How important was social suffering in causing the 1905 Revolution?

#### Introduction

Discontent rife in Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century...... Peasant riots widespread.......... Great distress because of effects of industrialisation......... Violent strikes..........cities at times becoming uncontrollable. Growing unrest among the national minorities....... Following Russia's defeat in the war against Japan and the Bloody Sunday massacre a violent revolution erupted in Russia.

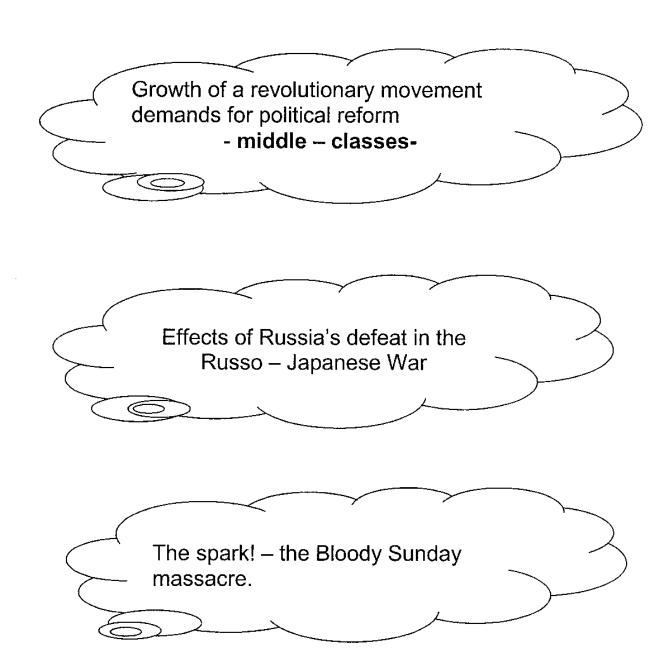
### **Development**

Grievances of the peasants –
aftermath of emancipation and effects
of industrialisation

Grievances of the industrial workers

– effects of industrialisation

Unrest among the national minorities – brutal repression....policy of Russification



# Conclusion

#### **Grievances of the Peasants.**

Although they had been given their freedom in 1861, the peasants had to pay for it and for any land they received as a result. These redemption payments were to be a source of continued anger. Thus, the peasants remained impoverished, working plots of land that were too small to support a family. They continued to work as labourers for the aristocracy in order to make ends meet. Control over the peasantry was exercised through the "mir" or village commune, an organisation of village elders that decided which crops should be grown and controlled movement from the village. Rural life had remained largely unchanged since the middle of the nineteenth century but its stability could easily be disrupted by harvest failures. Tension and peasant unrest were never far from the surface.

The peasants were dissatisfied with the Emancipation settlement: they ended up with less land than they had cultivated before; they did not understand why they had to pay for it; many felt that the Tsar should have just given it to them. It was also not good value since the nobles kept much of the best land and the price tended to be above market-value. This was the cause of considerable resentment. Moreover, the binding of the peasants to the commune was not dissimilar to the old practice of their being tied to the nobility; thus peasant allotments were not their private property-they could be periodically reallocated by the village assembly.

## The Effects of Industrialisation

#### **Effect on the Peasants**

Witte and the Tsar believed that eventually the benefits of industrialisation would be felt by the Russian people and would be reflected in a higher standard of living for everybody. In the short term though, while capital was being built up, both the peasants and the rapidly growing industrial working class would be required to work hard for low wages and to pay high taxes. As most of these people lived very hard impoverished lives in any case, the extra demands imposed on them were liable to drive them to breaking point. At times both the peasants and the town workers faced intolerable pressures because of rapid industrialisation.

Every year under Witte, Russia exported more than it imported so that enough money could be accumulated to pay for the foreign loans which were so essential to the programme of industrialisation. One key commodity which was exported in vast amounts was grain-and this occurred in a country which had so recently experienced a horrible famine and which lived in permanent fear of another one. There were massive grain exports which left from Odessa on the Black Sea. In 1897 famine returned, and stayed until 1899. Yet still the exports of grain continued.

Bad harvests in 1900 and 1902 pushed the peasants into starvation. They had already been squeezed by Witte's policies and now they were at breaking point. From 1902 to 1904, peasant uprisings erupted sporadically and there was widespread violence in which the homes of landowners were looted and burnt. The government's only response to this was to use force to suppress the disturbances.

#### Effect on the Industrial workers

Russia's big cities especially St. Petersburg and Moscow, were experiencing great distress because of the effects of industrialisation. With low wages, slum housing, rigid factory discipline and few effective safety precautions in industry, the workers understandably were seeking something better. But striking was illegal. A few early attempted strikes failed to achieve anything of note, partly because the workers were frightened of being dismissed and deprived of their means of livelihood.

As the industrialisation programme developed, however, the influence of the revolutionaries came to be felt more and more. They educated the workers on how to organise themselves and how to arrange strikes more effectively. In 1896 and 1897 Lenin and the Bolsheviks organised strikes of the St. Petersburg textile workers and won a maximum working day of eleven and a half hours. Violent strikes also occurred in 1902 and 1903.

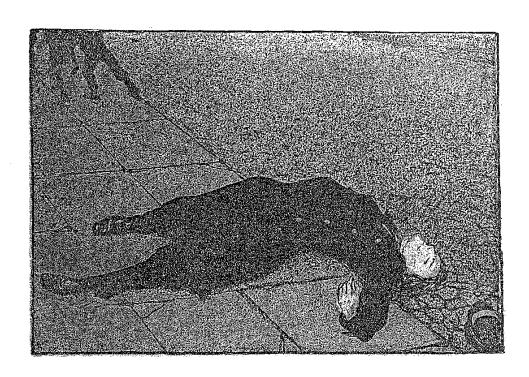
The response of the Tsar's government was predictable. As the number of strikes grew, Witte recruited more men into the police in an attempt to keep the strikers in check. He did not hesitate to call in the army to suppress strikers, and the number of times when this desperate measure proved necessary increased dramatically. Army units were used to combat strikers fifty times in 1899, but over 500 times in 1902. The situation seemed at times to be getting beyond control.

## Russification

- To govern and control the national minorities the Tsar imposed the policy of russification. This policy meant enforcing the ways of life of the Great Russians on the minorities. Special privileges were given to those who followed the Russian Orthodox faith and those who spoke Russian. Schools which taught minority languages were closed. Opponents of Russian rule were arrested and exiled by the Okhrana. Worst were the pogroms. Mobs of Russians were encouraged by the government to attack Jews or other minority people and to destroy their homes and businesses while the police made no effort to interfere.
  - By 1881 the Russian empire could claim to have under its jurisdiction some two hundred different nationalities. By the time of Alexander 111's accession, the concept of Russification was becoming very popular in the minds of the Tsar's advisers. The aim of this policy was to make all the Tsar's subjects see themselves as being primarily Russian. This would serve to unify the empire. Clearly, a population which was Russian Orthodox in outlook, spoke the Russian language, and was educated in Russian ways would be much more accessible to Tsarist control than a variety of ethnic groups who regarded Russia as an alien power.
  - The Russian Empire was made up of a bewildering mixture of racial, linguistic and religious groups who varied enormously in levels of civilization, cultural traditions and ways of life. The central government tried to destroy the customs of the minorities by a process of "russification"; forbidding the use of local languages in schools and attacking religious customs. These measures aroused resentment, and sometimes rebellion, in the subject peoples who wished to preserve their national characteristics. Such outbursts by the Poles were put down by military force, while the Jews were herded into certain provinces known as the Pale of Settlement.

#### The Growth of a Revolutionary Movement

By the early 1900s, a number of groups had emerged who opposed the Tsar's autocratic system of government. The chief underground opposition to the autocracy came from the Socialist Revolutionary Party. Formed in 1901, the Socialist Revolutionaries were working for a peasant rising and the common ownership of all land. They believed in the need for terrorism as well as propaganda in the struggle against the autocracy. Russian Marxists rejected the use of terror and chose to concentrate on industrial agitation to undermine the existing order. Not all the Tsar's opponents were violent revolutionaries. Many law-abiding Russians, particularly those who owned property, were liberals. Prominent in the zemstvos, they supported the Tsar but they wanted him to share his power. They wanted a democratic system of government, like the one in Britain where an elected parliament shared power with the monarch.



## **The Growth of Opposition**

The chief underground opposition to the autocracy came from the Socialist-Revolutionary party, which was the most influential of the Revolutionary parties during Nicholas 11's reign. It was a development of the earlier Populist movement, working for a peasant rising and the common ownership of all land, and believing in the need for terrorism as well as propaganda in the struggle against the autocracy. It began as a movement among university students, and was organised as a secret political party about 1900.



Among intellectuals in the larger cities, and among better-educated workmen in the factories, however, Marxist groups, also underground, were gaining in strength. In 1894 a few representatives of these groups met at Minsk to form the Russian Social Democratic party. Among the leaders of the new party was Lenin, the son of a school inspector. He had been sentenced in 1895 to three years' exile in Siberia for his activities as a member of a Marxist group in St Petersburg. Another prominent member of the party was Leon Trotsky, a Ukrainian Jew.

The Russian police soon began to arrest the party's leaders. Lenin, Trotsky and others managed to get abroad, and continued their propaganda work, mainly in England. At a meeting of the party held in London in 1903, a split occurred between the more violently revolutionary Bolsheviks and the moderate Mensheviks. Through his pamphlets and his editing of the revolutionary newspaper Iskra (The Spark), published in England and smuggled into Russia, Lenin became the recognised leader of the Bolsheviks.

## The Russo - Japanese War

Plehve, the Tsar's Minister of the Interior, recommended "a small victorious war to stop the revolutionary tide" and encouraged Nicholas to expand the Empire in the Far East. This policy brought Russia up against the growing power of Japan and resulted in the Russo – Japanese War of 1904-5. It was an unnecessary war which ended in disaster for Russia. Japan seized Port Arthur and sank most of the Russian fleet. Defeat by Japan, a second-rate power, was a humiliation. By 1905 there was considerable public anger over the war. The situation was made worse by an economic slump that resulted in food shortages in the cities. The industrial workers were badly affected and strikes and unrest developed.

The war became a nightmare for the Tsarist autocracy. Instead of being a diversion from the problems in Russia, it added immeasurably to them. The war served to show the backwardness of Russia compared to Japan who had embarked on a programme of industrialisation and westernisation in the nineteenth century. The war had revealed the inefficiency, weakness and corruption of the Tsarist state. As news of the fall of Port Arthur and the humiliating defeats at Mukden and Tsushima leaked through to the Russian people, their despair quickly turned to anger. The situation was made worse by an economic slump that led to food shortages in the cities affecting the industrial workers. Once again resort was made to violence-workers went on strikes, revolutionaries assassinated the Minister of the Interior, V.K. Plehve in July 1904.

Far from making Nicholas popular, the war with Japan weakened his position. The war also made conditions for working people worse than before: food supplies to the cities broke down and factories closed as raw materials ran short. Workers found themselves out of work and out on the streets.

The war lowered the prestige of the government and caused an acute crisis. Frequent mutinies occurred in the army and navy after the defeat in Japan. The humiliating defeats unleashed the revolution of 1905 – unrest among every social class had reached the limit of endurance.

# -Bloody Sunday

<u>Father Georgi Gapon</u> - A complex character: he was an Orthodox priest, a police informer and revolutionary leader. He led the Assembly of Russian Factory Workers and organised the march on the Winter Palace, St Petersburg, on "Bloody Sunday".

"<u>Little Father</u>" – A traditional title used for the Tsar of Russia. The title implied that the Tsar had the duties of a father to look after the Russian people. The "Bloody Sunday" incident of 1905 was to shatter this view.

The event that was to spark a full-scale revolution was to become known as "Bloody Sunday". On 9th January 1905, Father Gapon led a march of workers to the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg to give the Tsar, the "Little Father" of the Russian people, a petition. Father Gapon, an Orthodox priest, was the leader of the Assembly of Russian Factory Workers, an organisation tolerated by the government because it had been infiltrated by the police. Father Gapon was, himself, a police informer. The march was attended by more than 150,000 people whose demands included higher wages. shorter working hours and free elections. Liberals joined the call for a constitution that would give political rights to the people and set up a parliament. The economic slump had resulted in a rise in unemployment at a time of food shortages and it was this combination that gave the march a high level of support in the city. When the marchers arrived at the gates of the Winter Palace the troops opened fire, killing over a hundred demonstrators.

"Bloody Sunday" had two immediate effects. First, it was believed that the Tsar had given the order to open fire. This was untrue but the incident destroyed the idea of the Tsar as the "Little Father" of the people and seriously weakened the loyalty of the common people. The second effect was to produce a wave of sympathy strikes and unrest grew.

#### **Bloody Sunday**

On 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1905 a vast crowd gathered in the wintry streets of St Petersburg before marching to the Winter Palace to hand over a petition to the Tsar. They were led by Father Georgy Gapon, a young priest who had formed a Union of Russian Factory Workers. The petition asked for an eight-hour working day; freedom of the Press, religion and assembly; a minimum wage of one rouble a day; equality before the law, and the calling of a constituent assembly. One hundred and thirty-five thousand people had signed the petition, which Gapon hoped to hand to the Tsar in person. Nicholas, however, had moved his family out of the palace and they were at that moment at Tsarskoe Selo, fifteen miles away........

The marchers set out. They sang hymns and carried portraits of the Tsar. As the crowd filed into the square before the palace, the police called upon them to stop and go home. The crowd came on: a trigger-happy officer lost his head and gave the order to fire. The sound of hymns gave way to the crack of bullets. Salvo after salvo was poured into the marchers as they broke for cover. Several thousand were wounded and almost one thousand dead were left lying in the snow.



Bloody Sunday, 1905. Father Gapon and his demonstrators met by troops