

# Russia before the 1905 Revolution

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## Life of the peasants

- There are more than 80% of peasants

(a) Describe the way of life for Russian peasants in the early twentieth century.

- Life was generally hard for the peasants. Their main diet was fish and grain-made products, while the meat was rare. Their food supply was heavily dependent on the quality of harvests, and most families always could only produce just the amount of food they families might consume. They faced the serious problem of lacking land, many of the peasants got into crushing debt as they could not pay back the loans generated from the government to buy lands. More and more peasants were competing for hardly available lands as time elapsed. (4)

## Economic conditions

Before 1861, peasants were called **serfs** before

- owned by their master
- serfs need to execute
  1. **Feudal Dues:** worked for the masters voluntarily for 1/3 amount of time in a week
  1. **Rent:** gave rent to the masters to use their land

After 1861, serfs were freed

- The **strip system** was carried out
  - 条块制
- now they need to pay
  1. **Mortgage repayment:** to buy the land from the government
  2. **Land tax:** tax to the government
  3. **Grain tax:** tax in exchange of grain
  4. **Excise tax:** indirect tax
  5. somewhat **fees for mir:** for organization

These put a great economic burden on the peasants

## Agricultural conditions

### Backward agricultural techniques

- even *wooden plows* were used
- they can only produce the amount of food sufficient for only sustaining the families
  - and even some may not

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What political opposition to the rule of the Tsar existed in Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century? (4)

- Social revolutionaries existed in Russia then, which aimed to overthrow the power of the Tsar and to give all the land to peasants to farm collectively. In addition, there were also social democrats aimed to

create socialist state, who followed the teachings of Karl Marx. One of the most famous social democrats included Lenin and Trotsky. Finally, the liberals also emerged that promoted civil rights and free elections, and wanted Tsar to become a constitutional monarch. (4)

## Populists - social revolutionaries

- thought that they represent the Russian people
  - including peasants and workers
- promoted **Russian commune**
  - regarded as a superior way of social organization
  - *give all the land to peasants to farm collectively*
- opposed by **terrorism**
- **Right SRs** and **Left SRs**
  - Left - most ideologically inline with the bolsheviks

## Social Democrats

	<b>Bolsheviks</b>	<b>Mensheviks</b>
<b>Aim</b>	overthrowing Tsarists	overthrowing Tsarists
<b>Way of organizing</b>	professional, disciplined, strong-skilled revolutionaries -- large party be infiltrated by the spies	a mass organization
<b>Members</b>	of middle-class intelligentsia	every worker can join
<b>Leadership</b>	proletariat	should cooperate with the bourgeoisie

## Liberals

- aimed
  1. free elections and a parliament to run the country
  2. the Tsar to be a constitutional monarch
  3. civil rights
- supposed by
  - **the middle** and **educated** class
  - some of the **gentry**

## Tsar Nicholas II

- The last Tsar
- **Medieval** style of ruling
  - absolute monarchy (not constitutional)

## Family

### 1. Wife - Alexandra

- a **German**
- asks Nicholas to be cruel and harsh on the peasants
- tells Nicholas to spend more time on the family stuff
- loves Alexandra much

### 2. Children

- Four girls
- One boy -> Hemophilia

### 3. Dad - Alexander III

- very reactionary

## Three Killers of Stardom

### 1. Autocracy

- Absolute monarchs

### 2. Orthodoxy

- *Orthodox church*
  - completely controlled by the Tsar, not the Poles

### 3. Nationalism

- *Russification* -> makes others to be Russians!

## Russification

### Education

- Education only for elites
- No **compulsory education**
- Native language forbidden

### Pogram

- organized violence against the Jews by the government
- Propaganda
  - *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*

## Remote Areas

- Government infrastructure is not well developed
- *Trans-Siberian Railroad*
  - from St. Petersburg to Vladivostok
  - **Sergei Witte**
    1. control the country

2. supply

## Life of workers

1. long working hours - even up to 14 hours a day
2. low wage - 1 rubble per day
3. terrible working conditions
  - firm owners wouldn't need to be responsible for the workers (if they are injured)
  - a family lives inside a bed, with beds connected, no privacy
4. no trade unions
5. also tax
  - when the financial situation is unfavorable

## Russo-Japanese War

### 1. Defeats

- January 1905, Port Arthur (旅顺港)
- March 1905, Mukden (凤天, 今沈阳)
- May 1905, Tsushima Strait

-> made the Russians feel humiliating

### 2. Economic & Social Chaos

- Peasants were conscripted to fight the war -> less food was available
- Many industrial resources are utilized, factories that produced dairy products then closed -> unemployment

## Bloody Sunday

Father Gapon - 双面间谍

- due to the miserable life of the Russian people
- petitions
- marchers were fired by cavalry and appr. 200 had been killed (unarmed petitions)
- "little father" 身败名裂 although Nicholas II was not in St. Petersburg

## --- Causes of the 1905 Revolution ---

Despite Bloody Sunday, the misery of the peasants also contributed to the outbreak of the 1905 revolution. Life was generally hard for the peasants before 1905 even after they had been freed from serfs in 1861. The peasant's food mainly relied on harvest, and most of them could merely produce enough food for their family, let alone sell extra grain for an income. Most importantly, peasants pay a huge debt to the government to buy lands, and the inability to make an adequate income made them unable to pay back such a large amount of mortgage. Simultaneously, they also had to pay heavy taxes, which even worsen their economic situation, like adding an insult to injury. Hence, the peasants were living a hard yet poor life, which might push them towards uprisings aiming for a better life when the government changed.

In addition, terrible life for the workers also caused the 1905 revolution. Under the Tsar's control, workers had to work for long hours (even up to 14 hours) a day, but only received incredibly low wages. They also endured awful working conditions, as many of them always lived in barracks near the factories. They slept and rested in minute rooms with multiple other people and therefore no privacy there was. Therefore, same as the peasants, the workers may have a wish for a better life, a better working conditions, as they saw no future of a good life under the Tsar's system and thus want to overthrow it and support a new government.

Nevertheless, the Russo-Japanese war also led to the 1905 revolution due to its humiliating effects. After Russia's rejection of its proposals for the settlements of Korea, Japan launched a hostile attack on Russia starting from the Arthur port. This was a tremendous humiliation for the Russians - the honorable Russians were defeated totally on Port Arthur on January 1905, on Mukden in March, and on Tsushima Strait in May. Such failures in the Russo-Japanese war highlighted the incompetence of the Tsar's government in Russia, which acted as a real-time impetus for the public to arise for a better government that would not make the same failures happen ever again.

Further, the poor economic & social chaos brought by the Russo-Japanese war was also a factor leading to the 1905 revolution. Peasants were conscripted to fight the war against Japan, leading to less food produced and thus less food available to the public. In addition, many industrial resources were utilized by the government to produce goods for military usage, and hence many factories that produced other products, such as daily necessities, would close due to a lack of resources. Such a situation made the public's life quite hard, adding to their resentment towards the government and thus might have the idea to overthrow it, wishing for a brighter future in society.

To begin with, Bloody Sunday did cause the 1905 revolution because of the huge amount of unjust deaths. On 22 January 1905, the marchers, who mainly consisted of workers, marched in front of the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg to beg for better working and living conditions and etc. However, this induced panic in the secret police which fired the marchers and created approximately 200 deaths. This might trigger resentment between the public and the government because even if the marchers asked for better conditions in such a mild way, violence was also imposed on them and rejected in such a peaceful way. Hence, they might arise following the belief that only a larger and more violent movement can make real changes.

Moreover, Bloody Sunday also made the public lose faith in the government, or more specifically, the Tsar. Although Nicholas II wasn't really in St. Petersburg during the Bloody Sunday event, his traditional image of the "little father" was damaged. People might not respect the Tsar till then, and had no confidence in him that he would make the country a better place. Hence, they might arise into a revolution to overthrow the Tsar's rule and embrace a new system.

Marxists - class struggle, resources shared between everyone, capitalism will beat feudalism & people's will - to kill Alexander the II

## --- Causes of failure of the 1905 Revolution ---

The first reason why the 1905 revolution failed was the concessions made by the Tsar to the Russian people. Instead of using a military that may cause massive bloodshed, the Tsar gave in and issued the October Manifesto, which promised to give civil rights to the public, establish a Duma elected by the people, and allow uncensored newspapers and forms of political parties. The Manifesto made the liberals and the middle class think that they were beginning to have a democratic government, and therefore they stopped protests. This triggered the revolution to fail as without the financial aid from these middle-class people to purchase goods and materials, the front-line revolutionists might not have had enough foundation to fight against the government by themselves. Hence, the Tsar's concessions contributed to the failure of the 1905 revolution.

In addition, concessions made by the Tsar also led to the failure of the 1905 revolution due to the Tsar's policy on the peasants. In November 1905, the Tsar announced that the mortgage payments of the peasants were to be progressively reduced and then abolished altogether. This policy immediately dropped the number of land-seizures by the peasants, which reduced the lawlessness in the countryside. Hence, without the pressure on land loans, it was a weight off the peasant's minds, as a decrease in loans symbolized an increase in their living conditions - they didn't have to pay the extra outcome of the harvest to the government, but instead could sell them and make money to increase their house standards. Therefore, being pacified, the peasants would stop rebel the government, which meant a great loss in the number of the revolutionists and thus stimulated the failure of the revolution.

However, the Russian armed force also contributed to the failure of the 1905 revolution due to the Portsmouth Treaty. In September 1905, Russia signed a peace treaty with the Japanese in the USA, and hence thousands of troops were now free to go back to Russia. By December, with all the troops back in Russia, the Tsar had enough military power to close down the St. Petersburg Soviet and crush an armed uprising in Moscow. He also sent troops to take revenge on some disobedient workers and peasants. By doing so, the Tsar was strong enough to take back control of Russia through violence, and due to the undoubted fact that the uprising peasants and workers weren't competent enough to fight against the trained and armed soldiers, the 1905 revolution would quickly come to an end.

Moreover, the armed force led to the failure of the revolution thanks to the good treatment of the army from the Tsar. At the beginning of the revolution, some soldiers were reluctant to attack the peasants as they used to be peasants as well. The Prince Potemkin also occurred in June 1905 in which the crew attacked the officers and took over the control of the ship under the consent of the other ships in the squadron as they were treated inhumanly. However, in order to fight against the rebellion, the Tsar had to promise the army to give them better pay and conditions for the sake of increasing their loyalty. This did advance the loyalty of the soldiers, which made them cooperate in launching the attacks on the rebellions. Hence, the untrained peasants and workers were incomparable to the loyal troops, which made them fail in the revolution.

The diversity in the aims of the revolutionary groups also led to the revolution into a failure. While the peasants wanted a lower economic burden, the workers demanded for increasing wages and conditions, as well as 8-hour working days. Simultaneously, the middle-class and the liberals aimed to make Russia into a constitutional monarch, a more democratic country. Hence, although revolutionists consisted of various groups of people, they didn't combine to form a united opposition, which greatly lowered their capability in rebellion. The Tsar could tackle each group one by one by pushing forward pacifying policies, and once a group had been satisfied with its aims, they might rather choose to quit the revolution, leaving less force to the revolutionary group which would finally be solved by the government, by the Tsar.

The minor collaborations between the diverse revolutionary groups made the 1905 revolution fail as well. The peasant uprising through riots in the countryside - they seized the land and burned the landowner's houses. At the same time, the revolutionists acted in a relatively mild way, they carried out speeches trying to advocate for more people to join them. The worker also rebelled by carrying out strikes and setting up Soviets in which representatives from factories met to coordinate the strike actions. However, although these actions seemed to pose serious threats to the Russian government, the lack of inter-cooperation between the revolutionary groups critically decreased their bargaining strength as a whole. For example, despite the fact that the workers established St. Petersburg Soviet, only the workers themselves were enrolled in the group. Considering the fact that workers only occupied 4% of the total population in Russia, they could barely make any extraordinary damage to the government. In addition, the peasant who accounted for 84% of the population did carry out riots, but their actions were unorganized and scattered around the country, with no one to coordinate and make no serious threats to the central government.