

The Autocracy

5th Year Higher

The Autocracy	The Army	The Okhrana	The Orthodox Church
Alexander III Repressive Policies	Russification		

The Autocracy



The Autocracy

Some typical questions

- How important was **the Orthodox Church** in maintaining the authority of the Tsar up to 1905?
- How important was **the policy of Russification** in assisting the Tsarist state to maintain its authority in the years up to 1905?
- How significant was **military power** in maintaining the authority of the Tsarist state in the years before 1905?

The Autocracy

military power

the Orthodox Church

the policy of Russification

Challenges to the Tsar's Authority

“Throughout the three centuries of Romanov history, the regime experienced challenges to its authority in the form of *riot, mutiny* and *rebellion*”.

The Nature of the Tsarist Government.

Russia was an **autocracy**.



Power lay in the hands of the Emperor or **Tsar**, who believed he was chosen by and answerable only to God.

Powers of the Tsar

- **The Tsar was an autocrat – a monarch who does not have to share power**
- **He could make new laws, increase taxes, do exactly what he liked, without consulting anyone.**
- **There was no parliament to limit his power.**
- **The Tsar could sack any minister or adviser who disagreed with him.**

- **Political parties were not officially tolerated before 1905.**
- **Trade unions were banned and strikes were illegal**

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.

Censorship

- **All criticism was ruthlessly stamped out.**
- **There was no such thing as free speech.**
- **Every published book, magazine or newspaper was censored.**
- **The censorship was enforced by the secret police who had great power.**

The Tsar was head of the Russian Orthodox Church. It taught the people obedience to the Tsar.



The nobility made up a small percentage of the population. Nobles were loyal to the Tsar. They owned much of the land and controlled the peasants.



The Army

.....”the military was the monarchy’s
main instrument of repression”



Richard Pipes.

To suppress strikes in the towns and cities

To put down nationalist risings



Role of the Tsar's army

To crush peasants revolts

To defend the empire from attacks

In rebellious areas, the declared martial law, giving them the power to hold quick trials of arrested trouble-makers and to carry out an immediate death sentence.

The Army

- **The Tsar was the supreme commander of the armed forces.**
- **The imperial Russian army maintained a strength of around one and a half million troops.**
- **The army's role was to defend the empire from attacks from abroad and to defend the Tsar's authority from attacks from within.**

The Army

- **The army played an increasing role in the suppression of civilian protests.**
- **Between 1883 and 1903 the troops were called out nearly 1,500 times.**
- **In affected areas the army declared martial law, giving them the power to hold quick trials of arrested strikers and carry out an immediate death sentence.**

The Army

- **Towards the end of the nineteenth century the working class became increasingly more rebellious.**
- **The number of strikes reached a peak in 1899 affecting 97,000 workers.**
- **The Tsar's troops had to provide more or less instant military assistance for the provincial governors or the police to with unrest.**
- **The much-feared Cossacks were frequently used to suppress strikers.**

The Army

- **Sometimes, especially where there was famine, riots broke out.**
- **Workers in factories went on strike and peasants in the country attacked their landlords or the tax collectors.**
- **When this happened it was the Cossacks who came to the Tsar's rescue.**
- **Cossacks were fierce mounted soldiers armed with sabres who specialised in breaking up mobs by butchering anyone not able to run away fast enough.**

The Army

- **In 1903, one-third of the infantry and two-thirds of the cavalry stationed in European Russia were engaged in repressive action.**

The Role of the Tsar's Army

“The whole basis of the autocratic system was the ability of the autocrat, as a last resort, to set his army against those who challenged his authority”

J.N. Westwood



The Okhrana

- **The Tsar did not allow people to question his authority or challenge his power.**
- **To make sure that nobody opposed him, the Tsar had a secret police force, the Okhrana.**
- **The Okhrana censored all books and newspapers.**

The Okhrana

- **Okhrana agents spied on political groups and arrested people who criticised the government.**
- **The Okhrana arrested anyone even suspected of 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.**

The Okhrana

- **Secret revolutionary groups were frequently infiltrated by agents of the Okhrana.**
- **As a result, raids, arrests, imprisonment and general harassment were regular occurrences.**



The Okhrana

- **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.**



The Orthodox Church

- The Orthodox Church helped to maintain the authority of the Tsar.
- 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 priests taught people to respect the autocracy and to be loyal to the Tsar.



The Orthodox Church

- **The 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.**

The Orthodox Church

- **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 many Russian churchgoers.**

The Orthodox Church

- **The tsars used Church laws to prosecute all their political opponents.**
- **The priests were called upon to denounce from the pulpit all forms of dissent and opposition to the Tsar.**
- **The priests were also expected to inform the police about subversive elements with their parish.**

The Orthodox Church

- **Through 41,000 parish schools the Orthodox clergy were expected to teach the peasant children to show loyalty and obedience to the Tsar and his officials.**

The Orthodox Church

.....a section of the basic school catechism:

Question

How should we show our respect for the Tsar?

Answer

We should feel complete loyalty to the Tsar and be prepared to lay down our lives for him.

We should without objection fulfil his commands and be obedient to the authorities appointed by him.



Alexander 111's Repressive Policies.

- **Alexander 111 was determined to wage war against all political opponents.**
- **He began by purging ministers and judges who were considered sympathetic to change.**

Alexander 111's Repressive Measures

- **Criminal cases were now conducted by military tribunal.**
- **These military courts could confiscate property and arrest, imprison or fine people, remove elected officials and suppress publications.**

Repressive Measures.

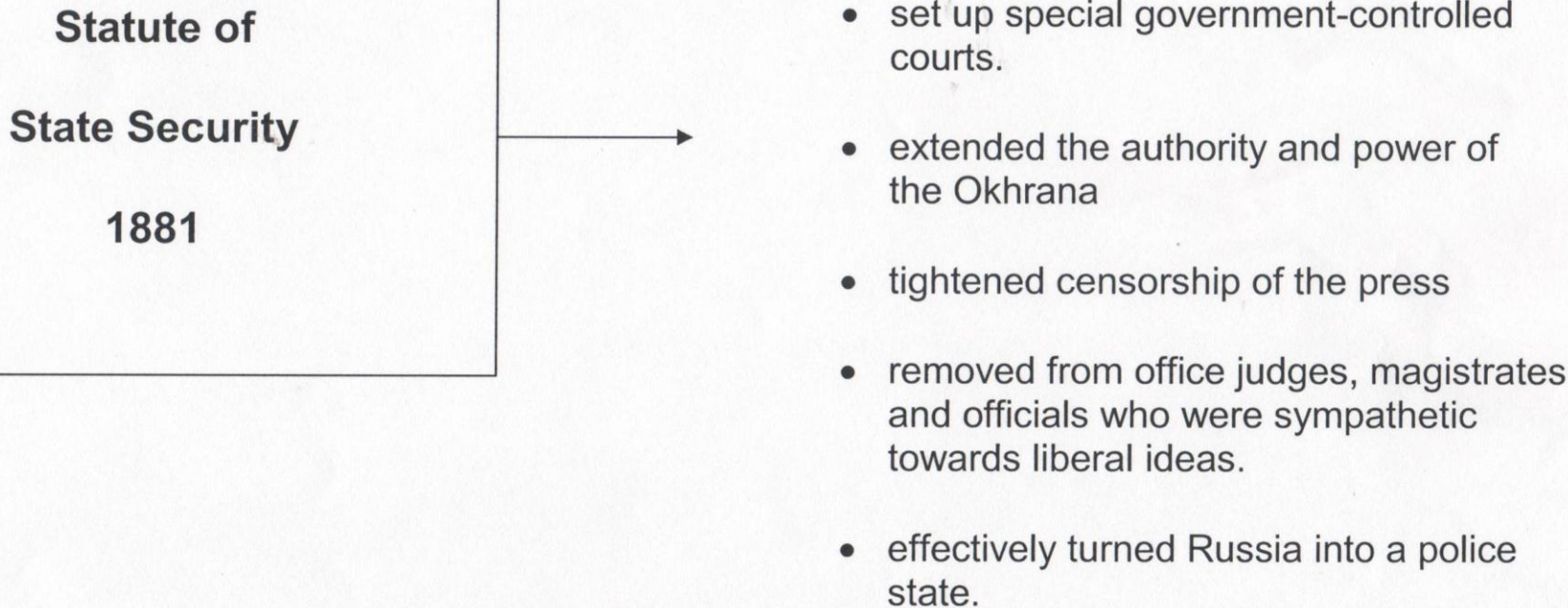
Alexander 111 was determined to re-enforce the authority of the tsar and stamp out political opponents who posed a challenge.

During his reign a number of reactionary measures were introduced which turned Russia into a police state.

- **The Statute of State security, 1881**
- **The University Statute, 1887.**
- **Land captains were appointed to oversee peasants.... 1889**
- **The Zemstva Act, 1890**

Alexander 111's Repressive Laws

**Statute of
State Security
1881**



- greatly increased government powers
- set up special government-controlled courts.
- extended the authority and power of the Okhrana
- tightened censorship of the press
- removed from office judges, magistrates and officials who were sympathetic towards liberal ideas.
- effectively turned Russia into a police state.

Alexander 111's Repressive Laws

The University Statute

1887



- brought the universities under strict government control.
- deprived universities of their independence
- suppressed student organisations

The Zemstva Act

1890



- decreased the independence of the local councils
- empowered government officials to interfere in their decision-making
- increased noble control of local affairs

Alexander 111's Repressive Laws

Land Captains

- To bring the peasants back under the control of the autocracy, land captains were appointed in 1889.
- Land captains held considerable authority over peasant villages.
- The 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.



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.**

Russification.

- The aim of the policy of russification was to make all the Tsar's subjects see themselves as being primarily Russian.
- This would serve to unify the empire.

- **The policy of Russification forced non-Russians to use the Russian language instead of their own, wear Russian-style clothes and adopt Russian customs.**
- **Russian officials were brought in to run the government of non-Russian areas of the Empire.**
- **The Russian language had to be used in schools, in law courts and in local government.**

- **Opponents of Russian rule were arrested and exiled by the okhrana**
- **Worst still were the pogroms.**
- **Mobs of Russians were encouraged by the government to attack Jews while the police made no effort to interfere.**

- **The national minorities saw russification as a fundamental attack on their way of life.**
- **During the nineteenth century there were a number of uprisings and protests from national groups seeking more self-government in their parts of the empire.**
- **Such outbursts of violent protest were put down by military force**

