

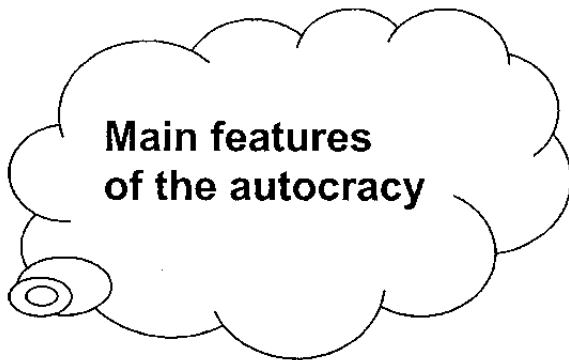
Why was there no significant challenge to the authority of the Tsar in the years up to 1905?

**Introduction**

Late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.....growing opposition to the autocracy. ....peasant riots..... strikes in towns.....nationalist uprisings.....a wave of assassinations etc. But until 1905 there was no significant challenge to the Tsar's authority. By wielding his autocratic powers, and with the support of powerful groups, he was able to suppress the opposition.

**Development**

(a)



- powers of the Tsar
- no Parliament or political parties
- censorship
- banning of trade unions, striking illegal.
- Russia was a brutal and oppressive police state

(b)



- Orthodox Church
- Army
- Okhrana

(c)

**Repressive Measures**

- laws and measures introduced to crush the opposition.

(d)

**Policy of Russification**

- how the opposition from the national minorities was crushed.

**Conclusion**

- Sum up the main points made in your essay and directly answer the question. Identify the main factor..... the army?

# The Autocracy

- Tsarist Russia was an autocracy. The Tsar was an autocrat, an absolute ruler, who had supreme power over his subjects. As far as the tsar was concerned, he had been appointed by God to lead and guide his people.

The tsar had an imperial council to advise him and a cabinet of ministers who ran the various government departments. But they were responsible to him alone, not to a parliament or to a prime minister. They reported directly to the tsar and took instructions from him.

Opposition was not tolerated. Political parties were illegal before 1905 and newspapers and books were censored. Trade Unions were banned and strikes were illegal. The government made use of an extensive secret police network, the Okhrana, to root out dissidents and people likely to cause trouble. Political critics who organised strikes and protests were often put in prison or sent to exile in Siberia. The large-scale protests, demonstrations and riots that often broke out in times of famine were suppressed by force. The much-feared Cossacks were used to deal with any trouble. Tsarist Russia was an oppressive and intolerant regime.



There was no parliament and there were no elections. All power came from the Tsar. He had a council of ministers to advise him. He chose them from the rich landowners. They held office at his pleasure and he could rid himself of them at any time he pleased. There was no such thing as free speech. Every published book, magazine or newspaper was censored and the censorship enforced by secret police and government officials, who had great power. All criticism was ruthlessly stamped out. Political criminals were usually exiled-that is, they were sent to distant places and not allowed to return for a long period of time.

The most terrible place of exile was Siberia, in the far north of Asiatic Russia. Here, political offenders were sent for years at a stretch. This did not always mean that they were shut up. They lived in small cabins in remote villages and were able to have books, and letters from home. Their 'prison walls' were the vast distances that shut them off from the outside world.

In Russia in 1881 it was still a criminal offence to oppose the tsar or his government. There was no parliament, and political parties were not officially tolerated. State censorship was imposed on the press and on published books. Although this did not prevent liberal ideas from seeping into Russia, it did mean that they could not be openly advocated. The result was that supporters of reform or change had to go underground. In the nineteenth century there had grown up in Russia a wide variety of secret societies dedicated to political reform or revolution. But these groups were frequently infiltrated by agents of the **Okhrana**, the tsar's secret police. As a result, raids arrests, imprisonment and general harassment were regular occurrences.

There were three official bodies through which the tsar exercised his authority: the Imperial Council-a group of honorary advisers directly responsible to the tsar; the Cabinet of Ministers-concerned with the running of the various government departments; and the Senate-concerned with supervising the operation of the law. These bodies were much less powerful than their titles suggest. They were appointed, not elected, and their role was wholly advisory or administrative. In no way did they restrict the power of the tsar, whose word was the final authority in all matters of state and law.

## **The Role of the Tsarist Army in Maintaining the Autocracy**

- The nobility were expected to control its own districts. If law and order broke down, the army was sent in. The army was a key to maintaining the Tsarist autocracy. The officers were taken from the nobility, while the ranks were forced conscripts of peasants. The army was used to put down internal disturbances as well as to fight against Russia's enemies.
- The Tsar controlled the armed forces. The army was loyal to the Tsar and had for centuries had been used to crush peasant revolts. The army was also increasingly called into suppress strikers. Army units were used to combat strikers 50 times in 1899 but over 500 in 1902.
- The military provided the coercive power that the tsarist system needed to maintain its power and position.
- If there were strikes, protests or riots, which often took place in time of famine, then soldiers, particularly the much-feared Cossacks, would be used to restore order. They stopped any demonstrations with great brutality.
- Throughout the nineteenth century the imperial Russian army maintained a strength of around one and a half million troops.
- Towards the end of the nineteenth century the army played an increasing role in the suppression of civilian protests.
- Many historians have depicted the army as a stalwart buttress of the tsarist regime.
- The Russian army was the largest military force in the world, and was utilized not only for fighting foreign wars but also for maintaining internal order and suppressing civilian disturbances which threatened the stability of the regime.

- The Russian army was regularly employed in quelling popular disorders.
- Between 1883 and 1903 the troops were called out nearly 1,500 times to suppress civilian protests. Their job was to provide more or less instant military assistance for the provincial governors or the police to deal with unrest. In affected areas they declared martial law, which gave the army the power to hold quick trials of arrested strikers and carry out an immediate death sentence.

## The Role of the Okhrana in Maintaining the Autocracy.

In Tsarist Russia opposition was not tolerated, and the okhrana, or secret police, dealt with anyone who criticised the government. The okhrana had spies and agents everywhere. Dissidents soon found themselves in jail or exiled to Siberia.

The okhrana arrested anyone even suspected on disloyalty to the Tsar. Those who suffered this fate might be kept in prison for years without trial, might be tortured, or sent to Siberia.

In the nineteenth century there had grown up in Russia a wide variety of secret societies dedicated to political reform or revolution. But these groups were frequently infiltrated by agents of the okhrana, the tsar's secret police. As a result, raids, arrests, imprisonment and general harassment were regular occurrences.

In Tsarist Russia there was no such thing as free speech. Every published book, magazine or newspaper was censored and the censorship was enforced by secret police who had great power. All criticism was ruthlessly stamped out.

The secret police, the okhrana, dealt with political opposition. It censored newspapers and books. It arrested opponents of the Tsar. Many critics of the autocracy were exiled to Siberia.

## The Okhrana

The job of making sure that the country remained loyal to the Tsar was given to the Minister of the Interior. He headed the secret police known as the Okhrana. It was the task of these men to seek out persons suspected of opposition to the Tsar. Their powers were very wide. There was no need to prove that a prisoner was plotting against the emperor; any suspect could be exiled to Siberia without any form of trial whatsoever. The Okhrana worked through secret agents who joined organizations, or enrolled as students at a university, to seek out the tiniest breath of criticism. Many of its arrests were quite unjust and thousands of innocent Russians were exiled because the Okhrana was unwilling to admit a mistake.

The Okhrana headquarters contained the "black room" where mail was opened and read before being sent on its way. It had the power to censor all printed books and papers and order the removal of anything of which it disapproved.

....."it was not until the late nineteenth century, with the arrival of telegraphs and telephones, that the machinery of the police state became really efficient. The Okhrana..... fought what can only be described as a secret war, using special powers outside the law, to stamp out revolutionaries. It had thousands of agents and informers, many of them posing as revolutionaries, who reported on conditions in the factories, the universities, the army and the institutions of the state itself. House porters filed daily reports to the police. Hundreds of bureaucrats were employed in a 'Black Office' to read people's intercepted mail..... No subject of the Tsar, regardless of his rank or class, could sleep securely in his bed in the knowledge that his house would not be subject to a search, or he himself to arrest."

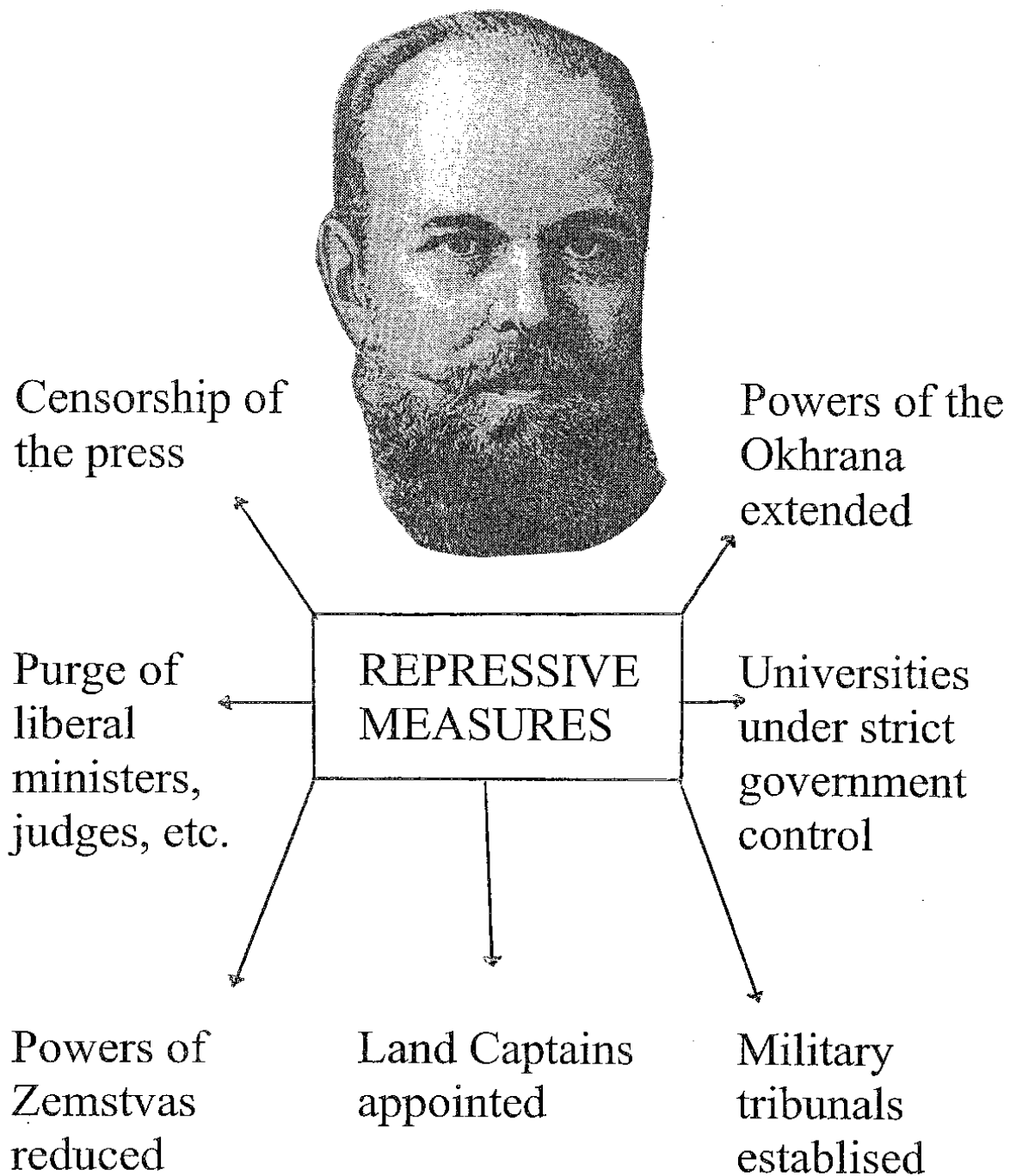


## **The Role of the Orthodox Church in Maintaining the Autocracy**

- The Russian Orthodox Church taught people to respect the Tsar and obey him. The Head of the Church was a government minister. Bishops took orders from him and passed on instructions to the priests. This meant that the Government could control what was said in Church.
- The Church in Russia helped to maintain the authority of the Tsar. The priests of the Russian Orthodox Church taught people to respect the autocracy and to be loyal to the Tsar. The head of the church was a government minister. Bishops took their orders from him and priests took their orders from the bishops. In this way the government had control over the minds and souls of Russian churchgoers.
- The Orthodox Church was closely linked to the Tsar and supported his way of ruling. It taught that the Tsar was the head of the country and the head of the Church – in other words, that he was God's chosen representative on earth.
- The tsars were fully supported in their claims to autocracy by one of the great pillars of the Russian system, the Orthodox Church. By the late nineteenth century it had become an essentially conservative body, opposed to political change and wholly committed to the preservation of the tsarist system in its reactionary form. As an institution it used its spiritual authority to teach the Russian people that it was their duty to be totally obedient to the tsar as God's anointed.
- The Russian Orthodox Church was effectively an arm of the state. Its governing body, the Holy Synod, was chosen by the tsar and his advisers rather than by the church itself. The church gave legitimacy to the tsarist system and provided a symbolic prop for the structure as a whole.

- In times of internal unrest, the church played its part in support of law and order through sermons and publications. The Church depicted the Tsar as the vicar of God and condemned disobedience to him as a sin. The tsars used Church laws to persecute their political opponents.
- In a vast peasant country like Russia, where most of the population was illiterate, the Church was an essential propaganda weapon and a means of social control. The priests were called upon to denounce from the pulpit all forms of dissent and opposition to the Tsar, and to inform the police about subversive elements within their parish. Through 41,000 parish schools the Orthodox clergy were also expected to teach the peasant children to show loyalty, deference and obedience to the Tsar and his officials.
- The Orthodox Church was not independent of the State, but controlled by the Holy Synod, chaired by a government minister. The Church was a strong pillar supporting the government, emphasizing to all in society the importance of obedience to authority, whether it was political or religious.

The Orthodox Church was a strong support for the Russian status quo. By preaching blind obedience to God, it encouraged blind obedience to social superiors and ultimately the Tsars



Zemstva - local government councils in the countryside, established in 1864. Their main duties were looking after local transport, crops, education, prisons and hospitals.

## Alexander 111's Repressive Measures

Alexander 111 was determined to wage war against all political opponents. He relished power as an autocratic ruler. Most of his ideas were borrowed from his close adviser, Konstantin Pobedonostsev. He was conservative, deeply suspicious of the West and resistant to change. An ardent champion of the reactionary Russian Orthodox Church, Pobedonostsev referred to the notion of parliamentary democracy and a constitution as the "greatest lie of our time". He believed that autocracy was the only possible basis of government for Russia and that Alexander 11's reforms were "criminal acts". Under the influence of Pobedonostsev, Alexander 111 introduced a number of reactionary measures.

### Source A

Universities were deprived of their independence and student organisations were suppressed. Dimitri Tolstoy was Alexander's Minister of the Interior, and was enthusiastic to support the policies of Alexander and Pobedonostsev. In 1889, "land captains" were appointed to oversee peasants, with powers to whip and prosecute farmers for minor misdemeanours. This measure earned Alexander 111 the bitter resentment of peasants who saw it as a return to serf law. In 1890, Pobedonostsev reduced the powers of the zemstva in favour of increased noble control of local affairs.

### Source B

Alexander 111 believed that his father's death demonstrated that reform and change of any kind were a mistake. Indeed, he attempted to reverse many of the reforms and began by purging ministers who were considered sympathetic to change. In 1881 he issued the Statute on Measures to Preserve National Order which was renewed every three years down to 1917; in effect, it turned Russia into a police state. A special police section, the Okhrana, was developed which concentrated on crushing political activity. Criminal cases were now conducted by military tribunal, censorship was much stricter and universities were brought under firmer control. In 1889 a new tier of provincial officials, Land Captains, was introduced with administrative and judicial powers over the peasantry. In 1890, the franchise to the zemstvo was restricted.

## 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 III'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.