

The problems and fall of the tsarist regime in russia c 1900-1917

Politics



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Some of the main causes took a long time to develop into revolution, as peasants, industrial workers and the general public were very patient and downtrodden. The views of these groups all interlocked with each other. These include long and short term causes including the spark which signals when people had had enough.

Conditions for the poor had worsened since 1891 when famine swept through the southern region of Russia and forced millions of peasants to leave their families and village communities to search for work in towns. Most of the industrial workers who worked in the factories were peasants and women. Women filled the textile factories in St Petersburg and Moscow, which was the poorest paying industry in Russia.

The industrial workers were angry at the poor living and working conditions. Living space was at a premium so workers had to occupy accommodation provided by the employers. There were ten to a room and a single sheet separated bedrooms. There was no privacy and disease easily spread. Also there were no regulations on safety or hours of work, so some people died or were badly injured and had to work 12-15 hours per day. In addition they received extremely poor wages.

The peasants had to pay very high taxes on grain and also on items such as alcohol and salt. The peasant farmers not working in the factories suffered two very poor harvests and it came to a point when they could barely survive. This proved too much for the peasants and they had enough.

Russia's population in 1900 was about 120 million; at least eighty percent were peasants, so they formed a big unhappy majority. Some peasants

wanted land to be divided out fairly and taken off the middle class. The Social Revolutionary party also agreed with the peasants and wanted them to start a Revolution.

The middle class shared the view that there needed to be a change but unlike the other groups in Russia they didn't feel the need to start a revolution. The middle class who came from well-educated backgrounds wanted the Tsar to share his power, so the Russian people could benefit from the freedom and rights that people in Britain enjoy.

Due to working and living conditions worsening and wages remaining low, there was less call for trade and jobs and so many were left without income. This included widespread famine and hunger, which had dramatically increased.

Agriculture was going downhill and Russia wanted to change its fortunes to develop its industry and remain an important military power. As Russia felt the need to improve her industry she had to borrow money from other countries, though the main source of money came from the people of Russia. Wages were kept low so money could be spent on industry' and after a few years people would be better off. Industry grew rapidly at first due to the success in iron, steel and the railways. In 1902 depression hit Russia and there was an industrial slump and thousands of people lost their jobs. Demonstrations and strikes were a regular occurrence and many peasants were starving. There were many violent acts and landlord's houses were even burned down.

To make matters worse there was a war with Japan. The Tsar Nicolas the 2nd thought it would be a good idea to have a war because after a victory people would stop criticizing the government. But Japan ended as easy winners and made conditions worse in Russia. Prices rose and the war caused shortage of food. The Tsar was humiliated as Japan defeated Russia with ease even though Russia was such a big country in comparison to the small size of Japan.

This brought more protests about the ineffectiveness of the Tsar and his government.

There were very many causes but the spark of the revolution was " Bloody Sunday". Conditions in St Petersburg were appalling and tension was at an all time high. As trade unions were banned and strikes illegal the Russian public decided to turn to a march. There were a crowd of 200, 000 protesters and they marched to the Winter Palace to give a petition to the Tsar. The Tsar was not there and the Cossacks charged and the soldiers opened fire. It was a big day as the Russian public had lost respect for the Tsar.

All these causes contributed towards the Revolution. However, none is important enough to cause a revolution by itself. When these causes were combined together it only took one small short term event to provoke the people of Russia to revolt.