FACT/ OPINION
4	Bukharin's idea of launching a revolutionary war was naïve in the extreme.	FACT/ OPINION
5	Lenin was insistent on coming to a peace agreement with the Germans.	FACT/ OPINION
6	Many former Russian lands came under German influence after the Treaty of Brest Litovsk.	FACT/ OPINION
7	The Treaty of Brest Litovsk was a key factor bringing an end to the Left SR/ Bolshevik coalition.	FACT/ OPINION
8	The Treaty of Brest Litovsk was finally buried with the 1922 Treaty of Rapallo.	FACT/ OPINION
9	The terms of the Treaty of Brest Litovsk were not as tough as historians have tried to make out.	FACT/ OPINION
10	Lenin was afraid of a possible joint western-German campaign against his government.	FACT/ OPINION

What do the historians have to say about the significance of the Treaty of Brest Litovsk?

1. Leonard Schapiro: 1917

Schapiro makes the point that the Treaty of Brest Litovsk now brought about the permanent break between the left SRs and the Bolsheviks. The left SRs were essentially a peasant-based party and they had already been unhappy with some heavy-handed Bolshevik food requisitioning in some areas. The treaty was the last straw. The subsequent murder of Count von Mirbach and the abortive left SR revolt in 1918 finally gave Lenin his excuse to end the "ill-matched" political partnership.

*"... (after the revolt) Physical reprisals were very moderate... The left SRs even retained the theoretical right to sit in the soviets provided they repudiated the July affair. But in practice... they were driven by arbitrary action from soviets to which they had been elected."*⁵

⁵ Schapiro, L, 1917, Temple Smith, Hounslow, 1984, p 170

2. John Bradley: *Civil War in Russia 1917-1920*

Bradley makes the point that the peace terms were terrible indeed for Russia, listing the losses and showing how the various national groups on Russia's periphery were now very much German-dominated. However, he goes further and shows how the Germans now played a significant role in the unfolding internal struggle taking place inside Russia. The Don Cossacks asked for and quickly gained German aid, while the anti-Bolshevik movement split into pro-German and pro-allied factions. However, Germany continued to haunt both the pro- and anti-Bolsheviks forces.

*"...it was impossible to forget the terrible losses inflicted on Russia in the war and at Brest Litovsk. Moreover, Germany appeared such an unpredictable power, ready in its struggle against the Allies to abandon or destroy either or both Russian sides."*⁶

3. Adam Ulam: *Lenin and the Bolsheviks*

Ulam argues that the Bolshevik leadership had another issue on their mind when negotiating at Brest Litovsk. What if the western powers came to a deal with the Germans to jointly destroy the Bolshevik regime and partition the Russian Empire? Ulam says that this fear led Lenin to even seek contacts with the west and to suggest that Russia might even re-enter the war, and that Russia might welcome an allied presence in the north of the country. This was a dangerous game, of course, because it could provoke a German attack on the Bolsheviks.

*"...it would not have been inconceivable – on the contrary it would have been entirely logical – for the western capitalists to conclude a peace with the German capitalists and to join in the congenial task of destroying the Bolsheviks..."*⁷

6 Bradley, J, *Civil War in Russia 1917-1920*, B T Batsford, London, 1975, p 46

7 Ulam, A, *Lenin and the Bolsheviks*, Collins, London, 1965, p 540

Chapter Sixteen

The Civil War

Introduction

An uneasy peace prevailed inside Russia for several months following the Bolshevik seizure of power in November 1917. Lenin's main early priorities were achieving peace with Germany, ensuring the support of the peasants and taking control of the Soviets. As explained in Chapter Fourteen, during these early months the SOVNARKOM was busy passing a series of populist measures while at the same time developing its coercive apparatus. Opponents of the Bolsheviks took several months to organise a proper resistance to the new regime.

However, Lenin and Trotsky were realists and knew that the full array of counter-revolutionary forces would be hurled against the Bolshevik regime sooner rather than later. By mid-1918, Russia was in the midst of full-scale civil war, with each side denoted by its colour.

- The **“Reds”** comprised the Bolsheviks and their supporters.
 - A “Workers’ and Peasants” Red Army was completely reorganized by Trotsky in early 1918.
 - It was made up of sailors from the Kronstadt base, former Red Guard units, volunteering workers and peasants, and also some men and officers from the former tsarist army.
 - The “Reds” had one simple war aim: survival!
- The anti-Bolshevik **“whites”** comprised a wide range of forces who shared one aim: the destruction of Bolshevism. Beyond that, the various “white” groups agreed on very little else, a factor which was to greatly weaken their cause.
 - The “white” forces comprised a wide range of competing groups. They included members of the various political groups such as Socialist Revolutionaries and other moderate socialist groups.
 - There were those who would have liked a return of tsarism (few in number), often referred to as monarchists or rightists.
 - There were liberals, happy to have military rule in the short run if it meant the end of the Bolsheviks.
 - There were nationalist separatist groups.
 - The various “white” groups were each led by a particular general who doubtless saw himself as the saviour of Russia. The main white generals included Kolchak, Yudenich, Kornilov, Denikin and Wrangel.
 - The “whites” also had foreign backing including the Czech Legion (see below) and allied intervention forces.
- A third and significant participant in the civil war were the **“greens”**.
 - The “greens” were predominantly peasant armies who were primarily concerned with protecting their local areas from both Red and White forces.

- The “Greens” often comprised deserters from both sides and fought against both, depending on the local situation. By the end of the civil war, the “Greens” were fighting as an irregular Red force.
- “Green” groups ranged in size from small bandit gangs to well-coordinated guerrilla armies.
- The most well-known of the Green leaders was Nestor Makhno. Once the “Reds” had won the civil war, “Green” forces were gradually destroyed. Makno escaped to Romania.

The “narrative” of the Civil War

1918	<p>The main areas of fighting in 1918 are in the south east and the east.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ March: British forces land at Murmansk in northern Russia. ¹ ■ May: Czech Legion captures part of the Trans-Siberian railway. ² ■ May: By now Trotsky has tightened his organization of the Red Army, including the introduction of conscription. ■ July: murder of former Tsar Nicholas II and his family. ■ August: more British and US forces arrive in northern Russia. The allies attempt to set up anti-Bolshevik governments. ■ August: The Reds abandon Kazan, 750 kms from Moscow. Trotsky rallies Red troops to prevent White forces crossing the River Volga. ■ General Kolchak reaches Omsk, east of the Urals, 2000 kms from Moscow. ■ December: French forces land at Odessa in the south. ■ Allied intervention was largely ineffective and allied forces rarely fought against the Reds.
1919	<p>1919 proves to be the most dangerous time in the civil war for the Bolsheviks as white forces converge on Red held territory from three directions and allied forces are still present in the country. The turning point in the war comes in the autumn.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Denikin takes over as commander of White forces in the south and south east. He has almost 150 000 men under his command. Generals Alexseev and Kornilov both died in 1918. ■ Kolchak’s White forces cross the Ural Mountains but are held in check by the Red Army. ■ Denikin’s army captures Kharkov. ■ In July and August there is a major conflict for control of Tsaritsyn. The heroic defence of the city, led by Stalin, becomes part of the Bolsheviks’ heroic civil war mythology. Denikin’s forces are prevented from linking up with Kolchak’s. ■ October: Denikin captures Orel, south of Moscow, but is soon pushed back. ■ November: Yudenich and his 15 000 strong army is on the outskirts of Petrograd but he is pushed back. <p>In late 1919, the Reds are in real trouble, being threatened from the south, east and north east. However, they successfully repulse White forces in all three areas. Allied intervention has petered out by the end of the year.</p>

¹ For the reasons for the Allied Intervention, see Chapter Fifteen.

² The Czech Legion comprised Czech nationalists willing to fight for Russia against Austria in order to achieve Czech independence. It was later augmented by Czech prisoners of war. Following the Treaty of Brest Litovsk, it wanted to fight for the allies against Germany in the west. Disagreements with the Bolsheviks on how to reach the west led to clashes and it took part of the Trans-Siberian railway. White forces grew up around the Czech Legion. The Legion had ceased to be a factor in the war by late 1918.

1920	<p>The Reds are now able to take the initiative and the civil war is soon all but over.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ February: General Kolchak is captured by Red forces in the east. He is executed. ■ Georgia is invaded by the Red Army. ■ By March: Denikin has retreated to the Crimea where he is replaced by General Wrangel. ■ May: Polish forces invade and capture Kiev. In July General Tukhachevsky leads Red forces against the Poles, cross the border but the Red Army is defeated outside Warsaw in what becomes known as “the miracle of the Vistula”. ■ November: The remaining White forces of Wrangel are defeated in the Crimea region. <p>The Bolsheviks regime has survived.</p>
1921	<p>Remaining pockets of White resistance are “mopped up”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ March: A peace treaty is signed with the Poles at Riga. Poland receives more territory than it wanted. Lenin believes that the more non-Russians Poland has, the less stable it might be.

The map in Figure 16.1 outlines the main areas of control of Red and White forces during the Civil War.

Figure 16.1 Extent of “Red” and “White” forces during the Civil War



Why did the Reds win the Civil War?

In mid-1918, the odds were clearly stacked against the possibility of a Red victory in the Civil War. White forces outnumbered the Reds, they controlled most of Russia’s territory, they appeared to have significantly greater military expertise and they had the prospect of western allied aid to fall back on. Yet by the end of 1919, the White cause had effectively collapsed. The Red victory was the result of a series of interconnected factors: leadership, unity of purpose, geography, superior organisation, propaganda, a willingness to do “whatever it takes” and idealism. The reasons for the Red victory are presented in Figure 16.2.

Trotsky was arguably the key factor in determining the outcome of the Russian Civil War. Appointed by Lenin as Commissar of War in February 1918, Trotsky was able to bring all his special talents, and those less pleasant aspects of his personality to the job of War Commissar.

“...His oratory stirred the troops and his arrival at the front in his specially fitted out train could always be guaranteed to increase morale. His intelligence and his industry combined to totally refashion Red military forces into an efficient fighting force. His willingness to use brute force and the cruelest measures ensured the maintenance of Red Army discipline. He was even willing to turn on the Kronstadt sailors who had long been the Bolsheviks’ most loyal supporters.”³

Exercise 16.1

Answer the following questions in the spaces provided:

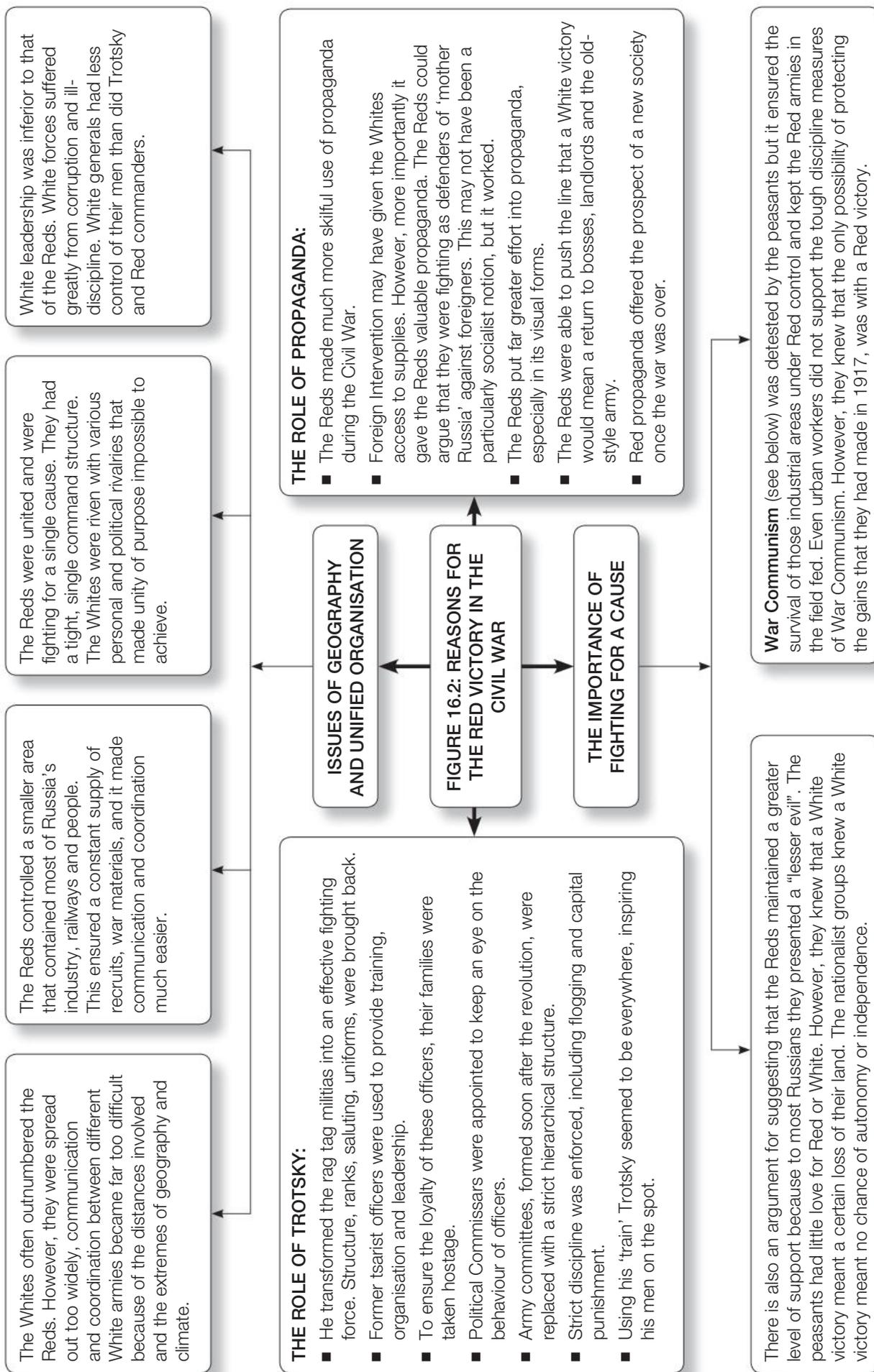
1. Place the following events in the correct chronological order:

THE TREATY OF RIGA / THE DEATH OF KOLCHAK / THE DEFENCE OF TSARITSYN,
THE TREATY OF BREST LITOVSK / THE REVOLT OF THE CZECH LEGION

1st
2nd
3rd
4th
5th

³ Webb, K, Leon Trotsky 1879-1940, Get Smart Education, St Ives, 2010, p 51

Figure 16.2: Reasons for the red victory in the civil war



2. Match the personality on the right with the description on the left.

a	Led the White attack on Petrograd		KOLCHAK
b	White commander in the South until March 1920		WRANGEL
c	Led the White forces moving west from Siberia		MAKHNO
d	Took over White forces in the South in March 1920		YUDENICH
e	The most important Green commander		DENIKIN

3. Assume the role of a Russian peasant. Explain why you might support the Reds instead of the Whites.

Robert Service comments on the role of Trotsky during the civil war.

Robert Service: A History of Twentieth Century Russia

Service pays tribute to the efforts of Trotsky in bringing about a Red victory. He refers to Trotsky's "élan and dash", his use of his specially-designed train and how all this inspired his men to fight. Trotsky soon earned the respect of the former tsarist officers he had persuaded to join the Red cause.

"...His brilliance had been proved before 1918. What took everyone aback was his organisational capacity and ruthlessness as he transformed the Red Army into a fighting force." ⁴

⁴ Service, R, *A History of Twentieth Century Russia*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1997, p 105

Chapter Seventeen

War Communism

The term “War Communism” refers to the series of extreme policies which Lenin introduced from mid-1918 to deal with the disastrous economic and military situation that the Bolsheviks were facing. War Communism involved the imposition of state control over economic production, distribution and grain output. It also involved the widespread use of state terror to achieve this control.

Why was War Communism introduced?

- By mid-1918 the only issue for the Bolsheviks was survival.
 - Its White enemies controlled most of the country and were planning to move on the areas of Bolshevik control from the north west, the east and the south.
 - Allied intervention forces were arriving to assist the Whites.
 - Military defeat was a real possibility.
- The prime aim therefore had to be to maintain Red forces in the field. The Red Army had to be fed and it had to be supplied.
- The factories producing war equipment had to be kept going and their workers in turn had to be fed.
- The Bolsheviks’ industry policies which had been introduced after the November Revolution, though popular, had led to economic collapse.
 - Workers were proving incapable of running the factories.
- Land policies had pleased the peasants but had resulted in plummeting food production.
 - The peasants were unconcerned with feeding the cities, and the cities had little to exchange with the peasants for their grain.
 - Many peasant households had broken up into smaller units to increase their claims for land and this had led to smaller landholding units. Russian agriculture was returning to near subsistence levels.
- Lenin believed that the only solution to this disastrous situation was for the state to take control of the economy: reorganise the factories and force the peasants to give up their grain to the cities and the army.

The solution was War Communism.

War Communism comprised the following elements:

1. All industry was nationalised and brought under state control.
 - a. Following the seizure of power, workers’ factory committees had been set up to run things.
 - b. They proved to be inept and often corrupt.
 - c. The Bolsheviks ended the committees and put in place managers, often the previous bosses, who were now referred to as “specialists”.

2. Workers could not leave their jobs without permission.

- a. An internal passport system was introduced.
- b. Strict rules regarding labour discipline were now introduced.

3. An end was put to the market economy.

- a. The state would now decide who would produce what, where, and how the produce would be distributed.
- b. A class-based rationing system was introduced: soldiers and workers got the most while former bourgeois groups, the burzhui, got the least.
- c. Rationing was chaotic and a burgeoning black market developed.

4. In 1919 the party tried to put an end to the use of money.

- a. This was achieved by flooding the market with useless bank notes.
- b. The result was hyper-inflation and the appearance of a system of barter.

5. The land was “socialised”

- a. Peasants ordered to work for the state.
- b. Their product was requisitioned by food detachments sent out into the country to prevent peasants hoarding their grain. This led to widespread violence between Red forces and the peasants.
- c. The Cheka was increasingly used to force grain requisitioning and they did not hold back from using the most extreme forms of violence they felt necessary.

What was the impact of War Communism on Russia?

Any discussion of the impact of War Communism is determined by the issue of from which perspective the question is being addressed.

From the Bolshevik perspective it could be argued that the policy had been a success.

- The army and the towns had been kept fed and were thus able to function throughout the Civil War.
- The long-term result of this was of course victory in the war.
- Some Bolsheviks liked the ideological nature of War Communism and its policies of state control, state direction and the apparent end to the notion of private property.

However, from the economic, social and humanitarian standpoints, the policies of War Communism were disastrous for the country.

- Rather than give up their grain or their livestock, peasants chose to destroy it. They refused to sow future crops, gorged what food they had and killed their livestock. ¹
- Such behaviour led to even more extreme brutality from the Food Detachments and the Cheka. Terror was becoming the norm.
- Lenin insisted that any opposition be met with the most severe measures. He demanded the execution of hundreds of richer peasants known as “kulaks”. People could be arrested for behaving as, or giving the appearance of behaving as, a bourgeois. Hundreds of thousands of alleged opponents were arrested and placed in labour camps. ²

¹ Similar behaviour would occur during Stalin's collectivisation but on a much larger scale.

² Brutal though Stalin's regime was to become, the origins of secret police power, the vast use of terror and the establishment of state concentration camps occurred under Lenin.

What do the historians have to say about War Communism?

1. David Christian: *Power and Privilege*

Christian highlights the plight of the Reds' food situation caused by Brest Litovsk, the loss of the Ukraine grain source and the Civil War. He goes on to describe the extremes that food detachments went to, taking not only food but also firewood, horses and carts. He quotes Lenin who admitted food detachments often took not only hoarded food but the peasants' own supplies. However, for all its brutality and crudeness, Christian says it:

*"...did the job of supplying towns and armies with just enough food and supplies to keep providing war material and to keep fighting. In this sense, it was a success."*³

2. Gordon Greenwood: *The Modern World*

Greenwood highlights the tragic results of the War Communism policy. Peasants were restricting their production to just what they needed. Bolshevik policies aimed at dividing the peasants, and encouraging some to produce, failed. State farms failed to produce enough food through lack of experience. Despite extensive aid given by such bodies such as Herbert Hoover's American Relief Administration:

*"...The outcome was the disastrous famine of 1921, rendered worse by the general drought which immediately preceded it... in the area of the Lower Volga, there was an almost total failure of the crop... Some five million are estimated to have died from starvation.."*⁴

³ Christian, D, *Power and Privilege*, Pitman, Melbourne, 1986, p 171

⁴ Greenwood, G, *The Modern World*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1964, p 441

Chapter Eighteen

The Russo-Polish War 1920-21

Introduction

In the sixteenth century, Poland was a significant European power. However, it had fallen into decline by the late eighteenth century and between 1772 and 1795, its territory was partitioned three times. Throughout the nineteenth century there was no state of Poland; its people were ruled by Prussia (later Germany), Austria-Hungary and Russia.

Poland and Russia have long had a troubled relationship. During the nineteenth century, Polish nationalists tried to maintain their language, their culture and their national identity. Russia's leaders sometimes tolerated such things, but often attempted to prevent such developments. Occasionally, the Poles rose in open revolt against Russia, as in 1863; such revolts were always forcefully suppressed.

In the twentieth century the two nations fought a brief war in 1920-21 (see below).

- Following the Nazi-Soviet Pact of August 1939, the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany invaded Poland and then proceeded to carve it up between them.
- After World War II, the Soviet Union ensured that pliant communist leaders ruled the country.
- In the 1980s, the Poles became increasingly independently-minded. The Solidarity trade union movement, led by Lech Walesa, became a focus of Polish desires for independence.
- The Poles took great pride from the fact that the Pope was Polish, Pope John Paul II (1978-2005).
- Poland finally broke away from communist rule and the Soviet bloc following the East European revolutions of 1989.

Background to the Russo-Polish War

Following the defeat of Germany and Austria-Hungary in World War I, and Russia's preoccupation with revolution and civil war, the Polish state was reconstituted following the 1919 Paris Peace Settlement.

- In the west of the country, Poland's territory included former German territory, some of which comprised the 'Polish Corridor', which gave Poland access to the sea. This was greatly resented by Germany.¹
- In the east, Poland's frontier was eventually agreed as the rough dividing line between Catholic Polish communities and Orthodox communities to the east. This frontier was referred to as 'The Curzon Line', named after the British Foreign Secretary.

Armed clashes between the Poles and the Bolsheviks had occurred as early as January 1919 in Vilnius (now Lithuania). At this stage the Poles' eastern frontier had not been settled, and some in the Bolshevik leadership had dreams of leading a revolutionary war westward.

¹ The former allied commander, General Foch visited the Polish Corridor in mid-1919. He is alleged to have said "Here lies the cause of the next war, and within twenty years" World War II began on 1 September 1939, when German forces invaded Poland via the Corridor..

The Red Army soon captured the city. Led by Jozef Pilsudski ², the Poles fought a counter-offensive and recaptured the city. By this time, the Bolsheviks were deeply embroiled in the Civil War against the Whites. ³

The campaigns of 1920

Poland's new leaders were keen to expand and so Pilsudski formed an alliance with the Ukrainian nationalist leader, Symyon Petliura. Petliura sought an independent Ukrainian state. He was willing to cede Eastern Galicia to Poland for assistance in achieving his goal.

- Poland and its ally invaded the Ukraine in April 1920 and soon captured Kiev.
- However, they failed to establish a strong administration in the areas they had captured, and following a strong Bolshevik counter-offensive, they had been ejected from Kiev by 11 June.
- Some on the Bolshevik side again began to countenance the idea of a revolutionary war. The Bolshevik general, Tukhachevsky, said at the time: "Our way to worldwide conflagration passes over the corpse of Poland".

Lenin believed that Polish workers would welcome the Bolsheviks with open arms. However, the Poles were imbued far more with feelings of Polish nationalism than a desire to be part of the international proletariat. In July and August, Bolsheviks pushed westwards and soon reached the river Vistula, and the Poles were now involved in a life and death struggle to save the capital, Warsaw. With help of French General Weygand, the Poles won the day in what has become known as "the miracle on the Vistula". ⁴

Polish forces now advanced westwards:

- Under Pilsudski, Polish forces were soon east of the Curzon Line.
- An armistice was finally signed in October 1920.
- The Poles and the Bolsheviks ended their brief war with the Treaty of Riga, signed in March 1921.

The outcome of the Russo-Polish War: The Treaty of Riga

Hostilities were finally ended with the signing of the Treaty of Riga, signed in the Latvian capital on 18 March 1921. The treaty was acknowledged by the Western powers in 1923. The treaty's provisions were concerned with three main issues: frontiers, national minority groups and economics. Figure 18.1 summarises the treaty's key points.

² Pilsudski was Poland's first Chief of State. In 1926 he staged a coup and became dictator of Poland until his death in 1935.

³ See Chapter Sixteen.

⁴ Weygand is often given credit for this but Jaroslaw Centek of Nicolaus Copernicus University in Poland, argues that French tactics were too static for such a victory, and so gives the credit to Polish commanders: Pilsudski or Genera; Rozwadowski.

Figure 18.1 The Treaty of Riga



Riga: Capital of Latvia

Poland's eastern frontier was no longer the Curzon Line. It had been pushed eastwards by about 250 kilometres.

People living in the eastern border regions were given the right to choose their nationality: Polish or Russian. Each state was expected to respect the rights of the minorities within their borders.

Russia had to pay Poland in gold for a year and to send materials to Poland for railway construction. Poland was excused from paying any debts that its new (previously tsarist) territory had incurred. Poland received "most-favoured nation" status, ie any trading concessions that Russia granted to another country, automatically flowed on to Poland.

- Poland was much bigger than had been planned at the time of the Paris Peace Settlement.
- There were now about six million White Russians and Ukrainians under Polish rule. Lenin was not concerned about this. He argued that when the 'world revolution' came, the treaty would be ripped up. In the short term, such a sizeable minority of non-Poles could only but cause difficulties for the Polish government. In fact, these people never assimilated.
- For the Bolsheviks, dreams of world revolution were pushed into the background. Lenin had more immediate issues to deal with (see Chapters Nineteen and Twenty).
- Under the Treaty of Riga, Poland received "most-favoured nation" status, ie any trading concessions that Russia granted to another country, automatically flowed on to Poland.
- The Treaty of Riga disappeared following the Nazi-Soviet Pact of August 1939 and the subsequent events of World War II.

Figure 18.2 Poland after the Treaty of Riga



Exercise 18.1

Answer “true” or “false” for each of the following statements.

1	Relations between Poland and Russia had traditionally always been very cordial.	TRUE/ FALSE
2	The Curzon Line was the border between Poland and Russia that had been agreed in Paris in 1919.	TRUE/ FALSE
3	Early clashes between Poland and Russia saw the quick Polish capture of Kiev.	TRUE/ FALSE
4	Poland managed to hold on its capture of Kiev for the entire war.	TRUE/ FALSE
5	Poland’s success in the defence of Warsaw is often referred to as ‘the miracle of the Vistula’.	TRUE/ FALSE
6	Despite its success, Poland managed to acquire very little territory at the conclusion of the war.	TRUE/ FALSE
7	Lenin was very concerned at having so many White Russians and Ukrainians under Polish rule after the war.	TRUE/ FALSE
8	All classes of Russians were eager to rally to the Bolshevik causes when it came to fighting the Poles.	TRUE/ FALSE
9	Polish workers eagerly welcomed Red Army forces in a spirit of international proletariat solidarity.	TRUE/ FALSE
10	Red Army actions in Poland bore a certain similarity to traditional tsarist army actions of earlier times.	TRUE/ FALSE

What do the historians have to say about the Russo-Polish War 1920-21?

1. Sheila Fitzpatrick: *The Civil War as a formative experience*

Fitzpatrick highlights how the war clearly showed the preference both Poles and Russians had for nationalism over international workers’ solidarity during the war.

*“...(the Bolsheviks) observed not only that Polish workers rallied to Pilsudski but that Russians of all classes rallied to the Bolsheviks when it was a question of fighting Poles...”*⁵

2. Sheila Fitzpatrick: *The Russian Revolution*

Fitzpatrick makes a related observation about Bolshevik actions during the war. As the Red Army marched into Poland, there was:

*“...a disconcerting similarity to the policies of old-style Russian imperialism...”*⁶

⁵ Fitzpatrick, S, *The Civil War as a formative experience*, *The 20th Century Russia Reader*, ed A Kocho-Williams, Routledge, Abingdon, 2012, p 131

⁶ Fitzpatrick, S, *The Russian Revolution*, OUP, Oxford, 2008, p 70

Chapter Nineteen

The Kronstadt Revolt

1921: Anti-Bolshevik rebellions

In early 1921, the Communist regime faced two serious revolts: a peasant revolt in the Tambov region on the river Volga, and at Kronstadt. Cheka records showed that there had been 118 peasant revolts in 1921. Some areas of the country were too dangerous for party officials to enter.

- The peasants of Tambov, led by Alexander Antonov, refused to hand over the grain demanded of them and prevented grain convoys from being sent to the Moscow region.
- The Communists did not have too many troops in the area and Lenin decided to deal with this revolt with kid gloves for fear of causing a general peasant revolt.
- The Tambov revolt lasted almost an entire year.

Kronstadt

However, the revolt at Kronstadt was something quite different. The Kronstadt Naval Base was situated on Kotlin Island in the Gulf of Finland. It was about twenty-five kilometres from Petrograd. In 1917, during the July Days and the October coup, the sailors of the Kronstadt Naval base had gained almost legendary status in Bolshevik circles as some of the Bolsheviks' most loyal and courageous supporters. Trotsky had referred to them as "the pride and glory of the Russian Revolution".

However, it would be inaccurate to suggest the base had been entirely Bolshevik. Most of the sailors were originally peasants and many had been supporters of the more peasant-based Socialist Revolutionary party. They remained connected to their former rural areas and were well aware of the peasant suffering under War Communism.

*"Now they were repudiating the Bolsheviks' revolution...and calling for a true soviet republic of workers and peasants."*¹

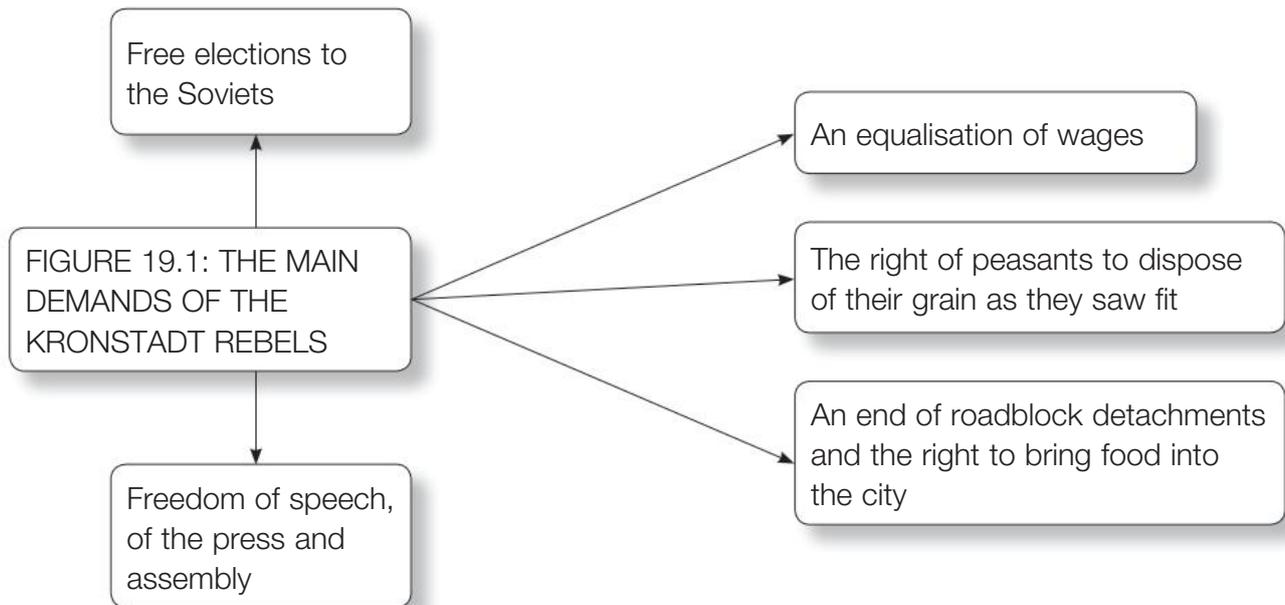
At the end of February 1921, the crews of the Battleships Sevastopol and Petropavlovsk called a meeting about reports they had heard of government repression of strikes in the city and elsewhere. A delegation went to investigate and reported back two days later. Angered by government actions, the sailors passed a resolution which contained 15 demands of the Communist government. These are summarised in Figure 19.1.

The fact that the revolt occurred as the 10th Party Congress was in session, only served to add drama and a sense of crisis to what was happening.² At first the Bolshevik press put out stories that the revolt was the work of mysterious 'white' elements but attendees at the Congress soon knew this was not the case but a genuine revolt of previously loyal supporters of the Bolshevik cause.

¹ Fitzpatrick, S, *The Russian Revolution*, OUP, Oxford, 2008, p 94

² Proceedings of the Congress were interrupted as Congress delegates joined Red Army units to put down the revolt

Figure 19.1 The main demands of the Kronstadt rebels



Trotsky saw the Kronstadt Revolt as a major threat to the party's hold on power. His response was brutal in the extreme. He sent Tukachevsky to deal with the rebels.

- Red Army troops made their way across the ice, followed by Cheka units to ensure there were none retreating. It would take ten days to crush the revolt.
- Up to 15 000 were killed in the suppression of the Kronstadt Revolt.
- Leaders were rounded up and shot without trial.
- Many others were sent to the labour camp that had been established in the north at Solovetsky.

Lenin had no illusions about the seriousness of Kronstadt:

"...This was the flash which lit up reality more than anything else."

Kronstadt had a major impact on the party and its ideological direction (at least in the short run). It also showed that Lenin and the party would do anything to cling on to power. More importantly:

*"...it marked a turning point in the party's relationship with the people as the early idealism and genuine links to the proletariat were destroyed. In the short term, Lenin realized that there had to be a change in policy direction. In effect, it could be said that Kronstadt gave birth to NEP..."*³

³ Webb, K, *Russia and the Soviet Union 1917-1941*, Nelson, Melbourne 2018, p 21

Figure 19.2 Red Army troops attacking the Kronstadt rebels.



Exercise 19.1

Answer the following questions

1	What was the extent of opposition to the Bolsheviks in 1921?	
2	Where is the Kronstadt naval base?	
3	Why did many Bolsheviks see the Kronstadt revolt as much more serious than other revolts?	
4	What was happening at the same time as the revolt at Kronstadt?	
5	What was arguably the main cause of the revolt?	
6	What economic demands did the rebels make?	
7	What political demands did the rebels make?	
8	How did Trotsky handle the Kronstadt revolt?	
9	What did the revolt arguably show had been destroyed at Kronstadt?	
10	What was the key economic result of the Kronstadt Revolt?	

Section Two: Consequences of Revolution (B) The New Economic Policy (NEP)

Chapter Twenty

Introduction of the New Economic Policy

Introduction

The Bolsheviks had emerged victorious from the Civil War and allied intervention was a thing of the past.¹ Though there would remain pockets of peasant resistance for some years to come, the Bolsheviks² had a firm hold on power. However, the country that Lenin now ruled unchallenged was in a disastrous state. The economy was in ruins, infrastructure had been destroyed, millions had died and large areas of the country were suffering starvation.

While War Communism had played a key role in the eventual Communist victory, it had also alienated the peasants, wrecked the economy and created ongoing opposition to Communist rule. This was seen no more clearly than in the revolt at the Kronstadt Naval Base in 1921 which was brutally suppressed by Trotsky's Red Army.³

In the face of such dire circumstances, Lenin decided to reverse policy. An end was brought to War Communism and the New Economic Policy (NEP) was introduced. The NEP allowed for a partial return to capitalism, the operation of the free market and a degree of private ownership. It quickly proved successful in reviving the Russian economy.

However, though there might have been some economic liberalisation, Lenin had no intention of easing up on political control and the authoritarian nature of the Communist regime was strengthened.

The background to the introduction of the New Economic Policy (NEP)

Kronstadt may have lit up reality for Lenin, but he would have been well aware of the signs of disaster facing his regime. Comments were being made at the time comparing 1921 with the situations preceding the revolutions of 1905 and of February 1917.

- Russia was experiencing one of the most severe famines of the century. An estimated five million people had died and emergency aid was even accepted from the United States. Parts of the country were suffering from historically bad droughts but the impact of government policy was clear.
- Between 1914 and 1920, the birth rate in Petrograd had fallen 50%; the death rate had increased four times. Diseases such as cholera and typhus were rife.
- The economic collapse of Russia was catastrophic:
 - In 1921, industrial output was about 16% of its 1912 level.

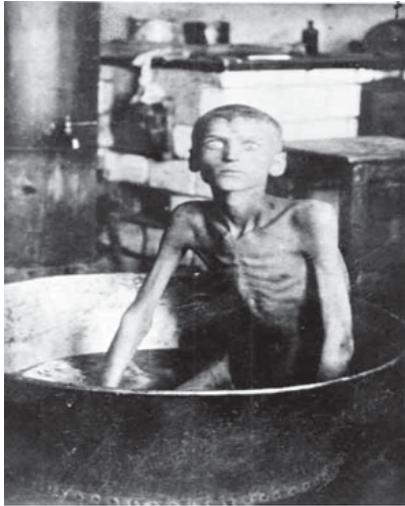
¹ Japan would not completely evacuate the Far East of Russia until 1922.

² The Bolsheviks now referred to themselves as Communists.

³ See Chapter Nineteen.

- Mining output was 29%, oil 36% and grain 48%.
- Transport had completely broken down.

Starvation in Russia at the end of the War Communism period



Few party leaders had travelled around the country as much as Trotsky who had been able to witness the full impact of War Communism. He called for change as early as February 1920 but was overruled by Lenin. Trotsky then argued for increased coercion. However, following Kronstadt, Lenin realised that there had to be a dramatic change in policy.

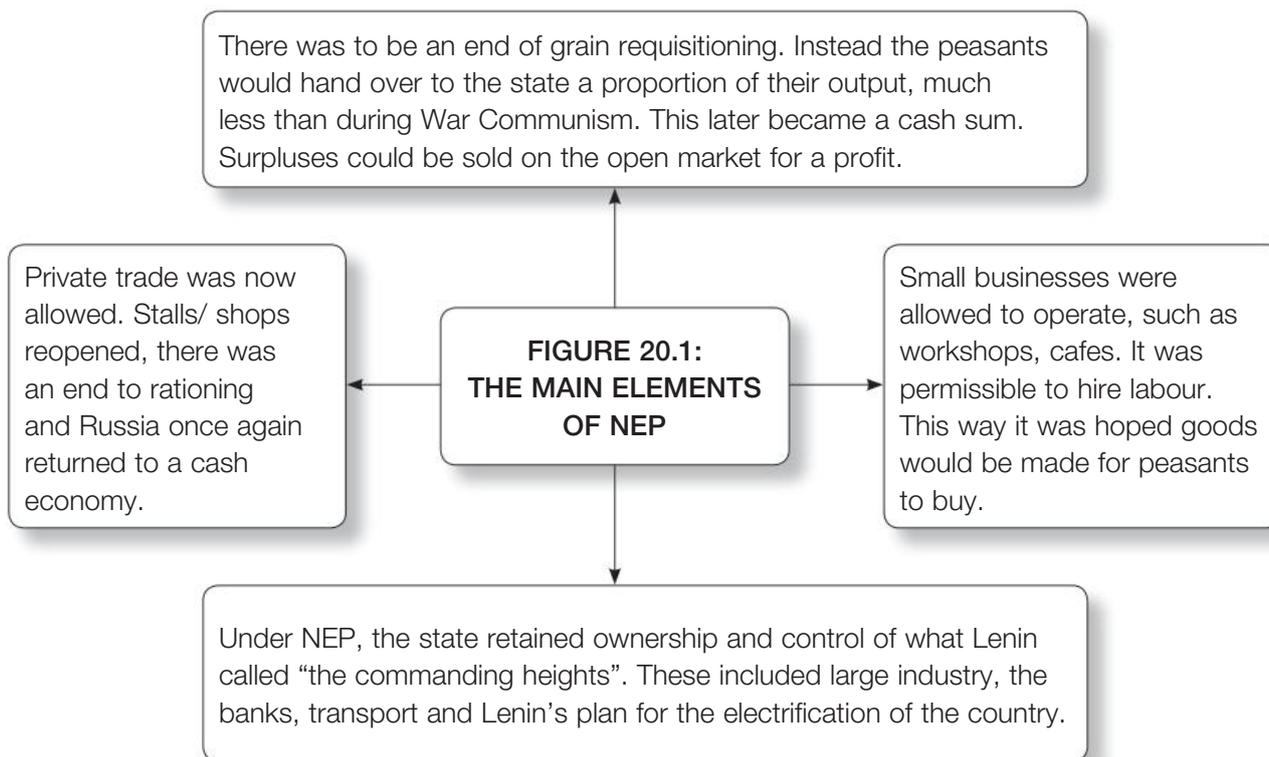
The introduction of the NEP

It was with some considerable reluctance that Lenin pushed for the introduction of the New Economic Policy at the 10th Party Congress in 1921.

- Reluctance because the step back towards capitalism which it entailed went against everything that Lenin and other party leaders believed in.
- Some party members asked the question: “Did we struggle in exile, the revolution, three years of civil war and Kronstadt just to return to capitalism?”
- The Congress made it clear that the introduction of the NEP was to be seen as a temporary measure, “a tactical retreat” as Zinoviev called it.
- In a sense, the NEP might be seen as an economic Brest Litovsk:
 - something unpalatable, necessary in the short term but certainly not to be seen as a long-term policy.

The main elements of the New Economic Policy are summarised in Figure 20.1

Figure 20.1 The main elements of the NEP



Exercise 20.1

Indicate whether the following statements are true or false.

1	NEP was introduced at roughly the same time as the Kronstadt Revolt occurred.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
2	In a real sense, NEP was a response to the issues raised by the Kronstadt Revolt.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
3	Trotsky had never been a supporter of easing up on War Communism.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
4	Despite NEP, it was still not permissible for Russians to employ labour privately.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
5	Lenin had always been an eager supporter of the NEP.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
6	For most Bolsheviks, the introduction of the NEP was ideologically unsound.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
7	Under the NEP, the state withdrew completely from involvement in economic matters.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
8	Under the NEP, rationing remained a key feature of economic life.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
9	Under the NEP, peasants now had the freedom to sell their surpluses on the open market.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
10	Under the NEP, permission was granted for small businesses to operate.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE

The “paradoxes” of NEP

There was an essential series of paradoxes about the NEP. It was the saviour of the Russian economy, yet it provided Russia with no long-term solution to its future economic development. It was incredibly successful, yet it also contained the seeds of its own destruction. It proved to be the saviour of the young Communist state, yet it totally contradicted the ideological bases of communism.

The short-term results of the NEP were impressive:

- Within a year there was enough food, shops and restaurants had reopened and the country seemed to have returned to the semblance of normal social life.
- Within three years, cereal production was up almost 25%, while industrial output was up 200%.⁴
- Individuals were now allowed to operate in the retail area. A class of people known as “NEPmen” appeared who sought to buy up surplus goods and sell them in the markets. In a short time, NEPmen were controlling almost three quarters of urban retail trade.
- However, there was also a negative side to the NEP. The arrival of the NEPmen was accompanied with many of the evils of capitalism which the Communists had fought against.
 - Corruption was common, NEPmen were always “doing deals”, there was widespread speculation in property and manufactured goods.
 - Crime and prostitution increased.

NEP would not last more than a few years. There were two fundamental reasons for this:

1. NEP did not provide a long-term solution to the Soviet Union’s economic development. This will be examined in Chapter Twenty-One.
2. Economic policy became embroiled in the post-Lenin struggle for power. This will be touched in Chapters Twenty-Two and Twenty-Three.

Exercise 20.2

Answer the following questions in the spaces provided.

1	What was the short-term impact of the NEP?	
2	Who were the NEPmen?	
3	Why did many NEPmen become unpopular in Russia?	

⁴ It must be remembered that these figures were coming off a very low base.

4	What negative developments re-appeared in 1920s Russia and accompanied NEP?	
5	What was the main long-term problem with the NEP?	

The tightening up of political control

Historians still debate the issue of the evolution of the Bolshevik regime into a brutal dictatorship. Was this development inherent in the nature of communist ideology or was it thrust upon the party by circumstance? This is not the place to digress into a complex historiographical debate. However, in a short time the party did change from an open forum of free-flowing discussion to one that demanded a rigid acceptance of the party line. The roots of Stalin's dictatorship are to be found in the early 1920s.⁵ By the time of Lenin's death (1924), Russia had become a one-party dictatorship that allowed no opposition.

- The party dominated the government and all key decisions were made in the party Politburo.
- The party was no longer democratic.
- Instead it had become a highly centralized, bureaucratic and hierarchical organization.
 - However, it should be pointed out that the further one moved away from Moscow, the looser was party control and the more independently local Soviets and party organizations behaved.

Several steps had been taken which led to this situation.

- By 1921, the situation in the country had become so bad that major intra-party division was occurring. One of the major opposition groups was called *The Workers Opposition*.
 - It was led by Alexander Shlyapnikov and Alexandra Kollontai.
 - The Workers Opposition called for more workers' control, less militarisation of society and they opposed Trotsky's idea of making the trades unions organs of state.
 - They sought a return to the freer days of early 1918.
- Lenin was greatly angered by these divisions. At the 10th Party Congress in 1921, he called for a ban on such "*factionalism*".
 - It was decided that once the party had accepted a policy, all party members had to accept that policy and were not allowed to campaign against it.
 - The price of opposition would be expulsion from the party.
- At the same time as the ban on factions was being enforced, the "*Nomenklatura system*" was being put into place.
 - This was a system by which all key party/ government jobs were allocated by the party.
 - The key to gaining a post in the Nomenklatura system was loyalty, not talent.
 - In time the Nomenklatura system led to the development of a party elite.⁶

⁵ This theme will be covered in much greater detail in Chapters 8 and 9.

⁶ Stalin was to use this development to consolidate his power after he became General Secretary in 1922.

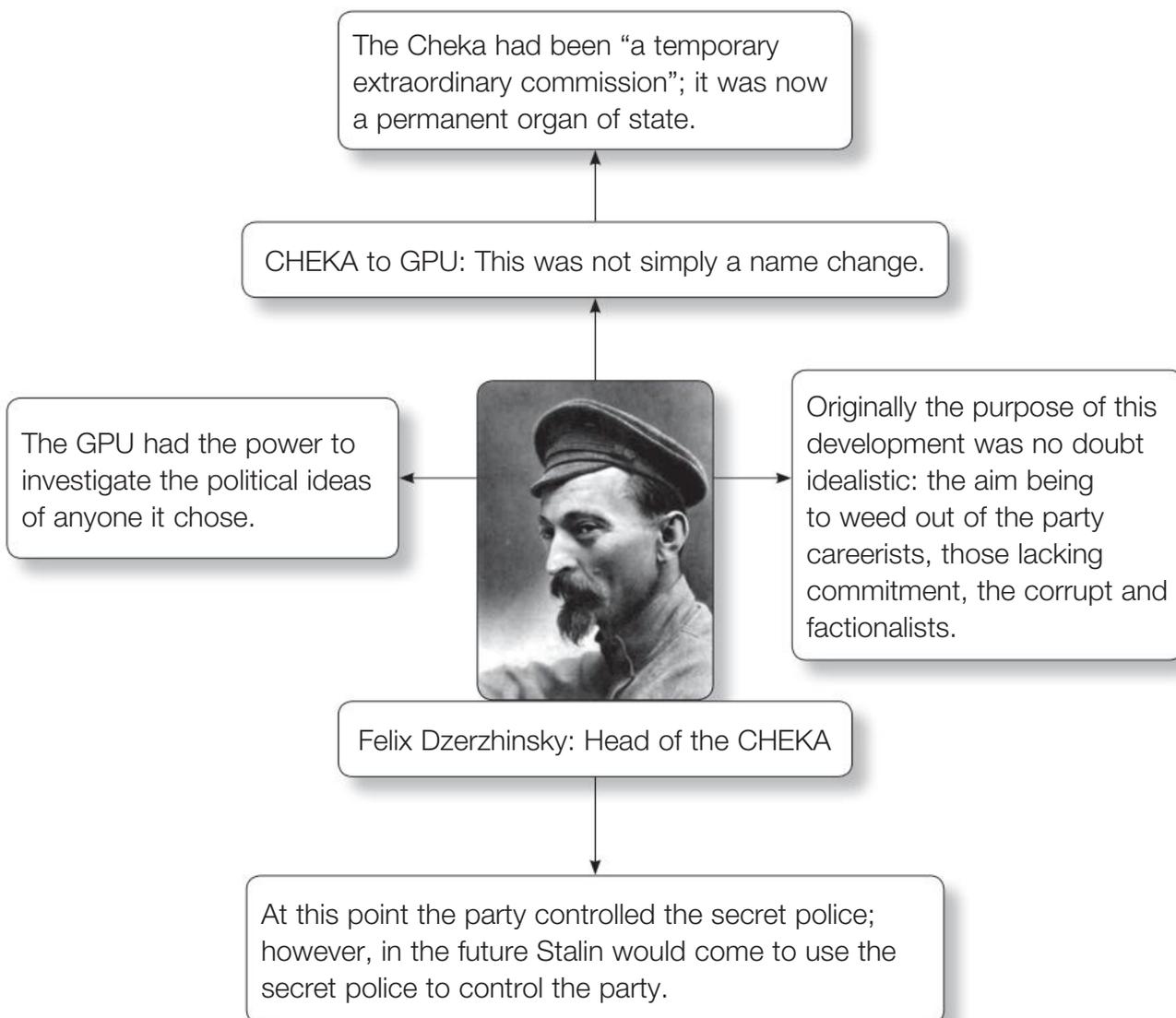
There were other developments which pointed to the strengthening of dictatorship.

- In the early 1920s, several intellectual critics were deported.
- All publications had to have the party seal of approval before publication by being examined by the Main Administration of Affairs of Literature and Publication.
- “Show Trials” became a key feature of Stalin’s rule in the 1930s. However, the first of the party’s “Show Trials” came in 1921 which led to the execution of eleven Socialist Revolutionaries.
- The party tightened its pressure on the church seen in the creation of The Union of the Militant Godless in 1921 which permitted the pillaging and expropriation of church property.

From the Cheka to the GPU

In 1922 a most significant development occurred. **The Cheka became the GPU** – the Political Administration of the State.

Figure 20.2 From the Cheka to the GPU



Exercise 20.3

Answer the following questions in the spaces provided.

1	What was the Workers Opposition?	
2	What decision was made at the 10th Party Congress regarding intra-party opposition?	
3	How did the Nomenklatura system help to consolidate the party's control?	
4	What was happening to freedom of expression inside Russia in the early 1920s?	
5	What happened to the Cheka?	

The creation of the USSR

With the signing of the 'Treaty on the Creation of the USSR' in December 1922, "Russia" became the "Union of Soviet Socialist Republic", or "the Soviet Union". In 1922, the USSR was made up of four republics:

- The Russian SFSR (Soviet Federative Socialist Republic)
- The Transcaucasian SFSR (comprising Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan)
- The Ukrainian SSR
- The Byelorussian SSR

By late 1940, the USSR had grown from four to fifteen republics. It would continue in existence until the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991.

What do the historians think about The New Economic Policy (NEP)?

1. Martin McCauley: *The Soviet Union since 1917*

McCauley makes the basic point that if War Communism had been a leap into the world of socialism, then the NEP was a leap out of it. He points out that the party leadership accepted the NEP as a necessary evil while the lower levels of the party were unhappy with this ideological retreat. No matter how the leadership might try to paint the NEP, and praise the continuing control of the “commanding heights”, McCauley says the capitalist nature of the NEP could not be masked.

*“...At first the peasants paid a tax in kind but with the stabilisation of the currency in 1923, this could be paid in money – Soviet Russia was back to a money economy.”*⁷

2. Ronald Segal: *The Tragedy of Leon Trotsky*

Segal concedes that the NEP recorded rapid successes. Harvest yields were up and industrial production levels were gradually recovering. Private trade was flourishing in the streets. However, Segal also points out that there was also a much darker side to the NEP. Credits were given to enterprises on the basis of its profitable employment. Thus, enterprises tried to cut labour costs to get the credits. This swelled the rate of urban unemployment. Eager to exploit the system, some people acted corruptly as agents of state enterprises and made quick fortunes in the process. Segal paraphrases the Menshevik leader Dan, released from prison during the time of the NEP who found a Moscow:

*“... in which speculators seemed to be everywhere; shops stocked luxuries beyond the reach of any but the rich; and prostitutes were once more plying their trade.”*⁸

3. Boris Pasternak: *Doctor Zhivago*⁹

Though parts of Pasternak’s novel were written as early as the 1920s, it was not published until the mid-1950s. Pasternak won the Nobel Prize for literature for his efforts. Soviet authorities in the 1950s frowned on Pasternak’s work as it brought out too many uncomfortable truths about the Soviet past, and it was not to be published inside Russia until the 1980s. The book was smuggled out of the Soviet Union and first published in Italy. Pasternak questions many of the values and beliefs that came out of the Russian Revolution. He uses his characters to highlight the contradictions of Bolshevik Russia and to show the state of Russia in the early 1920s. In the extract below, Zhivago has just read a party newspaper report:

*“...How lucky to be so blind!... To be able to talk of bread when it has long since vanished from the earth! Of propertied classes and speculators when they have long since been abolished by decree!... What kind of people must they be to go on raving with this never cooling, feverish ardour, year in, year out, of things which are non-existent, of themes which have long vanished, and to know nothing, to see nothing, of the reality which surrounds them?”*¹⁰

⁷ McCauley, M, *The Soviet Union Since 1917*, Longman, Harlow, 1981, p 48

⁸ Segal, R, *The Tragedy of Leon Trotsky*, Hutchinson, London, 1979, p 251

⁹ Students probably will not have time to read *Dr Zhivago* which is a great loss. However, the Oscar-winning film is well-worth seeing. It succeeds in highlighting many aspects of Russia history from just before 1914 into the 1920s in a spectacular and dramatic fashion. It also tells the story of one of cinema’s great romances!

¹⁰ Pasternak, B, *Doctor Zhivago*, Collins, London, 1958, p 374

Chapter Twenty-one

The end of the New Economic Policy

The Soviet Union's economic dilemma

In ideological terms, Russia was in the socialist stage of development which was to precede the ultimate stage of communism. Lenin knew that this stage would last a long time. Marx had a vision of a communist society based on abundance. However, Russia was very backward and so, to achieve the condition of abundance, it was necessary for Russia to modernise and industrialise. The problem with the NEP was that it was not creating the necessary capital that was essential for industrial development.

In the early days of the revolution, the Bolsheviks had evaded the problem of a lack of capital with the belief that revolutions would ignite in Western Europe.

- Western socialist regimes would then assist Russia.
- However, apart from a few abortive attempts at revolution in Germany and Hungary, the hoped-for world-wide revolution had not happened.
 - Russia was alone.
 - As an isolated socialist state, Russia now also had the issue of defence to worry about.
 - After the ravages of the Civil War, Russia was in no position to defend itself.

Christian sums up the dilemma facing the Communists:

*"...Building socialism in Russia meant undertaking rapid economic growth without help from abroad, with the continual threat of foreign intervention, and in a hostile peasant environment. How could it be done?"*¹

NEP posed a major problem for the young Communist state. **It did not offer an answer to Russia's long-term development.**

Trotsky had flagged the dilemma Russia was facing at the 12th Party Congress in 1923. He referred to what was to become known as the "scissors crisis".²

- The prices of urban produced industrial products were going up (due to poor production techniques and lack of economies of scale);
- However, the prices of rural agricultural goods were falling (due to increased peasant productivity after the end of War Communism).

Faced with high-priced, often low-quality consumer goods coming out of the cities, the peasants were limiting or hoarding their output. After two years of the NEP, Trotsky understood that industrial growth was still a long way behind the recovery in agriculture. He understood that the "scissors" that had opened up between urban and rural prices:

*"...threatened to cut the economic and political ties between city and countryside. The peasants would stop hoarding much of their surplus and sell it instead only if the 'scissors' were closed."*³

¹ Christian, D, Power and Privilege, Pitman, Melbourne, 1986, p 187

² See Figure 21.1 below for a diagrammatic explanation.

³ Segal, R, The Tragedy of Leon Trotsky, Hutchinson, London, 1979, p 269

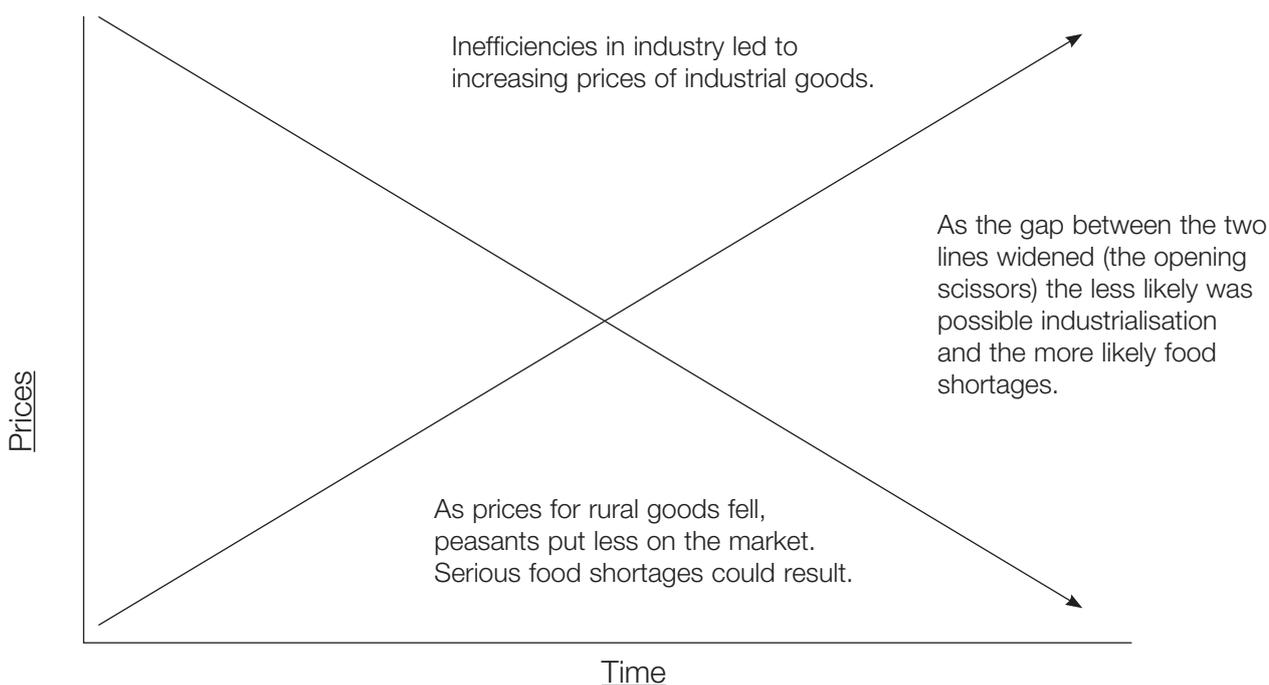
If the Soviet Union was ever to industrialise and modernise, it needed three things: labour, raw materials and capital. There was no shortage of labour or raw materials. However, from where was the country to acquire its capital?

- There were few enterprises large enough from which profits could be recycled.
- It was unlikely that western capitalists would pour in investment funds (especially after Russia's pre-WWI debts had been repudiated).
- As peasants still made up the vast majority of the population, it was clear that it was from the rural sector that sources of capital would have to be found for industrial development.

The “scissors crisis” of 1927-28

As had happened in 1923, and as Trotsky had predicted, by 1927 peasants were again limiting their output as rural prices fell, while industrial prices continued to rise. Stalin and Bukharin had attempted to deal with this situation by trying to forcibly hold down prices for each. This failed as peasants put even less on the market and NEP men were quick to buy up industrial goods cheaply and speculate. By 1927, Soviet cities were facing serious food shortages. The nature of the scissors crisis is illustrated in Figure 21.1

Figure 21.1 The nature of the scissors crisis



The “scissors crisis” had major economic, social and political consequences.

- Food shortages were appearing in Soviet cities. The country was not facing the famine-like conditions of a few years earlier but the leadership had reasons for concern.
- As rural prices were falling, there was less incentive for peasants to put more grain on the market. As the quality of manufactured goods was poor and they were expensive, there was little incentive for peasants to buy. This situation would worsen as “the scissors” opened up even further.

- The “scissors crisis” meant that capital for industrialisation could not be accumulated from the rural sector. A failure to industrialise would not only hold the country back economically but it also had defence implications.

It was in this environment that Stalin launched ‘the great turn’ in 1928 with the introduction of collectivisation and the first Five-Year Plan. Grain production was to be increased under state management, no matter what the cost and the pain involved. It would be exported and the foreign income earned would provide the capital needed for industrialisation.

- The ‘great turn’ also had political implications. As Stalin moved ‘to the left’, he was able to isolate the ‘right’ (Bukharin et alia) and complete his assumption of unquestioned leadership (see Chapters 22 and 23).

It was the end of the New Economic Policy.

Exercise 21.1

Indicate whether each of the following is true or false.

1	NEP was never intended to be a long-term solution to the Soviet Union’s development.	TRUE/ FALSE
2	During the early days of the regime, few hopes were held for revolutions in the west.	TRUE/ FALSE
3	Trotsky was one of the first Bolshevik leaders to highlight the nature of the scissors crisis.	TRUE/ FALSE
4	Rural production continued to rise and rise throughout the 1920s.	TRUE/ FALSE
5	Thanks to new techniques and economies of scale, prices of industrial goods fell steadily.	TRUE/ FALSE
6	By 1927, Soviet cities were beginning to suffer serious food shortages.	TRUE/ FALSE
7	It was clear that Soviet industrialisation could rely on western investors for sources of capital.	TRUE/ FALSE
8	Actions to hold down prices by the party leadership only exacerbated the scissors crisis.	TRUE/ FALSE
9	Stalin’s decision to launch ‘the great turn’ had little bearing on the post-Lenin power struggle.	TRUE/ FALSE
10	It was hoped that collectivisation would boost grain exports and provide needed capital.	TRUE/ FALSE

What do the historians have to say about The End of the New Economic Policy

1. Robert Service: *Russia – From Tsarism to the Twenty-First Century*

Service makes the point that Stalin had to be careful in challenging the NEP as the policy had been closely associated with Lenin, and the cult of Lenin was still in full swing. However, this did not stop him manoeuvring against his chief rival of the time, Bukharin, who supported a continuation of NEP (see Chapter Twenty-Two). Stalin pressed ahead with the Ural-Siberian method of grain requisitioning which was applied across the entire country from the winter of 1928-29. At the same time, a group of engineers at the Shakhty coal-mine in the Don Basin was put on trial, accused of a counter-revolutionary plot. Five of them were executed. Others were beaten and forced to memorise false confessions. The days of NEP were over. Service makes the point:

*“...The Shakhty trial stirred up industrial policy as crudely as Stalin’s visit to the Urals and Siberia had done to agricultural policy...factory and mining managers were intimidated into trying to put all Gosplan’s projects into effect...”*⁴

2. Stalin’s speech, February 1931⁵

By now NEP was of course well and truly dead. However, it is interesting to read what Stalin said in this famous speech as he clearly explains why an end had to be brought to the New Economic Policy. He argues that the pace for change must not slow down but in be increased:

“...It is sometimes asked whether it is not possible to slow down the tempo a bit, to put a check on the movement. No, comrades, it is not possible...To slacken the pace would mean to lag behind and those who lag behind are beaten...”

He goes on to relate the sorry story of Russian military defeats from the Mongol Khans to the Japanese. And why was Russia defeated? Because of its backwardness.

“...For military backwardness, for cultural backwardness, for political backwardness, for industrial backwardness, for agricultural backwardness...”

He concluded with this oft-quoted statement:

“...We are fifty or a hundred years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this lag in ten years. Either we do it or they crush us...”

4 Service, R, *Russia: From Tsarism to the Twenty-First Century*, Penguin, London, 2009, p 175

5 Stalin speaking to Industrial Executives in February 1931.

Chapter Twenty-two

Education, Women and Artistic Experimentation

Education

The late 1920s witnessed what became known as “the cultural revolution”. Young people were encouraged to criticise bourgeois values and to discover their revolutionary self and their proletarian values. It caused great upheaval as bourgeois intellectuals were attacked, and the values of schools and the authority of teachers were put in question. Many teachers were forced out of their jobs, branded as “bourgeois specialists”. The cultural revolution soon gained a momentum of its own. Many of the young people active in this process were also involved in the great changes taking place, anything from working in factories to teaching peasants how to read and write. These young people were active supporters of Stalin and his vision for the future.¹

By the early 1930s, Stalin called for an end to the cultural revolution of the 1920s. Russia needed educated and disciplined citizens and all he could see were schools in chaos. There was an immediate shift to a more conservative and conventional approach to schools and education in general.

- Teaching was to be based on a tight curriculum, strict programming and structured timetables.
- There was an emphasis on the practical, “useful and non-political” subjects such as physics, chemistry and mathematics.
- Homework, rote-learning, examinations and school uniforms were back.
- Discipline was reinforced, as was respect for teachers.
- The increasingly conservative nature of education was extended to universities where academic success rather than proletarian origins became the criterion for entry.

During the “cultural revolution”, history and history teachers were targeted. History was seen as irrelevant in the brave new world of socialism and its past emphasis on previous tsars was seen as out of step with proletarian values. Some history professors were imprisoned. However, by the mid-1930s, things also changed in the area of history.

- Stalin decreed that history should be taught with reference to previous tsars such as Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great.
- There was to be a greater emphasis on dates, chronology, great men.

Crucially, there was a rewriting of revolutionary history.

- John Reed’s book, *Ten Days That Shook the World* was no longer printed; it had no mention of Stalin.
- Trotsky’s historical works were obviously banned.

¹ The activities of young Komsomol members at this time were similar to those of the Red Guard in China in the 1960s Cultural Revolution, though on a much-reduced level.

- In 1938, it became compulsory for all school students to be taught Soviet history from A V Shestakov's "A Short History of the USSR". This "correct" view of the past has Stalin as the central figure and Trotsky completely eliminated, except when he appears in a negative light. Here is an example of this new Stalinist view of history:

*"...Trotsky and his contemptible friends organised in the USSR gangs of murderers, wreckers and spies... (The aim of) these enemies of the people was to restore the yoke of the capitalists and the landlords to the USSR..."*²

Women

At the time of the November Revolution, there was a genuine desire within the Bolshevik Party to achieve equality for women. Lenin certainly believed this and he supported the efforts of his Commissar of Social Welfare, **Alexandra Kollantai**, to achieve this. However, it should be pointed out that Lenin was far more conservative than Kollantai and balked at her promotion of "free love" ideas. Even though Lenin and Kollantai had their political differences (she was a member of the Workers' Opposition), they remained close. Lenin even intervened to prevent the execution of her lover, Pavel Dybenko.

In the early years of Bolshevik rule, women made significant gains.

- In January 1918, women were given civil, legal and electoral equality.
- Equality in marriage was introduced, as was divorce by consent.
- Abortion was legalised.
- Women were allowed to play a significant part in the Civil War, not only as nurses but also as combatants. About 74 000 took part in the Civil War, suffering 1800 casualties.
- In 1920, a Bolshevik Women's Section was formed, called the Zhenotdel. It was headed by Inessa Armand who worked closely with Kollantai and Lenin's wife, Krupskaya.

Women were given wider educational opportunities and encouraged to join the work force, particularly during the economic transformation of the 1930s. However, it is one thing to legislate and propagandise for female equality; it is quite another to achieve it. Russia did not lose its deep-seated male chauvinism overnight. It was still women who did the housework and who queued for bread. Men took advantage of the growing sexual freedom and there were many "postcard divorces". Millions of children grew up without parental homes. As one Bolshevik member, Yaroslavsky put it:

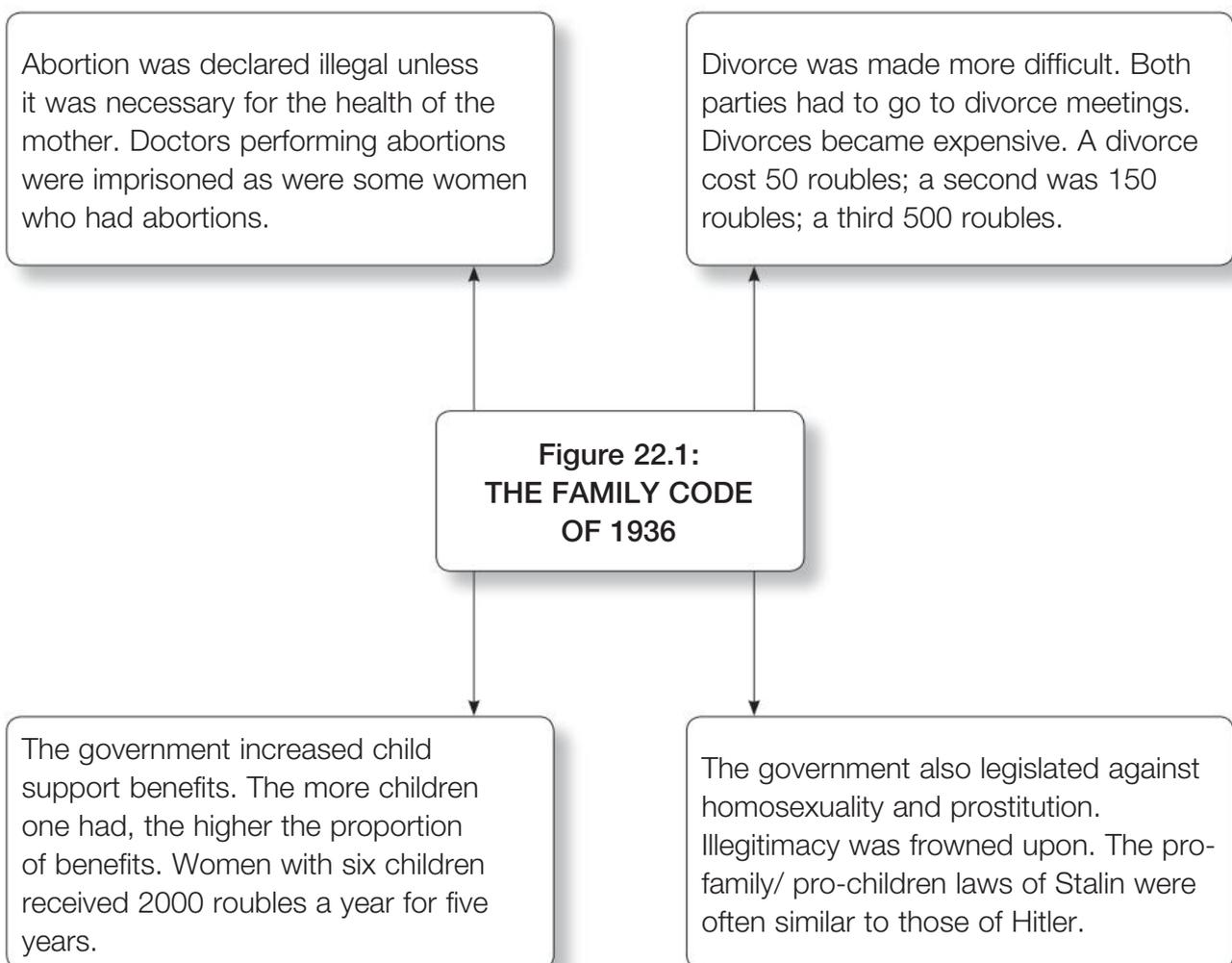
"... It is one thing to write good laws and another to create the social conditions to bring them to life."

Kollantai was to die a disappointed woman as the revolution in the role of women that she had hoped for never eventuated. Under Stalin, there was a reversion to more conservative values and this inevitably affected women. The 1930s was a period of massive upheavals with millions of workers on the move which had social ramifications. The Soviet Union faced growing social instability.

² Shestakov, A V, A Short History of the USSR, Moscow, 1938

- the birth rate was steadily falling (not good for long-term growth);
- there were increasing levels of juvenile crime;
- Soviet cities were inundated with large numbers of homeless children, a not dissimilar situation to that described by Charles Dickens in his novels about 19th century industrial Britain.

As a result of these issues, and against the context of the Stalinist hard line of the time, it is perhaps not surprising to see some of the gains made by women after the revolution diluted. The change in the official approach to women became known as “the great retreat”. A more serious attitude to marriage was now demanded and children were to be taught respect and obedience. In 1936, the government introduced its new Family Code. Its main provisions are summarised in Figure 22.1.



The hard-line policies of the 1930s began to affect domestic issues. From 1935, the NKVD became involved in dealing with juvenile crime, and adolescents as young as twelve could receive the death penalty for violent crime. The NKVD attempted to clear the streets of homeless children and place them in orphanages. Parents were fined if their children were guilty of juvenile crime and on occasions could have their children taken away from them.

Artistic experimentation

During the 1920s, Russia experienced a spectacular period of cultural activity.

- Led by Sergei Eisenstein, Soviet cinema rivaled the work of the German expressionists and Hollywood.
- The theatre world had Karl Meyerhold.
- Literature had Boris Pasternak and the art world the likes of Alexander Rodchenko.

However, once Stalin gained his supremacy Soviet artistic life was forced to change. Pasternak could not get work published and Rodchenko gave up his avant-garde art for the more acceptable world of sports photography.

Stalin demanded that artistic endeavour be mobilised to promote the efforts of the new Russia. Writers, artists, filmmakers and composers now had to work within the framework of “**Socialist Realism**”.

- The days of artists expressing their inner feelings, their emotions and their individuality were gone.
- “Socialist Realism” demanded that all artistic efforts should be positive, optimistic and heroic. Art should assist in the socialist construction of the time and be in accord with the views of the party. Art was to be didactic, ie it was to teach the people the correct attitudes.
- Socialist Realism was instrumental in developing the Stalinist cult of personality. Images of Stalin from this time are classics of socialist realism.
- Heroes were the order of the day, be they Stakhanovite miners, industrious peasants, arctic explorers or pioneering aviators.
- Gone were the self-doubt, questioning or introspection of the 1920s experimenters. Socialist Realism demanded of artists, writers and filmmakers the celebration of the glorious present and a golden future.
- Even music could not escape the demands of Socialist Realism. Stalin hated Shostakovich’s opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mzensk District* – it was too dark and realistic.

Figure 22.2 is a typical example of Socialist Realism.

Figure 22.2: Collective farm harvest



This rural scene offers us a view of well-fed, contented peasants. It is called “Collective Farm Harvest Festival” and was painted in 1937 by the artist Sergei Gerasimov. No brutalised kulaks here, merely happy collective farm workers.

Another change from the 1920s in the late 1930s was the revival of more nationalistic themes, a development

which was promoted more fully during the Great Patriotic War (1941-45). Russia's glorious past was to be celebrated, seen in films on past Russians heroes such as Eisenstein's Alexander Nevsky. ³

Grahame Gill makes the point that the Soviet Union suffered a major cultural decline during the 1930s after the artistic experimentation of the 1920s.

- This was partly the result of the party emphasis on Socialist Realism and of course the standards set by Stalin.
- However, Gill also suggests that the decline was a reflection of the new elite that had arisen in Stalinist Russia.
- This new elite had been educated primarily in the technical fields and they usually came:

"...from a background with little appreciation of literature, art and music, (and so) it is not surprising that this group had little time for these aspects of Russian culture." ⁴

Exercise 22.1

Answer the following questions in the spaces provided.

1	What immediate effect did the revolution have on Russian women?	
2	What was the Bolshevik women's section called?	
3	How were women affected by Stalin's Family Code of 1936?	
4	What was the party's attitude towards the nation's teenagers?	
5	What happened to education during the cultural revolution?	
6	What happened to education from the early 1930s onwards?	
7	What style of art was demanded of artists by Stalin?	

³ Alexander Nevsky was a 13th century Russian prince who won victories against invading German and Swedish armies.

⁴ Gill, G, Twentieth Century Russia, Nelson, Melbourne, 1987, p 84

8	What were the key features of Soviet artistic endeavour in the 1930s?	
9	How was the role of Trotsky presented in Soviet history books?	
10	How did the arts handle Russia's pre-revolutionary history in the 1930s?	

Section Two: Consequences of Revolution

(C) The post-Lenin struggle for power

Chapter Twenty-three

The Power struggle – the narrative

CHAPTERS 23 and 24: AN EXPLANATION

The material to be covered in Chapters 23 and 24 covers common ground. Consequently, some points will appear in both chapters. The following approach has been taken:

- Chapter 23 will take an essentially narrative/ chronological approach. Its purpose will be to merely “tell the story” as far as possible, with the minimum of analysis. There will be no specific “What do the historians have to say?” section in Chapter 23.
- Chapter 24 will assume knowledge of the narrative and will attempt to provide some analytical detail and the views of various historians.

The Death of Lenin

On 30 August 1918, Lenin gave a speech to workers at the Michelson factory in Moscow. Earlier in the day, the head of the Petrograd Cheka, Uritsky, had been assassinated. Lenin refused appeals to stay home and continued his speaking engagements. When he had finished his speech, Lenin answered a few questions. He then turned to enter his car when three shots were fired; two bullets hit Lenin. ¹ Distrusting the possible political affiliations of hospital doctors, Lenin’s chauffeur quickly drove him home. Lenin was lucky; the bullets missed his heart and any arteries. This is important because it took quite a while before doctors were at his side. Lenin survived the shooting and was quickly on the mend. The bullets remained in his body. ²

Lenin’s final years were difficult. He suffered from severe headaches and insomnia; today we might recognise these as stress-related ailments. In the final two years of his life he suffered three strokes. By late 1923, he was having difficulty moving, and even speaking. Lenin suffered a final stroke on the morning of 24 January, 1924 and he died later that day.

“...The autopsy was to reveal that he had suffered all along from an advanced cerebral arteriosclerosis. ³ To the last the organism struggled against the inevitable end.” ⁴

The succession

Though Lenin had been ill for some time, no procedures had been put in place for deciding on his successor. Some in the party believed that there would be a form of collective leadership

¹ The would-be assassin was Fanny Kaplan. Cheka records of her interrogation indicate that she was probably insane and Soviet authorities could not link her to any political organisation. She was shot without a trial. However, her action sparked a wave of red terror against potential enemies.

² One of the bullets was removed in 1922.

³ Cerebral arteriosclerosis is a blockage of the arteries in the brain that occurs as a result of thickening and hardening of the artery

⁴ Ulam, A, Lenin and the Bolsheviks, Collins, London, 1965, p 762

while others believed an individual would take over, most probably Trotsky. Lenin himself had not indicated who should follow him. In his last will and testament, he made comments about several leading party figures, both positive and negative, but did not decisively indicate one person to assume the leadership. One clear opinion Lenin did make in his will was his growing distaste for Stalin. Had Lenin's will been openly published, Stalin's political future would have been gravely in doubt.⁵

There were several possible candidates for the leadership.



Trotsky seemed most likely to follow Lenin - charismatic, intelligent, admired by Lenin and largely responsible for the Red victory in the Civil War. He was disliked by many in the party for his arrogance.



Zinoviev had opposed Lenin's call for the seizure of power in 1917 and had not distinguished himself in the Civil War. However, as the boss of the Petrograd party, he had a strong party support base. Zinoviev was the President of the Comintern (the Communist International).



Kamenev had opposed Lenin's call for the seizure of power in 1917. He had the Moscow party machine behind him, had been with Lenin from the start and had been Lenin's deputy for a while.



Bukharin was one of the younger party leaders and was very popular with party members. Lenin had admired Bukharin as a Marxist theorist.



Stalin seemed the least likely to assume the leadership. Taciturn, and lacking charisma, Stalin was not liked by Lenin. However, he had built up a powerful power base in the party bureaucracy.

Stalin slips in “under the radar”

Power had already moved from Lenin's grasp long before he died in January 1924. When viewing the Russian political landscape during those final months of Lenin's life, Isaac Deutscher makes the following comment:

“...Two years after the end of the Civil War Russian society already lived under Stalin's virtual rule, without being aware of the ruler's name.”⁶

⁵ The will and how it was handled were crucial factors in the post-Lenin struggle for power. (This will be covered in Chapter 23).

⁶ Deutscher, I, Stalin, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1966 ed, p 232

By the time of Lenin’s death, Stalin had accumulated an enormous amount of power and influence within the party. By 1922, Stalin had become:

- Commissar of Nationalities
- Commissar of the Workers’ and Peasants’ Inspectorate
- A member of the ruling Politburo
- “...the only permanent liaison officer between the Politburo and the Orgbureau (Organisation Bureau).”⁷
- General Secretary of the Communist Party

Stalin’s party roles were to be of crucial importance in the post-Lenin struggle for power (see Chapter 24). However, most party figures never saw Stalin as a potential party leader. He was a “grey blur”, a bureaucratic back-room party hack doing essential but unexciting work for the party. It was Trotsky, the charismatic Commissar of War, Red Army hero who was most expected to follow Lenin. This worked against Trotsky and in Stalin’s favour.

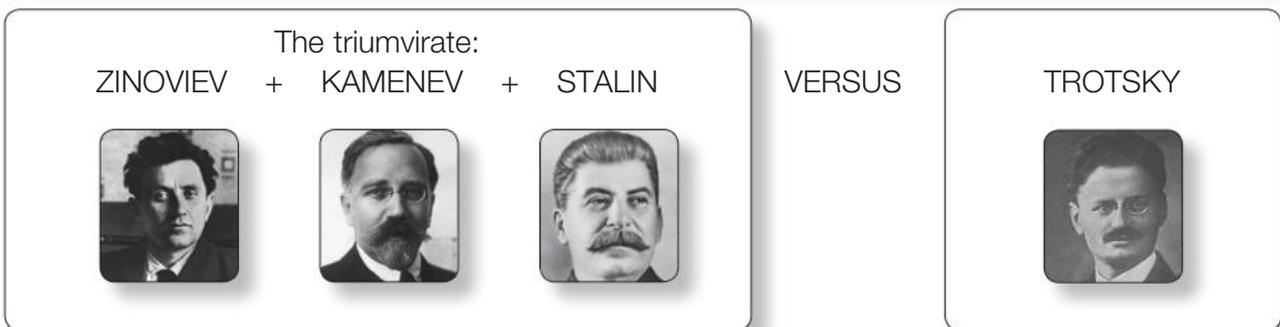
- Trotsky was admired, but also envied, distrusted and hated by many because of his arrogance and his contemptuous attitude to those whom he deemed to be his intellectual inferiors.
- Stalin was totally underestimated by his party colleagues. Few party members held Stalin in high regard but equally few feared him or suspected him of having aspirations for the top job.

Recent accounts of the struggle for power have taken issue with Deutscher’s view. The Russia historian, Oleg Khlevniuk, in his biography of Stalin suggests that Politburo members recognized Stalin’s strengths and shared Lenin’s concerns about him.

Robert Service argues a similar line, suggesting that Stalin’s taking the lead in the attack on Trotsky at the 13th Party Congress indicated the high regard in which he was held by other party figures.

Figure 23.1: The Triumvirate

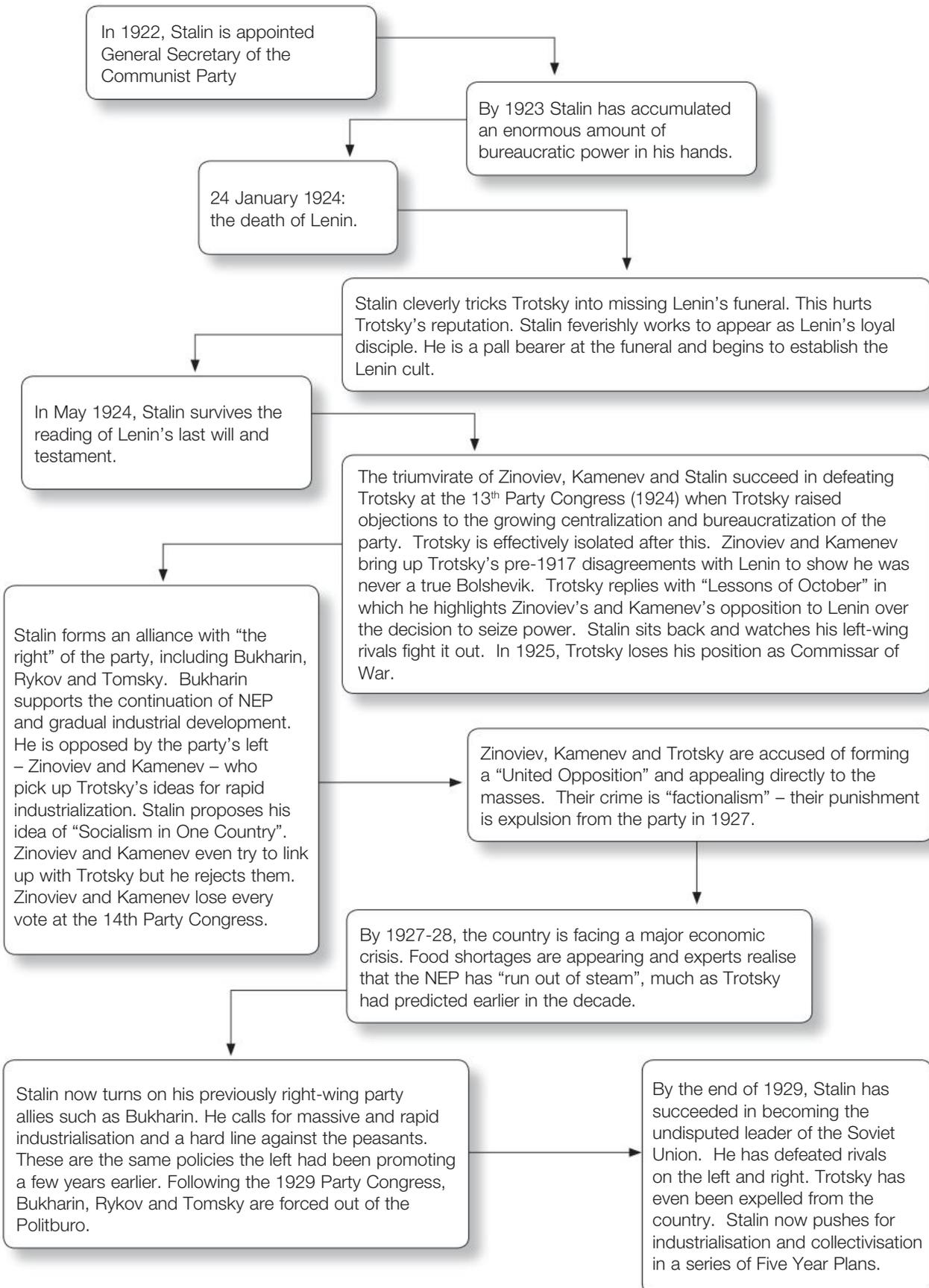
As early as 1923, suspicions about Trotsky’s dictatorial ambitions led to the creation of a “triumvirate” designed to keep Trotsky out of the top job



⁷ Deutscher, p 235

Figure 23.2: The struggle for power

The significance of each of the following stages in the power struggle will be analysed more fully in Chapter 24. Figure 23.2 is aimed at providing a brief narrative overview.



Immediate aftermath of the power struggle

By the end of the 1920s, Stalin was totally in control of the party.

- His main rival Trotsky had not only been expelled from the party but in 1929 was exiled from the Soviet Union. He eventually ended up in Mexico.⁸
- Other leading figures were removed from the Politburo and also expelled from the party.
 - Expulsion from the party was not seen as a permanent punishment, and those expelled were often allowed back in.
- Stalin was now able to fill all key party positions with his own appointments, men and women who owed their careers to him.
- Stalin was also tightening his grip on the GPU.
- It was now full steam ahead in the pursuit of the modernisation and industrialisation of the Soviet Union, and the goal of catching up the west within ten years!

Exercise 23.1

How well have you understood the narrative? Here is a detailed chronological exercise which includes information from this and earlier chapters. Rearrange the following events into the correct chronological order. Write each event in the space provided.

- Stalin turns on the left, and allies with Bukharin
- the November Revolution
- introduction of NEP
- Bolshevik victory in the Civil War
- Stalin survives reading of Lenin's will
- Lenin is shot
- Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky lose their party posts
- Stalin appointed General Secretary
- Stalin emerges triumphant in the party
- Treaty of Brest Litovsk
- the death of Lenin
- triumvirate of Zinoviev, Kamenev and Stalin defeats Trotsky at the 13th Party Congress
- Stalin turns on his right-wing allies
- the Kronstadt Revolt
- Zinoviev, Kamenev and Trotsky expelled from the party
- Trotsky misses Lenin's funeral

⁸ Trotsky was eventually murdered in Mexico in 1940 by one of Stalin's secret police agents.

1st event	
2nd event	
3rd event	
4th event	
5th event	
6th event	
7th event	
8th event	
9th event	
10th event	
11th event	
12th event	
13th event	
14th event	
15th event	
16th event	

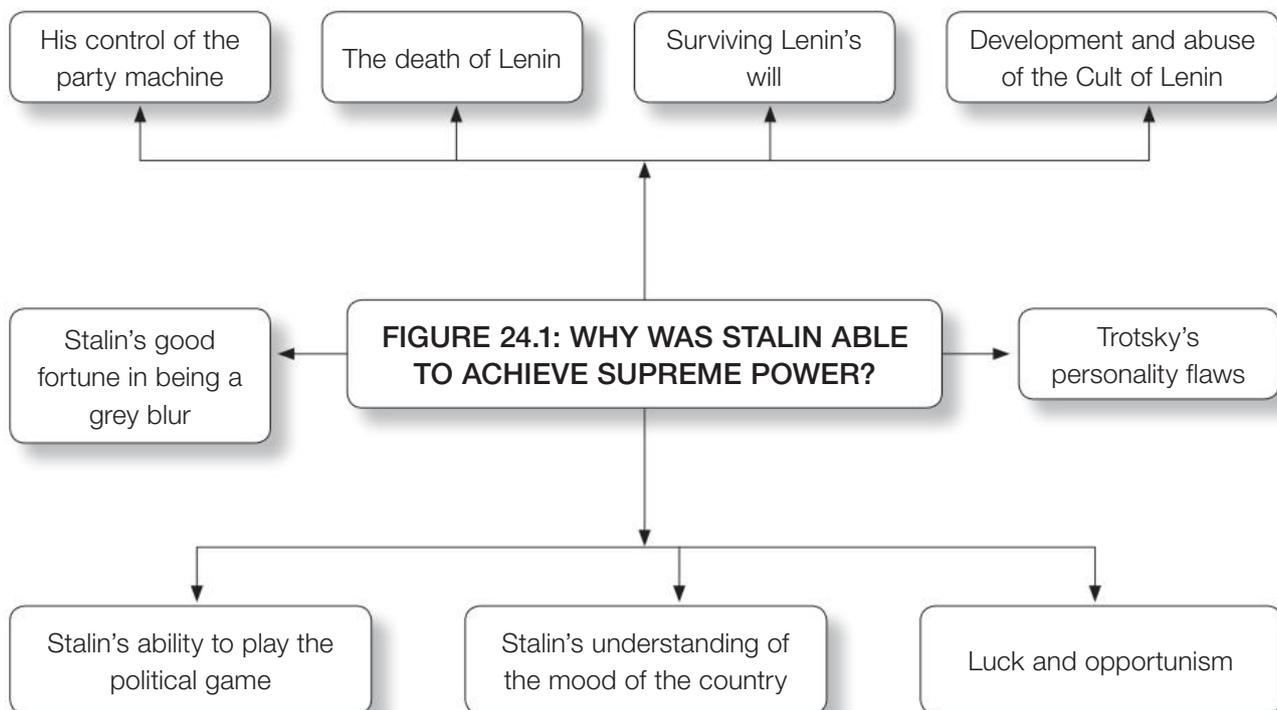
Chapter Twenty-four

The power struggle – analysis

In the early 1920s, few in the Soviet Union would have believed that within less than a decade Stalin would have become the undisputed leader of the country. Nikolai Sukhanov described Stalin at the time as “a grey blur which flickered obscurely and left no trace.”¹ His colleagues were often contemptuous of him, even mocking his Georgian accented Russian. Yet it was Stalin who triumphed! It is unlikely that Stalin had a carefully worked out plan for his rise to power; History rarely works in such ways. However, it is certain that he was driven by a desire to protect his position and make himself a key player in the party. Stalin was an opportunist, driven more by a desire to thwart rivals than relentlessly pursue the leadership of the party. Here is one view of how it happened:

“...Although Stalin seemed to win every trick, it is unlikely that he followed a long-term plan. He did not need to, he could stand back and watch his rivals dig their own graves, occasionally offering his spade to one or other of them.”²

The purpose of this chapter will be to analyse some of the issues which were raised in Chapter 23. The aim is to answer ‘the why’ Stalin was able to achieve supreme power, not ‘the how’. Figure 24.1 summarises the key ideas which will be followed in this section.



¹ Sukhanov was a Socialist Revolutionary who had been a member of the Petrograd Soviet in 1917. After November 1917, he became a critic of the Bolshevik government. Stalin had him shot in August 1939.

² Westwood, J N, *Endurance and Endeavour*, OUP, Oxford, 1973, p 287

1. Stalin's control of the party machine.

Russia was quickly evolving into a one-party dictatorship. No other political parties were allowed to exist, no opposing views were permitted and the major decisions affecting the country were made in the party Politburo. The party controlled the nation.³ Thus, it logically follows that whoever controls the party, controls the nation. Stalin recognised that in order to control the party, one did not have to be its leading light to whom all looked up with admiration and for guidance. This was how many party figures behaved towards Lenin. Some party figures, such as Zinoviev, even went to the extent of trying to ape Lenin's handwriting style. This was not Stalin's way.

Stalin knew that whatever decision was made in the Politburo would have to be implemented by the party machine, the party bureaucracy. Thus, real power was to be had there. By the early 1920s, the party was becoming more centralized, bureaucratic, hierarchical and more disciplined. The ban on factions that was decided at the 1921 10th Party Congress is but one example of this development. This suited whoever could get control of the party machine. As early as 1923, if there was one leading figure that was fast in the process of gaining control of the party machine, it was Stalin.

In 1919, Stalin was appointed as **Commissar of Nationalities**. The Soviet Union was a vast multi-national empire containing not only Russians but Georgians, Ukrainians, Armenians, Tartars, Azerbaijanis and a host of other groups.

- As Nationalities Commissar, Stalin became the party's expert in this area.
 - Other leading party figures that had spent much of their lives in western Europe and the United States looked down on the minority groups and chose not to be involved with them.
 - Stalin was able to use his position to build up contacts in the border areas and in the far-flung party organisations.
 - He would be able to count on these people in any future party conflicts.
- Stalin understood the complexities and intrigues of the distant regions.

*"...His attitude was just that mixture of patience, patriarchal firmness, and slyness that was needed. The Politburo relied on this and refrained from interfering."*⁴

Also, in 1919, Stalin became the **Commissar of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate** on the suggestion of Zinoviev.

- This office had a noble purpose which was to remove inefficiency and corruption from the party. Idealism still counted at this stage.
- The inspectorate, or the Rabkrin as it was called, had the job of checking on every branch of government and of training a civil service elite to run the country. However, it soon developed its own bureaucracy, inefficiencies and corruption.
- Above it all was Stalin, who by virtue of this appointment came to supervise the personnel and workings of the entire government.

³ See Chapter Twenty.

⁴ Deutscher, I, Stalin, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1966 ed, p 233

Stalin was also a member of the **Politburo**.⁵ The Politburo had become the real government of the country. Each member had specific responsibilities, eg Trotsky was responsible for the management of the Civil War.

- Stalin's role was to take care of the day to day management of the party.
- Connected to the Politburo was the **Organisation Bureau** (Orgbureau). Its purpose was to direct party workers wherever they were needed following Politburo decisions.
- Stalin was the only permanent link between the Politburo and the Orgbureau.

*"...Like none of his colleagues, he was immersed in the party's daily drudgery and in all its kitchen cabals."*⁶

The most important job Stalin took on was the post of General Secretary to which he was appointed in 1922. The purpose of the General Secretary's job was to coordinate the overlapping branches of the party which had grown up since 1917. It was seen as a dull, unexciting job which the more exalted party leaders had spurned. It suited Stalin.

- He was responsible for promotions, demotions and various appointments.
- By the mid-1920s, there were thousands of party members at all levels of the party who owed their positions to one man – Stalin.

Stalin's dominance of the party machine would be of crucial importance during the power struggles which were to come.

2. The death of Lenin

Lenin's death in 1924 would not have brought many tears into the eyes of Stalin. Though Lenin had recognized Stalin's talents and assisted in his rise, by 1923 their personal relationship had broken down completely. Lenin accused Stalin of rudeness and formally stated that he would deal with Stalin only on an official basis. In his last will and testament (see below), Lenin had promoted the idea of removing Stalin from the post of General Secretary. Lenin's position was untouchable; his words holy writ. If Lenin had pushed for Stalin's removal, that would have been the end of Stalin. Lenin's death was thus, for Stalin, timely.

Lenin's death was significant in another way. Stalin did not need Lenin as other leading party figures did. Stalin had not spent years in European exile mulling over theoretical debates at Lenin's table like other leaders. He did not share their intellectual need. While they were discussing the nature of the Marxist dialectic, Stalin was robbing banks or in a Siberian exile. Lenin's departure did not create that feeling of emptiness in Stalin that it did in some other party figures.

3. Surviving Lenin's will.

If there was one moment when Stalin's fate hung in the balance it was in May 1924 when Lenin's last will and testament was read out before the Central Committee. Lenin's will contained negative comments about several leading party figures. However, the man who came in for the worst treatment was Stalin. This is part of what Lenin had to say about Stalin:

⁵ During the Civil War it consisted of Lenin, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev and Stalin.

⁶ Deutscher, I, Stalin, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1966 ed, p 235

“...Comrade Stalin, having become General Secretary, has concentrated an enormous power in his hands; and I am not sure that he always knows how to use that power with sufficient caution... Stalin is too coarse and this fault is insupportable in the office of the General Secretary. Therefore, I propose to the comrades to find a way to remove Stalin from the position and appoint to it another man who will in all respects differ from Stalin – more patient, more loyal, more polite, more attentive to comrades...”

Stalin was in trouble. So soon after his death, it was inconceivable that Lenin’s requests be denied. If the Central Committee agreed to have the will read to the entire Party Congress due to meet soon, Stalin’s career would be over.

- He was saved by Zinoviev who addressed the Central Committee and argued that fortunately Lenin’s fears had proven to be unfounded as party members were able to work harmoniously with Stalin.
- Apparently, there was an embarrassed silence as few in the room agreed with Zinoviev. However, Zinoviev won the day and it was agreed that the will would not be distributed.
- At this stage, Zinoviev was working with Kamenev and Stalin in an informal “triumvirate” directed against Trotsky. To Zinoviev, Trotsky was the threat, not the dull Stalin.

Deutscher’s comment on this incident brilliantly sums up the importance of the moment.

“...Stalin could now wipe the cold sweat from his brow. He was back in the saddle, firmly and for good.”⁷

4. Development and abuse of the cult of Lenin

It was stated earlier that Stalin did not “need” Lenin in the way that other party figures did. However, this did not stop Stalin from manipulating the legend of the late leader for his own purposes. Lenin was a modest man. He spurned adulation, extravagance and made it clear that when he left this earth, he did not want pomp and ceremony. Stalin chose to ignore this request for his own political purposes.

Stalin set about developing a “cult of Lenin”, raising Lenin up to an almost divine status. Lenin’s image now appeared everywhere and his words were constantly quoted. In order to justify a party policy or decision Stalin would always manage to find an appropriate quotation from Lenin’s work. If Lenin had made a point about something, opposition to that position was now impossible. Lenin’s words were coming to have the same authority as that of the Bible to a Christian who accepts a literal interpretation of the scriptures.

Stalin’s skillful manipulation of the Leninist cult, his ability to present himself as totally loyal to Lenin and his memory, played well throughout the country.

- Stalin tricked Trotsky into missing Lenin’s funeral. Trotsky was recovering from an illness in the south of the country. When he asked about the funeral, Stalin told him the wrong date and advised Trotsky to continue his recovery. Trotsky’s absence from Lenin’s funeral looked bad and had people commenting on Trotsky’s ‘arrogance’.

⁷ Deutscher, I, Stalin, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1966 ed, p 275

- Stalin was one of the pall bearers at the funeral.
- Lenin's body was embalmed and placed in a tomb in Red Square, Moscow.
- Stalin made a habit of using Lenin to support anything he said. By doing this he was playing the role of the loyal disciple. This contrasted with Trotsky's approach. Trotsky always presented himself as Lenin's equal.

Exercise 24.1

Answer the following questions in the spaces provided.

1	Why was the post of Commissar of Nationalities of such use for Stalin?	
2	What power did the post of General Secretary give Stalin?	
3	Comment on relations between Lenin and Stalin by 1923.	
4	How would Stalin have felt about Lenin's death?	
5	Why was Lenin's will and testament so dangerous for Stalin?	
6	Who saved Stalin at the time of the reading of Lenin's will?	
7	Why did Trotsky not attend Lenin's funeral?	
8	Why was Stalin keen to develop the cult of Lenin?	
9	What would Lenin have thought of the cult developed around him?	
10	How did Trotsky feel about the cult of Lenin?	

5. Stalin and Trotsky: a study in contrasts

Sukhanov's description of Stalin as a 'grey blur' was far from complimentary. However, for Stalin being a grey blur had major advantages.

- It meant that nobody suspected him of ambition and so nobody feared giving Stalin additional responsibilities and additional powers.
- Stalin was a dull, back-room bureaucrat, known to some of his colleagues as "Comrade Card-Index".
- The Bolsheviks were very conscious of history. They frequently looked back to previous revolutions to "learn the lessons of history".
 - In particular, they looked back to the example of The French Revolution.
 - What had come of the ideals of "égalité, fraternité et liberté"?
 - They had evolved into the military dictatorship of Napoleon Bonaparte. Could this happen to the Russian Revolution?
 - If it could, who might be that military dictator? There was only one possibility: Trotsky!
 - Who was the least likely candidate for military dictator? Stalin.
- The two men also differed greatly in their personality and the way that they dealt with their colleagues.
 - Stalin always seemed to have time to talk to people. He kept his views to himself but listened patiently and attentively, whether he was being spoken to by Bukharin or a poor peasant from the Georgia Soviet.
 - Trotsky, on the other hand, lacked patience and did not suffer fools gladly. He found it difficult to deal with his intellectual inferiors. His arrogance and disdain went to the extent of his sitting through Central Committee meetings immersed in a French novel.

6. Luck, opportunism and how to play the game

Historians enjoy seeking out deep currents of developments and complex interpretations to explain the course of events. However, much of what happens in History can often be put down to luck and chance. It has already been noted this is the case when it comes to Stalin's rise to power.

- Lenin's illness and premature death were of great benefit for Stalin. Had Lenin survived for another six months, what of Stalin's future then?
- Trotsky's absence from Moscow at the time of Lenin's death was fortunate for Stalin. It gave him a perfect opportunity to blacken Trotsky's reputation.
- Zinoviev's speech to the Central Committee in which he advised against the publication of Lenin's will saved Stalin.

Stalin certainly knew how to play the political game.

- He used his key positions within the party organisation to place "his" people in positions and to pack Congresses with people loyal to him.
 - This meant that when crucial votes had to be taken, Stalin could be assured of success.

- Fundamentally this is why Trotsky's position deteriorated so rapidly.
- The ban on factions meant that Stalin's opponents were not allowed to campaign against his policies once a Congress dominated with his supporters had passed them. Such action would lead to expulsion from the party.⁸
- Stalin proved very skillful at forming and reforming political alliances:
 - firstly, he joined with Zinoviev and Kamenev against Trotsky;
 - then he joined Bukharin and the right against Zinoviev and Trotsky;
 - then he turned on his right-wing allies.
- Stalin was unscrupulous and opportunistic when it came to pursuing policy:
 - he opposed the left, supported Bukharin and NEP;
 - then without any qualms rejected the right and adopted those left-wing ideas which he had argued against so strongly a few years earlier;
 - all made possible because of his control of the party machine.

7. Stalin's understanding of the mood of the country

Stalin's policy positions throughout the 1920s suggest he was a man devoid of principle and concerned only with power. This might be the case. However, Stalin proved to be more perceptive than his rivals. He was able to make use of two quite contradictory strands of thought to out-manoeuvre his rivals.

Stalin understood that the people of Russia wanted a rest from the strains of war and revolution which had preoccupied the country from 1914 to 1921. However, he also realised that there was still a strong nationalist feeling within the country that he could tap into, despite the supposedly socialist nature of the new Russia.

- Stalin was happy to go along with the New Economic Policy, introduced in 1921, whatever his genuine feelings might have been and despite his totally opposite policies less than a decade later.
 - He knew that the Russian people had had enough crusading and campaigning. They wanted a period of quiet and peace. Since 1914, Russia had experienced war with Germany, two revolutions, Civil War and War Communism.
 - NEP offered a period of calm and consolidation.
 - What the Russian people did not want was more of the same. This is what Trotsky's plans for "permanent revolution" and the left's calls for rapid industrialisation offered.
 - By supporting Bukharin and NEP, Stalin was showing that he understood the mood of the country and so was able to outflank Trotsky.
- However, Stalin also realised that he could make use of the still strong patriotic sentiments that continued inside Russia.
 - When he introduced his theory of "Socialism in One Country", he struck a chord with the party and the country at large.

⁸ This point refers to the ban on factions decided upon at the 10th Party Congress in 1921.

- For too long, Russians had been told that they could not build socialism on their own. Their country was too backward and it needed the help of the “advanced” west.
- Stalin was saying no to this idea: Russia can do it on its own.
- When he decided upon the great turn in 1928 and introduced plans for massive and rapid industrialisation, he found millions of Russians genuinely stirred by this great patriotic adventure. Russia would catch up the west in a decade!

Exercise 24.2

Read the statements listed below on the left. Indicate which person shown below would most likely have made each statement.

1	I believe that what is best for the future of Russia is to continue with the policy of NEP.	
2	I know we must never veer from Comrade Lenin’s position but thankfully he was wrong when it came to Comrade Stalin.	
3	I am surrounded by fools who simply do not have my level of understanding of national issues.	
4	I intend working with Zinoviev and Stalin against Trotsky for the future good of the party.	
5	At times Stalin was almost invisible, it was as if he had disappeared into the background.	
6	Stalin is rude and impatient and I have no desire to continue a personal relationship with him of any kind.	
7	We all honour the word of the late Comrade Lenin and I, for one, intend doing nothing unless guided by his words.	
8	I agreed with Bukharin that NEP should be continued. My position saw me losing my major party posts in 1929.	

TROTSKY	RYKOV	ZINOVIEV	LENIN
STALIN	KAMENEV	SUKHANOV	BUKHARIN

What do the historians have to say about the reasons for the triumph of Stalin as leader of the USSR?

1. Isaac Deutscher: *Stalin*

Deutscher explains how the party became pre-occupied with the example of the French Revolution. Party leaders were educated, they knew their history and they knew full well that the idealism of the French Revolution had resulted in a military dictatorship. Stalin was seen as no threat. There might have been “a streak of perversity in him” but nobody suspected him of seeking to become Lenin’s sole successor. Indeed, the same was felt about all the leading party figures. All that is except Trotsky. Trotsky was brilliant, charismatic and had been the party’s great military hero. Deutscher believes that this worked strongly against Trotsky and for Stalin.

*“...The mask of Bonaparte seemed to fit Trotsky only too well. Indeed, it might have fitted any personality with the exception of Stalin. In this lay part of his strength.”*⁹

2. Martin McCauley: *The Soviet Union since 1917*

McCauley suggests that a key reason for Stalin’s success in the post-Lenin power struggle was the fact that none of his rivals had had any experience in playing the political game. They had not had to climb the political ladder step by step but had, in effect, been handed power in 1917. Stalin was different; he had had to work his way up. The leading party figures all believed that they were superior to Stalin. This, says McCauley, was an error because their sense of intellectual independence had not prepared them “for caucus politics.”

*“...Stalin was moderate and methodical, not to say pedestrian, but he was the only one skilled at building tactical alliances and this put him head and shoulders above the rest.”*¹⁰

3. Hélène Carrère d’Encausse: *Stalin: Order Through Terror*

D’ Encausse highlights the role that the GPU played in the struggle for power. Before the mid-1920s, the role of the GPU (previously the Cheka) had been to deal with anti-party enemies of the state. When Felix Dzerzhinsky was in charge, the GPU retained this role. However, Dzerzhinsky died in 1926 to be replaced by Menzhinsky. Menzhinsky was in poor health, lacked Dzerzhinsky’s revolutionary past and was much more accommodating to Stalin’s wishes. D’ Encausse shows how the police were now willing to use violence to rout Stalin’s enemies. The idea that the party was the source of all authority was over. D’ Encausse concludes:

*“...Menzhinsky clearly showed that the police recognized another type of authority, that of the Party apparatus, and thus of the General Secretary.”*¹¹

⁹ Deutscher, I, *Stalin*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1966 ed, p 275

¹⁰ McCauley, M, *The Soviet Union Since 1917*, Longman, Harlow, 1981, p 70

¹¹ D’ Encausse, Hélène Carrère, *Stalin: Order Through Terror*, Longman, Harlow, 1981, p 10

The Hollywood version

“*Nicholas and Alexandra*” – A Study Guide

Introduction

The film *Nicholas and Alexandra*, released in 1971, was based on the book of the same name by Robert K Massie. With a screenplay by James Goldman and directed by Franklin J Schaffner, the film was nominated for six Academy Awards, winning two. It starred Michael Jayston as Nicholas II, Janet Suzman as Alexandra, Laurence Olivier as Witte, Eric Porter as Stolypin and Tom Baker as Rasputin. ¹

Nicholas and Alexandra was a major Hollywood movie, and was made for the entertainment of cinema goers. It is not a history documentary. However, Goldman and Schaffner have done an excellent job of capturing the feel of the times and they handle the main issues of early twentieth century Russia with skill. The film obviously focusses on the royal family, but the key elements of Russian life at this time – social inequality, attempted reform, terrorism, war, revolution – are handled well within the confines of a three-hour film.

For the purposes of cinematic continuity, the writer and director occasionally take liberties with chronology.

- The film opens with the birth of the tsarevitch, 12 August 1904. However, the creation of the Bolsheviks is shown as happening at the same time – this happened in 1903.
- In the film, Stolypin is assassinated just after the tercentenary celebrations in 1913 – he was murdered in 1911.
- The film shows the Duma being closed in 1913. It was in fact allowed to run its full course from 1912-17.

However, these are minor issues and do not detract from the value of the film!

Advice to teachers

- It is not a good idea to start the topic “The Russian Revolution” by showing the film. The film is complex and students will only truly gain from a viewing if they already have good background knowledge.
- It is also not a good idea to show the film in one go. It is three hours long. It is much better to show it in 30/ 40 minute segments. Each segment could be shown after work has been in done in class dealing with what the film shows.
- The following **study guide** is broken down into specific scenes and might assist teachers in planning their lessons on this topic. The study guide is extremely detailed.
 - For some teachers it may be too detailed and they may choose to use only part of it. Alternatively it can be used fully as a useful revision tool.
 - Teachers might divide their class up and allocate certain scenes to certain students for each part of the viewing.

¹ Dr Who fans will know Tom Baker as the fourth doctor, 1974-81. His interpretation of Rasputin is a real ‘tour de force’.

- Another strategy of using the film would be to debrief with the class after each part of the viewing to discuss the various questions.

Advice to students

Encourage your teacher to show the film in class, best on the lines explained above.

If you cannot watch it in class, watch it at home but not until you are well into the topic. The DVD can be easily obtained from online stores and it might be on a streaming service such as Netflix. Enjoy!

The birth of the tsarevitch

1. Why are Nicholas and Alexandra so excited about the birth to their son?

2. What impression does the director try to give of the relationship between the tsar and his wife?

Despatches from Port Arthur

3. Why is Witte so concerned about what is happening in Port Arthur? What does he suggest could happen if Russia loses the war to Japan?

4. What is Nicholas' uncle's advice about the war?

5. Summarise Nicholas' attitude to the war and to his autocratic powers?

The creation of the Bolsheviks

6. What is happening at the meeting attended by Lenin, Trotsky and Martov? What does Lenin say will be the result of this meeting?

The party for the mother of Nicholas II (Dowager Empress Maria Feodorovna)

7. What impression is given of the lifestyle of the Romanovs?

8. What advice does Nicholas' mother give about the war?

9. Describe Rasputin's appearance.

10. What claims does Rasputin make?

11. How has Alexandra's attitude to the party changed? How do you account for this?

The meeting with the doctors

12. What is wrong with the tsarevitch?

13. How is the disease passed on?

14. What is the main danger of haemophilia as explained by Nicholas?

The student meeting

15. What are the students protesting about? (Their leader, as yet unnamed, is Kerensky).

The workers' factory

16. Describe the living and working conditions.

17. What is the priest's plan? (He is meant to be Father Gapon).

18. What does the priest read out?

The troops leaving for the Far East to fight

19. What are the tsar and tsarina doing? What are they giving the troops?

20. What has happened to Alexi?

Back at Tsarkoe Selo

21. What is Alexandra doing when Rasputin meets her?

22. What reason does Alexandra give Rasputin for her baby's problem?

23. How does Rasputin prove to Alexandra that he is "special"?

Bloody Sunday

24. Describe the march. What are people carrying?

25. What happened to the marchers?

26. What does the film try to present as the significance of the march?

27. What is Nicholas' reaction to the massacre?

28. What is Witte's view of events?

29. How is Lenin presented in the scene where he is examining Trotsky's writing?

Livadia Palace in the Crimea – eight years later (1913)

30. How does the tsar ensure Alexi's well-being?

31. Why does Alexandra not like Stolypin?

32. What is the real reason for Stolypin's visit to Nicholas at Livadia?

33. What do the police reports say about Rasputin?

Back in St Petersburg

34. What decision does Nicholas make about Rasputin?

35. Why does Alexandra demand Rasputin's return?

Lenin in exile

36. Why is Lenin so despondent?

Back in Russia: 1913

37. What happens at the opera?

38. What is Nicholas' reaction?

39. What point does Kerensky make at the meeting of the Duma?

40. What happens to the Duma?

The hunting lodge in Poland

41. What happens to Alexi? What are the doctors able to do?

42. What added issue regarding Alexi's condition is mentioned at this point?

43. What is happening across Russia when the tsar is in Poland?

44. What demand does Alexandra make?

45. How does Alexandra manage to humiliate Nicholas? What is the effect of this?

46. Why is Alexandra so ecstatic?

47. What seems to have happened to Alexi?

48. How is Rasputin behaving in Siberia?

The outbreak of World War I

49. What does Nicholas explain to his family after Alexi's dream?

50. What is the mood of the generals to the possibility of war?

51. Explain Witte's opposition to going to war.

52. What fateful decision does the tsar make? What is the result?

53. What is the Duma's response to the outbreak of war?

54. What happens all across Europe?

55. What appears to be the reaction within Russia to the outbreak of war?

Russia at war

56. Why do you think the officer shoots himself?

57. Give examples of Rasputin's hold over Alexandra.

58. What major decision does Nicholas make?

59. Why are Nicholas' ministers so concerned at his decision?

Nicholas at army HQ

60. Comment on the state of the army.

61. What is Nicholas' uncle's opinion of Rasputin?

Rasputin in Petrograd

62. Comment on Rasputin's influence and behaviour.

Nicholas' meeting with his mother

63. What criticisms does the Empress Dowager make of her son's leadership?

64. What impression are we given of Nicholas as a leader in the scene with his mother?

The party at Prince Yusupov's palace

65. What is the purpose of the party?

66. How does Rasputin behave? Do you find this believable?

67. What happens to Rasputin?

Petrograd: Early 1917

68. Why is Kerensky not excited at the death of Rasputin?

69. What is the condition of Petrograd?

70. What is the significance of the scene when the soldiers slash the grain sacks with their swords?

On Nicholas' train

71. What demand does the Duma make of Nicholas? Why does he really have no choice?

72. What addition does Nicholas make to the abdication document?

The German embassy in Switzerland

73. What is Lenin asking of the German ambassador?

74. What deal is struck?

75. Why does Germany allow Lenin to travel across Germany?

Nicholas and Kerensky

76. Why is Nicholas being sent to Siberia?

Lenin returns

77. What demands does Lenin make?

October 1917

78. Who is the planner of the Bolshevik October coup?

79. What had been the Provisional Government's fundamental error?

80. Who is now Russia's leader?

The fate of the tsar

85. Once the Bolsheviks had taken control, to which city is the royal family sent?

86. Why are they sent there?

87. Describe the immediate events surrounding the tsar's execution.

Notes

Advice on Constructing Essay Responses

Introduction to essay writing

Essay writing is both a literary and a scientific skill. There is no mystery in writing a good essay. Certainly, some people are better writers than others: they might have a wider vocabulary, they might know more, they might have a better turn of phrase, they might have a better grasp of the issues. However, everyone can come to terms with the basics and write a reasonable essay.

So what makes for a successful essay?

1. **Answer the question.** This sounds almost trite and an insult to the intelligence, but the majority of poor essay responses simply do not answer the question. Failing to answer the question can be done in a variety of ways. In summary it can happen because:

a. A student fails to address the issues presented in the question, ie he or she decides to write about something else. For example in the essay:

How important was World War I in bringing about the fall of the Romanov Dynasty?

A student decides to argue that:

- the war had nothing to do with the fall of the Romanov Dynasty
- it was the result of the Nicholas' weakness, Alexandra's domination of him and Rasputin's influence

A nice line of argument, but it is not answering the question. The student could argue the 'Nicholas/ Alexandra/ Rasputin' line, but above all he needs to deal with the issue of the war, even if it is to show that the war was not the key factor. He cannot simply ignore the focus of the question because he wants to write about something else.

- he could argue that yes, the war was important in bringing about the fall of the Romanovs, and show why this is so, and then argue "but of course other factors were also of importance such as....."
- as a rule of thumb: if you are going to pursue this style of argument, ensure about half of the essay deals with the subject of the question, in this case the war

b. A student writes about the issues presented in the question, but instead of providing an argument to answer the question, she simply 'narrates' or 'tells a story'. For example in the essay:

How important was World War I in bringing about the fall of the Romanov Dynasty?

A student fails to present an argument, instead she simply narrates:

- she might describe the events leading up to the outbreak of the war;
- she might go on to describe events such as the Battle of Tannenberg and the Battle of Massurian Lakes, the Brusilov Offensive
- she might list casualties and German territorial losses

This is all relevant, factual detail but she is merely telling a story and not presenting an argument which is showing how important the war was in the Fall of the Romanov Dynasty.

c. A student does not really understand the question and has so little factual detail they are unable to sustain even a narrative response.

d. A student does understand the question and attempts an argument but has so little factual detail that the argument cannot be sustained.

'c' and 'd' can only be fixed up with solid work and revision on the part of the student; 'a' and 'b' can be perfected with practice.

2. **Provide an argument** in your introduction which will form the basis of the essay. The introduction is the most important paragraph of the essay; if it is written properly it should leave the marker in no doubt what is going to come up in the essay. So what does a good introduction involve?

a. Avoid the dramatic 'setting the scene' method. For example in the essay:

How important was World War I in bringing about the fall of the Romanov Dynasty?

A student should avoid opening like this:

- Russian soldiers were hurled before merciless German machine guns by their callous upper-class generals whose incompetence was matched only by their self-indulgence and indifference to their men. With temperatures twenty degrees below zero, Russia's peasants advanced not wearing boots, waiting to pick up the rifle of a comrade who had been killed in front.

b. Avoid providing lots of factual detail in the introduction. Introduce the broad areas you will discuss, but leave the detail to the body of the essay. For example in the essay:

How important was World War I in bringing about the fall of the Romanov Dynasty?

This is not a good introduction:

- Germany declared war on Russia on 1 August 1914. Russia sent forces into Galicia against Austria and had some success but their advance into East Prussia brought them up against well-trained and well-equipped German forces under Hindenburg and Ludendorff. Unable to link up, the Russian 2nd Army and the Russian 1st army fought separate battles at Tannenberg.....

c. Be careful with length. Two lines is not an introduction, no argument can be properly introduced in such a small space. However, a page and half is too long. With average sized writing, 6-8 lines should be enough to present the argument of the essay.

d. Present an argument in your introduction. There is no 'right' answer to a Modern History essay question; the right answer is the argument which you have presented, logically developed and backed up with detailed factual evidence. For example, for the essay:

How important was World War I in bringing about the fall of the Romanov Dynasty?

A student might try to argue:

- World War I was of fundamental importance in bringing about the fall of the Romanov Dynasty. However, it was not so much that the war caused massive casualties and brought misery to the Russian people. All nations were affected this way. The war brought to the surface the fundamental economic, political and military weaknesses of the tsarist regime. The tsarist regime was so flawed in its structure that the war gradually eroded all the bases of the system. World War I did not so much cause the fall of the Romanov Dynasty as determine its timing.

3. **Provide your essay with a structure.** Your introduction should show where the essay will lead, eg the above introduction might lead to the following structure:

- by mid-1914, Russia was almost on the verge of revolution as strikes and riots were spreading across the country; comment on the brief unity and rallying to the tsar the war created, and that the outbreak of war merely postponed another revolution.
- consider the suffering of the troops, their lack of equipment, poor communications, lack of supplies and food, and then relate this to the backward state of the economy which even Stolypin's reforms had been unable to adequately change.
- the incompetence of Russian military leadership, which led to massive casualties and prisoners being taken, seen clearly at Tannenberg and Massurian Lakes; the result of Russia's social system in which rank not talent mattered.
- the tsar clung to autocracy when cooperation with the Progressive Bloc was desperately needed; relate this to his reactionary views which had prevailed ever since he came to the throne; this served to weaken the autocracy further.
- The nature of the tsarist system made possible the disastrous influence of Alexandra, and of course Rasputin; this was the result of a failure to institute real reform;
- conclusion: The war was ultimately the factor which determined the timing of the fall of the Romanov Dynasty as much as its cause. Before 1914, the tsarist system was profoundly weak economically, politically paralysed, dominated by an autocrat who refused to compromise. The tsar headed a system that allowed for military incompetence and political interference from the worst possible quarters. The outbreak of war temporarily cooled the political temperature in mid-1914. However, the war quickly brought out the fundamental faults of the regime so that the bases of its power were eroded by early 1917.

(NB: this is only one of a hundred ways of dealing with this question)

So once more, let us examine what makes for a successful essay?

Let us consider the same ideas relating to a later part of the revolution.

1. **Answer the question.** This sounds almost trite and an insult to the intelligence, but the majority of poor essay responses simply do not answer the question. Failing to answer the question can be done in a variety of ways. In summary it can happen because:

- A student fails to address the issues presented in the question, ie he or she decides to write about something else. For example in the essay:

How important was the NEP in the consolidation of Bolshevik power?

A student decides to argue that:

- the NEP had nothing to do with the collapse of the consolidation of Bolshevik power;
- it was the result of the policy of War Communism and Trotsky's skilful leadership during the Civil War.

A nice line of argument, but it is not answering the question. The student could argue the 'War Communism/ Trotsky' line, but above all he needs to deal with the issue of the NEP, even if it is to show that the NEP was not an important factor. He cannot simply ignore the focus of the question because he wants to write about something else.

- he could argue that yes, the NEP was important in bringing about the consolidation of Bolshevik power, and show why this is so, and then argue "but of course other factors were also of importance such as...."
- as a rule of thumb: if you are going to pursue this style of argument, make sure that about half of your essay deals with the subject of the question, in this case the NEP.

A student writes about the issues presented in the question, but instead of providing an argument to answer the question, she simply 'narrates' or 'tells a story'. For example, in the essay:

How important was the NEP in the consolidation of Bolshevik power?

A student fails to present an argument, instead she simply narrates:

- she might describe the main aspects of the NEP;
- she might even go on to show some of the results of the NEP.

This is all relevant, factual detail but she is merely telling a story and not presenting an argument which is showing how important the NEP was in the consolidation of Bolshevik power.

c. A student does not really understand the question and has so little factual detail they are unable to sustain even a narrative response.

d. A student does understand the question and attempts an argument but has so little factual detail that the argument cannot be sustained.

'c' and 'd' can only be fixed up with solid work and revision on the part of the student; 'a' and 'b' can be perfected with practice.

2. **Provide an argument in your introduction** which will form the basis of the essay. The introduction is the most important paragraph of the essay; if it is written properly it should leave the marker in no doubt what is going to come up in the essay. So, what does a good introduction involve?

a. Avoid the dramatic 'setting the scene' method. For example, in the essay:

How important was the NEP in the consolidation of Bolshevik power?

A student should avoid opening like this:

- Before the NEP, the Russian people were living in a country where starvation and the stench of death stalked the land. Red and White armies roamed the countryside,

terrorising the people. As mothers tried to keep their families alive, Cheka-backed food detachments grabbed the food from their children's mouths.....

- b. Avoid providing lots of factual detail in the introduction. Introduce the broad areas you will discuss but leave the detail to the body of the essay. For example, in the essay:

How important was the NEP in the consolidation of Bolshevik power?

This is not a good introduction:

- The NEP, which stands for New Economic Policy and was introduced at the time of the 10th Party Congress of 1921, returned Russia to capitalism. It allowed peasants to sell surplus food on the open market and it also provided for the opening of shops and small businesses which gave an opening to NEPmen to.....

- c. Be careful with length. Two lines is not an introduction, no argument can be properly introduced in such a small space. However, a page and half is too long. With average sized writing, 6-8 lines should be enough to present the argument of the essay.

- d. Present an argument in your introduction. There is no 'right' answer to a Modern History essay question; the right answer is the argument which you have presented, logically developed and backed up with detailed factual evidence. For example, for the essay:

How important was the NEP in the consolidation of Bolshevik power?

A student might try to argue:

- The NEP was of fundamental importance in the consolidation of Bolshevik power. Lenin's resolution, Trotsky's skill, and divisions amongst the Whites had helped the Bolsheviks emerge victorious from the Civil War. However, War Communism had left Russia shattered economically, left millions starving and presented the Bolsheviks with an alienated peasant population. It was NEP which restored the economy, made it possible for Russia to feed itself and which removed the final pockets of opposition to Bolshevik rule.

3. **Provide your essay with a structure.** Your introduction should show where the essay will lead, eg the above introduction might lead to the following structure:

- some points about Lenin's role, his ruthlessness and his willingness to do whatever it took to ensure Bolshevik success, Trotsky's military skills and the Bolshevik military success in the Civil War;
- the impact of War Communism, its role in bringing victory, the disastrous state in which it left Russia and the revolts it caused which made NEP necessary;
- some narrative detail about the elements of NEP;
- evidence to show how the NEP managed to revive the Russian economy;
- the political impact of NEP, the removal of all opposition and strengthening of party control;
- conclusion: The NEP was crucial in the Bolshevik consolidation of power. Despite their victory in the Civil War with the Whites, the Bolsheviks might well have found themselves unable to hold on to power in the desperate situation they faced in 1921 had it not been for the NEP. Thanks to the NEP the Russian people survived, the economy was revitalised and the Bolsheviks achieved unopposed political supremacy.

(NB: this is only one of a hundred ways of dealing with this question)

4. Structure paragraphs carefully. Some simple rules:

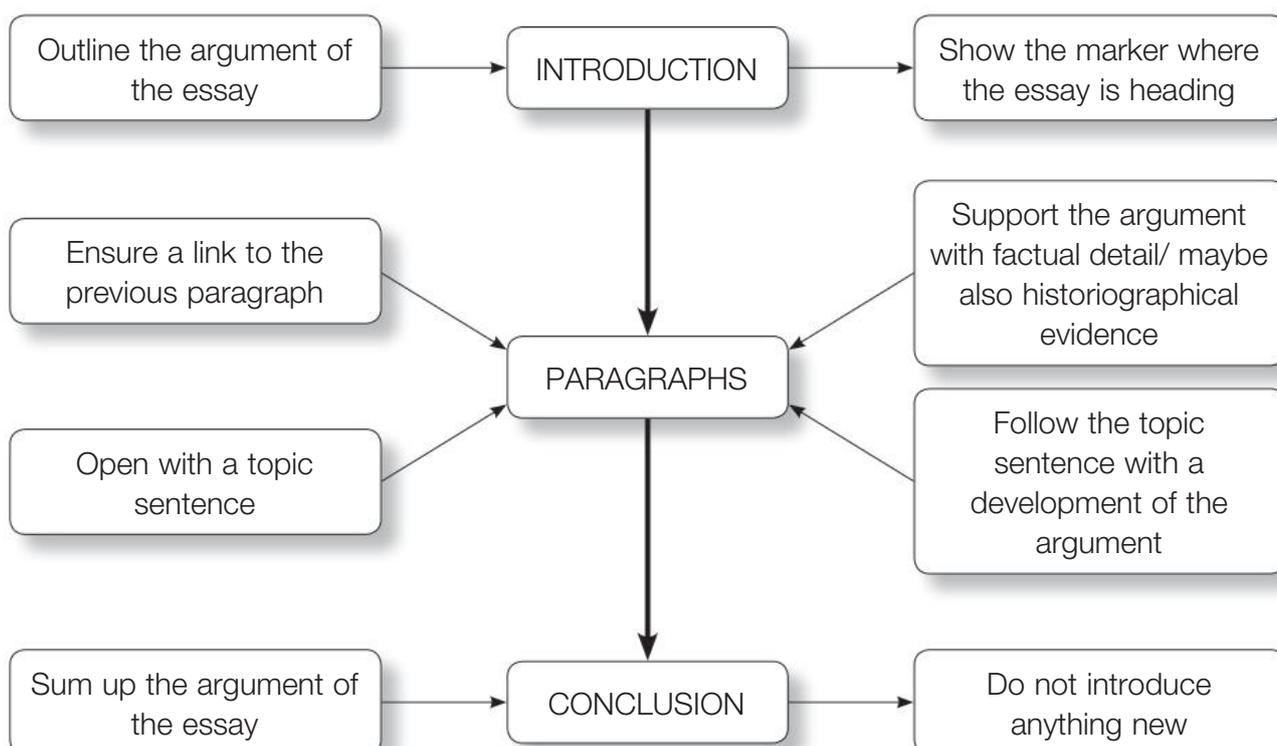
- open with a topic sentence which outlines what the paragraph is going to be about;
- develop the argument presented in the topic sentence;
- support the argument with specific factual detail;
- if appropriate, support the detail with historiographical evidence;
- link your paragraphs – this can be achieved easily with certain stock phrases, eg:
 - “not only was ‘x’ of significance but ‘y’ also had an impact....”
 - “in addition to “a and b”, “c and d” were also to benefit from.....”
 - “in contrast to “e”, “f” reacted quite differently....”

NB: Do not open paragraphs with historiography. The aim should be for the student to show the marker what he knows. Therefore, open with your ideas, back it up with factual detail and then, if appropriate, back up your idea with what a historian has said:

- argument>detail>(maybe) historians’ ideas;
- do not name drop for the sake of it – markers are not fooled or impressed by having lots of historians’ names dropped into an essay when their books have almost certainly never been looked at;
- Fewer historians mentioned is better than lots.

NB: Do not quote, paraphrase! This shows that you understand what the historian is saying; giving a three-line quotation merely shows you have remembered a three-line quotation, whereas paraphrasing the historian’s view in your own words shows that you have understood what you are writing about. The occasional pithy quote of just a few words can be effective.

The diagram below sums up some of the main ideas that have been discussed in this section.



Timeline

- 1893 – Witte appointed Finance Minister
- 1894 – Nicholas II becomes tsar
- 1903 – Creation of the Bolshevik Party
- 1904 – February: Outbreak of war with Japan
August: Birth of tsarevitch Alexi
- 1905 – January: Bloody Sunday
June: Mutiny on the Battleship Potemkin
September: Japan defeats Russia in the Russo-Japanese War
The October Manifesto
Creation of the St Petersburg Soviet
- 1906 – Resignation of Witte
Stolypin becomes Prime Minister
May to July: Opening and closing of the First Duma
- 1907 – Anglo-Russian Entente
February to June: Opening and closing of the Second Duma
November: The Third Duma commences
- 1911 – Assassination of Stolypin
- 1912 – Lena Goldfields massacre
- 1913 – Tercentenary of Romanov rule
- 1914 – 28 June: Assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand
1 August: Germany declares war on Russia
Russians defeats at the Battle of Tannenberg and Massurian Lakes
- 1915 – Nicholas assumes the role of Commander-in-Chief
- 1916 – The Brusilov Offensive
The murder of Rasputin
- 1917 – The February Revolution
Formation of Provincial Government and the Petrograd Soviet
Nicholas II abdicates
July: Kerensky becomes Prime Minister
The Bolsheviks seize power in the October Revolution
Creation of the SOVNARKOM
December: formation of the Cheka
- 1918 – January: Closing of the Constituent Assembly
March: The Treaty of Brest Litovsk
June: Civil War in Russia
Introduction of War Communism
July: Execution of Tsar Nicholas and his family
August: assassination attempt on Lenin

- 1919 – Stalin appointed Commissar of Nationalities
Allied intervention over by end of the year
Formation of the Comintern
- 1920-21 – War with Poland ended by Treaty of Riga
Bolshevik victory in the Civil War
- 1921 – The Kronstadt Revolt
10th Party Congress: start of NEP
- 1922 – Stalin appointed General Secretary
Treaty of Rapallo
Formation of the GPU
- 1923 – Triumvirate of Zinoviev, Kamenev and Stalin
- 1924 – Death of Lenin
Stalin survives Lenin's will
- 1925 – Trotsky loses job as Commissar of War
- 1927 – Zinoviev, Kamenev, Trotsky expelled from party
- 1928 – Bukharin defeated in the power struggle
The First Five Year Plan
The trial of the Shakhty engineers
- 1929 – Trotsky expelled from the Soviet Union

Glossary

abdicates	gives up the throne
abdication	the act of a monarch surrendering his or her throne
agent provocateur	person working for the government who attempts to provoke demonstrators into illegal actions
annex	to take land belonging to another nation and make it part of one's own territory
April Theses	Lenin's ideas for Bolshevik strategy in 1917
autocracy	form of government where all power is concentrated in the hands of one person
Black Hand	Slav anti-Austrian terrorist group
blank cheque	Germany's unconditional support for Austria, 6 July 1914
Bolsheviks	Lenin's faction of the Social Democratic Party, formed 1903
Bonapartism	fear of the revolution evolving into a military dictatorship
bourgeoisie	Marxist term for the middle class
Brest-Litovsk	treaty signed between Germany and Russia in March 1918
burzhui	bourgeois types
capitalists	owners of businesses, banks, factories etc
Cheka	Bolshevik secret police created in December 1917
Comintern	Communist International, formed 1919
cossacks	mounted troops renowned for their loyalty to the tsar and their brutal methods
coup d' état	forceful takeover of power
cult of Lenin	acceptance of the almost divine status of Lenin after his death
divine right	the idea that a monarch holds his or her crown by the will of god
double-agent	a person who secretly works for both sides in a conflict
Dual Alliance	1879 alliance between Germany and Austria
duma	Russian parliament
emancipation of the serfs	1861 Law of Tsar Alexander II giving the serfs their freedom
Enclosure Movement	process in which farm holdings were consolidated in England in the 18th century
factionalism	development of opposition groups with the Communist Party
franchise	the qualification to vote
gold standard	system whereby a currency can be converted into gold
GPU	secret police, Political Administration of the State
Greens	the non-Red and non-White forces during the Russian Civil War 1918-21
icon	small painting of a religious figure
indemnity	compensation paid to a victor after a conflict
Iskra	Russian Marxist newspaper, means the Spark
Kadets	Constitutional Democrats Party in Russia
Kronstadt	naval base outside Petrograd
kulaks	prosperous peasants
Massurian Lakes	Site of major Russian defeat in August 1914
Mensheviks	faction of Social Democratic Party formed in 1903 in opposition to the Bolsheviks
mir	commune
most favoured nation status	a nation automatically receives any concession that is made to another nation
NEP	New Economic Policy, introduced 1921, involved a partial return to capitalism

nephritis	inflammation of the kidneys
NEPmen	retail traders during the NEP period, often corrupt
NKVD	secret police, successor of the GPU
nomenklatura	people holding leading party and state jobs
Octobrists	Russian political party who supported the October Manifesto but wanted no more changes
okhrana	Tsarist secret police
patriarch	head of the Russian Orthodox Church
Petrograd Soviet	Workers' and Soldiers' Council established in February 1917
pogrom	state organised attack on Jews
Politburo	ruling body of the party
Potemkin	battleship, scene of a naval mutiny in 1905
proletariat	Marxist term for the working class
propaganda	information aimed at making a person think a certain way
protectionism	policy of imposing tariffs on imports to protect a country's industry
Provisional Government	government formed from the Duma in February 1917
Rapallo, Treaty of	German-Soviet treaty of 1922
reactionary	ultra conservative opposed to any change
real wages	value of wages after changes in prices have been taken into account
redemption payments	payments made by peasants for the land they were given after Emancipation
Reds	the Bolshevik side in the Russian Civil War
Re-Insurance Treaty	1887 treaty between Germany and Russia
Romanovs	the dynastic family ruling Russia 1613-1917
rouble	Russian currency
Russification	policy of imposing the Russian language and culture on to non-Russian groups in the empire
scissors crisis	growing gap between industrial and rural prices in the 1920s
scorched earth policy	destroying one's own resources to deprive an enemy of them
serfs	peasants owned by the state or landowners before Emancipation in 1861
Social Democratic Labour Party	Russian Marxist party
sosloviia	the various estates or social sections of the Russian people
soviet	council of workers and soldiers
SOVNARKOM	Council of People's Commissars
St Petersburg Soviet	Workers' and Soldiers' Council established in 1905
State Council	key advisory body to the tsar
Stolypin's necktie	the hangman's noose
subsistent	type of farming where just enough is produced to feed one's family but there is no surplus
suffragettes	women fighting for the vote in early 20th century Britain
Tambov	site of peasant revolt 1920-1
Tannenberg	Site of major Russian defeat in August 1914
tariff	a tax on imports
the Straits	waters linking the Black Sea to the Mediterranean Sea
Triple Entente	grouping of Britain, France and Russia
triumvirate	term describing the anti-Trotsky coalition of Zinoviev, Kamenev and Stalin
Versailles, Treaty of	Post World War I treaty with Germany
War Communism	extreme socialist economic measures imposed on Russia during the Civil War
Whites	the anti-Bolshevik side in the Russian Civil War
Workers Opposition	group opposed to War Communism policies 1921
zemstvos	local government councils in Russia
zhenontdel	women's department set up in 1921

Dramatis Personae

Alekseev	Russian Chief of Staff from August 1915
Alexander Guchov	leading member of the Octobrists
Alexander II	Tsar of Russia 1855-1881
Alexander III	Tsar of Russia 1881-1894
Alexander Kerensky	leader of the Provisional Government, July-October 1917
Alexandra	Tsarina, 1894-1917, wife of Nicholas II
Alexi	the tsarevich, son of Nicholas and Alexandra
Antonov, Alexander	leader of the Tambov revolt, 1920-1
Bismarck	German chancellor 1871-1890
Botkin	the royal family's doctor
Brusilov	arguably Russia's most successful general
Bukharin, Nikolai	key supporter of the NEP, executed by Stalin in 1938
Denikin	white Civil War general
Dmitry Bogrov	assassin of Stolypin
Dukhonin, General	Army commander at time of the November Revolution
Dzerzinsky, Felix	head of the Cheka
Engels, Friedrich	Communist writer and thinker, close colleague of Karl Marx
Father Georgi Gapon	leader of the peaceful march on Bloody Sunday, 1905
Franz Ferdinand	heir to Austrian throne, assassinated June 1914
Gavrilo Princip	assassin of Franz Ferdinand
Grigori Rasputin	Siberian holy man who ingratiated himself with the Royal Family
Hindenburg	German commander at Battle of Tannenberg
Kamenev, Lev	Moscow party boss, part of triumvirate with Stalin and Zinoviev
Kaplan, Fanny	attempted to assassinate Lenin in August 1918
Kolchak	White general in the Civil War
Kolchak	white Civil War general
Kollantai, Alexandra	Commissar of Social Welfare, promoter of women's rights
Kornilov	Commander in Chief of Russian army who attempted a coup in August 1917
Krylenko	Bolshevik army commander from mid-November 1917
Lenin	leader of the Bolshevik Party
Leon Trotsky	commander of the Bolshevik Red Army in the Civil War
Makhno, Nestor	green Civil War leader
Martov	leading member of the Mensheviks
Marx, Karl	Communist writer and thinker, author of The Communist Manifesto
Menzhinsky, Vyacheslav	head of the GPU 1926-34
Michael Rodzianko	leading member of the Octobrists
Molotov	Soviet Foreign Minister
Nicholas II	Tsar of Russia, 1894-1917
Pasternak, Boris	author of Doctor Zhivago
Plehve	Interior Minister from 1902, assassinated 1904
Pobedonostev	reactionary advisor to Alexander III and Nicholas II

Prince Lvov	first leader of the Provisional Government in 1917
Pyotr Stolypin	Russian Chief Minister 1906-11
Rasputin	mysterious religious figure, gained enormous influence in the royal family
Reed, John	radical American journalist, author of Ten Days That Shook The World
Rennenkampf	Russian commander at Battle of Massurian Lakes
Rykov, Alexey	supporter of Bukharin and the NEP, executed by Stalin in 1938
Samsonov	Russian commander at Battle of Tannenberg
Sazanov	Russian foreign minister in 1914
Sergei Witte	Finance Minister 1892-1903, Chairman of Committee of Ministers 1903-06
Stalin	Soviet dictator from 1929-1953
Sukhanov, Nikolai	Socialist Revolutionary, later opponent of Bolsheviks, shot by Stalin in 1939
Theodore Roosevelt	US President 1900-1909
Tomsky, Mikhail	supporter of Bukharin and the NEP, committed suicide 1936
Trotsky	leading Bolshevik, Commissar of War 1918-21
Tukachevsky	Civil War hero, executed by Stalin 1937
Uritsky	head of Petrograd Cheka, assassinated 1918
Victor Chernov	founder of the Socialist Revolutionary party
Wilhelm II	German kaiser 1888-1918
Wrangel	white Civil War general
Yudenich	white Civil War general
Yurovsky	Ekaterinburg Bolshevik in charge of Nicholas II's execution
Yusupov, Count	murderer of Rasputin, December 1917
Zinoviev, Grigory	Petrograd party boss, part of triumvirate with Kamenev and Stalin

Answers to Revision Exercises

Exercise 1.1

1 – 8000 kms east-west; an area of over 20 million sq kms; 2 – Christianity (Orthodox, Catholic), Judaism, Islam; 3 – Georgians, Poles, Armenians, Azeris; 4 – russification; 5 – fear of invasion; 6 – size, diversity, history of invasion; 7 – Sergei Witte; 8 – producing just enough for oneself with no surplus available for sale; 9 – foreign capital, resources, labour; 10 – still well behind Britain and the United States.

Exercise 1.2

1 – false; 2 – true; 3 – false; 4 – true; 5 – false; 6 – false; 7 – true; 8 – true; 9 – false; 10 – true.

Exercise 1.3

1 – Alexander II; 2 – Peter the Great; 3 – zemstvos; 4 – Nicholas I; 5 – reactionary; 6 – the Dukhobors; 7 – divine right; 8 – the okhrana; 9 – Ivan IV (the terrible); 10 – Tsar Michael.

Exercise 2.1

Belief in divine right/ yes/ yes; more suited to a constitutional monarch/ no/ yes; preferred personal life to political life/ no/ yes; tough and no-nonsense/ yes/ no; gentle, diffident nature/ no/ yes.

Exercise 2.2

1 – fact; 2 – opinion; 3 – opinion; 4 – fact; 5 – fact; 6 – opinion; 7 – fact; 8 – opinion.

Exercise 3.1

1 – false; 2 – false; 3 – true; 4 – true; 5 – true; 6 – true; 7 – false; 8 – false; 9 – true; 10 – false.

Exercise 3.2

1 – workers (proletariat), peasants; 2 – health, education, housing; 3 – the land they were given was too small to support themselves; 4 – loyalty, they called him ‘the little father’; 5 – preached acceptance of the status quo, promised better in the next life; 6 – low wages, excessively long hours; 7 – naval reform; 8 – interest payments; 9 – high tariffs; 10 – force.

Exercise 4.1

1 – Anarchist; 2 – nihilist; 3 – Narodnik; 4 – Bolshevik; 5 – Socialist Revolutionary.

Exercise 4.2

Nicholas II made it clear when he came to the throne that he had no intention of diluting his autocratic powers. As a result of this, he maintained the reactionary policies of father, Alexander III. This included the work of the okhrana. This meant that those agitating for change had no peaceful means of achieving their aims. Consequently, revolutionary movements were formed which often engaged in violent, terrorist activities. Not only were these groups violent, they also embraced romantic and totally unrealistic notions for Russia’s future.

Exercise 5.1

1st – The Treaty of Shimonoseki; 2nd – Russia annexes the Liaodong Peninsula; 3rd – Japan attack Port Arthur; 4th – Assassination of Plehve; 5th – Japan captures Port Arthur; 6th – The Battle of Mukden; 7th – The Battle of Tsushima; 8th – The Treaty of Portsmouth.

Exercise 5.2

1 – false; 2 – true; 3 – true; 4 – true; 5 – false; 6 – false; 7 – true; 8 – false; 9 – false; 10 – true.

Exercise 6.1

1 – not a revolutionary document/ petitioners seeking basic rights and an improvement in living conditions/ loyalty to the tsar remains; 2 – basic freedoms/ measures to improve their desperate lives and measures to stop exploitation in the factories.

Exercise 6.2

1st – start of the Russo-Japanese War; 2nd – assassination of Plehve; 3rd – Bloody Sunday; 4th – The Potemkin Mutiny; 5th – National Congress of Zemstvos; 6th – end of the Russo-Japanese War; 7th – issuing of the October Manifesto; 8th – closing down of the St Petersburg Soviet

Exercise 7.1

1 – excitement, relief, hope; 2 – basic freedoms, an elected Duma; 3 – Octobrists, Kadets; 4 – go through the State Council, be acceptable to the tsar; 5 – supreme autocratic power belonged to the tsar; 6 – quickly closed down, too oppositional; 7 – 3rd – 1907-12; 4th – 1912-17; 8 – change in franchise rules meant each Duma was more pro-government; 9 – vacillation, indecisiveness; 10 – reassertion of his divine, autocratic power

Exercise 7.2

1 – fact; 2 – opinion; 3 – fact; 4 – fact; 5 – opinion; 6 – fact; 7 – opinion; 8 – opinion

Exercise 7.3

1 – false; 2 – true; 3 – false; 4 – true; 5 – true; 6 – false; 7 – true; 8 – false; 9 – true; 10 – false

Exercise 7.4

1 – hard-working, a workaholic not interested in simple pleasures, understands Russia's situation; the beach scene creates humour as Stolypin never lets go of his briefcase; 2 – she does not like him/ "our friend" (Rasputin) distrusts him; 3 – the tsar is angry but probably already knew/ he cannot get rid of Rasputin because of his wife's belief that only Rasputin can save her son; 4 – correct: the opera, the nature of the murder, the timing; incorrect: wrong year 1913 instead of 1911, Nicholas is clearly upset whereas in fact he did not even bother visiting Stolypin in hospital.

Exercise 8.1

1 – George Buchanan; 2 – Bismarck; 3 – Berchtold; 4 – Gavrilo Princip; 5 – Grey; 6 – Franz Ferdinand; 7 – Wilhelm II; 8 – Nicholas II; 9 – Yanushkevitch

Exercise 8.2

1st – Austria annexes Bosnia-Herzegovina; 2nd – The Balkan Wars; 3rd – Assassination of Franz Ferdinand; 4th – The “blank cheque”; 5th – Austria delivers its ultimatum; 6th – Sazanov tells Serbia that Russia will support it; 7th – Serbia accepts nine of the ten points; 8th – Austria declares war on Serbia; 9th – The tsar orders general mobilisation; 10th – Germany declares war on Russia

Exercise 9.1

Stolypin – horses – explosives – evacuation – scorched earth policy – Germany – shortages – boots – labour – mines – transport – troops – loans – printing – inflation – vodka – revenue – rose – prices – real – revolution

Exercise 9.2

1 – false; 2 – false; 3 – true; 4 – true; 5 – true; 6 – false; 7 – true; 8 – true; 9 – false; 10 – false

Exercise 10.1

1 – Trotsky; 2 – Pipes; 3 – Charques; 4 – Figes; 5 – Kennan; 6 – Khlevniuk; 7 – Schapiro

Exercise 11.1

1st – Establishment of the Provisional Government; 2nd – Abdication of the tsar; 3rd – Lenin returns to Russia; 4th – Lenin announces the April Theses; 5th – Brusilov’s June offensive; 6th – The July Days; 7th – Kerensky becomes leader of the Provisional Government; 8th – Kornilov’s attempted coup; 9th – Bolsheviks gain majorities in Moscow and Petrograd Soviets; 10th – Bolshevik coup

Exercise 12.1

CLASS STRUGGLE – CLASSES – THE LANDED ARISTOCRACY – BOURGEOISIE – CAPITALIST – PROLETARIAT – THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT – DISAPPEAR – STATE – DETERMINIST – INDIVIDUALS – ECONOMIC

Exercise 12.2

1 – BOURGEOISIE; 2 – WHAT IS TO BE DONE?; 3 – THE CLASS STRUGGLE;
4 – DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT; 5 – PROLETARIAT; 6 – DAS KAPITAL;
7 – FRIEDRICH ENGELS; 8 – LEON TROTSKY; 9 – COMMUNIST MANIFESTO;
10 – STATE AND REVOLUTION.

Exercise 13.1

1st – Lenin opposes the patriotic calls for Russians to join the war effort against Germany; 2nd – Lenin returns to Russia thanks to a sealed train trip across German-occupied Europe; 3rd – Lenin announces “The April Theses” and calls for “all power to the Soviets”; 4th – Following the failure of the July Days uprising, Lenin flees to Finland; 5th – Kerensky’s Commander-in-Chief, General Kornilov attempts to seize power; 6th – Bolshevik popularity increases following their role in the suppression of the Kornilov coup; 7th – Lenin contacts his Bolshevik allies and says the time is right to take power; 8th – Lenin returns to Petrograd to convince the Central Committee on the wisdom of taking power; 9th – Trotsky organises the Bolshevik November coup; 10th – Lenin announces the formation of a Bolshevik government.

Exercise 14.1

1 – belief the Soviet should rule/ expectation of a socialist coalition government; 2 – into the dustbin of history; 3 – radical American journalist who was present in Russia in 1917 and who wrote “Ten Days That Shook The World”; 4 – the weakness of the new regime and its tenuous hold on power; 5 – belief that failure to end the war with Germany would spell the end of his government; 6 – peasants given the right to seize gentry land and pay no compensation; 7 – it went against his socialist beliefs but was necessary in order to maintain peasant support for the revolution; 8 – workers now in control of their factories and their railways; 9 – it lost land, wealth and control of things such as marriage; 10 – end of ranks, election of officers, soldiers’ committees, end of saluting.

Exercise 14.2

1 – DZERZINSKY; 2 – ZHENONTDEL; 3 – BURZHUI; 4 – THE CHEKA; 5 – KADETS;
6 – COMRADE; 7 – SOVNARKOM; 8 – CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY; 9 – STALIN;
10 – THE RED TERROR

Exercise 15.1

1 – fact; 2 – fact; 3 – opinion; 4 – opinion; 5 – fact; 6 – fact; 7 – fact; 8 – fact; 9 – opinion;
10 – opinion.

Exercise 16.1

1 – 1st: THE TREATY OF BREST LITOVSK; 2nd: THE REVOLT OF THE CZECH LEGION;
3rd: THE DEFENCE OF TSARITSYN; 4th: THE DEATH OF KOLCHAK; 5th: THE TREATY OF RIGA.

2 – a: YUDENICH; b: DENIKIN; c: KOLCHAK; d: WRANGEL; e:MAKHNO.

3 – I have no love of the Bolsheviks; the Reds can be as brutal as the Whites and I hate War Communism. Yet I know if the Whites win I will lose my land forever, the landlords will be back in control and then I am likely to suffer the cruelties and humiliations in the army that I suffered before the revolution.

Exercise 17.1

The Bolsheviks regime was in a dire situation by the middle of 1918 as it faced its White enemies and allied intervention. Lenin knew that the most important thing was to keep his soldiers and his factory workers fed and supplied. This led to his introducing the policy of War Communism. The main elements of the policy involved the nationalisation of industry, the end of the free market and grain requisitioning. The latter frequently led to major violence in the countryside between peasants and food detachments. The results of War Communism were devastating. Food production dropped dramatically and starvation stalked the land. However, in the long term it might be argued that War Communism had been a success as it had secured victory in the Civil War.

Exercise 18.1

1 – false; 2 – true; 3 – true; 4 – false; 5 – true; 6 – false; 7 – false; 8 – true; 9 – false; 10 – true

Exercise 19.1

1 – over 100 peasants revolt including Tambov, Kronstadt; 2 – Gulf of Finland, 25 kms from Petrograd; 3 – the Kronstadt sailors had previously been seen as the most loyal supporters of the Bolsheviks; 4 – the 10th Party Congress; 5 – War Communism; 6 – end of grain requisitioning, equalisation of wages; 7 – free Soviet elections, freedom of speech and assembly; 8 – brutally suppressed it; 9 – idealism and genuine links to the proletariat; 10 – introduction of NEP

Exercise 20.1

1 – true; 2 – true; 3 – false; 4 – false; 5 – false; 6 – true; 7 – false; 8 – false; 9 – true; 10 – true

Exercise 20.2

1 – revival of Russian economy/ increases in industrial and food production; 2 – retail traders who bought up surpluses and sold them for profit; 3 – often corrupt, became involved in speculation and crime; 4 – speculation, corruption, crime, prostitution; 5 – it did not provide a long-term solution to Russia's industrialisation and modernization;

Exercise 20.3

1 – a group within the party opposed to the policies of War Communism; 2 – a ban on factions, party decisions had to be accepted at the risk of expulsion from the party; 3 – jobs could only be gained by overt signs of loyalty to the party line; 4 – limited by the party with increased censorship; 5 – in 1922 it became the GPU, a permanent organ of state.

Exercise 21.1

1 – true; 2 – false; 3 – true; 4 – false; 5 – false; 6 – true; 7 – false; 8 – true; 9 – false; 10 – true

Exercise 22.1

1 – Greater equality/ easier divorce/ legalised abortion; 2 – Zhenotdel; 3 – Many of earlier gains were lost/ divorce harder/ abortion illegal; 4 – Tightened up on discipline and juvenile crime; 5 – It suffered/ lack of respect for teacher authority; 6 – Return to traditional values/ emphasis on practical subjects; 7 – Socialist Realism; 8 – Optimism/ positive outlook/ emphasis on heroes; 9 – he was written out or if mentioned denigrated; 10 – Glorification of past Russian heroes.

Exercise 23.1

1st – the November Revolution; 2nd – Treaty of Brest Litovsk; 3rd – Lenin is shot; 4th – Bolshevik victory in the Civil War; 5th – the Kronstadt Revolt; 6th – introduction of NEP; 7th – Stalin appointed General Secretary; 8th – the death of Lenin; 9th – Trotsky misses Lenin's funeral; 10th – Stalin survives reading of Lenin's will; 11th – triumvirate of Zinoviev, Kamenev and Stalin defeat Trotsky at the 13th Party Congress; 12th – Stalin turns on the left, and allies with Bukharin; 13th – Zinoviev, Kamenev and Trotsky expelled from the party; 14th – Stalin turns on his right wing allies; 15th – Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsy lose their party posts; 16th – Stalin emerges triumphant in the party.

Exercise 24.1

1 – gave him great influence in the non-European regions of the Soviet Union; 2 – power over promotions, demotions, appointment; 3 – Lenin had broken off personal contacts with Stalin; 4 – probably relieved; 5 – in it Lenin had called for Stalin's removal; 6 – Zinoviev; 7 – Stalin had lied to him about the date; 8 – to show how close and loyal Stalin had been to Lenin, to justify his policy positions; 9 – he would have hated it; 10 – he disliked it; he saw himself as Lenin's equal.

Exercise 24.2

1 – Bukharin; 2 – Zinoviev; 3 – Trotsky; 4 – Kamenev; 5 – Sukhanov; 6 – Lenin; 7 – Stalin; 8 – Rykov.