

How is the outbreak of the 1905 revolution best explained? essay sample

[History](#), [Revolution](#)



There are many ways to explain the outbreak of the 1905 revolution, as many factors contributed towards it. The most important and significant factor was the different attitudes towards the government at the time. Attitudes varied from moderate to ones of a violent and extreme nature. Without the range of varying attitudes towards the tsarist system, there would have been no opposition facing the state. The 1905 revolution was very significant. Opposition towards the tsarist system dated back decades; however people in Russia were getting noticeably more and more dissatisfied with their lives and the way their country was run, as Russia started to modernise. The 1905 revolution was the first time that tsar faced a direct challenge from all three major classes, the peasants, the proletariat and the intelligentsia and bourgeois, at once. The peasants made up the bulk of Russia's population, of whom Tsar Nicholas II had little understanding of. The peasants were severely poor and in debt from the mortgages they were forced to take out after their emancipation in 1861.

One of the peasant's main motives behind their involvement in the 1905 revolution was fear that the government would repossess their homes, as they had fallen behind on their mortgage repayments during economic decline. The peasants wanted reform, and were fed up with paying fees to their landlords etc. These circumstances shaped the majority's opinions of the tsar and his government, who believed that the tsar was incompetent. However, these views had been held for a long time. The peasants became more dissatisfied with the state as policies were set up in order to speed up Russia's modernisation. Sergei Witte's industrialisation policies played a big role in increasing opposition towards the government, mainly within the

peasants and the proletariat. Witte's intentions were to raise the capital needed to fund industry and the building of a trans-Siberian railway, in order to catch up with Western countries. He did this through persuading foreigners to invest in Russia and loan him money, but more importantly through increasing taxes and decreasing wages of the already under-paid lower classes.

This had a huge impact on the lower classes which led to more social unrest, particularly within the proletariat, who were already extremely frustrated with the Russian authorities. The proletariat were the urban, industrial workers in Russia and were affected massively by Witte's policies. The proletarians were living in appalling conditions in Russian towns, with many of them living in workhouse-kind-of buildings that were dirty and disease ridden. On top of this, they were not paid well and were made to work extremely long hours. The proletariat sought reform and more political power, and were fed up with the government's oppressive policies which denied the basic freedoms, such as freedom speech and a free press. A lot of the proletariat were revolutionaries, as Revolutionary groups such as the Social Revolutionaries, who often agitated among the workers, in order to gain more followers who wanted to see the tsarist system overthrown. They too, saw the tsar as incompetent and weak. Another group involved with the 1905 revolution was the intelligentsia and the bourgeois. This was the middle class of 1900s Russia, and consisted of reformists in professions such as doctors and lawyers.

They were generally quite liberal in their attitudes towards the government, who wanted a constitutional monarchy to be established, as opposed to completely abolishing the tsar and his government. A constitutional monarchy would still see Nicholas II in power, but would restrict his powers, as a group of elected representatives would have the power to oppose his ideas. They thought this would give them more power in the way the country was run, which is what their intentions were for revolting in 1905. The most extreme views were held by the Revolutionaries. The two main revolutionary parties in 1905 were the Social Revolutionaries and the Social Democrats. They shared the same intentions, views and ultimate goal, while believing in different ways to achieve it, which was that progression could only take place if the tsarist system was violently overthrown. However, these opposing attitudes were all very much singular and didn't really interlink, events such as the Russo-Japanese war and Bloody Sunday were crucial in unifying the classes together into a revolution. Without these, there may have been a revolution at some point, but certainly not in 1905.

The Russo-Japanese war of 1904-1905, was seen before-hand as an easy victory against a 'backward nation'. The government intended to avert attention from its economic and social difficulties and raise the Russian population's morale and increase levels of patriotism within Russia. In fact, the war did quite the opposite, as Russia was defeated in a matter of hours at the battle of Tsushima, which was a huge blow to Russia's confidence and caused nationwide embarrassment. People blamed the defeat on the tsar and his incompetence to rule Russia. The war was significant as it sped up

the opposition towards the tsarist system and unified them in a sense, as the humiliation was a shared feeling across all the classes, as opposed to before where the opposition between social classes was very much exclusive, as they were both angered by different problems.

This was the first time they were all dissatisfied with the government for the same reason, but is not the most important reason for the outbreak of the 1905 revolution, as the opposing views towards the state within the classes were needed first, for there to even be an event that unified them. Now that the social classes were united with they needed a major event to occur, that would justify a revolution and also spark outrage amongst Russia. This event was Bloody Sunday. Bloody Sunday was a direct result of attitudes towards the government. Bloody Sunday was intended to be a peaceful march, led by Father Gapon, where a petition from the workers was to be handed to tsar, pleading with him to use his authority to relieve them of their awful conditions, as they were getting desperate. The sudden arrival of huge crowds sparked panic within the police, who fired at the crowds on the tsar's orders.

Two hundred people were killed and many were injured. The incident was viewed as a deliberate massacre of the innocent by the tsar's opposition and severely damaged the tsar's already deteriorating reputation. Bloody Sunday resulted in nationwide disorder in Russia and was the outright cause of the 1905 revolution. Although Bloody Sunday was the immediate cause of the 1905 revolution, it's not the most important reason for the revolution.

Arguably, the challenging of the tsarist system was inevitably going to

happen, Bloody Sunday or not, as the attitudes of the Russian people were nearing breaking point from the humiliating defeat of Russian in the war against Japan, which is the most important reason for the outbreak of the 1905 revolution, as it effectively unified the classes in opposition.