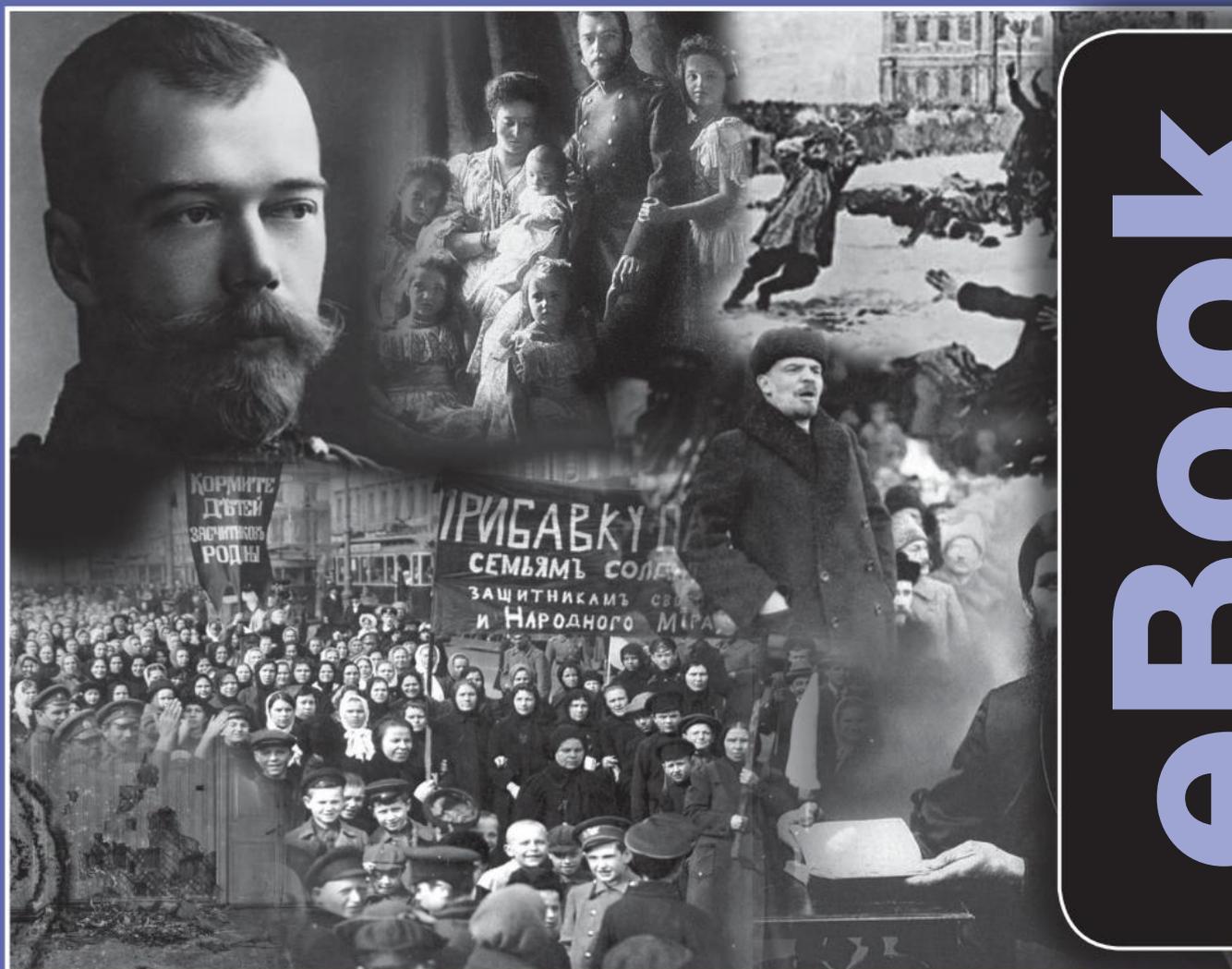


The Decline and Fall of the *Romanov Dynasty* by Ken Webb

Here it is: the factual detail, the historiography, revision exercises and advice on how to write HSC-style responses on the decline and fall of the Romanov dynasty



eBook

“Everything you wanted to know about the decline and fall of the Romanov dynasty, but were afraid to ask.”

The Decline and Fall
of the
*Romanov
Dynasty*

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

***“Everything you wanted to know about the decline and fall
of the Romanov dynasty, but were afraid to ask.”***

www.kenwebb.com.au

1st Edition

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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 Independent Schools Examination Committee for Modern History. He frequently lectures and runs workshops for Year 12 and teacher groups in Sydney and Regional NSW. 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. In 2012, Ken Webb was a NSW winner of the "National Excellence in Teaching" award.

Over the years, Ken Webb has written a wide range of study guides and textbooks for NSW and Australia wide, including *"The Age of Imperialism"* (Nelson Cengage Learning), *"Discovering Australian History"* (CUP), *"The Augustan Age 44 BC – AD 14"* (Get Smart Education), *"World War 1: From Sarajevo to Versailles"* (Nelson Cengage Learning), *"Extension History: The Historians"* (HTA of NSW), *"Power and Authority in the Modern World 1919-1946"* (Nelson Cengage Learning), *"Spartan Society to the Battle of Leuctra 371 BC"* (Get Smart Education)

"The decline and fall of the Romanov dynasty" is one of fourteen titles in the "Everything you wanted to know about... but were afraid to ask" series written specifically for the "new" NSW Modern and Ancient History syllabuses commencing 2018-19. Other titles in this series include:

- World War I
- Power and Authority in the Modern World 1919-1946
- Russia and the Soviet Union 1917-1941
- Conflict in Europe 1935-1945
- The Cold War 1945-1991
- Conflict in Indochina 1954-1979
- The Fall of the Roman Republic 78 BC–31 BC
- The Augustan Age 44 BC–AD 14
- The Julio-Claudians AD 14-AD 69
- Agrippina the Younger
- The Greek World 500-440 BC
- Spartan society to the Battle of Leuctra 371 BC
- Hatshepsut

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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 Case Study section of Year 11 Modern History. It is not intended to be the final word on The decline and fall of the Romanov dynasty; 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 decline and fall of the Romanov dynasty*.

Rationale for the structure of this book

“*The decline and fall of the Romanov dynasty*” is topic A4 in List A of case studies suggested for study in the The Modern History syllabus ¹. The syllabus divides the topic into three sections:

- the historical context
- the nature of the decline and fall of the Romanov dynasty
- a relevant historical debate or issue

These broad headings have been used to structure the book and have been broken down into sections to make the topic more accessible to students. An additional section on the cinematic versions of the Romanov story has been included as well as a skills section on approaching questions that could be set on the topic.

Suggestion for scope and sequencing of this topic

The length of time spent on a case study such as *The decline and fall of the Romanovs* is at the discretion of the individual school. What follows are suggestions based on past experience and the construction of the new NSW Modern History syllabus commencing in 2018-19.

- The “Investigating Modern History” has two parts: “The Nature of Modern History” and “Case Studies”. Integrating the “Nature” topics into the “Case Study” topics would probably work best.
- Thus, teachers could choose three case studies for study. The “*Romanovs*” would work well as the first case study, an interesting and different introduction to senior Modern History. NB: One of the three case studies has to be a non-western, non-European topic.
- Integrate into the study of the “*Romanovs*” one of the “Nature topics”
- Do the same for the other two case studies. Thus, by the end of term two, Year 11, students should have completed three case studies/ nature of modern history topics, plus the individual research project.
- This will allow all of term three for dealing with World War I (one of the “Shaping of the Modern World topics) which would provide a great basis for Year 12 study which will probably commence with the “*Power and Authority in the Modern World 1919-1946*”.

¹ Stage 6 Syllabus Modern History, NSW Education Standards Authority NSW, 2017, p 31

Section One ■ The historical context

Chapter One

Origins and nature of the Russian Empire

Geography, expansion, diversity, economics

The geography of the Russian Empire

The empire which Tsar Nicholas II ruled in 1900 was vast. The Russian empire was both European and Asian, as it is 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

German soldiers, who had been part of Hitler's invading armies during Operation Barbarossa², were interviewed after the war about their experiences. One of the most frequent comments they made concerned the enormity of the country as the army pushed ever eastwards. So great were the distances, these men remembered the sense of disorientation and the feeling of melancholy which Russia's vastness caused.

The Russian empire grew slowly over the course of many centuries. The first East Slavic state was "Kievan Rus", established in the 9th century by Vikings invading from Scandinavia. The city of Novgorod was founded in c 862. Just over a thousand years later, Russia's territories covered a sixth of the earth's land surface as described above. What follows is a brief summary of that expansion.

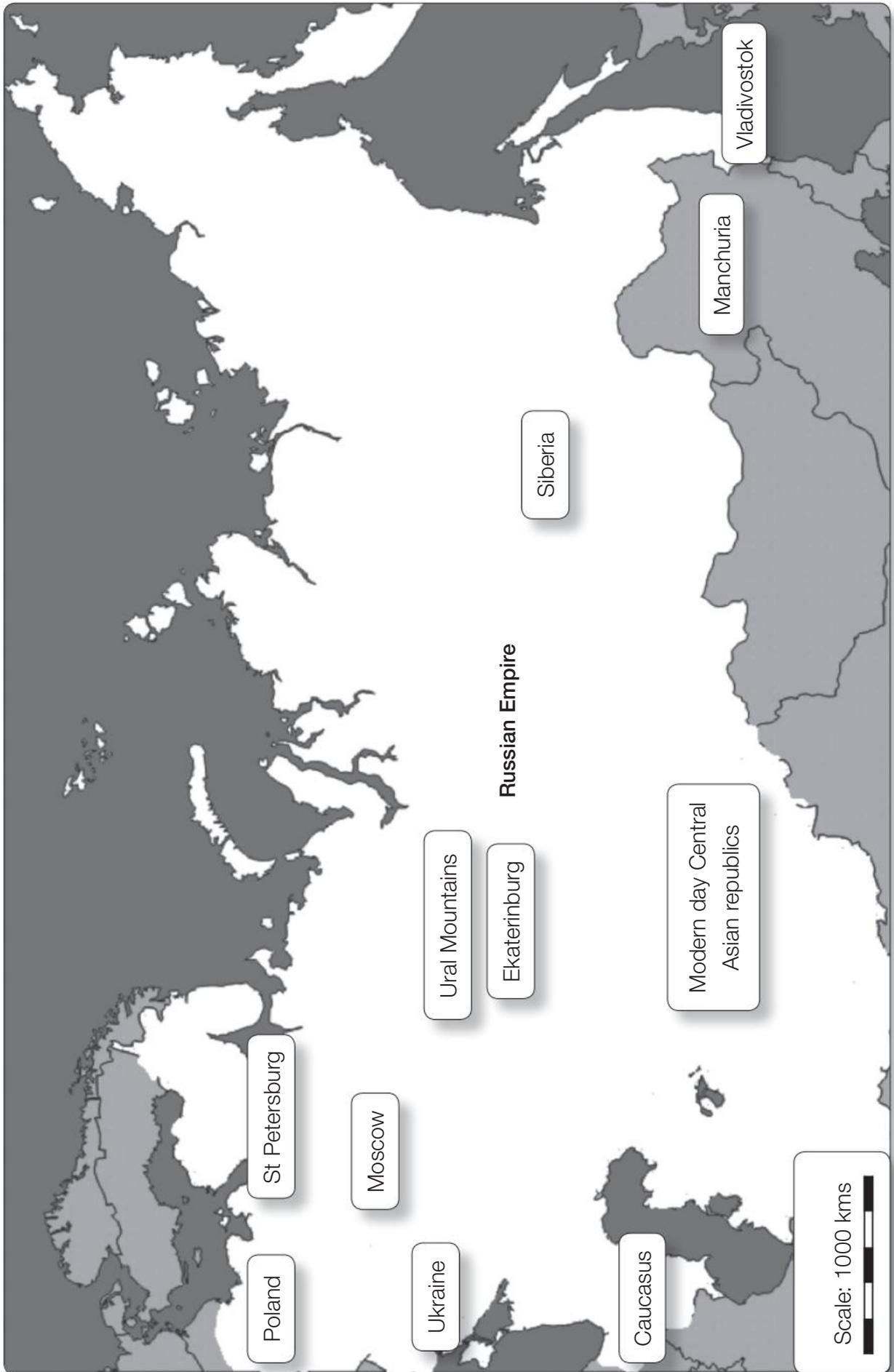
¹ Sixsmith, M, *Russia: A 1000-Year Chronicle of the Wild East*, BBC Books, St Ives, 2012, p 59

² Operation Barbarossa was the name given to Nazi Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941.

The expansion of the Russian empire

1230s >	Kievan Rus was overrun by invading Mongol invaders from the east. The “Tatar Khans” from the east established the empire of the Golden Horde in southern Russia. Novgorod and Pskov tried to take up the legacy of Kievan Rus but Moscow gradually came to dominate the earlier cultural centre of Russia. Small Russian states remained tributaries of the Mongol Golden Horde for almost two hundred years.
1485 >	Under the leadership of Ivan III (“the Great”), the power of the Golden Horde was finally brought to an end and he managed to consolidate many of the Russian states with new territories. The areas under his command were controlled from Moscow and were collectively called Russia. Ivan III’s son, Vasili III continued his father’s work, annexing the remaining autonomous provinces of Pskov, Novgorod and even captured the Polish city of Smolensk.
1552-56	Ivan ‘the Terrible’ defeated the Tatar-controlled regions of Kazan and Astrakhan.
1580s > 1600s	Russian Cossack forces began the Russian takeover of Siberia and the south. However, land was lost in the west after wars with Poland, Sweden and Lithuania.
1721	Following many conflicts with Sweden, under Peter the Great, Russia gained the territories which are modern day Estonia and Latvia. Russia now had a naval presence on the Baltic Sea.
1772 > 1814	Russia gradually gained control of the Crimea, Ukraine, the area of modern day Belarus, Moldova and part of Poland.
1864-65	The modern day areas that comprise the central Asian republic were annexed.
1877-78	Following war with Turkey, Russia seized Turkish lands in the Caucasus.
<p>By the end of the 19th century, Russia’s territorial control extended to the Far East. It was developing economic interests in the nominally Chinese region of Manchuria and had started work on the Trans-Siberian railway. These developments would eventually bring it into military conflict with Japan (see Chapter Eight).</p>	

Figure 1.1 The Russian Empire in 1900



The diversity of the Russian empire

The extent of the Russian empire meant that there was obviously enormous geographical diversity as was described earlier. However, Russian expansion also had a major human dimension. By 1900, 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.

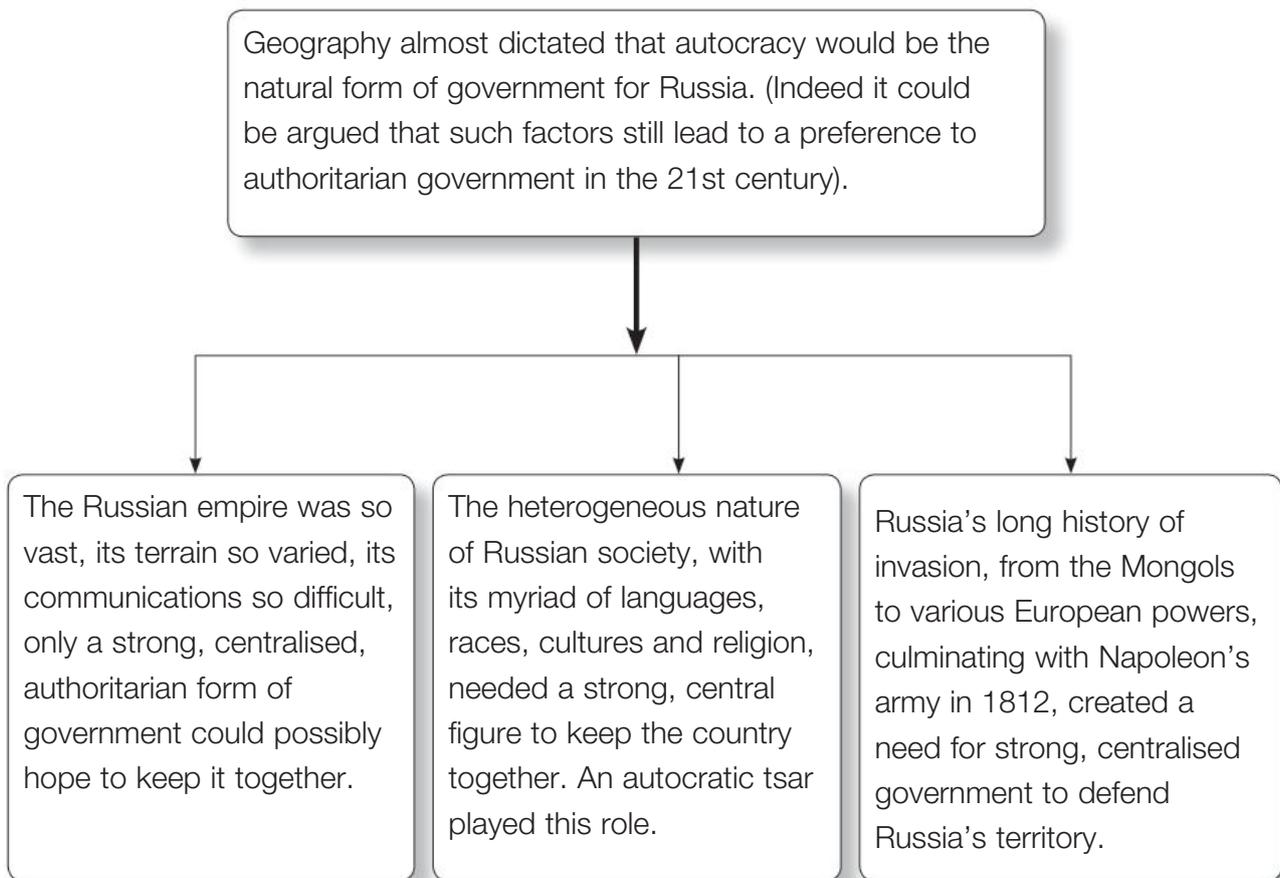
Apart from rare, brief moments such as the early years of Tsar Alexander II's reform period in the 1860s, and in the immediate aftermath of the 1905 revolution, little tolerance was granted to the cultural aspirations of the non-Russian national groups. A strict policy of Russification tended to be the norm. All national groups were forced to learn the Russian and to operate in the Russians 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 1906³, non-Russians were prevented from buying 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.⁴

³ See Chapter Nine

⁴ Autocracy will be examined more fully in Chapter Two.

Figure 1.2 Geography and autocracy

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"> ■ They 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	In terms of east-west distance and area, how big was the Russian empire in 1900?	
2	From where did the biggest threat to Russia emanate in the mid-13th century?	
3	Describe the terrain of European Russia.	
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?	

Exercise 1.2

Fill the blanks in the following passage using the terms in the box below.

_____ was established by Vikings in the 9th century. One of first of Russia's major cities to be built was _____. However, following the invasion of the _____ in the 1230s, it was _____ which became the main cultural centre of Russia. During the 1600s, Russia began its gradual takeover of _____ and after its war with Turkey in 1877-78 it gained territory in the _____. The empire was _____, containing a wide range of races and cultures. However, though there were brief periods of _____ for non-Russian groups, these groups were usually subjected to the policy of _____. Farming in Russia before 1900 was very _____ though _____ did experience a spurt of development, thanks in large part to the efforts of Finance Minister, _____.

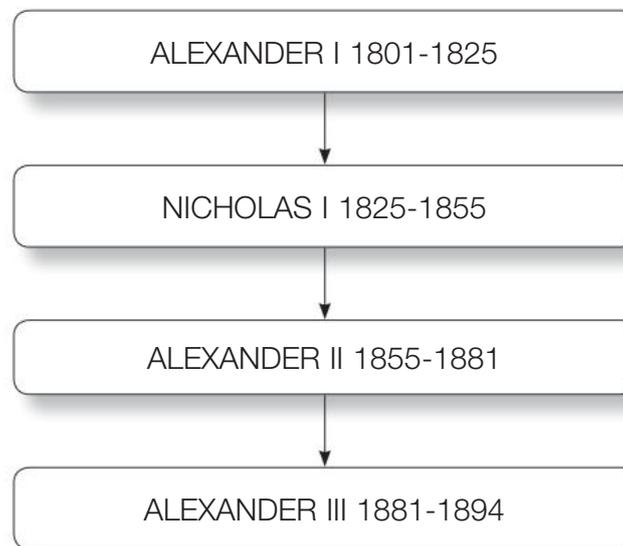
SIBERIA TOLERANCE BACKWARD KIEVAN RUS GOLDEN HORDE
WITTE INDUSTRY MOSCOW CAUCASUS HETEROGENEOUS
NOVGOROD RUSSIFICATION

Chapter Two

The nineteenth century tsars: 1801-1894

When Tsar Nicholas II came to the throne in 1894, he was inheritor of a deep legacy of Russian history. As was explained in Chapter One, the Russian empire had been an almost thousand year history of expansion, setbacks and had reached the point where it occupied almost a sixth of the earth's land surface.

There had been giant figures in Russia's past whose names still resonate today. A list would include Ivan the Terrible, Peter the Great and Catherine the Great. However, this chapter will focus on the four tsars of the nineteenth century who immediately preceded Nicholas II, the last tsar.



This chapter will focus primarily on the domestic issues facing the four tsars. ***The following chapter will focus on foreign policy and Russia's relations with foreign powers.***

Alexander I: 1801-1825

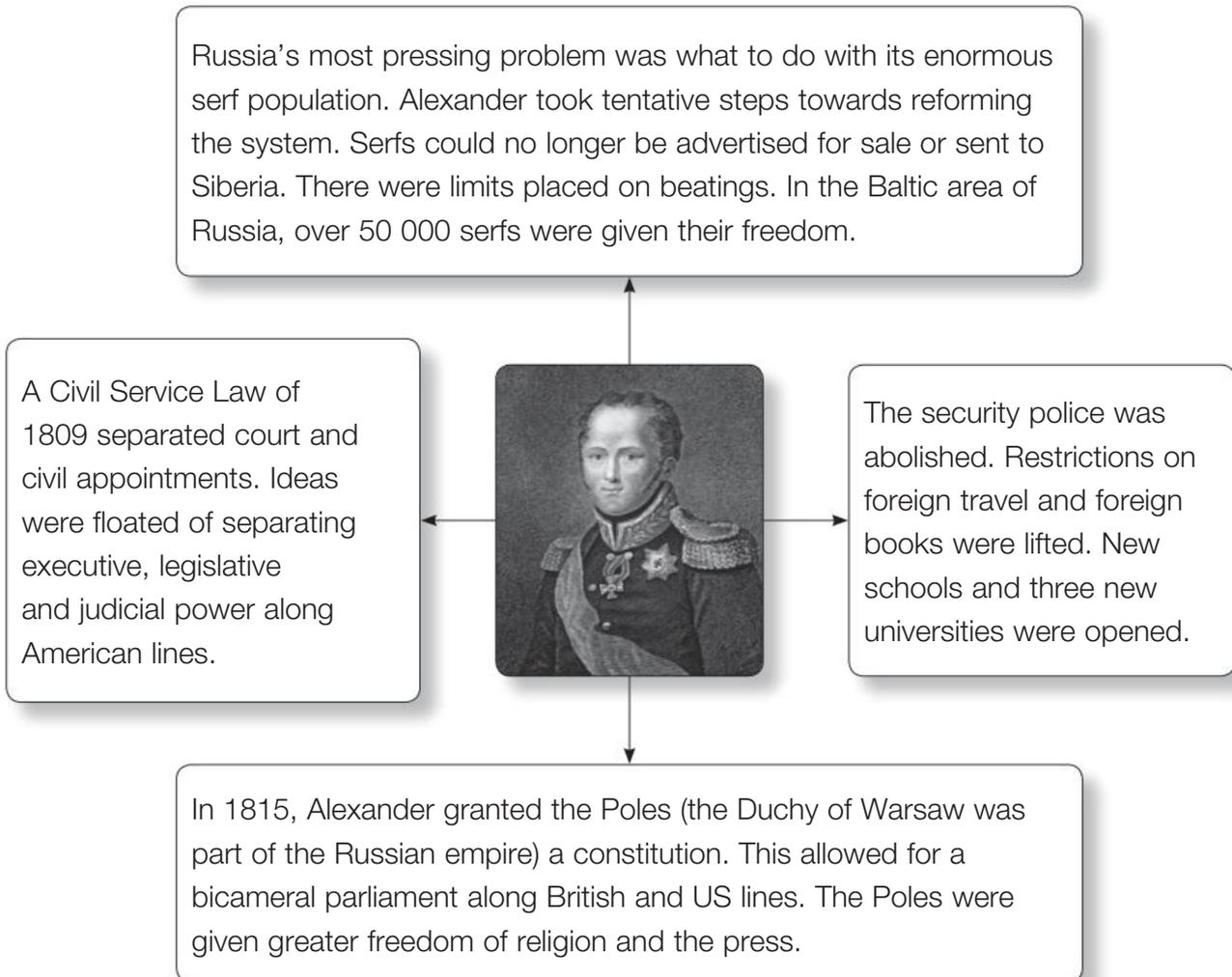
Alexander I was the grandson of Catherine the Great and came to the throne following the assassination of his father, Tsar Paul, in 1801. He was twenty four years old. Foreign affairs dominated the first fifteen years of Alexander's reign. Napoleon's invasion of Russia was thwarted by distance, climate and nationalist resistance. By 1815, there were Russian armies on the streets of Paris. ¹

Alexander had been given a liberal education. He was taught by a Swiss tutor, La Harpe, who was a follower of the French philosopher, Rousseau. Not surprisingly, the early part of

¹ See Chapter Three.

Alexander's reign was marked by a series of early reforms. Figure 2.1 summarises some of Alexander's early reform measures.

Figure 2.1 Early reforms of Alexander I



However, Alexander's reforming zeal did not last long. Once the war with France was over, he came under the influence of the Austrian statesman, Metternich, and was persuaded to stamp on reform and revolution across Europe.² He also became a mystic and increasingly religious. By the end of his reign, Alexander had become a reactionary. Many of the earlier reforms were reversed:

- The earlier reforms in Poland and the education reforms inside Russia were reversed.
- Serfs were once again able to be sent to Siberia.
- His chief advisor Arakcheyev, convinced him of the dangers of liberal, western ideas. He was able to use a bogus monk, Photius, who convinced the tsar of plots on his life.

² See Chapter Three.

Alexander's growing paranoia led to a military revolt in 1820 and secret societies began to appear seeking the end of serfdom and the introduction of a proper constitution. Revolutionary movements such as the Union of Salvation and the Southern Society appeared calling for a republic and major land reforms. In 1825, there was an abortive attempt to overthrow the tsar, called The Decembrist Revolt. Alexander's assassination was planned for the following year but he died before the plan could be put into effect, and the revolt collapsed amidst confusion, treachery and loss of nerve.

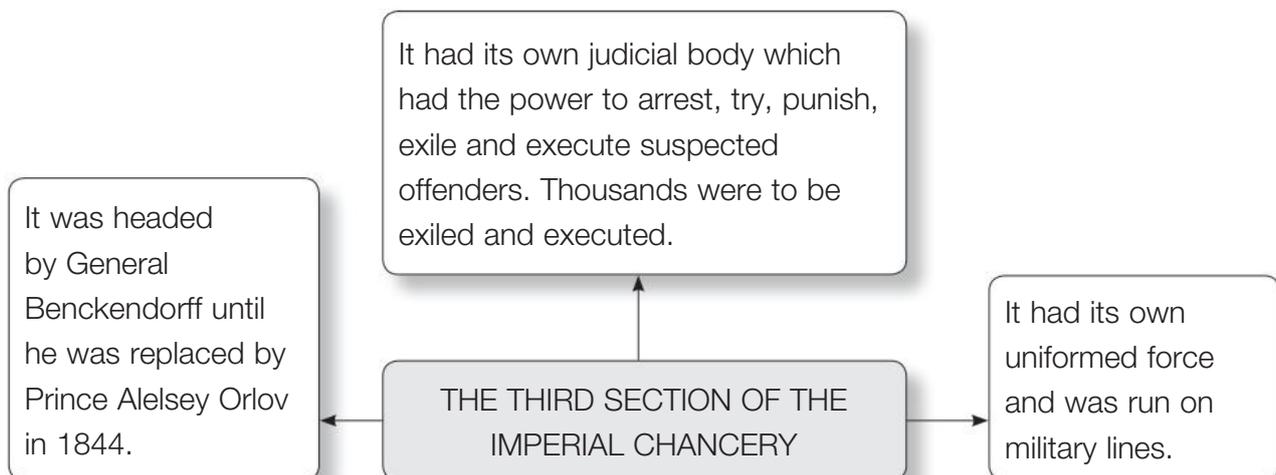
Nicholas I: 1825-1855



Tsar Nicholas I, brother of Alexander, was a thoroughgoing reactionary. Unnerved by the Decembrist Revolt, he distrusted Russia's nobles, would not countenance western thinking and surrounded himself with reliable trusted, military men. The 1826 Censorship Law gave censors unlimited powers and many western books were banned. The University Charter of 1833 made theology and church history compulsory subjects. Education minister, Uvarov, demanded that education focus on nationalism, the orthodox church and an acceptance of the tsar's autocratic power.

Nicholas I established the Third Section of the Imperial Chancery to deal with internal security. Its key elements are summarised in figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2 The Third Section of the Imperial Chancery



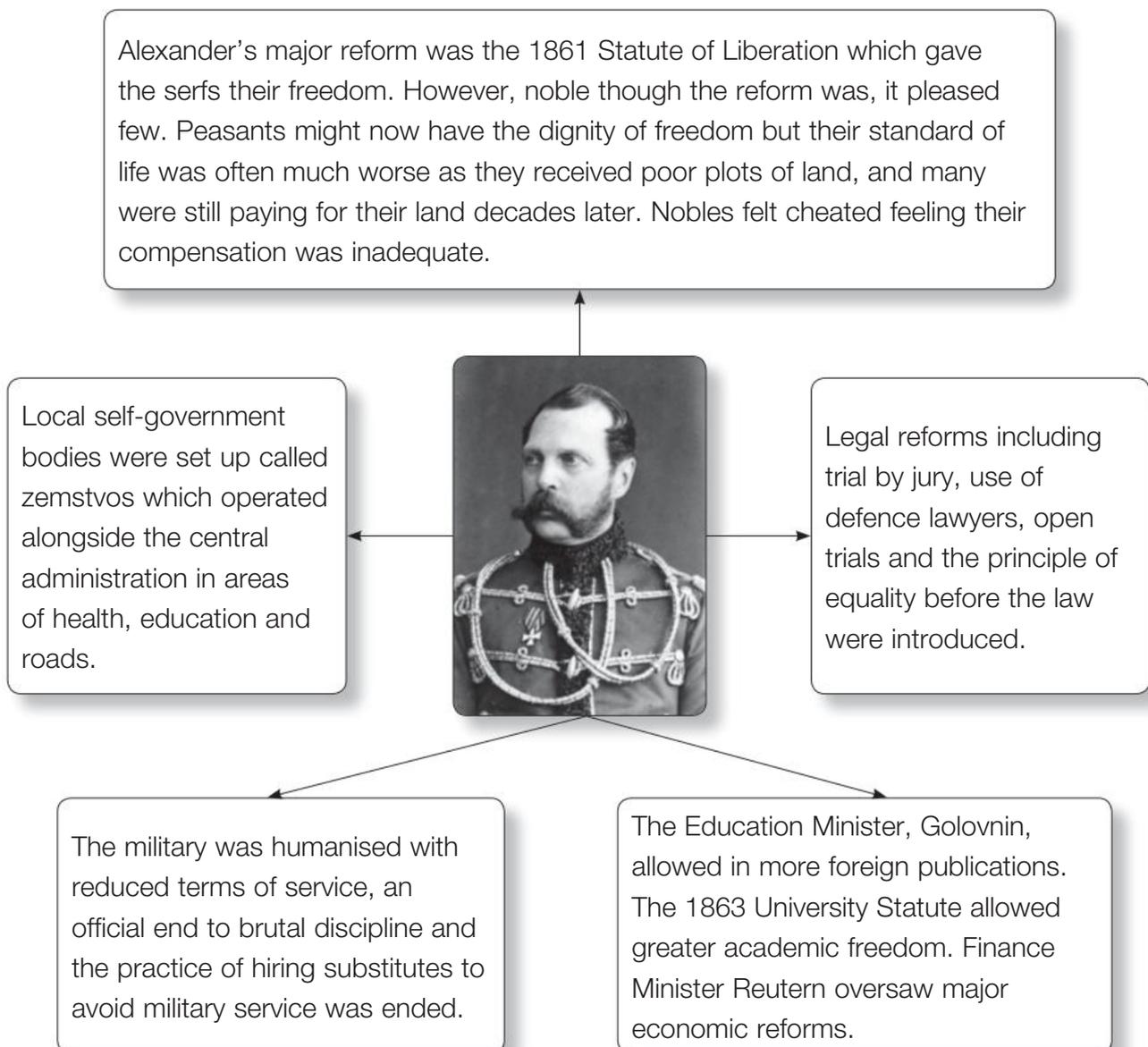
The “Nicholas system”, as his rule became known, gave Russia an uncompromising cruel form of rule. In true reactionary fashion, Nicholas endeavoured to maintain the status quo, indeed even turn the clock back. However, even Nicholas' reactionary rule could not stop the tide of change. The issue of serfdom, Russia's slowly evolving economy and the growth of the intelligentsia were all forces that Nicholas and later tsars found difficult to suppress.

Alexander II: 1855-1881

The tsarist system was utterly discredited by its disastrous performance in the Crimean War of 1853-56.³ The Russian army had been poorly led, was inadequately supplied, lacked modern weapons and the Crimean peninsula was almost totally lacking in modern roads and railways. The new tsar, Alexander II, realised that reform was needed, and learning the lesson of the French Revolution, believed that it was better for reform to be granted from the top than being forced from below.

The early years of Alexander II's reign were marked by wide-ranging reforms, to the extent that he became known as the 'tsar liberator'. Figure 2.3 summarises some of the major reforms of the tsar's early period.

Figure 2.3 The reforms of Alexander II



³ See Chapter Three.

However, though Alexander II may have begun his reign as the 'tsar liberator', he ended by being known as the 'tsar despot'. His Emancipation of the Serfs merely whetted the appetite for more and there were soon hundreds of peasant uprisings across Russia. His reforms in Poland led to a full scale nationalist revolt in 1863.⁴ His reforms ended up pleasing nobody. To the conservatives he had gone too far, to those demanding change he had not gone far enough. Unrest continued across the country in the universities, rural areas and the cities. Terrorist violence was on the increase.

As a result of this, Alexander II was pushed into the arms of the ultra conservatives. By the 1870s, he was implementing the methods of his father, Nicholas I, making great use of censorship, control of the universities and the secret police. There were several assassination attempts on the life of the tsar. Finally in 1881, one of these attempts succeeded in taking the tsar's life.

Alexander III: 1881-1894



It is not surprising that following the assassination of his father, Alexander III would pursue a tough, uncompromising policy of reaction. From the beginning of his reign, he made it clear that the era of reform was definitely over, concessions would not be made, terrorists would be hunted down and repression would be enforced.

Alexander III quickly introduced a series of repressive measures.

- Alexander followed closely the advice of his reactionary advisor, Pobedonostev, who was the procurator of the Holy Synod (effectively the lay head of the Orthodox Church).
- The judicial department was merged with the police department.
- A new, much tougher and more efficient secret police service was established called the Okhrana. It made wide use of informers and infiltrated revolutionary groups.
- Censorship was tightened and the 1884 University Statute placed great limits on university autonomy.
- Minor religious groups were persecuted as no opposition to the Orthodox Church was to be allowed.
- There were measures passed against the various nationalist groups within the empire and there was an increase in official anti-Semitic policies.⁵

Alexander III died unexpectedly of nephritis in November 1894 and was succeeded by his twenty-six year old son, Nicholas.⁶

⁴ See Chapter Fifteen.

⁵ See Chapter Fifteen.

⁶ See Chapter Six.

Exercise 2.1

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

1	Alexander I was a thoroughgoing reactionary ruler throughout his entire reign.	TRUE/ FALSE
2	Nicholas I established the Third Section of the Imperial Chancery which became a form of secret police.	TRUE/ FALSE
3	Russia’s performance during the Crimean War showed the success of Russian economic development.	TRUE/ FALSE
4	Alexander II was a reluctant reformer and had to be dragged into reform by his enthusiastic advisors.	TRUE/ FALSE
5	Nationwide unrest and the growth of political terrorism were features of the latter part of Alexander II’s reign.	TRUE/ FALSE
6	Alexander III was eager to restart the reform program his father had pioneered early in his reign.	TRUE/ FALSE
7	Nicholas I was eager for the publication of foreign works in Russia to enable the modernisation of the country.	TRUE/ FALSE
8	The men behind the Decembrist Revolt of 1825 were planning to assassinate Alexander I.	TRUE/ FALSE
9	Alexander I attempted to deal with the issue of serfdom by introducing reforms for the benefit of the serfs.	TRUE/ FALSE
10	Under Alexander III, a secret police organisation called the Okhrana was established.	TRUE/ FALSE

Chapter Three

Relationships with foreign powers

Russia's relations with foreign powers and the development of its foreign policy centred on three essential elements:

- Firstly, it had a continuous concern about the European balance of power and how this affected its security.
 - This saw a key Russian role in the defeat of Napoleon, the 1815 Congress of Vienna and the suppression of revolts across Europe after 1815.
 - It would also lead to its eventual strategic relationship with Britain and France in the face of the rising power of Germany before 1914.
- Secondly, Russia was a major imperial power.
 - However, its imperialism was land-based unlike a nation like Britain whose imperial expansion was closely linked to its naval power.
- Thirdly, Russia's major concern was its efforts to gain a warm sea port in the Near East.
 - The Baltic Sea was frozen for several months of the year and so Russia's naval forces were effectively immobilised.
 - Acquisition of a warm sea port, in the Balkans region would change this.

(A) Russia's relationship with foreign powers during the reigns of Alexander I and Nicholas I

Maintaining the balance of power

- In 1812, a 600 000 strong French army led by Napoleon invaded Russia and much of Moscow was burned to the ground.
 - However, a combination of geography, the unforgiving Russia winter and stubborn Russian resistance succeeded in thwarting Napoleon's ambitions.
 - Defeat in the Russian campaign would spell the beginning of the end for Napoleon.
- In 1813, Russian troops were a major part of the coalition forces which defeated Napoleon at the Battle of Leipzig, also known as the Battle of the nations.
- By 1815, Napoleon had been defeated and exiled to the island of St. Helena. Russian troops were marching through the streets of Paris.

The European leaders held a congress in Vienna in 1815 to restore order and balance in Europe after over twenty years of war. Along with Austrian foreign minister Metternich and British foreign minister Castlereagh, Tsar Alexander I played a key role in Vienna. After 1815, he strongly supported Metternich's opposition to liberalism and supported the return of traditional rulers to power through the Congress System and the Holy Alliance of Prussia, Austria and Russia.

The Holy Alliance was not a military alliance of the kind that existed before 1914 whereby powers promised to support allies in the event of a war.

- It was a loose organisation linking powers which had a similar form of autocratic government, were very conservative and strongly opposed to any liberal or nationalist revolutionary activity in Europe.
- Alexander I and Nicholas I were seeking to prevent change in Europe from similar motives to their trying to prevent change inside Russia.
- On several occasions, these three powers intervened in other countries to squash revolution.
- The conservative aims of Metternich and Nicholas I were ultimately rooted in their desire to maintain a peaceful balance of power in Europe.

Meanwhile, Russia continued its territorial expansion:

- In 1809 it annexed Finland.
- Russia took Bessarabia in 1812 and gradually expanded into the Caucasus.
- By the 1860s and 1870s, Russia was expanding to the Afghan border. ¹

Russian interest in the Near East

The principal area of activity for Russian foreign policy was the Near East, south Eastern Europe. There lay a continuous thread in Russian foreign policy which stretched from the time of Peter the Great at the start of the 18th century to 1914. This was Russia's pursuit of a warm-sea port and its interest in the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, the straits separating Asian Turkey from European Turkey.

Britain's opposition to Russian interest in the area formed the basis of what became known as 'the Eastern Question' in the nineteenth century. ²

It was not only strategic considerations which drew Russia to this area. During the nineteenth century Slavophilism, or the belief in the Slavonic or Russian way of life and culture, was

¹ Russia's expansion in this area would cause tensions with Britain who jealously protected its Indian empire.

² Britain was fearful of a possible future Russian threat to its naval domination. Its fears would be heightened in the future once it became reliant on the Suez Canal link to its empire.

gaining ground. This evolved into pan-Slavism. PanSlavists dreamed of creating a state uniting Slavs of south Eastern Europe and Russia. To some in the west, Panslavism was seen as a cover for Russian imperialism.

- Pan-Slavists talked of a religious and racial brotherhood between the various Slav groups of Russia and south Eastern Europe.
- What they really wanted was the removal of Austrian and Turkish control of south-eastern Europe's Slavs and its replacement with Russian control. This of course would make possible the attainment of a warm-sea port.
- Pan-Slavists would eventually triumph over those in Russia who were eager to follow Western ideas.

These ideas led to clashes in the Near East. In the 1820s, Russia supported the Greeks in their fight for independence from Turkey. Russia's merchant ships gained access to the straits in the 1829 Treaty of Adrianople and continued to increase its influence there in the 1833 Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi. The other European powers were becoming alarmed at Russian actions in the region and this led to the 1841 Straits Convention which denied all foreign warships access to the Straits.

The Crimean War: 1853-56

Russia laid claim to protecting Christians on their way to visit places of great religious significance in the "Holy Land" against Turkish attacks. This led to war with Turkey in 1853. France and Britain intervened and forced Russia out of Turkey. They fought a bloody, poorly-led, incompetent campaign which was more than matched by Russia's greater incompetence. ³ After the fall of Sebastopol, Russia sued for peace which resulted in the 1856 Treaty of Paris.

- The Black Sea was to be neutralised.
- No military ships were to be allowed through the Straits.
- The River Danube was to be free to river traffic and Russia was to drop its control of the river mouth in Bessarabia.
- Turkey's integrity and independence were guaranteed.

Britain's concern and fear over possible Russian expansion and its preoccupation with the Eastern Question would persist until the turn of the century when British policy makers would see the Germany of Kaiser Wilhelm II as the greater threat. ⁴

³ The heroic but suicidal "Charge of the Light Brigade" at the Battle of Balaclava was part of the Crimean War.

⁴ See Chapter Ten.

(B) Russia's relationship with foreign powers during the reigns of Alexander II, Alexander III and Nicholas II

Under tsars Alexander II, Alexander III and Nicholas II, Russia's foreign affairs interests remained centred on imperial expansion, maintaining the European balance of power and interest in the near east.

Russia's imperial expansion:

- In 1865, Russia took control of Tashkent and three years later took Samarkand (both in modern day Uzbekistan).
 - The borders of imperial Russia now stretched from Persia, Afghanistan to China.
- The city of Vladivostok in the Far East was founded in 1861 and from then on Russian interest in that region grew.
 - In 1875, Russia took possession of the Japanese island of Sakhalin.
 - Meanwhile, along with other western nations, Russia gradually gained concessions in China whose weak state forced it to submit.
- From the 1890s, Manchuria was becoming a prime area of interest for Russia in the Far East, seen most clearly in extensions that were added to the building of the Trans-Siberian Railway.
 - Manchuria was nominally Chinese.
 - Russia gained territory along the Amur River and the Sea of Japan.
 - In 1898, Russia annexed the Liaodong Peninsula, a move which greatly angered Japan whose 1895 possession of that area (decided in the 1895 Treaty of Shimonoseki) had been overturned by the joint action of Russia, France and Germany.

Russian involvement in the Far East would lead to its disastrous war against Japan, 1904-05. (see Chapter Eight).

Continuing interest in the Near East

The Near East continued to preoccupy Russia, despite its disastrous performance in the Crimean War. In 1870, the Black Sea neutrality clauses of the 1856 Paris Treaty (see above) were overturned. Russia once again had warships in the Black Sea.

In 1875, Turkey's Slav subjects in the Balkans rose up in revolt against what they saw as the tyrannical rule of the Ottoman Empire.

- Turkey's response was 'extremely firm' and the Slavs were soon in total retreat.
- In 1877, Russia went to war with Turkey in defence of its brother Slavs.

- Turkey was quickly defeated and forced to accept the 1878 Treaty of San Stefano.
 - The territorial arrangements of this treaty would have given Russia “its warm sea port”, and the European powers, particularly Britain, were alarmed.
 - The German Chancellor, Bismarck, called a conference of the major European powers to Berlin to deal with the situation.
 - At the 1878 Congress of Berlin, Bismarck, acting as the “honest broker”, ensured each power gained something (though not Germany) and Russia was carefully pushed out of the Balkans.

Russian interest in the near east remained strong and by the turn of the century it had become a serious rival of Austria who had its own concerns in the area. (Russian involvement in the Balkans is covered in more detail in Chapter Ten.)

The Balance of Power

Europe remained remarkably free of war during the nineteenth century. There were small regional conflicts between powers, especially during the wars of national liberation for Italy and Germany in the 1860s. However, between the time of Napoleon and World War I, no conflict occurred involving more than two powers of military significance (except the Crimean War which was a very localised affair).

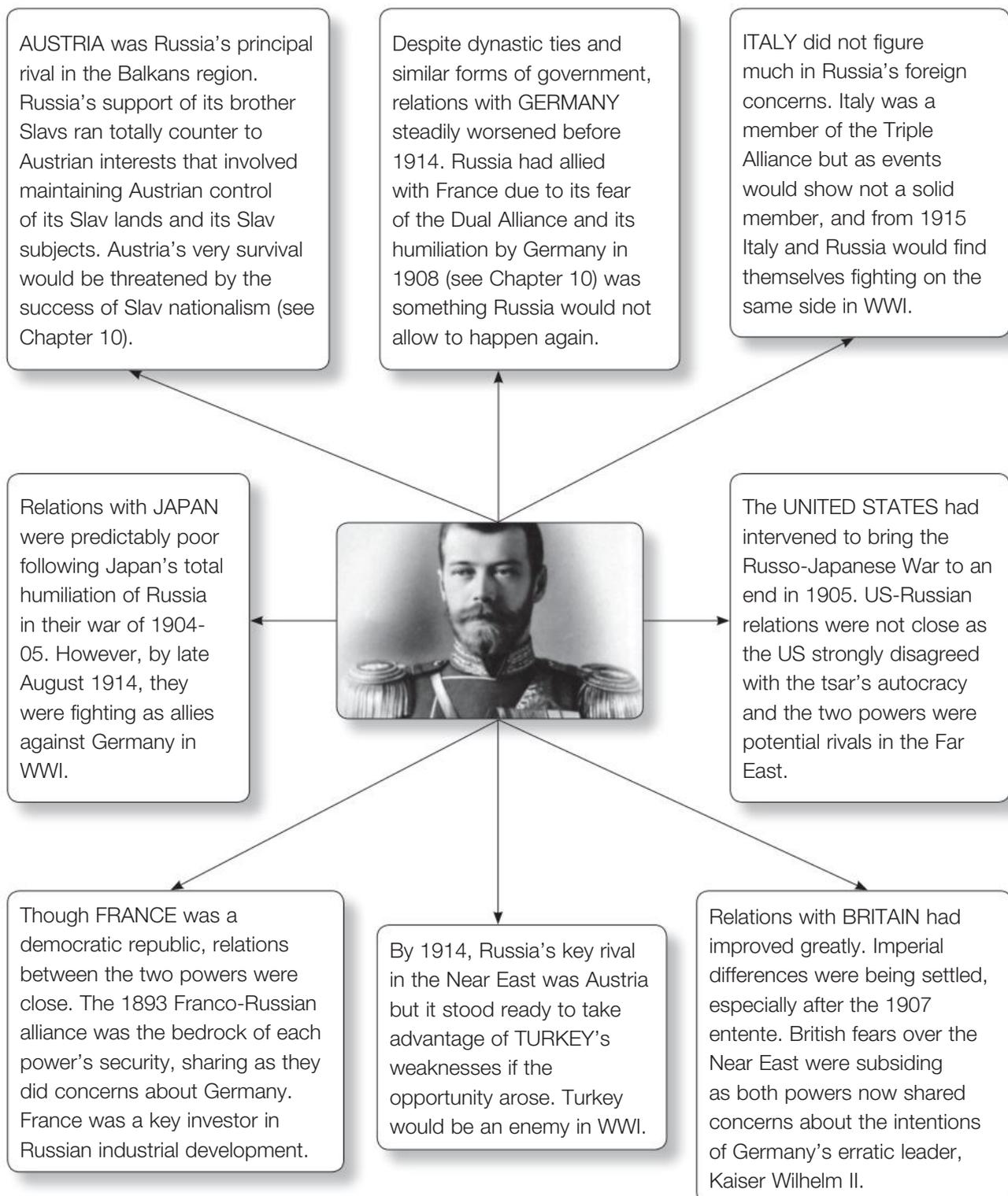
A major reason for peace had been the ability of European leaders to maintain a balance of power on the continent. A key player in this was the German Chancellor, Bismarck.

- In 1873, Bismarck revived the earlier Holy Alliance of Russia, Austria and Germany (formerly Prussia). This was known as the Dreikaiserbund, or Three Emperor’s League.
 - It was not an alliance, merely a loose grouping of three like-minded powers that shared similar forms of government, were monarchies and who each sought calm and balance within Europe.
- Russia became alarmed in 1879 when Germany formed an alliance with Austria, called the Dual Alliance.
 - To lessen Russia’s concerns, in 1887, Bismarck offered Russia the Re-Insurance Treaty.
- However, this was allowed to lapse in 1890, following the resignation of Bismarck. Russia now feared for its diplomatic isolation.
 - As a result in 1893 it overcame this isolation by signing an alliance with the other isolated European power, France.
- In 1904 Britain and France settled some outstanding imperial differences when they signed the Entente Cordiale. Russia and Britain signed a similar entente in 1907.

- Thus, by 1914, the European balance of power now consisted of two alliance blocs: the Triple Entente of Russia, Britain and France, and the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria and Italy.

The details of these developments and their contribution to the events leading to the outbreak of World War I in 1914 are covered in detail in Chapter Ten.

Figure 3.1 summarises Russia's relations with foreign powers before 1914.



Exercise 3.1

Answer the following questions.

1	Why was Russia's military prowess admired in the early years of the 19th century?	
2	Who were the members of the Holy Alliance?	
3	What were the main aims of the Holy Alliance?	
4	How did Russia become involved in the Crimean War?	
5	Why was Russia so interested in the Balkans region of south eastern Europe?	
6	What was the Dreikaiserbund?	
7	Who were Russia's main imperial rivals in Asia?	
8	Who was Russia's principal ally in Europe before 1914?	
9	What did the Anglo-Russian entente of 1907 decide?	
10	What were the two alliance blocs comprising the European balance of power in 1914?	

Chapter Four

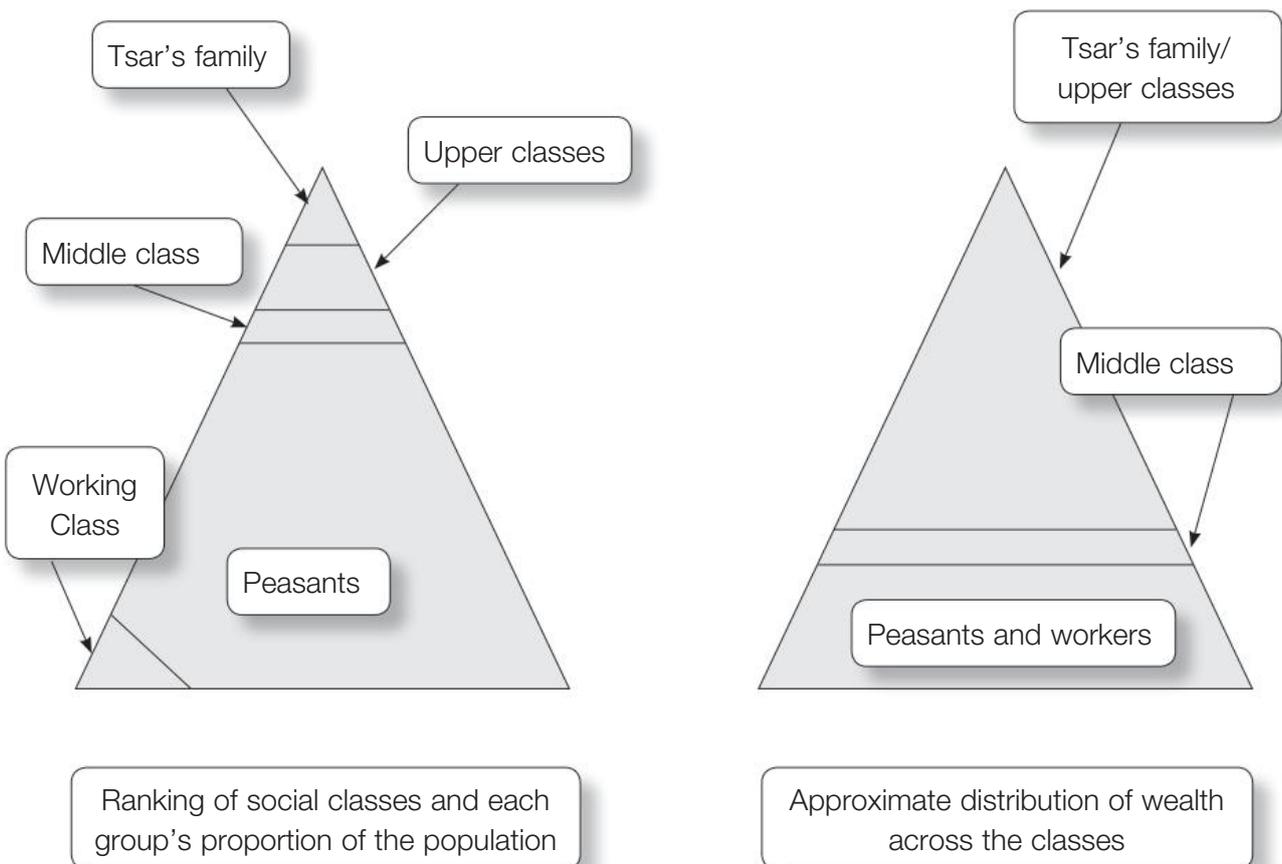
Economic and social grievances

Inequality, the countryside, the cities

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 4.1 illustrates the gross inequality of Russian society of the time.

Figure 4.1 Russia's wealth and class system in 1900 ³



¹ Political issues and the nature of the autocracy will be dealt with in Chapter Five.

² See Chapter Eight.

³ See Chapter Five for details on social structure.

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 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.

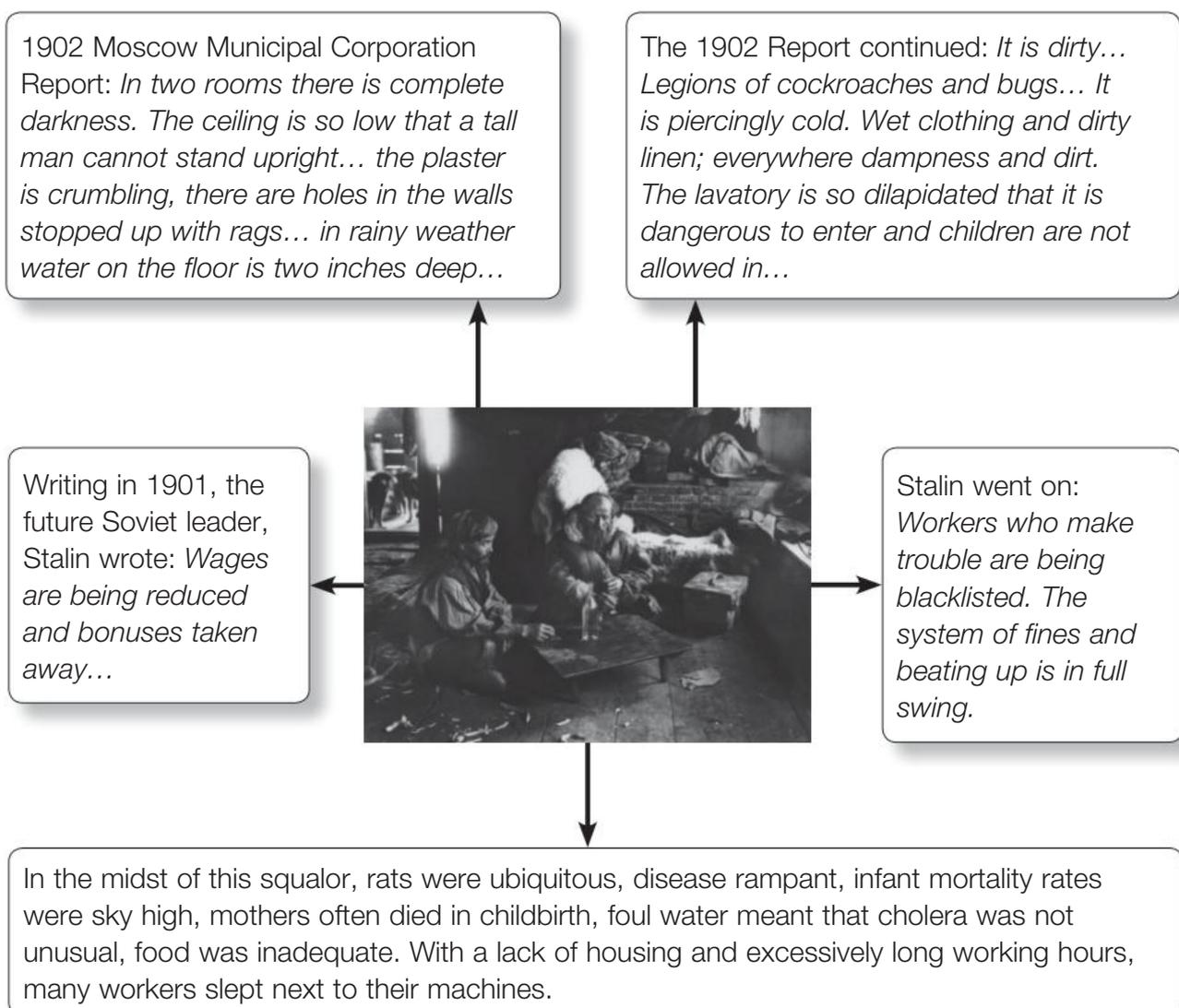
Peasants revolts in the countryside were not unusual and were always suppressed with the utmost severity by the authorities. However, in the nineteenth century, such peasant opposition was the result of desperation rather than any systematic effort to challenge the regime. For all their misery, Russia's 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.

Figure 4.2 Urban living conditions in Russia around 1900



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 4.2. Some of the quotations come from people living in Russia at the time, some from later historians.⁴

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...

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>

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 the 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 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 4.1

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 4.2

Answer the following questions in the spaces provided.

1	Name the two social groups at the bottom of the Russian social pyramid of 1900.	
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 Five

The role of Nicholas II as autocrat

The political system of tsarist Russia

In 1900, 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.

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.

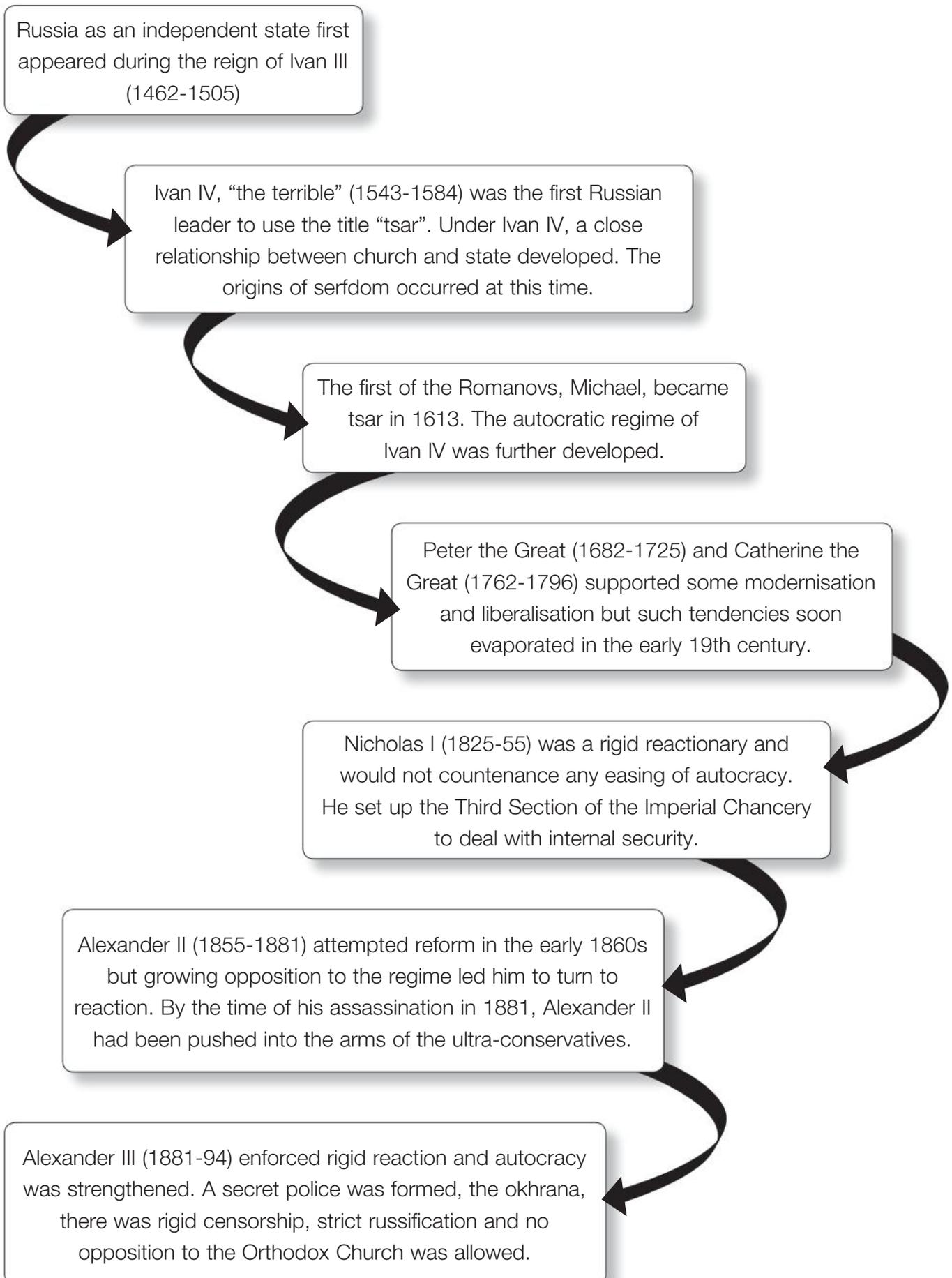
There was also an important religious element to autocracy. The tsar ruled because this was what god wanted. In other words, the tsar ruled by "divine right". English kings had once ruled in this manner but this belief had faded many years earlier. "Divine right" meant that opposition to the tsar implied opposition to god. The head of the Russian Orthodox Church¹ 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 5.1 explains some of the milestones in the story of autocracy.

¹ See below in this chapter.

Figure 5.1 Milestones in the story 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.

The bourgeoisie

In a modern capitalist society such as Great Britain, the bourgeoisie, or middle class, is quite a large group and is extremely influential. Members of the bourgeoisie are those are engaged in commerce such as banking, manufacturing and commerce, or come 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, this group made up about 2% of the population.

The proletariat

In a modern capitalist society such as Great Britain, the proletariat, or working class, is the largest social group. This group works in factories and mines, and tend 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.

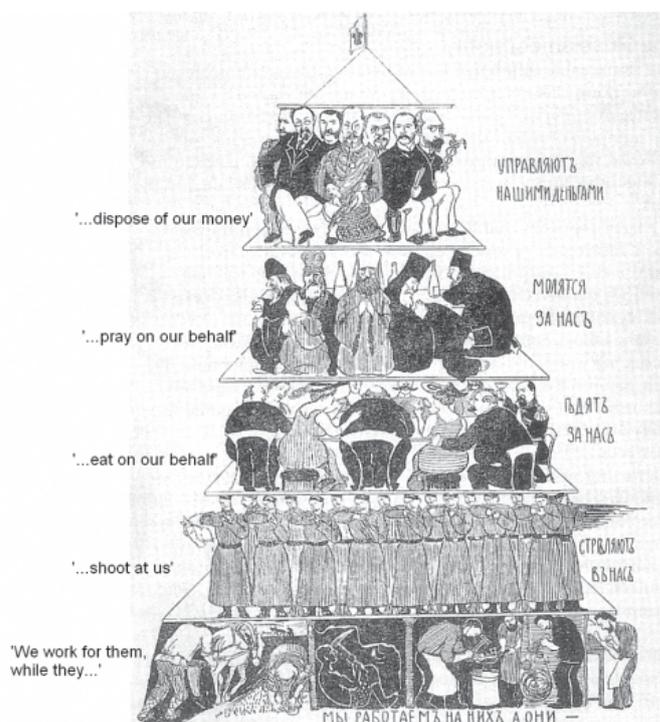
The peasantry

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.

Opponents of the tsarist regime produced cartoons to illustrate the unequal social structure of Russia of the time. The one shown in Figure 5.2 is a variation of one of these.

Figure 5.2 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?

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 that it was their religious duty to support the tsar. As the majority of the population was 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.

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...”*²

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...”*³

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

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

Exercise 5.1

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 5.2

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 Six

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 6.1 Tsar Nicholas II and Tsar Alexander III



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.

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

- 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.
- 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.

² See Chapters Four and seven.

- 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

Exercise 6.1

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,

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

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 6.2 Nicholas, Alexandra and their children

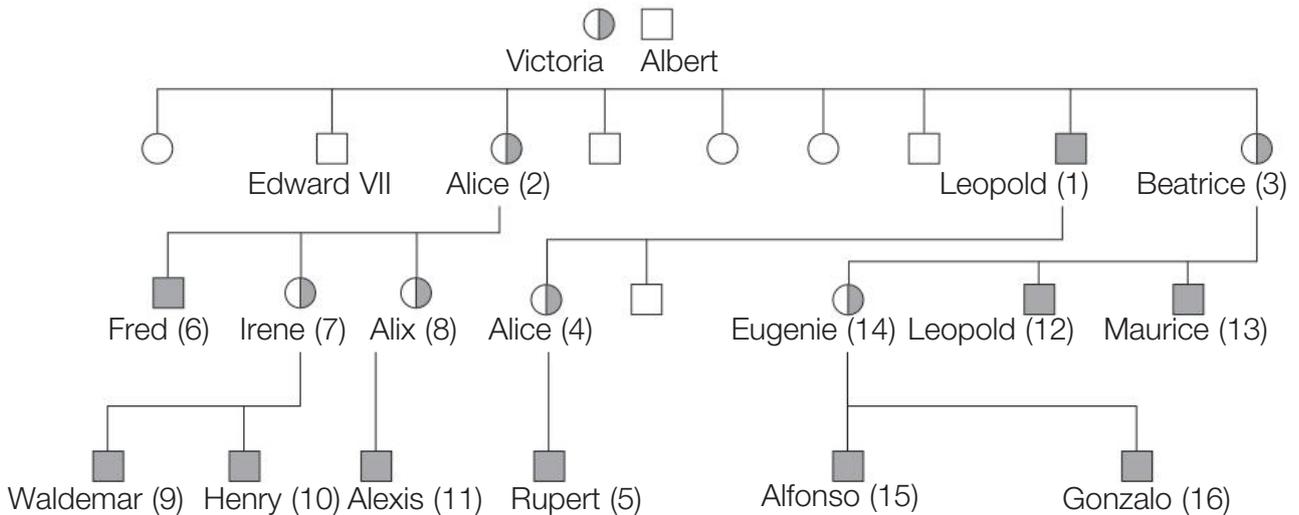


As tsar, it was taken for granted that one of Nicholas' principal duties was to provide a male heir, for the good of the empire and the good of the dynasty. At the time, it was taken for granted that Russia's future could be secured only with a male heir. Nicholas and Alexandra had four daughters: Olga, 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 6.3 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 6.3 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.

Figure 6.4 Rasputin



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.

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...

⁴ Rasputin’s influence became most significant during the war. This will be dealt with in Chapter 13.

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 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

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

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

Exercise 6.2

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

Chapter Seven

Political grievances and the development of opposition to the Romanovs

Demands for political change, terrorism

Demands for political change

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 Five and Six, 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 seeking 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 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

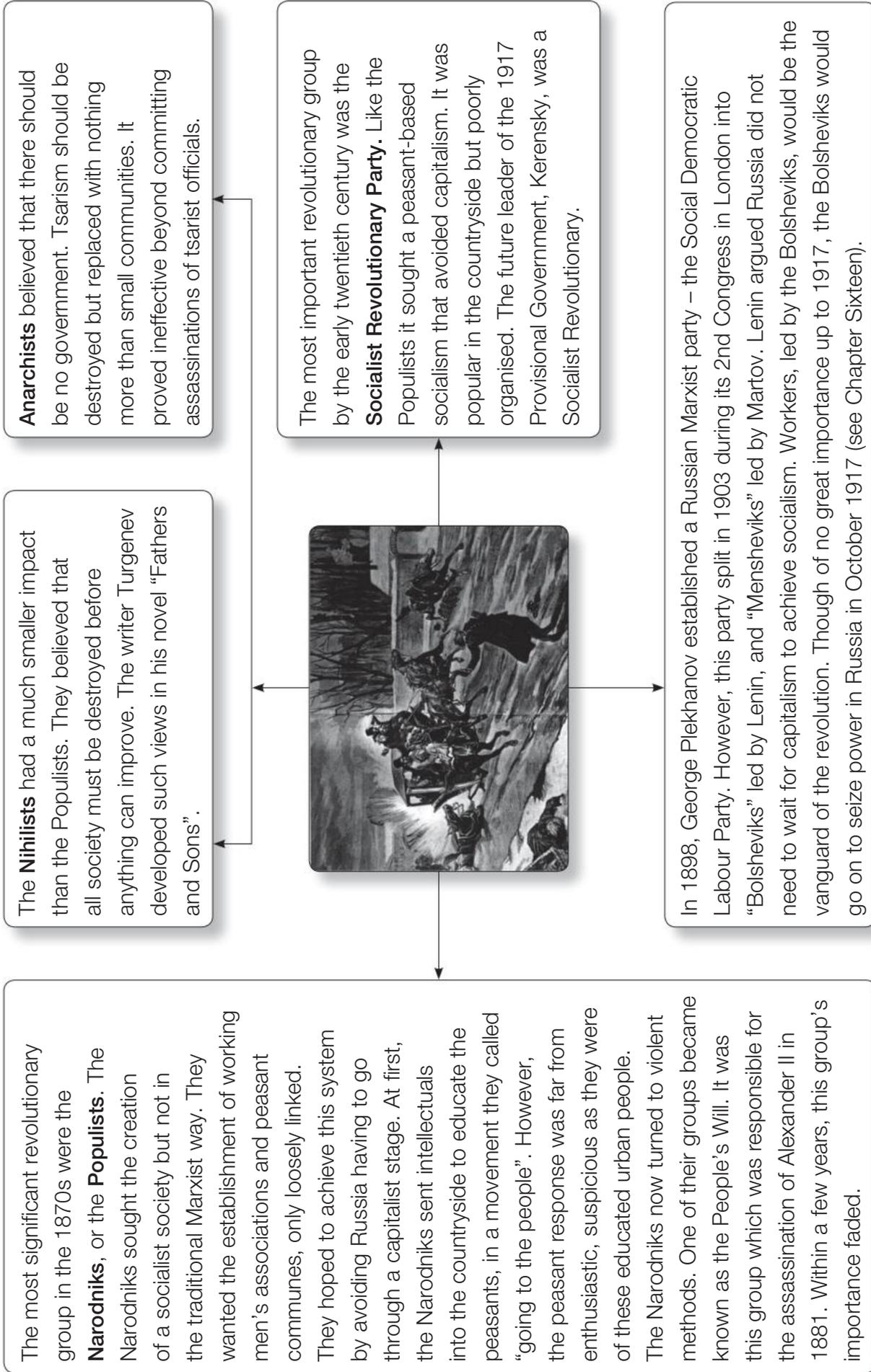
The second half of the nineteenth century saw the appearance of several violent revolutionary groups. This was the result of three key factors:

- 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 7.1 summarises the key ideas and activities of these groups.

Figure 7.1 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 7.1

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

Chapter Eight

(A) The Russo-Japanese War

Causes, course, consequences

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 nations.

*"...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.

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

- 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.
- 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.

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.

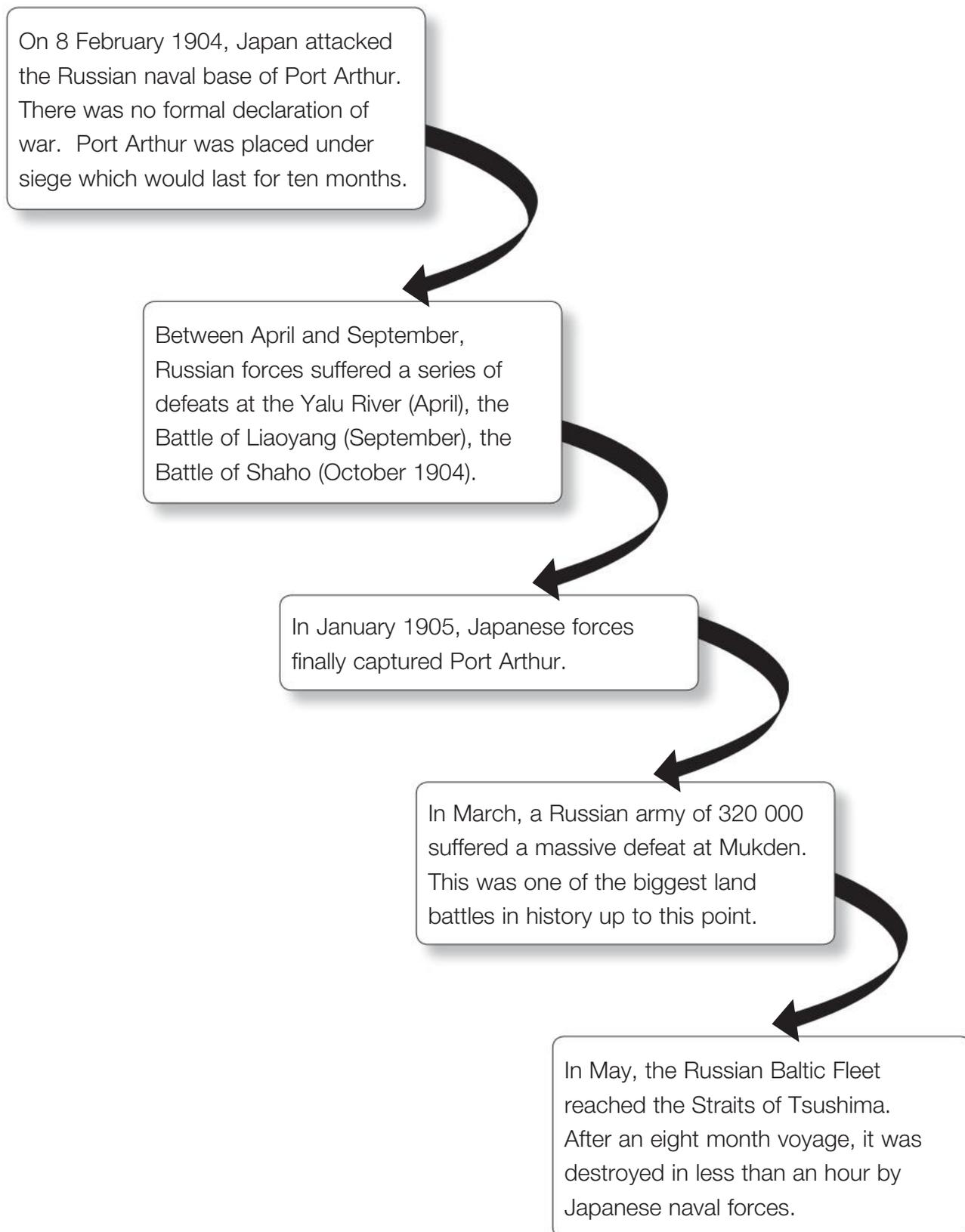
- In 1902, Japan signed an alliance with Great Britain.
 - Each power promised neutrality in the event of either power being involved in a war, and assistance to the other if either was facing two or more powers.
 - The combination of patriotic pressure at home and diplomatic security encouraged Japan 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.

Figure 8.1 The Russo-Japanese War 1904-05



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

Figure 8.2 The course of the Russo-Japanese War



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. (see below)

⁴ See Chapter Ten.

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"..."*⁵

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..."*⁶

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

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

Exercise 8.1

Place the following events in the correct chronological order.

1st event		The Treaty of Portsmouth
2nd event		Japan attacks Port Arthur
3rd event		Assassination of Plehve
4th event		Russia annexes the Liaodong Peninsula
5th event		The Battle of Tsushima
6th event		The Battle of Mukden
7th event		Japan captures Port Arthur
8th event		The Treaty of Shimonoseki

Exercise 8.2

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

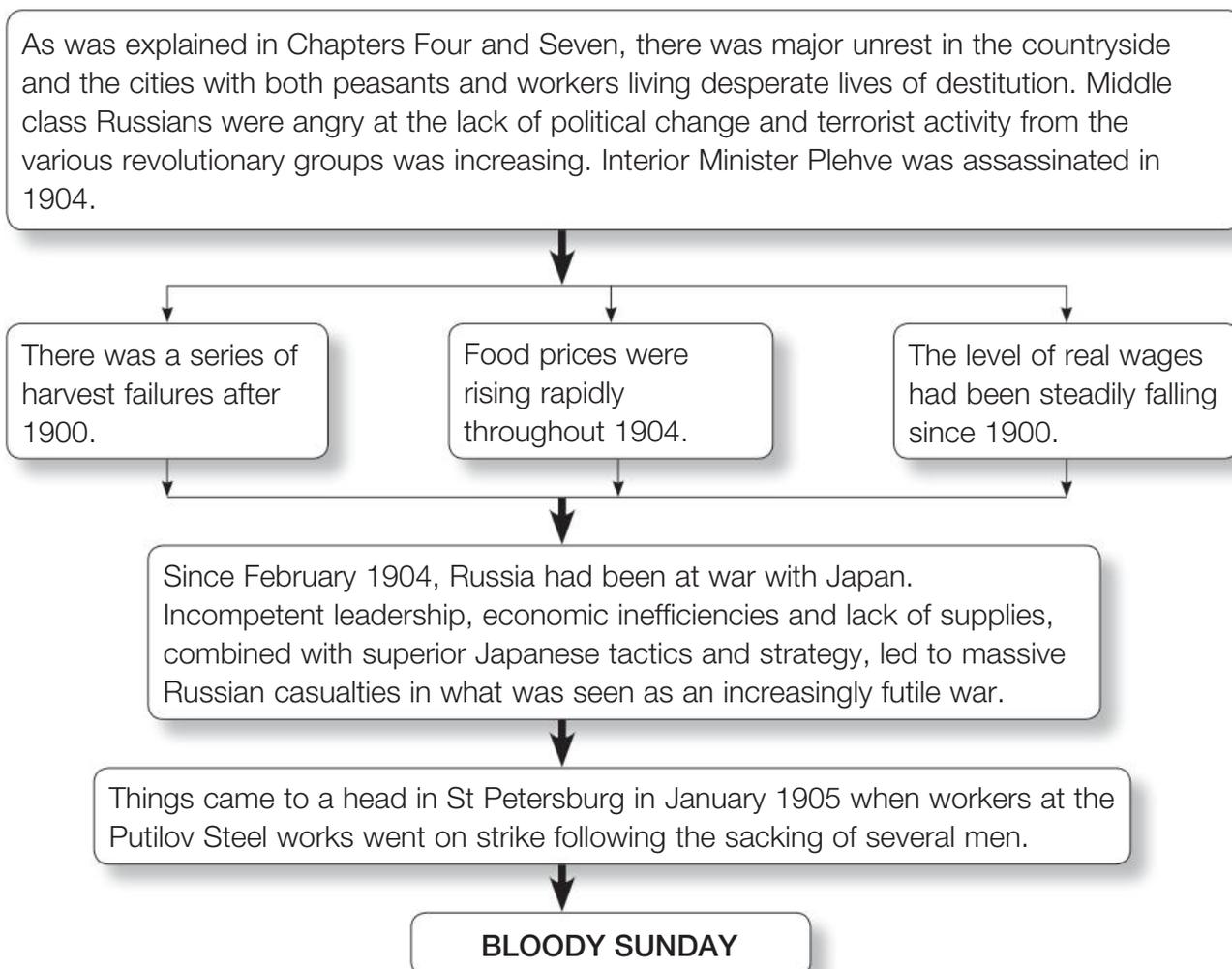
(B) The 1905 Revolution

Bloody Sunday, the revolution spreads, the tsar survives

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 8.3 summarises the factors leading to the explosion in Russia in 1905.

Figure 8.3 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.⁷ 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 had 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...

⁷ 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.

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.

Exercise 8.3

Answer the following questions.

1	Is this a revolutionary document? Are the petitioners seeking the overthrow of the tsarist regime?
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.⁸

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.⁹ The mutineers 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.¹⁰ 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 1905, 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 8.4.

⁸ It would reappear again in March 1917 (see Chapter Fourteen).

⁹ One of the greatest films of the Russian director, Sergei Eisenstein, was "Battleship Potemkin", produced in 1925. This amazing film is often ranked among the all-time best films by critics.

¹⁰ The future Chinese communist leader, Mao Zedong, summed this up well when he said: "Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun".

Figure 8.4 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.

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..."*¹¹

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..."*¹²

¹¹ Sixsmith, M, *Russia: A 1000 Year Chronicle of the Wild East*, BBC Books, London, 2011, p 161

¹² Service, R, *Russia – From Tsarism to the Twenty-First Century*, Penguin, London, 1997, p 14

Exercise 8.4

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 Manifesto
7th event		Start of the Russo-Japanese War
8th event		National Congress of Zemstvos

Notes

Chapter Nine

Aftermath of revolution

Reform and repression

The October Manifesto

The announcement of the October Manifesto had an immediate impact on Russia. As was explained in Chapter Eight, 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

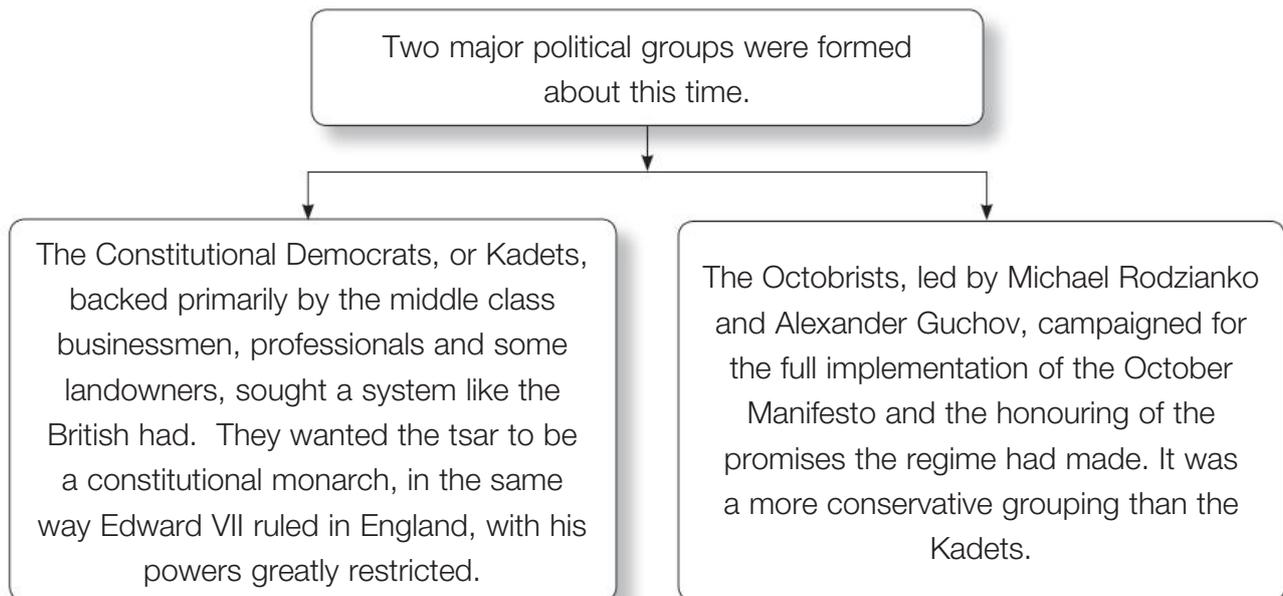
On paper, the October Manifesto was, indeed, a potentially transformative document for the people of Russia.

- 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.

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

Figure 9.1 The Kadets and the Octobrists



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.

- 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.

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

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

³ See below.

- 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

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

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

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

Exercise 9.1

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.	
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 9.2

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 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.

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.

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

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

Stolypin said just before his death that if Russia could have twenty years of domestic peace, Russia's 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 9.3

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 9.4

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.

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

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

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

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

Section Three ■ The role of World War I in the collapse of the Romanov Dynasty

Chapter Ten

Russia goes to war

Background, Sarajevo, the July Crisis

Russia and the background to World War I

(i) The Franco-Russian Alliance

The main goal of the German statesman, Bismarck¹ 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.

Figure 10.1 William I being crowned German emperor.



France had been decisively defeated in 1871, had been forced to surrender territory to the new German state² and to pay reparations. It then suffered the ultimate humiliation of having the new German Empire proclaimed in the Palace of Versailles. Figure 10.1 shows the crowning of William I as German 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 Germany 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.

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

- The basis of this agreement was that Russia and Germany would support each other if either was attacked by Austria-Hungary.
- 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.
- While this diplomacy was obviously contradictory:
 - 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 Treaty 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 other 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.

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

- 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.
- 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 were 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.

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

- 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 10.2.

Figure 10.2 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 10.3 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.

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

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.

What do the historians have to say about Russia going 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

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.

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 10.1

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

Exercise 10.2

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

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

Notes

Chapter Eleven

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. ¹ 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.
- 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.

¹ See Chapter 16.

Figure 11.1 Russian soldiers captured after the Battle of Tannenberg



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. ²
- 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. ³

² The full significance of the tsar's decision will be dealt with in Chapter 13.

³ See Chapters 13 and 17.

- 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 peace treaty was finally signed at Brest Litovsk in March.

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..."*⁴

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?..."*⁵

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

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

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...”*⁶

⁶ Kershaw, I, *To Hell and Back: Europe 1914-1949*, Penguin, 2015, p 53

Exercise 10.1

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 Twelve

The economic impact of the war

Agriculture, transport, industry, finance

Introduction

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. Patton’s 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.

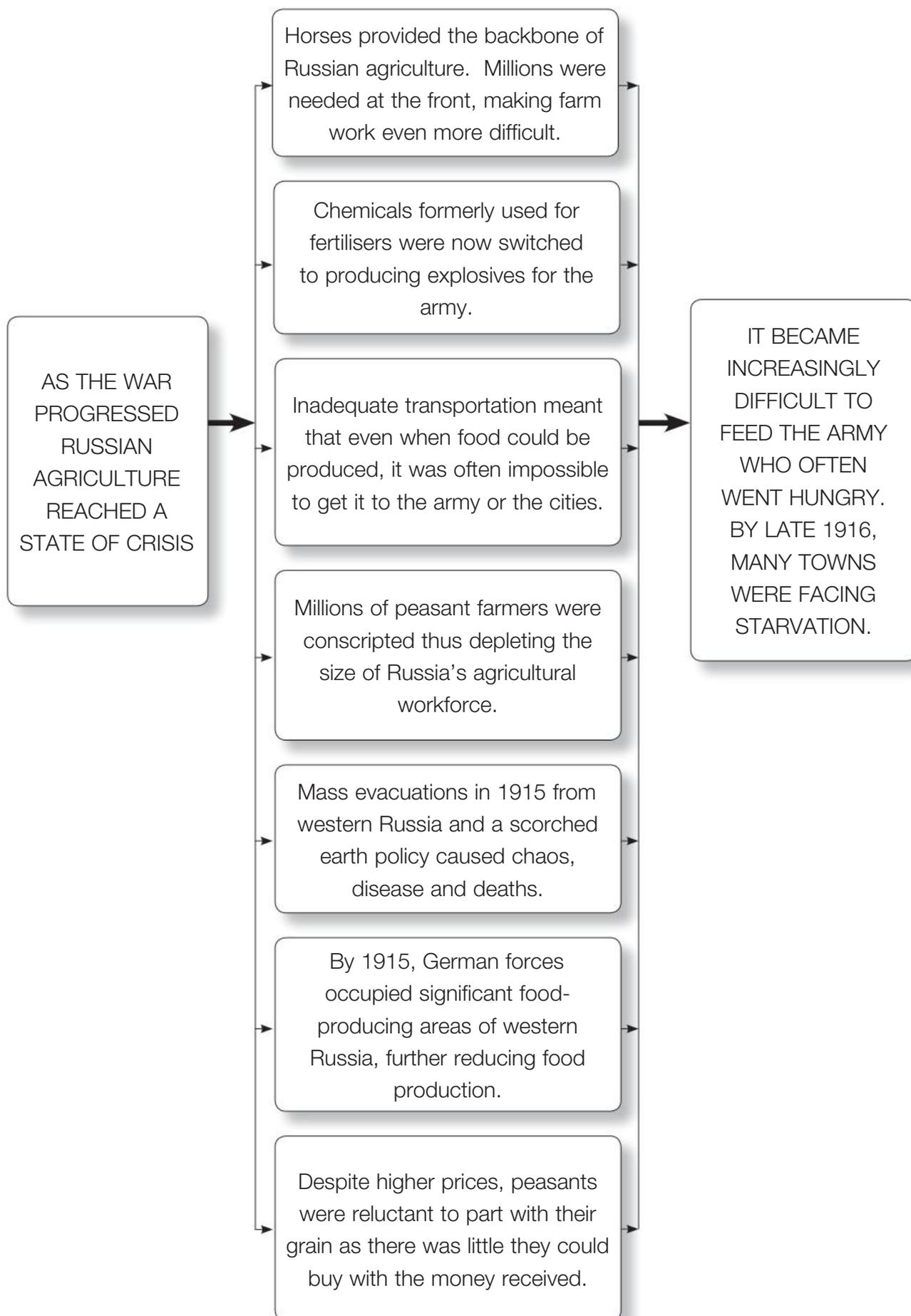
Agriculture

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 Nine 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 12.1. By late 1916/early 1917 the army was ill-fed and the cities were facing major food shortages. It was food riots in Petrograd ¹ 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 12.1 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, sophisticated and efficient economy. Strains soon began to appear in the Russian economy's industrial section which quickly translated into an inability to properly supply the army.

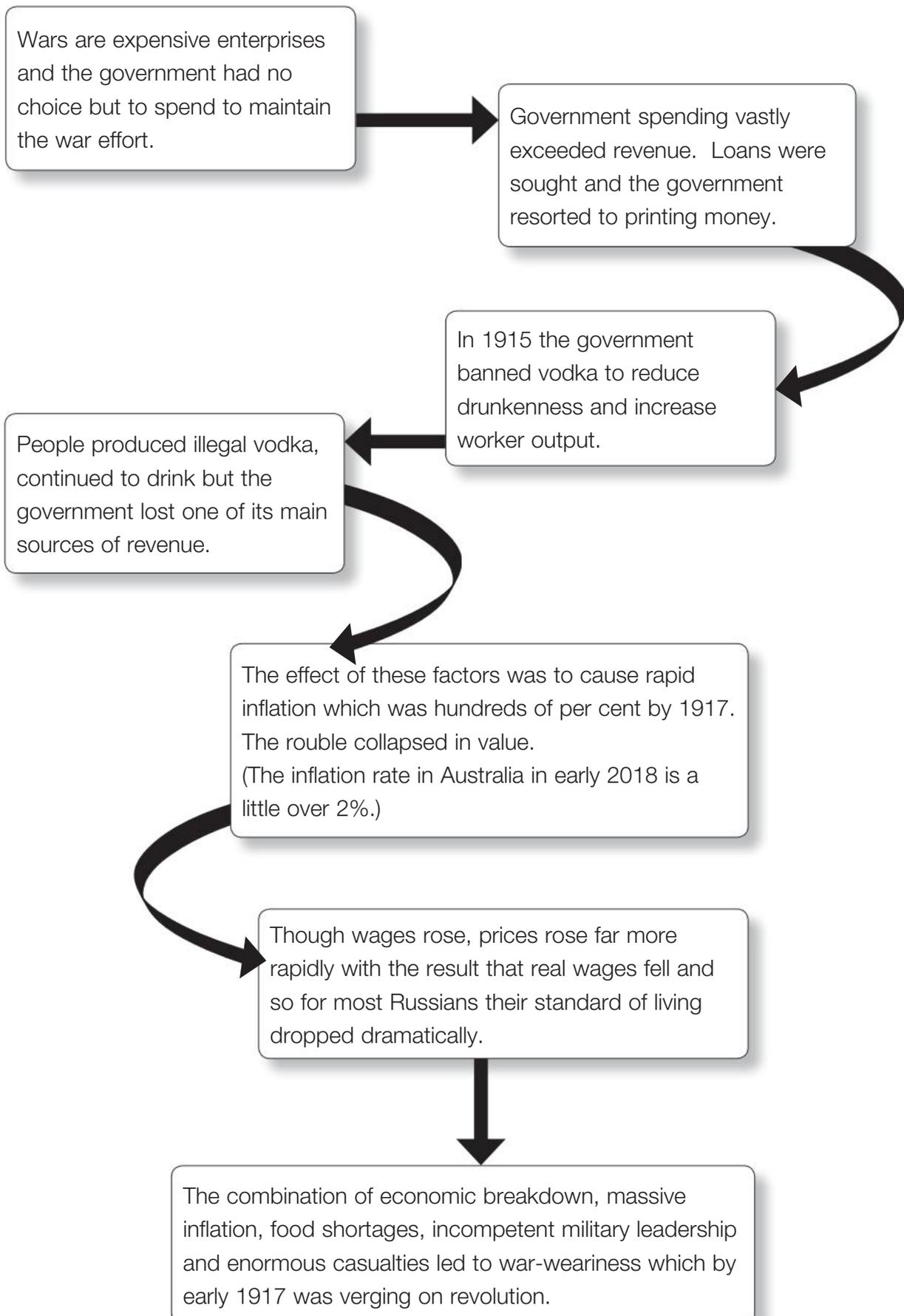
- The fundamental impact of Russian industrial weakness was the inability of the economy to supply the army.
 - The army suffered shortages of rations, rifles, medical supplies, artillery pieces. Troops were sometimes limited to three bullets a day.
 - The second wave of infantry thrown against the German machine guns left their positions with no weapon. 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.

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 the lack of transport and a lack of adequate storage.
- There was little coordination between the different sectors of the economy.

Finance



Exercise 12.1

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

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

Chapter Thirteen

The political impact of the war

Political collapse, Nicholas, Alexandra and Rasputin

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.

In August, the tsar even allowed one of the founders of the Octobrist Party, Alexander Guchov,¹ 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 bugling, 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.

¹ Formed in late 1905, see Chapter nine.

- 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. ²)

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.

Figure 13.1 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 13.1 certainly tried to propagate this idea.

The personal correspondence between Nicholas and Alexandra during the war years certainly 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?”

² 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

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, not that many of them were unwilling 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.³

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

- 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.

³ 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>

- Removing Rasputin had no impact on the events that began to unfold in early 1917. ⁴
- 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." ⁵

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." ⁶

⁴ See Chapter 14.

⁵ Gill, G, *Twentieth Century Russia*, Nelson, Melbourne, 1989, p 23

⁶ Charques, R, *The Twilight of Imperial Russia*, OUP, Oxford, 1958, p 230

Exercise 13.1

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

Notes

Chapter Fourteen

The transfer of power from the Romanov regime to the Provisional Government

The Tsar abdicates, the historians argue their case

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 14.1 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 14.1 *Les Misérables* promotion poster



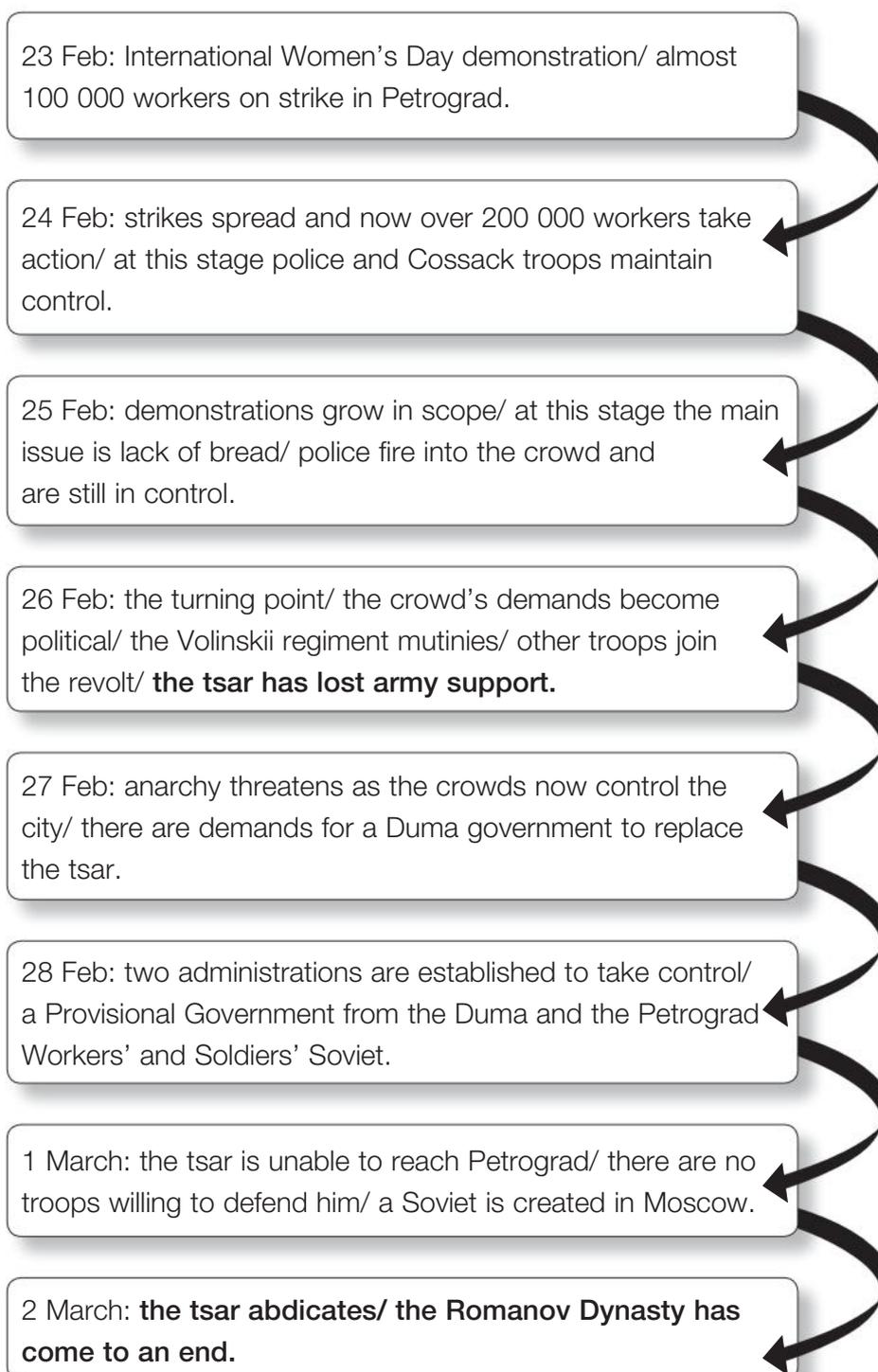
The poster shows all the features which we have come to associate with revolutionary action. The main protagonists are young, idealistic, fearless. The fist is raised; the rifle is held high and flags fly, often red. The scene is dramatic, exciting and promises change. Revolutions are expected to be 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

¹ For the purpose of this book, the Julian calendar has been used for Russian dates for Chapters 1-16. In Chapter 17, the Gregorian calendar is used from the time Russia changed its dating system.

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 International Women’s Day. A week later the tsar had abdicated. Figure 14.2 summarises the key events of the February Revolution.

Figure 14.2 The February Revolution



² The views of various historians will be considered below.

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 Provisional Government

The government which took over from the tsar was called 'provisional' because its members believed that it had only 'assumed' power until a legitimate government could properly take power following elections to a Constituent Assembly which was planned for later in the year. This proved a bad move for the Provisional Government as it meant it would refrain from making major decisions that needed to be made, regarding key issues such as land reform.

The Provisional Government comprised men who had been elected to the Fourth Duma in 1912, mainly landowners, liberals and moderates. The first prime minister was Lvov. Other key figures included Miliukov (foreign minister) and Guchkov (minister of war). However, the man who was to become the dominant figure in the Provisional Government was Alexander Kerensky, a member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party. Kerensky was minister of justice and in July would become prime minister.

However, the Provisional Government had to share power with the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.

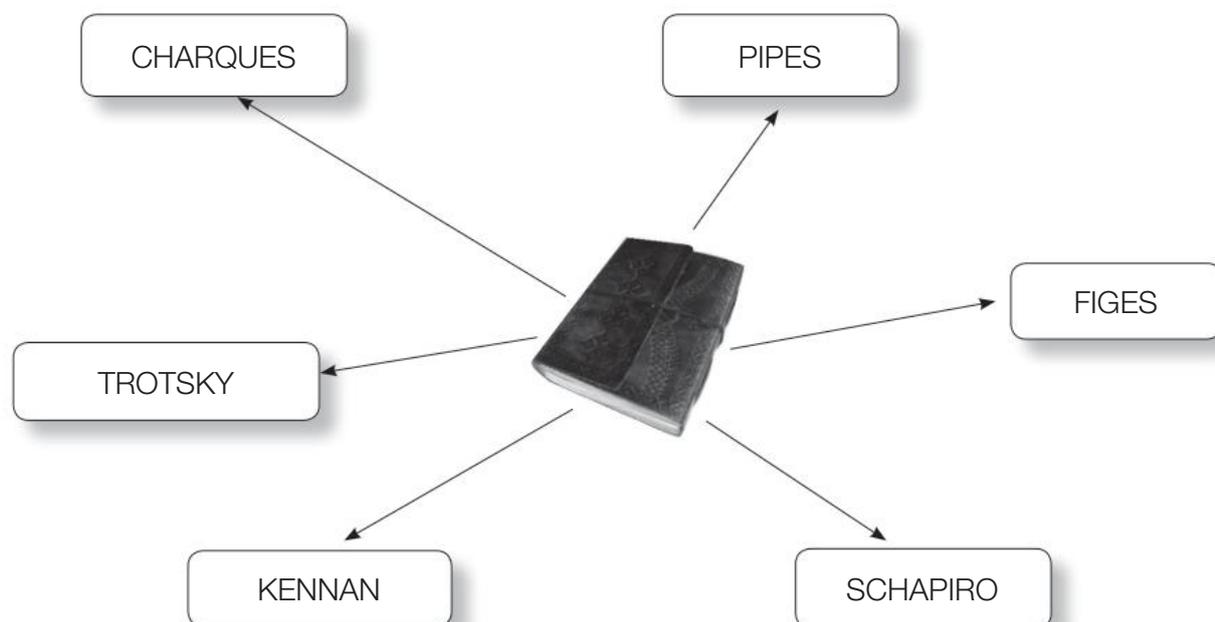
- The Soviet's "Order No 1" ordered naval and military forces not to accept any decisions of the Provisional Government, if such decisions contradicted decisions or resolutions of the Soviet.
- This weakened the authority of the Provisional Government.
- Prince Lvov described his government as one that "authority without power".

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 14.3 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 14.1

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

1	The revolution came about because of the effective propagandising 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

Chapter Fifteen

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

As was explained in Section One, 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. ¹

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. ²

¹ See Chapter Two.

² The government would of course approve of such nationalist feeling. British education certainly promoted nationalist and imperialist feeling.

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.
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.

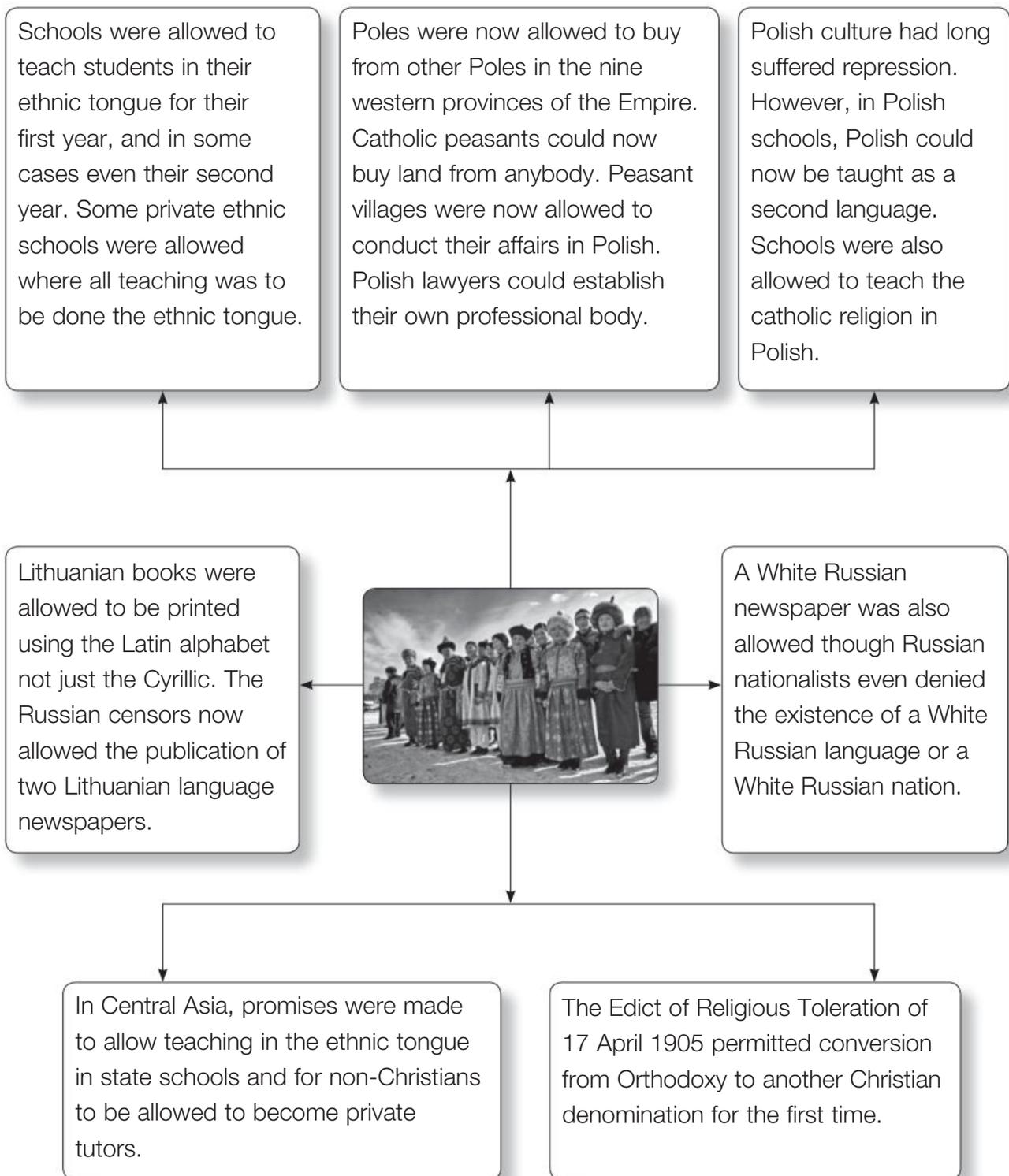
Struve further suggested that the weakness of Russian nationalism was due to the fact that it ultimately was aimed at merely maintaining the autocracy and the privileges of those in power.

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.

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 15.1 outlines some of the concessions made at this time.

Figure 15.1 Concessions to the ethnic minorities



After 1905

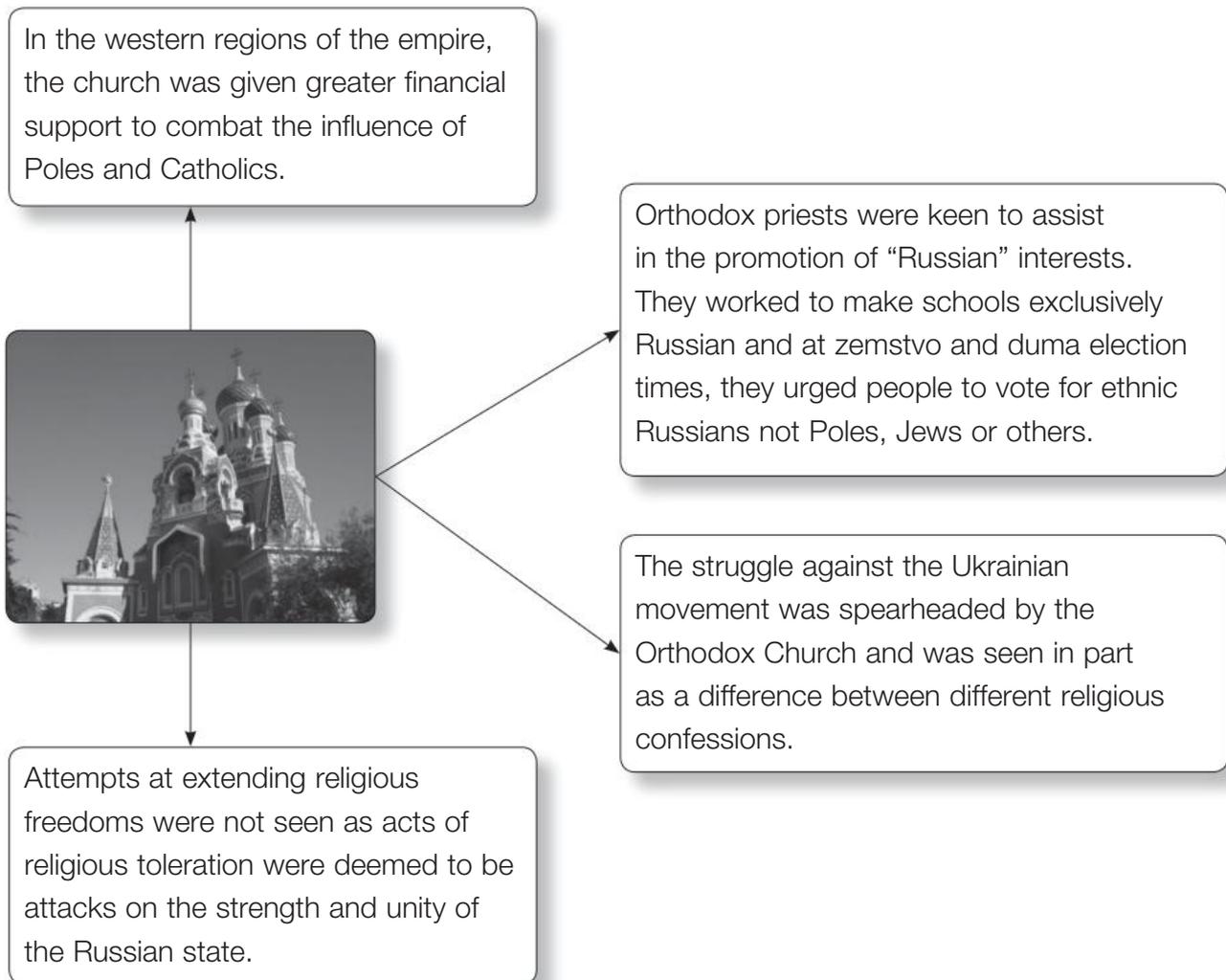
The easing of restrictions on the ethnic minorities did not last long. As was shown in Chapter Nine, once the regime had regained control of the country, tsarist authority was reimposed, as seen in the change to the Duma electoral rules. So too, concessions which had been granted to the ethnic minorities 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 15.2 summarises some of the elements of this aspect of policies towards the ethnic minorities.

Figure 15.2 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...”*³

³ Webb, K, Russia and the Soviet Union, Nelson Cengage Learning, South Melbourne, 2015, p 46

Exercise 15.1

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 Sixteen

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 16.1 and 16.2 summarise the contrasting arguments.

Figure 16.1 Russia 1914: Poised for greatness?

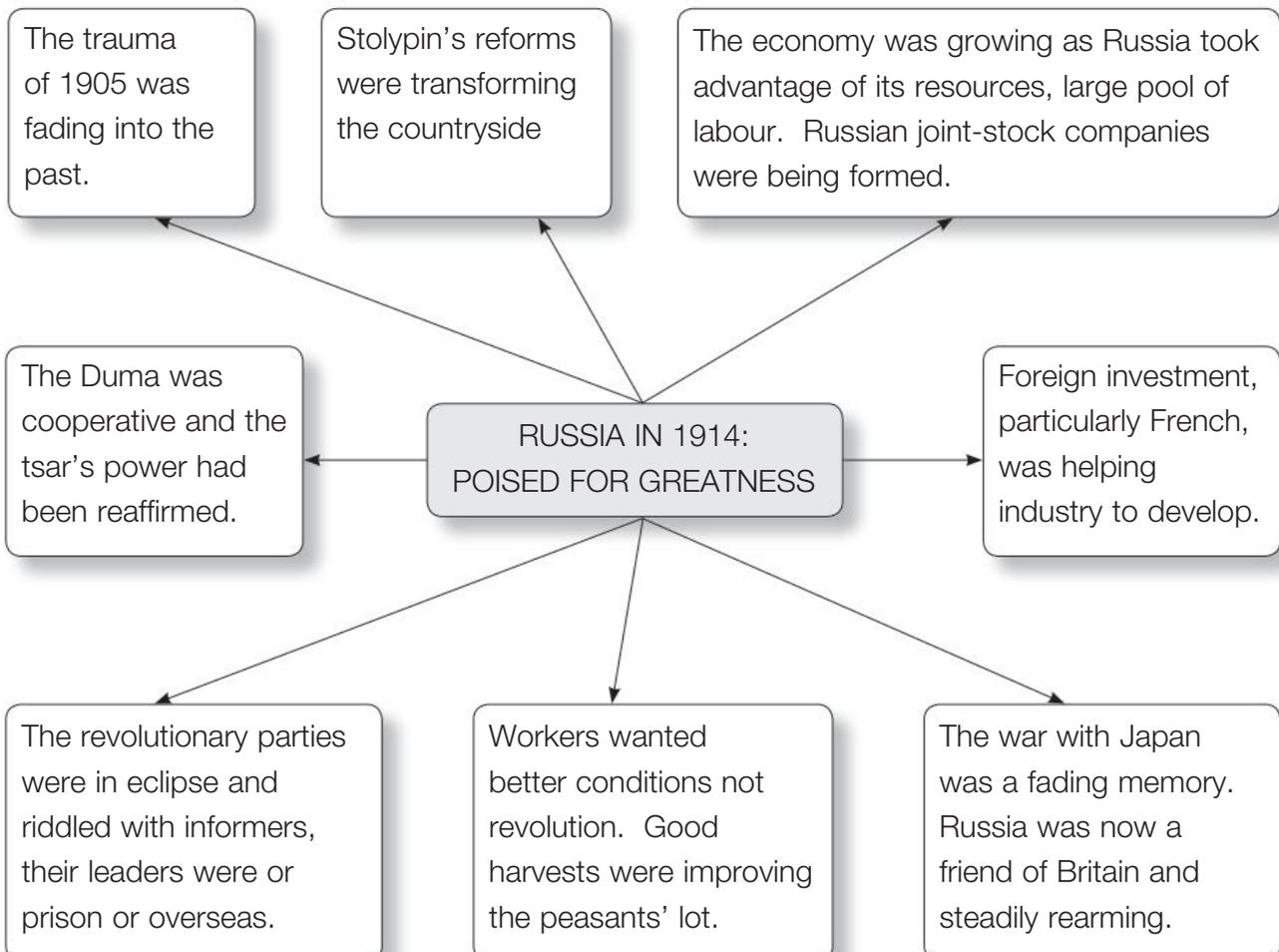
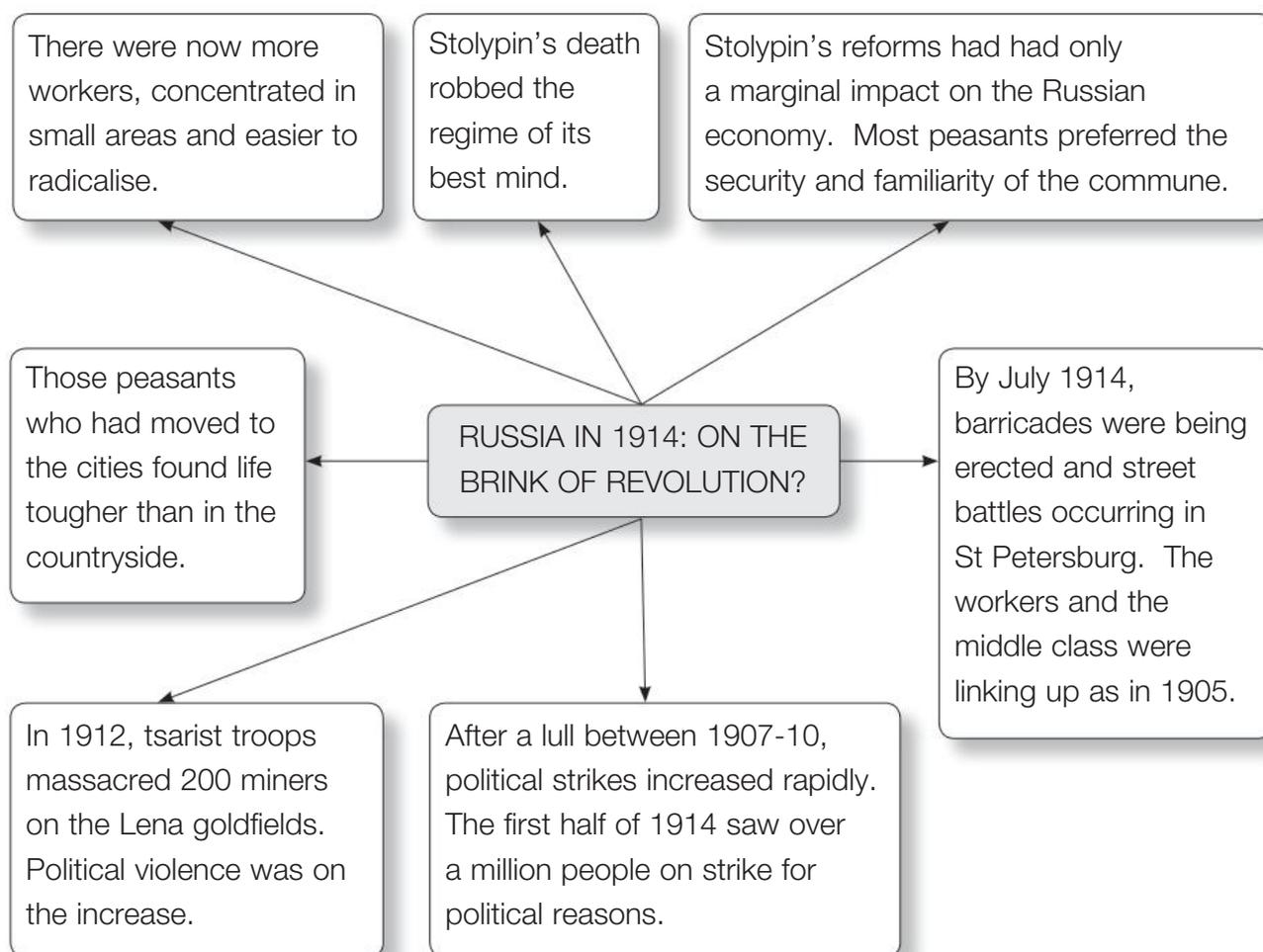


Figure 16.2 Russia 1914: On the brink of revolution?



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...”*¹

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...”*²

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...”*³

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

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

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

Chapter Seventeen

The execution of the Romanovs

From February to October, Civil War, execution

From February to October

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 and 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.

- The Provisional Government was formed from the Fourth Duma which had been elected in 1912.
 - Headed by Prince Lvov, it also contained Miliukov as Foreign Minister, Guchkov as Minister for War and Alexander Kerensky as Minister of Justice.
 - The Provisional Government comprised mainly landowners, liberals and moderates.
- The Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies was a more radical body.
 - Headed by the Menshevik Nikolay Chkheidze, its numbers fluctuated and sometimes reached as many as 3000.

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

- Throughout 1917, the Provisional Government struggled to assert its authority.
- Across the country, peasants were not waiting for a settlement of land issues but rather 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.

- In April, the Bolshevik leader, Lenin, returned from Switzerland. He immediately called for opposition to the Provisional Government. His slogans resonated with many Russian people – “all power to the Soviets” and “peace, land and bread”.¹

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. 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.

The Bolsheviks were now riding a wave of popularity and gained control of many Soviets across the country. Trotsky became Chairman of the Petrograd Soviet.² 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 had 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 presented as being done in the name of the Soviets and not just a Bolshevik grab for power. On 26 October the government fell in what was almost a bloodless coup. Kerensky later complained that the Bolsheviks were weak, and that if he had had only five hundred men, he could have defeated them. Unfortunately for Kerensky, he did not have five hundred men. Largely due to its decision to continue fighting the war, the Provisional Government’s support had evaporated by October.

The Civil War

The Bolsheviks’ hold on power was tenuous in the extreme. The October Revolution had been a capital affair, based in Petrograd. Gradually the party began to exert its authority across the country but the Bolsheviks’ enemies were gathering.

¹ Lenin was in Switzerland at the time of the abdication. He had been allowed to cross Europe in a sealed train by German authorities.

² This was the same position he had at the time of the 1905 Revolution.

In its early months, the new Bolshevik government introduced a series of populist measures such as giving workers control of factories and abolishing ranks in the army.

Most importantly, Lenin’s first decision was to issue the Peace Decree, and he called for immediate peace talks with Germany.

Peace between Russia and Germany was eventually signed at Brest Litovsk in March 1918.

Lenin’s second measure was the Land Decree, authorising peasant land seizures.

In addition to the introduction of populist measures, the Bolsheviks also showed that they would tolerate no opposition. In December 1917, Lenin set up a new secret police, the Cheka. The Cheka would soon far exceed the Okhrana in its exercise of torture and brutality. In these ways, the Bolsheviks were able to consolidate their slight hold on power into 1918.

However, by mid-1918, full-scale civil war had broken out in Russia between the “Reds” and the “Whites”. The following table explains how the two sides lined up.

THE REDS	THE WHITES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Lenin was the undisputed leader but Trotsky commandeered the Bolsheviks’ Red Army. ■ The Reds’ aims were to survive and retain power no matter what the cost. ■ They controlled the Russian heartland in the west. ■ The Reds had the support of most workers and Trotsky’s superbly organised Red Army. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ There was no united White leadership but rather several generals who vied for prominence. These included: Kolchak, Denikin, Yudenich and Wrangel. ■ Their only aim was to destroy the Reds; they were otherwise disunited. The Whites contained groups ranging from monarchists to Socialist Revolutionaries. ■ White forces were scattered across the breadth of Russia. ■ During the early part of the Civil War, White forces received aid from allied western nations such as Britain and France.
<p>There were also “GREEN” forces. These were localised partisan forces that sided with neither Reds nor Whites but were interested primarily in protecting their local interests. The most famous of the Green leaders was the Ukrainian Nestor Makhno.</p>	

The savagery and brutality of the Civil War far exceeded what had happened during the war with Germany. The three years of unremitting violence would have a long-term impact on the future development of Russia. The Russia historian Oleg Khlevniuk sums up the impact of the civil war in the following way:

*“...Statistics cannot capture the pervasive misery, the numbing of human feelings, and the destruction of any sense of right and wrong. Savage murders and mass terror became commonplace. The epidemic of savagery inevitably engulfed the Bolsheviks themselves. The Civil War shaped the new state and largely determined its trajectory...”*³

The Civil War dragged on until early 1921. The Bolsheviks emerged victorious. However, Russia had been ravaged by seven years of war with Germany, revolution and civil war. In 1921, the country was in ruins and famine stalked large areas of the country.

The execution of the tsar

Following the abdication, Nicholas II had become suddenly irrelevant. For the Provisional Government, the problem was ‘what to do with him?’ Nicholas had hoped that he would be able to take his family into exile in England. However, King George V made it clear that he was not welcome.

The government placed the royal family under house arrest in the Alexander Palace at Tsarskoe Selo, about twenty five kilometres south of Petrograd. As his troubles mounted, Kerensky moved them to Tobolsk in the Ural Mountains to the east. Once the Bolsheviks came to power, the conditions of the family’s imprisonment became stricter. Some Bolsheviks wanted the tsar put on trial and presumably executed.

The onset of the civil war worsened the situation the tsar and his family faced.

- White forces were greatly disunited, as explained above. However, it was possible that the tsar might provide a unifying influence.
- This was most likely the reason why the Bolsheviks made the decision to execute the tsar and his entire family.
- In May 1918, the Romanovs were moved further westwards to Ekaterinburg. Ekaterinburg was under Bolshevik control but land further east was being threatened by White forces.

Lenin had hoped to put Nicholas on trial but as White forces were closing in on Ekaterinburg, it became too dangerous for the Bolsheviks to keep Nicholas alive. Thus, the decision was made to execute Nicholas, his family and their four companions staying with them at Ekaterinburg.

³ Khlevniuk, O V, Stalin, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2015, p 54

The task of carrying out the execution was given to Commander Yakov Yurovsky. On the evening of 16 July, 1918, the tsar and his family were told to dress and ready themselves for a journey. They were told that they were being taken to a safer location. They were then ordered into the cellar of the house in which they were staying and told to wait. There eleven of them:

- Tsar Nicholas and Alexandra
- The tsarevitch, Alexei, and the four daughters: Maria, Olga, Tatiana and Anastasia
- The family doctor Botkin and three servants.

In the early hours of 17 July, Yurovsky led a party of his men into the cellar. The tsar's sentence was read out and then the men opened fire with their revolvers. The family had been seated/ stood together as if preparing for a family photograph.

Mystery prevailed for many years about the actual murder and perhaps we shall never know the precise details. However, eye-witness accounts can be found online.⁴

Exercise 17.1

Place the following events in the correct chronological order.

1st event		Start of the Civil War
2nd event		July Days
3rd event		Abdication of the tsar
4th event		Establishment of the Cheka
5th event		Execution of the tsar
6th event		Tsar placed under house arrest
7th event		Treaty of Brest-Litovsk
8th event		Lenin returns to Russia
9th event		The Kornilov coup
10th event		The October Revolution

⁴ One such link is: <http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/nicholas.htm>

Exercise 17.2

Research exercise

The murder of the tsar and his family was a subject of great conjecture for decades. Was the tsar murdered? Did any family members survive? Where were the bodies?

The story of the tsar became the stuff of myth and legend. Today the story of the tsar has significance as the government of Russia's President Putin has sought to rehabilitate Tsar Nicholas II's reputation. With these thoughts in mind, carry out some research which attempts to address the following issues.

1. What happened to the bodies of the tsar and his family? How do we know this?
2. DNA testing in 1993 and more advanced testing in 2008 finally explained the mystery of the royal family's remains. How did this come about? How did the Queen's husband, the Duke of Edinburgh, become involved?
3. What was the legend of Anastasia?
4. Who are the surviving Romanovs who could claim the throne if the monarchy was restored in Russia?
5. Why do you think President Putin has been so keen to rehabilitate Nicholas II when history's verdict on the tsar is largely negative?

Section Five ■ The Hollywood version

Chapter Eighteen

“*Nicholas and Alexandra*”

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 Decline and Fall of the Romanov Dynasty*” 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.

¹ Dr Who fans will know Tom Baker as the fourth doctor, 1974-81. His interpretation of Rasputin is a real ‘tour de force’.

- 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.
 - 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.

Advice on Constructing Written Responses

Introduction to essay writing

People who have been marking the HSC for a few years can read an essay and with little hesitation can say “that’s a ‘B’ level answer, 16/ 25, or that’s a ‘mid-A’ range answer, 23/ 25, or this is ‘D’ answer, 8/ 25. HSC markers do occasionally disagree about answers but once they share their disagreements, the value of the essay becomes clear. It is one of the comforting things about how Modern History is marked at the HSC, that the legendary level of accuracy is almost scientific.

The reason for this is that 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 be smarter and so understand the issues more clearly. 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 responses presented in the HSC which score poorly, do so because they 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, make sure that about half of your 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, they simply 'narrate' or 'tell 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 learned.

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?

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. Three 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)

4. Structure paragraphs carefully. Some simple rules:

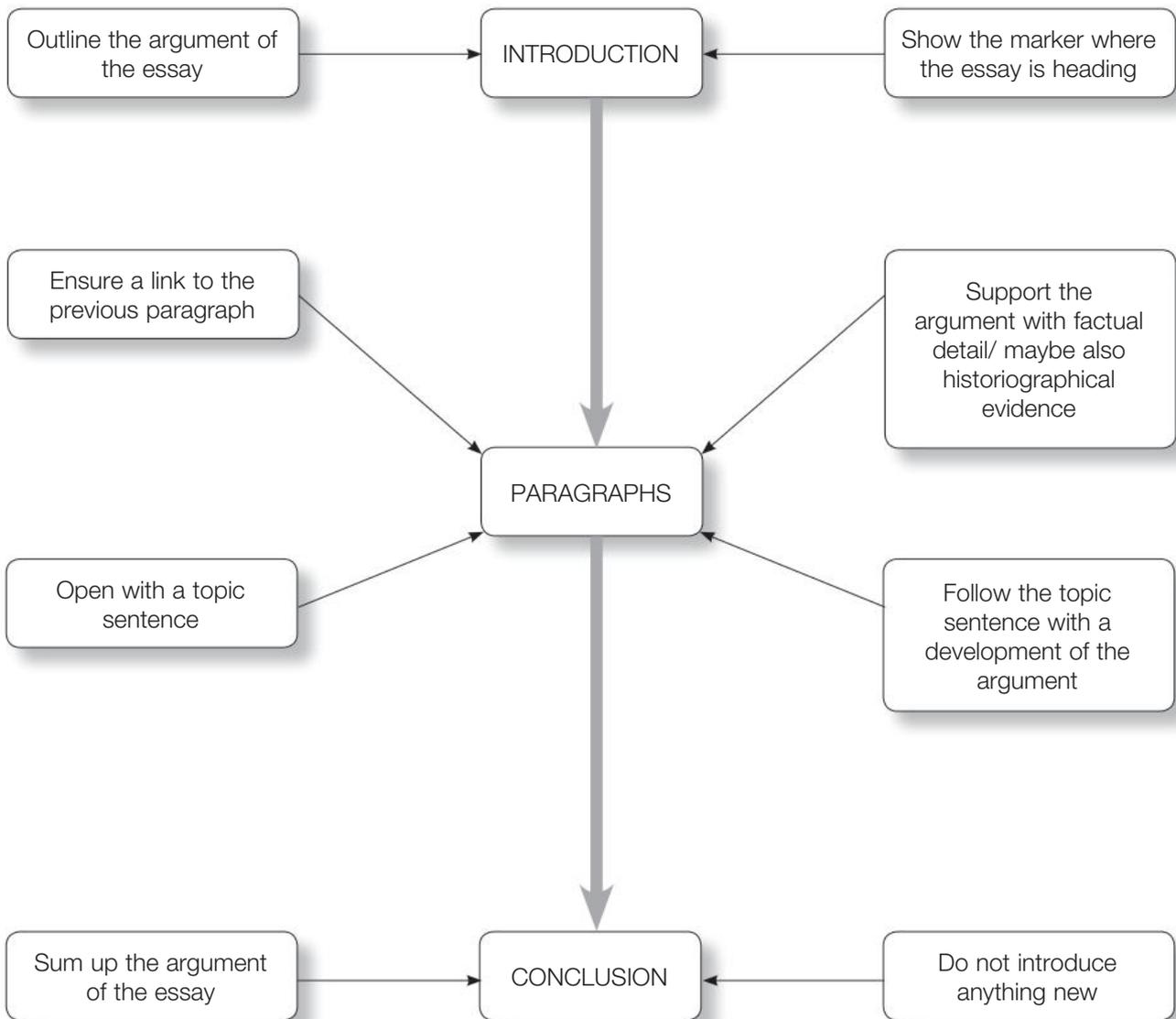
- open with a topic sentence which outlines what the paragraph is going to be about;
- develop the argument presented in the topic sentence;
- support the argument with specific factual detail;
- if appropriate, support the detail with historiographical evidence;
- link your paragraphs – this can be 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;
- Mentioning fewer historians 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. 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

- 1812 Napoleon's invasion of Russia
- 1815 Russia part of the victorious coalition that defeats Napoleon
- 1848 Year of revolutions
- 1861 The Emancipation of the serfs
- 1863 The Polish revolt
- 1881 Assassination of Tsar Alexander II
- 1893 Franco-Russian Alliance
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
- 1918 March: The Treaty of Brest Litovsk
June: Civil War in Russia
July: Execution of Tsar Nicholas and his family

Glossary

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
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
bourgeoisie	Marxist term for the middle class
Brest-Litovsk	treaty signed between Germany and Russia in March 1918
Cheka	Bolshevik secret police created in December 1917
cossacks	mounted troops renowned for their loyalty to the tsar and their brutal methods
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
franchise	the qualification to vote
gold standard	system whereby a currency can be converted into gold
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
Kadets	Constitutional Democrats Party in Russia
Kievan Rus	medieval Russian state
kulaks	prosperous peasants
mir	commune
nephritis	inflammation of the kidneys
Octobrists	Russian political party who supported the October Manifesto but wanted no more changes
okhrana	Tsarist secret police
pan-slavism	desire for a state containing all Slav peoples

patriarch	head of the Russian Orthodox Church
Petrograd Soviet	Workers' and Soldiers' Council established in February 1917
pogrom	state organised attack on Jews
Potemkin	battleship, scene of a naval mutiny in 1905
proletariat	Marxist term for the working class
protectionism	policy of imposing tariffs on imports to protect a country's industry
Provisional Government	government formed from the Duma in February 1917
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
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
sosloviia	the various estates or social sections of the Russian people
St Petersburg Soviet	Workers' and Soldiers' Council established in 1905
State Council	key advisory body to the tsar
steppes	flat, unforested grassland area in Siberia
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
tariff	a tax on imports
the Straits	waters linking the Black Sea to the Mediterranean Sea
tributary state	a state that makes payments to a dominating neighbouring state
Triple Entente	grouping of Britain, France and Russia
vassal state	a state that is nominally independent but really under the control of another state
Whites	the anti-Bolshevik side in the Russian Civil War
zemstvos	local government councils in Russia

Dramatis Personae

Alekseev	Russian Chief of Staff from August 1915
Alexander Guchov	leading member of the Octobrists
Alexander I	Tsar of Russia 1801-1825
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, wife of Nicholas II
Alexi	the tsarevich, son of Nicholas and Alexandra
Berchtold	Austrian foreign minister in 1914
Bismarck	German chancellor 1871-1890
Botkin	the royal family's doctor
Brusilov	arguably Russia's most successful general
Dmitry Bogrov	assassin of Stolypin
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
Grey	British foreign minister in 1914
Grigori Rasputin	Siberian holy man who ingratiated himself with the Royal Family
Hindenburg	German commander at Battle of Tannenberg
Kolchak	White general in the Civil War
Kornilov	Commander in Chief of Russian army who attempted a coup in August 1917
Lenin	leader of the Bolsheviks
Leon Trotsky	commander of the Bolshevik Red Army in the Civil War
Metternich	Foreign Minister of Austria 1809-1848
Michael Rodzianko	leading member of the Octobrists
Nestor Makhno	Green leader in the Civil War
Nicholas I	Tsar of Russia 1825-1855
Nicholas II	Tsar of Russia, 1894-1917
Peter the Great	Tsar of Russia
Plehve	Interior Minister from 1902, assassinated 1904
Pobedonostev	reactionary advisor to Alexander III and Nicholas II
President Putin	President of Russia since 2012
Prince Lvov	first leader of the Provisional Government in 1917
Pyotr Stolypin	Russian Chief Minister 1906-11
Rennenkampf	Russian commander at Battle of Massurian Lakes
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
Theodore Roosevelt	US President 1900-1909
Victor Chernov	founder of the Socialist Revolutionary party
Wilhelm II	German kaiser 1888-1918
Yurovsky	Ekaterinburg Bolshevik in charge of Nicholas II's execution

Answers to chapter revision exercises

Exercise 1.1

1 – 8000 kms east-west; an area of over 20 million sq kms; 2 – the Mongol Golden Horde from the east; 3 – very flat, part of the North European Plain; 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

Kievan Rus – Novgorod – Golden Horde – Moscow – Siberia – Caucasus – heterogeneous – tolerance – russification – backward – industry – Witte

Exercise 2.1

1 – false; 2 – true; 3 – false; 4 – false; 5 – true; 6 – false; 7 – false; 8 – true; 9 – true; 10 – true.

Exercise 3.1

1 – its role in the defeat of Napoleon; 2 – Prussia, Austria, Russia; 3 – keep the balance of power/ prevent revolutions; 4 – defending Christian pilgrims against Turkey; 5 – warm sea port/ links to its brother Slavs; 6 – loose grouping of Germany, Russia and Austria; 7 – Britain, Japan; 8 – France; 9 – settled some Anglo-Russian imperial differences; 10 – triple entente (Britain, France, Russia), triple alliance (Germany, Austria, Italy).

Exercise 4.1

1 – false; 2 – false; 3 – true; 4 – true; 5 – true; 6 – true; 7 – false; 8 – false; 9 – true; 10 – false.

Exercise 4.2

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 5.1

1 – false; 2 – true; 3 – false; 4 – true; 5 – false; 6 – false; 7 – true; 8 – true; 9 – false; 10 – true.

Exercise 5.2

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 6.1

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 6.2

1 – fact; 2 – opinion; 3 – opinion; 4 – fact; 5 – fact; 6 – opinion; 7 – fact; 8 – opinion.

Exercise 7.1

1 – Anarchist; 2 – nihilist; 3 – Narodnik; 4 – Bolshevik; 5 – Socialist Revolutionary.

Exercise 7.2

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 8.1

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 8.2

1 – false; 2 – true; 3 – true; 4 – true; 5 – false; 6 – false; 7 – true; 8 – false; 9 – false; 10 – true.

Exercise 8.3

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 8.4

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 9.1

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 9.2

1 – fact; 2 – opinion; 3 – fact; 4 – fact; 5 – opinion; 6 – fact; 7 – opinion; 8 – opinion

Exercise 9.3

1 – false; 2 – true; 3 – false; 4 – true; 5 – true; 6 – false; 7 – true; 8 – false; 9 – true; 10 – false

Exercise 9.4

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 10.1

1 – George Buchanan; 2 – Bismarck; 3 – Berchtold; 4 – Gavrilo Princip; 5 – Grey; 6 – Franz Ferdinand; 7 – Wilhelm II; 8 – Nicholas II; 9 – Yanushkevitch

Exercise 10.2

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 11.1

1 – enthusiastic, patriotic, loyal; 2 – there had been major unrest throughout the country; 3 – Galicia, against Austria; 4 – Tannenberg, Massurian Lakes; 5 – Tsar Nicholas II; 6 – Brusilov; 7 – disillusioned, mutinous, poorly supplied; 8 – the Provisional Government continued the war, the Bolsheviks stopped fighting; 9 – Brest Litovsk, March 1918; 10 – set the tone for Russia for the rest of the war

Exercise 12.1

Stolypin – horses – explosives – evacuation – scorched earth policy – Germany – shortages – boots – labour – mines – transport – troops – loans – printing – inflation – vodka – revenue – rose – prices – real – revolution

Exercise 13.1

1 – false; 2 – false; 3 – true; 4 – true; 5 – true; 6 – false; 7 – true; 8 – true; 9 – false; 10 – false

Exercise 14.1

1 – Trotsky; 2 – Pipes; 3 – Charques; 4 – Figes; 5 – Kennan; 6 – Khlevniuk; 7 – Schapiro

Exercise 15.1

1 – lack of tolerance to minority language/ culture/ religion; 2 – policy of enforcing use of Russian language/ orthodox faith/ Russian national feeling; 3 – Cyrillic; 4 – repression of ethnic minorities turned attention away from the regime's failings; 5 – led to a short term increase in tolerance of ethnic language/ religion/ customs; 6 – use of ethnic languages in schools/ ethnic newspapers allowed/ land reforms; 7 – to reduce ethnic influence in the Duma; 8 – he was not/ he sought Russification; 9 – it strongly supported it; 10 – unsuccessful/ regime unable to remove deep-seated ethnic loyalties.

Exercise 17.1

1st – abdication of the tsar; 2nd – tsar placed under house arrest; 3rd – Lenin returns to Russia; 4th – July Days; 5th – The Kornilov coup; 6th – The October Revolution; 7th – establishment of the Cheka; 8th – Treaty of Brest Litovsk; 9th – start of the Civil War; 10th – execution of the tsar

Reading list

What follows is not meant to be a comprehensive bibliography of “The Decline and Fall of the Romanov Dynasty”. These are some of the books that the author has found useful when teaching and lecturing on this topic, and they are easily accessible.

- For a detailed and intimate look at the royal family, go no further than “*Nicholas and Alexandra*” by Robert K Massie (World Books, London, 1968). This is the book upon which the movie of the same name was based. Massie has delved into the personal letters, diaries and memoirs of those concerned, and he emphasises the importance of the tsarevich’s haemophilia. In 1995, Massie updated his book using new material from the recently opened former Soviet archives.
- Orlando Figes is one of the current experts on Russian history. His book “*Revolutionary Russia 1891-1991*”, (Pelican, London, 2014) is well-argued and well suited to interested senior students. (See Chapters 1-6).
- For a denser more detailed look at the period, Robert Service’s “*Russia: From Tsarism to the Twenty-First Century*” (Penguin, London, 1997) is hard to beat. (See Chapters 1-4).
- For an entertaining, less academic examination of the period (and a sweep of Russian history), there is “*Russia: A 1000 Year Chronicle of the Wild East*” (BBC Books, London, 2011), by Martin Sixsmith. Sixsmith is a former BBC Moscow correspondent. (See Chapters 16-19)
- An old favourite of the author’s is “*The Twilight of Imperial Russia*” by Richard Charques (OUP, Oxford, 1958). Charques is unlikely to feature on many Russia reading lists but his analysis is still sound.
- Students and teachers will also find “*Russia and the Soviet Union*” by Ken Webb (Nelson Cengage Learning, Melbourne, 2015) full of added detail and useful primary source material. (See Chapters 1-3).