

my **revision** notes

AQA AS/A-level History

TSARIST AND COMMUNIST RUSSIA

1855–1964

Michael Scott-Baumann



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My revision planner



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2 The collapse of autocracy, 1894–1917

Political authority, government and Tsar: Nicholas II and the 1905 Revolution

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The personal rule of Nicholas II (1894–1917)

In September 1894, Alexander III died at the age of 49, leaving his 26-year-old son Nicholas as Emperor of Russia. **Nicholas II** admitted he had little idea of how to rule when he came to the throne. Nevertheless, he felt he had a God-given duty to fulfil. He was determined to rule 'as his father had done', yet he proved incapable of making firm decisions or providing any sense of direction. The new Tsar relied on the army and Okhrana to deal with challenges to his authority.

There was increasingly widespread unrest in both towns and the countryside as the Tsarist government appeared to offer no prospect of change. In 1903, the Tsar, who was easily influenced, dismissed his most competent adviser, Sergei Witte (see page 30), leaving himself surrounded by reactionary ministers. While peasants suffering from land hunger destroyed landlords' barns and seized woodland and pasture, industrial workers formed illegal **trade unions** and became involved in strikes. In St Petersburg in 1904, an official union, supported by the government, was formed by **Father Gapon**, in order to prevent workers joining the radical socialists.

War with Japan

- In January 1904, the Japanese attacked the Russian naval base at Port Arthur in the Far East.
- Plehve, the Minister for Internal Affairs, called for a 'short, swift victorious war' which would distract attention from political unrest at home.
- In March 1904, Russian forces were defeated at Mukden, with 90,000 Russians killed.
- In May 1904, 24 out of 27 ships of the Russian fleet were sunk in the Battle of Tsushima.
- In December 1904, Russia surrendered the naval base at Port Arthur.
- These defeats turned initial anti-Japanese patriotism into discontent and increased opposition to the government.

The 1905 Revolution: 'Bloody Sunday' and its results

Date	Event
3 January	Outbreak of a strike at the Putilov works in St Petersburg, which soon involved 150,000 workers.
9 January	Father Gapon led a peaceful march of about 20,000 workers to the Winter Palace, with a petition demanding improved working conditions and political reform. Troops fired on the marchers, leading to over a hundred deaths. Nicholas II later told the workers' representatives that they had been misguided and should return to work.
4 February	Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich, Nicholas's uncle and governor-general of Moscow, was assassinated.
March	An 'All-Russian Union of Railway Workers' was established and soviets of elected factory workers were formed to co-ordinate strikes.
June	Naval mutiny on the battleship <i>Potemkin</i> . In Odessa, the authorities tried to disperse sympathetic crowds, killing more than 2,000.
August	Peasants rioted and a 'Peasants' Union' was formed.
6 August	Nicholas promised a restricted State Duma , which revolutionaries regarded as too weak.
23 September	A printers' strike in Moscow spread to St Petersburg and other cities, creating a general strike in October.

! Simple essay style

Below is a sample exam question. Use your own knowledge and the information on the opposite page to produce a plan for this question. Choose four general points and provide three pieces of specific information to support each general point. Remember that there will be other, more long-term, reasons for the outbreak of the 1905 Revolution.

Once you have planned your essay, write the introduction and conclusion for the essay. The introduction should list the points to be discussed in the essay.

The conclusion should summarise the key points and justify which point was the most important.

'The outbreak of revolution in St Petersburg in 1905 was due to the incompetence of Tsar Nicholas II.' Explain why you agree or disagree with reference to the years 1894 to 1905.

i Introducing and concluding an argument

a

Read the A-level exam essay title below.

How good is the proposed introduction?

How effective is the proposed conclusion?

Could either be improved, especially to reach Level 5? (See page 7 for mark scheme.)

'The political unrest of 1905 was the result of failures in government policy since 1881.' Assess the validity of this view.

Introduction

There were both short-term and longer-term reasons for the political unrest of 1905. The immediate cause was the treatment of the marchers on Bloody Sunday in January 1905 and the Tsar's unsympathetic response. However, there were longer-term causes, such as the harsh, repressive nature of Tsarist rule in the time of Alexander III and the government's mishandling of the famine of 1891–2. Furthermore, some of the unrest was caused by factors that cannot be blamed directly on failures in government policy.

Conclusion

The incompetence of successive governments, whether in response to the Great Famine of 1891–2 or their conduct of the Japanese war in 1904 and the resulting discontent in 1905, was largely due to failures in government policy.

The October Manifesto and Duma government

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The October Manifesto

By October 1905, Russia seemed near to collapse. There were strikes and demonstrations in the main cities and peasant uprisings in the countryside. The St Petersburg Soviet was set up to organise a general strike, which began in October. Under increasing pressure from his advisers, the Tsar issued a decree promising:

- civil liberties, such as freedom of speech, conscience, press and assembly for all
- a State Duma, elected by **universal suffrage**, to pass laws.

The impact of the Manifesto

- Most liberals, such as the '**Kadets**' (see page 36), Progressives and **Octobrists**, accepted the Manifesto.
- The Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs) and the SDs (see page 38) rejected it.
- Many workers were unconvinced by the Tsar's promises and continued to support the SRs and the SDs.
- Peasant risings continued, especially with hopes of land redistribution.

The recovery of Tsarist authority

- Most of the army remained loyal and helped to storm the headquarters of the Moscow and St Petersburg soviets in November/December 1905.
- Most of the leaders of the soviets were arrested and many were executed or exiled to Siberia.
- Troops restored order in the countryside and the government promised an end to redemption payments.
- The October Manifesto split the opposition. Peter Struve, a liberal, said: 'Thank God for the Tsar who has saved us from the people.'

The 'Fundamental Laws', April 1906

A new constitution was drawn up and political parties were legalised for the election, although the SRs and **Bolsheviks** (see page 38) refused to participate. Then, four days before the first Duma met, the Tsar issued the 'Fundamental Laws', in which he claimed his right to:

- exercise 'supreme autocratic power'
- initiate legislation and approve laws

- appoint and dismiss ministers
- summon and dissolve the Duma
- rule by decree in an emergency or when the Duma was not in session.

The Tsar never had any intention of becoming a '**constitutional monarch**'.

The Dumas

First Duma (May–June 1906)

- It was dominated by Kadets and radicals, with many peasant representatives.
- It demanded radical constitutional change.
- It passed a vote of 'no confidence' in the government and was dissolved.

Second Duma (February–June 1907)

- **Peter Stolypin**, the new Prime Minister, engineered elections to increase the number of Octobrists.
- However, the Bolsheviks and the SRs participated, increasing the number of radical deputies.
- It opposed most Tsarist proposals, including agrarian reform.
- It was dissolved and leading radicals were exiled.

Third Duma (November 1907–June 1912)

- Stolypin introduced an emergency law to reduce the representation of peasants and workers.
- Consequently, Octobrists and Conservatives dominated and the Duma was more compliant.
- However, there were still some disputes with the Tsar and it was twice suspended.

Fourth Duma (November 1912–17)

- The right- and left-wing deputies could not co-operate and the fourth Duma was increasingly ignored.
- It voted for **war credits** in 1914, but was suspended in 1915 after demanding more power.

**Use own knowledge to support or contradict****a**

Below is an extract to read. Identify the main argument put forward to explain the failure of reform in the years from 1894 to 1914. Then, develop a counter-argument.

EXTRACT A

From Orlando Figes, A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution 1891–1924 (1996)

If there is a single, repetitive theme in the history of Russia during the last twenty years of the old regime, it is that of the need for reform and the failure of successive governments to achieve it in the face of the Tsar's opposition. Not that sweeping reforms would have been necessary: most of the liberals would have been satisfied by such moderate changes ... which would not have undermined the monarchy. But Nicholas was opposed to the idea of any limitation upon his autocratic prerogatives.

**Comparing interpretations**

With reference to the following two extracts and your understanding of the historical context, which extract provides the more convincing interpretation for the reasons for the eventual downfall of the Tsarist autocracy?

Compare the arguments in the two extracts and use your contextual knowledge to decide which is more convincing.

- You could shade the sections of each extract that you agree with.
- Then, set out your answer, identifying agreements between the two extracts, and then disagreements, using your contextual knowledge.

Extract B argument(s)**Extract C argument(s)****Your contextual knowledge****EXTRACT B**

From Martin Sixsmith, Russia: A 1,000-Year Chronicle of the Wild East, page 165 (2012)

After the events of Bloody Sunday and the disaster of Tsushima, Nicholas was forced to rethink his unbending insistence on absolute autocracy. He offered concessions in the hope of defusing the building revolutionary tension. Had he taken such steps at the outset of his reign, he might have been successful. But now his concessions were perceived as a grudging response to irresistible pressure from the people, rather than the voluntary act of a reforming monarch. If the people could force the government to concede this much, many concluded, another push might bring the whole edifice crashing to the ground.

EXTRACT C

From Robert Service, A History of Modern Russia, page 22 (1998)

Nicholas would have made things easier for himself if he had allowed himself to be restrained constitutionally by the State Duma. Then the upper and middle classes, through their political parties, would have incurred the hostility that was aimed at the Emperor. Oppressive rule could have been removed at a stroke. The decadence and idiocy of Nicholas's court would have ceased to invite critical scrutiny; and by constitutionalising his position, he might even have saved his dynasty from destruction. As things stood, some kind of revolutionary clash was practically inevitable. Even the Octobrists were unsympathetic to their sovereign after his humiliation of Stolypin.

Economic developments to 1914: industrial and agricultural growth and change

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The industrial transformation of Russia

Sergei Witte (see page 20) believed that industrialisation was essential to curb revolutionary unrest. Consequently the drive for growth continued and, from 1892 to 1914, the Russian economy grew at a rate of eight per cent per annum. Industrial growth was largely state-managed:

- Interest rates were raised to encourage foreign loans.
- A new rouble, backed by the value of gold, was issued in 1897 to increase business confidence.
- Foreign capital was raised to fund the development of railways, electricity plants, mining and oilfields.
- Heavy industry was prioritised over lighter industry.

The extent of growth

By 1914, Russia had 62,000 kilometres of railway track, the second longest in the world.

- The Trans-Siberian railway was built to link European Russia with the Far East.
- Railway development stimulated heavy industries, reduced transport costs for manufacturers and provided government revenue.
- However, the cost of industrialisation was high and Russia became dependent on foreign investment, which increased nearly tenfold from 1880 to 1900.
- By 1914, Russia was the fifth-largest industrial power.

The table below shows the huge growth in heavy industry from 1880 to 1910:

	1880	1890	1900	1910
Coal	3.2	5.9	16.1	25.4
Pig iron	0.42	0.89	2.66	3.0
Crude oil	0.5	3.9	10.2	12.1

Production in millions of metric tons

The development of agriculture

While Russia industrialised at a rapid rate from the 1890s, agriculture remained small-scale and inefficient. Stolypin, Minister of the Interior in 1906, believed that a radical reform of agriculture was required to prevent further peasant unrest. He wanted to increase individual peasant ownership so as to create a class of profit-orientated farmers, or kulaks, who would improve agriculture and, above all, support the regime.

- The mir system and collective ownership of land by families was abolished in November 1906.
- As promised in 1905, redemption payments were abolished in January 1907 and peasants became free to leave their villages.
- Peasants could apply for permission to consolidate scattered strips into single farms.
- A new Peasant Land Bank was established to fund purchases.
- Government subsidies to encourage settlement in Siberia were increased.

Successes of the legislation

- Peasant ownership of land increased from 20 per cent in 1905 to nearly 50 per cent in 1915.
- Grain production rose annually and, by 1909, Russia was the world's leading cereal exporter.
- Some peasants, the kulaks, consolidated their land, often 'buying out' poorer peasants to create more efficient and profitable peasant farms.
- Around 3.5 million peasants moved from over-populated areas to Siberia, creating a major agricultural region there for dairy and cereals.
- Some peasants sold out and moved to the towns to find work, so boosting the industrial labour supply.

Failures of the legislation

- By 1914 only around ten per cent of land had been transferred from communal to private ownership.
- In 1914, 90 per cent of peasant holdings were still based on scattered strips. Peasants were still reluctant to change farming methods.
- The poorer peasants lost their land and many became migrants looking for seasonal farm work or factory employment.
- Siberia proved difficult terrain for those who relocated there.
- Stolypin's reforms did not address the key issue – the redistribution of land held by the nobility, who retained 50 per cent of the land – and land hunger remained.



Turning assertion into argument

a

Below is a sample A-level exam essay question and a series of assertions. Read the question and then add a justification to each of the assertions to turn it into a supported view, so creating an argument.

'Russian industry was transformed but agriculture changed little in the years from 1894 to 1914.' Assess the validity of this view.

Russian industry was transformed on the basis of an annual growth rate of eight per cent between 1894 and 1914.

The growth of the railways stimulated the growth of heavy industry.

Russia was industrialised with the aid of massive foreign investment.

Contrary to the view expressed in the question, Russian agriculture did change, especially as a result of Stolypin's reforms.

However, by 1914, nearly 90 per cent of peasant land was still held in communal ownership and based on traditional strips.



Develop the detail

a

Below is a sample essay question and a paragraph written in answer to the question. The paragraph contains a limited amount of detail. Annotate the paragraph to add additional detail to it.

'Between 1894 and 1914, Russia became an economically strong and developed economy.' Explain why you agree or disagree with this view.

Between 1894 and 1914, Russia experienced massive industrial growth. By 1914, it had a huge railway network and had vastly increased its production of coal, iron and oil. Furthermore, agriculture became more efficient and profitable so that, by 1914, Russia had become the world's leading exporter of cereals. This shows that Russia became an economically strong and developed economy.