

Summer Bridging work: The making of modern Russia, 1855-1991

This is a very popular topic, and there is a wealth of material out there. The following is what I have used and would recommend; if you find other useful and interesting resources please tell me.

For a good overview of the tsarist period, 1855-1917:

- 'The Romanovs' by Simon Sebag Montefiore - p. 385 onwards this is a great introduction to these very human rulers, their personalities, mistakes and misfortunes.
- 'Russia, land of the tsars' :
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rXPP1j1yahg&list=PL658EE0F2CE09D44E&index=16>

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This is good as a very broad summary of the tsars - each one is only about 10 mins long. Start at episode 16, with Nicholas I, as it ends with our first tsar - Alexander II.

A good textbook: 'Russia, 1855-1991 From Tsars to Commissars' by Peter Oxley. Don't buy it new, it's expensive, but if you find a second hand copy it's very useful. It has a clear layout and easy to follow explanations and summaries.

Good fiction : I haven't found anything on the tsarist period, but there is plenty on the communist era, these are a taster:

- 'A day in the life of Ivan Denisovich' by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn - about life in the gulag under Stalin. Short and very readable.
- Novels by Simon Sebag Montefiore - all very well researched and great stories.
- 'Child 44' by Tom Rob Smith, and the rest of this series. A story set that starts in the shocking famine of the 1930s

Films and TV:

- 'Dr Zhivago': set in the revolution of 1917. I prefer the Omar Sharif version, but there is a more modern one with Kiera Knightly.
- 'Chernobyl' series on Netflix - this is a brilliant drama documentary, and tells the story of the nuclear disaster in the Ukraine in 1984.

Summer work:

1. Top Trumps - see separate sheet. These must be ready for our first lesson back. Since we don't yet know when that will be make sure that you have them ready for the first day of term - Thursday 2nd September, and bring them to school ☺

Happy Holidays

Summer Consolidation Work

Top Trumps



- Experience of government:
- Education:
- Positive personal qualities:
- Negative personal qualities:
- Success:
- Failure:

1. Design a card for each of the 7 rulers: Alexander II, Nicholas II, Kerensky, Lenin, Stalin, Khrushchev and Gorbachev.
2. You must give a score out of 10 for each category, 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest.
3. You must be able to justify your scores - we will be playing in the first lesson back in September.
4. On the back of each card list the main successes and failures of each ruler.

Due: first lesson back in September. Be ready.

Resources:

- 'Russian Rulers 1855-1961' - Chapter 1 of Heinemann gives you information on Alexander II - Stalin
- 'The making of modern Russia 1855-1991' by Rob Owen (our course textbook) pages 134-5 for Khrushchev and pages 159-161 for Gorbachev.
- Anything else you can find - there is a detailed reading list in your topic booklets.

Have a great summer.

In this period, Russia was ruled by three members of the Romanov dynasty (1855–1917): Alexander II, Alexander III and Nicholas II (see Fig. 1.1 a–c). For a brief period Russia was ruled by a Provisional Government, in which the Prime Ministers headed a cabinet. After October 1917 and until 1964 there were three main Communist leaders, Lenin, (Vladimir Illyich Ulyanov), Stalin (Josif Vissarionovich Dzugashvili) and the first to use his own name Nikita Khrushchev (see Fig. 1.2).

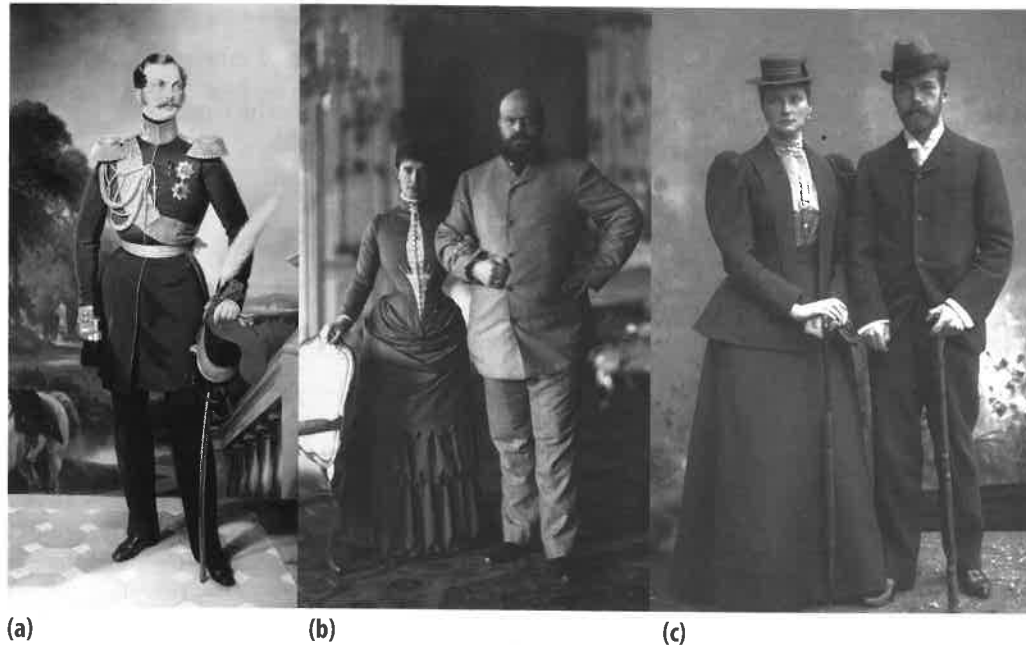


Figure 1.1 The Three Tsars: (a) Alexander II, (b) Alexander III and (c) the Tsarina Alexandra and Nicholas II. The photo of Nicholas captures a vulnerable personality, in contrast with the robust Alexander III and the earnest Alexander II.

Key Question:

In what ways were these rulers similar and in what ways were they different?

- They might be compared in terms of personality and background.
- They might be compared in how they reacted to the situations they found when taking up power.

In this chapter you will be invited to think about differences and similarities, but you will not be given a comprehensive history of Russian rulers between 1855 and 1964. Issues of continuity and change will be addressed by an analysis of Lenin as 'Red Tsar'. (The success of their major economic policies will be considered in Chapter 4.) You will also be encouraged through exercises to practise the skills of comparing rulers and situations and framing overall explanations and analyses. You will be asked to develop supported judgements and to weigh arguments about continuity and change.

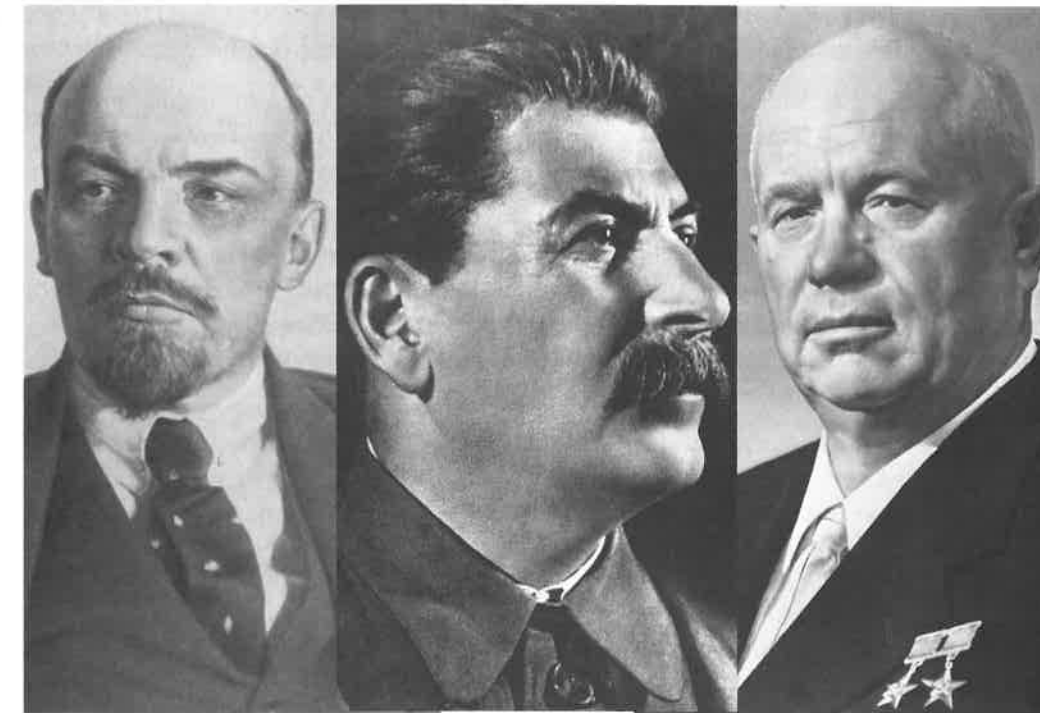


Figure 1.2 The Communist leaders Lenin, Stalin and Khrushchev in pictures emphasising their air of authority.

Personality and background

The Tsars were born to rule and given an education to prepare them for their huge responsibilities at the head of an empire. In contrast, it was by no means certain that any of the Communist rulers would rule. Lenin was the son of a provincial school inspector. Stalin was not even Russian and the son of a cobbler from Gori in Georgia (a town that Simon Sebag Montefiore in *Young Stalin* calls 'one of the most violent towns in the Tsar's empire'). Khrushchev was the son of a coal miner; his grandfather had been a serf who served in the Tsarist army. After a village education, Khrushchev went with his family to Yuzovka (later named Stalino, now Donetsk in the Ukraine), a mining and industrial centre in the Donets Basin, where he began work as a pipe fitter at age 15. Of all Russia's rulers in the period he was the only one who did manual work. Khrushchev was also the ruler with the least formal education.

For all their limitations, the Tsars had had a great deal of tutoring. Alexander II knew languages and studied a modern curriculum including Mathematics, Physics, History, Political Economy and Law. Alexander III similarly was taught by an impressive array of tutors. Like his father he knew German, French and English. Both were cultivated and artistic. Alexander II admired art; Alexander III played the French horn and read widely. Nicholas II shared a tutor with his father – the reactionary Konstantin Pobedonostev – and was taught in a similar way. Less able intellectually, he nevertheless was lectured by experts. He spoke in English within the family.

All three had traveled before they became Tsar: Alexander II had toured Siberia and met political exiles whom he tried to help, Alexander III had commanded forces in the Russo-Turkish War 1877–78, and Nicholas had traveled in the Far East and had nearly been assassinated in Japan.

All three married foreign princesses: Alexander II married, a German princess, Marie of Hesse. An American visitor in 1871 wrote of the Empress of Russia, that she was:

'a tall stately lady, with a sad face and the appearance of an aristocratic invalid, is rarely seen in public. She appears only at the State balls and other festivities where etiquette demands her presence, and it is evident that she would prefer to be shut off altogether from the stare of curious eyes. Maria Feederovna, formerly Princess Dagmar of Denmark was more vivacious – a keen dancer and horsewoman.'

Alexander III married Princess Dagmar of Denmark on 9 November 1866. Nicholas II's marriage was the only true love match of these Tsars and Alix of Hesse-Darmstadt in Germany was his choice, despite the opposition of his father. She took the place of the beautiful mistress, the ballerina Kschessinska.

Lenin too married a soul mate, and rejected a glamorous mistress whereas Stalin's first marriage ended in tragedy with his wife's death from cholera. His second wife committed suicide. Unlike the Tsars neither he nor Khrushchev enjoyed an easy married life. Khrushchev had three wives: his first Yeferasina died in the famine of 1921; he left his second, a peasant girl called Marusa and he lived with Nina Petrovna for over 40 years before finally marrying her in the 1960s. The only wife to exert political influence was the Empress Alix, whose favourite Rasputin was allowed power and influence. Lenin's wife shared his interest in politics but because Lenin was a stronger personality, lacked decisive influence. Alix was the only one of these wives to suffer execution, though not the only one to have a tragic death.

Two of these leaders came to power with a view to reforming an existing system. Alexander II was convinced that a more liberal rule than his father Nicholas I had established was necessary; Khrushchev though he had risen to prominence under Stalin thought that a more liberal communism was necessary. Neither man was prepared for the implications of change and both showed weaknesses in dealing with it. Both had unhappy endings in their different ways – Alexander II by assassination in 1881, Khrushchev by a humiliating removal from power in 1964.

In physical appearance, Khrushchev's burly physique most resembled Alexander III, who displayed his strength in rescuing his family from a railway accident by holding up the roof of a carriage. Neither he nor Nicholas II had the reforming impulses of Alexander II or Khrushchev. They were determined to uphold autocracy and restrict change to agricultural reform and industrial growth. Alexander III, shocked by his father's murder, was determined on a broadly conservative policy, whereas change had to be forced on Nicholas II by external events. Of all of Russia's rulers, the weakest personality was probably Nicholas II. The finest featured and most sensitive, he nevertheless, for all his sense of duty, failed to come to terms with Russia's problems, and his conservatism was more rigid and unthinking than any of the other rulers.

The two rulers who forced through change and overcame the most opposition were Lenin and Stalin. They have been compared with Tsars; if they were indeed like the Tsars, they were more like the Tsars of Russia's more distant past in personality than the rulers of the later 19th century. Lenin was by the far the most academic and intellectual of Russia's non-Tsarist rulers of the period; trained as a lawyer from an intellectual background, he relished the obscure debates about Marxist theory and concocted elaborate intellectual defences for policies which were based on practical considerations. Here there is little parallel with the Tsars. However, like Alexander II and Nicholas II, Lenin did make reforms which

nevertheless kept the basic power structure intact. Like the Tsars he could be pragmatic and also he did not shift from a basic belief in a political system – not autocracy but Communism. Stalin was the least Russian of all the rulers. Lenin described him as 'Asiat' – someone from Asiatic Russia with a different outlook and traditions. For all the German influences and foreign culture, the Tsars were Russian in outlook; whereas Stalin the Georgian, like Napoleon the Corsican and perhaps Hitler the Austrian, may have seen the people he ruled as essentially alien and dispensable. He had had a harder early life than any of the other rulers; his personal power in terms of his ability to change Russia was greater than any other ruler in practical if not theoretical terms. Certainly, no other ruler in the period had such an enormous impact on the everyday life of Russians, or on the historical development of the country.



Figure 1.3 Aleksandr Fedorovich Kerensky (1881–1970).

And of the leaders of the Provisional Government? Bizarrely Aleksandr Fedorovich Kerensky (Fig. 1.3) who became Prime Minister in July 1917 came from the same town – Simbirsk – as Lenin; his father, like Lenin's was a teacher. He even taught Lenin briefly. Like Lenin, Kerensky studied law and History at St. Petersburg University. Like Lenin he was drawn to radical politics and joined the **SRs**. He was elected to the **Duma** in 1912 as a moderate socialist (a member of the **Trudovik party**). His oratory made him noticed and he came into his own after February 1917, serving as Minister of Justice and then Minister of War. Unlike any of the other leaders he had to grapple with parliamentary politics and not exert dictatorial powers or assert autocratic principles. His rule was the shortest; like Nicholas II he was the victim of a revolution; like the Tsars before him he found that reforming measures were too little and too late. Intellectually more able than the Tsars, he lacked the ruthlessness of Lenin and Stalin and did not inherit, like Khrushchev, a powerful state with little opposition. Like the Tsars he failed to cope successfully with war. He bungled an attempt to use the army to increase the authority of the government. Unlike the Communists, he could or would not put power before every other consideration in order to maintain Russia's brief interlude of genuinely constitutional government.

SR: Social revolutionaries

They were the heirs of the 19th century radical intellectuals who put their trust in peasant democracy, advocating redistribution of land to the peasants. They for a party in 1901 under Victor Chernov which the largest revolutionary group before 1917. They split in 1917 and were suppressed by Lenin.

Duma

The Russian word for a (i.e. National) Assembly. The first Duma met in 1906 after Nicholas II agreed to a constitution with an elected assembly in October 1905. It met in the Tauride Palace in St. Petersburg. In practice it had little power until its members formed the Provisional Government in 1917. It was suppressed by Lenin. Duma is still a word used to describe the Russian parliament.

The Trudoviks

A group of peasant deputies and intellectuals who numbered 130–150 members in the first and second Dumas and who were more moderate than the SRs and sometimes aligned themselves with the Liberal Cadets. The word comes from the Russian Trudovaya Grupa (Toilers' or Labouring people's group). Kerensky is their most famous member but Zardunov, a Trudovik, was a minister in 1917 and played a leading part in trying to suppress the Bolsheviks. Lenin suppressed the Trudoviks in 1917–18.

ACTIVITY

Which one of the rulers between 1855 and 1964 was best prepared, both by their experiences before taking power and by their abilities, to rule Russia?

- 1 Consider what experience and qualities would have been important.
- 2 Break these down into distinct factors – experience of government, education, etc.
- 3 Award each of the rulers a mark between one and five for each factor. For example, you might give Kerensky quite a high mark for experience in government; he had headed two ministries before becoming Prime Minister.
- 4 Make a judgement and form a **thesis**, i.e. decide which one would gain the highest marks overall.
- 5 Explain briefly why the ruler of your choice could be seen as the best qualified/strongest of all the rulers between 1855 and 1964 on the basis of the criteria chosen.
- 6 Support your view by reference to the material above or your own research.

The next section looks at what situations each of these rulers faced on coming to power and how successfully they reacted to the problems in the *main* elements of their domestic policies.

What situations did the rulers of Russia face when they came to power and how did they react to them?

Whatever their upbringing and personal qualities and ideas, all the Russian rulers faced very challenging circumstances when they came to power. In 1855 Alexander II found himself with a monarchy that had demonstrably failed to keep pace with the other European powers. An analysis of the situation in 1855 might have revealed steady, but slow industrial progress, heavily dependent on foreign businesses and knowledge; growing rural discontent, and poor communications. Russia had an overwhelmingly agricultural economy whose crop yields were lower than the advanced economies of the West and a social system which had not moved in the direction of modernity and freedom, but was rooted in an outdated concept of personal bondage. The French-speaking Russian aristocrats who graced the spas and casinos of fashionable Europe, who read the latest literature and works of political economy and who admired the range of manufactures available from western industry came home to rural illiteracy, squalor and ignorance. They found repression and censorship of writing and reading; they found a monarchy resting on its armed forces in a way more typical of the previous century than the 'modern world' of the 1850s. By and large the Tsar shared some of the discontent of his liberal and better educated elite subjects. His upbringing had encouraged a humane view of the world, particularly by the poet-tutor **Zhukovsky**.

When as Crown Prince he had visited Siberia, he was saddened by the **political exiles** of 1825 and their conditions. More like Alexander I than his more rigid father, Nicholas I, he wanted to act in a generous and humanitarian way; to offer his people a better life. However, he had made no close analysis of the possible consequences of reform and was more influenced by a general soul searching in the wake of the Crimean War where a relatively small allied expeditionary force had not been thrown back by the Russian army. Unlike 1812 there had been no enemy retreat; instead the British and French with their Turkish allies had defended their positions in the Crimea and gone on to assault and take the major fortress of Sebastopol. Their communications had actually been better than those

BIOGRAPHY

Vasily Zhukovsky 1763–1852 was a major Russian poet, friend of the more famous writer Pushkin and translator of major foreign authors such as Schiller. He was a figure in the Romantic movement and fought in the war of 1812. An exotic figure, half Russian and half Turkish, he was tutor to the Tsarevich Alexander

in 1826 the young European education tutor, influenced reputation

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BIOGRAPHY

Otto von Bismarck 1815–98 went on to be Minister-President of Prussia in 1862 and was the Chancellor of a united Germany from 1871 to 1890. Here he is referring to the failure to create free peasant holdings, such as existed in France and Germany, but to peasants on communal holdings.

of the Russians, since roads and rail links to the west had not even managed to destroy the suicidal charge of the Light Brigade. British rifles had greater numbers of Russian troops. The serf and the technology could not reproduce the legend of the French of 1812–14. A profound analysis might have linked military backwardness with rigid control of ideas and lack of political development. However, Alexander, like most of his successors did not make this link. Perhaps the view of the British representative at his coronation that he was 'well-intentioned, but weak as water' is right. His reign saw the most far-reaching reforms since Peter the Great, but there was little intention or effort to alter the underlying system of autocracy or to offer any prospect of genuine political development. There was also no understanding that hope of reform might encourage further discontent and little consistency once that discontent seemed to challenge the authority of the Tsar.

The ways in which Alexander II reacted to the situation (1855–81)

The major reform of the reign, and perhaps the century, was driven in a large part by the Tsar. Alexander II wanted to gain the consent of the nobles and landowners to a major modernisation plan. In 1856 he began a debate by asking the Moscow nobility for their views on emancipating the Serfs. When this yielded little, he appointed a secret committee to draft proposals; again when this stalled, he appointed his brother to head a reform Commission. He rejected a reform proposal by the Lithuanian nobles to keep the land for themselves but to free the peasants. An Imperial order to all provinces for the nobles to discuss his proposals followed. The nobles anticipated change and began to dispose of their serfs by giving them to the army. They also deliberately moved them to poor lands so that the richer lands should not be given away to them to farm independently. This caused the serfs hardship and the Tsar was so distressed by the suffering and the selfishness of the nobles that in 1858 he expressly forbade landowners to move their serfs to poor lands or to dispose of them by giving them to the army. The Tsar appointed liberal nobles to the committee which drafted reform in 1859 and used reforming ministers like Miliukin and Samarin to plan changes. This willingness to ally with liberal elements was vital for the success of reform. The **Emancipation Act**, signed by the Tsar in 1861, was in many ways a massive personal achievement and he had already emancipated serfs on royal estates in 1858.

Bismarck, then ambassador in St. Petersburg made the sour comment that 'the Emperor would do even more for Russia if he freed the serfs from communal proprietorship'. However, there was no desire to break from the communal past or Russian tradition. Social

Emancipation Act

On 19 February 1861 Alexander II signed the edict in which 'the serfdom of peasants settled on estate owners' land and property is abolished forever'. This affected 23 million serfs but was not fully implemented for years.

Thesis

Usually an extended essay, as in a university PhD thesis. Here, forming a 'thesis' is proposing an explanation on a particular subject that relates to the whole period.

The political exiles

These were the Decembrists, liberal officers and nobles who had tried to prevent Nicholas I from becoming Tsar in a failed revolution in 1825, hoping for a constitution and liberal reforms. Alexander II was moved by the plight of these idealistic Russians who had been forced into exile and lost everything in their plans for a more modern Russia.

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Zemstvos

There was a Zemstvo
 (rural Zemstvo) for each
 province and district. They
 were elected in separate
 meetings by peasants,
 townsmen and nobles.
 They could not levy taxes
 but oversaw local matters:
 roads, poor relief, prisons,
 public health and some
 industrial development.
 There were urban councils
 created in a similar way in
 1870.

control of the peasantry who continued to be in communal agriculture and to pay communal taxes and heavy redemption payments to the state, which had compensated the nobles, was more important than 'modernisation'. The liberal ministers were dismissed when the peasants protested about loss of land and the imposition of obligations to the state in a wave of peasant unrest. The Tsar Liberator had no intention of introducing a modern system of money relationship into the countryside, or a class of capitalist peasant farmers, or even peasant citizens – there was no equality before the law or real economic freedom to develop individual lands. The nobles, who had been the privileged order, remained so throughout the Tsarist period. Their share of wealth increased from 1861–1914 rather than decreasing. Alexander II was a long way from the reforms of the French revolution – the Emancipation was a very Russian, very traditional and very communal act, and its consequences were not really foreseen. It was supported as much by pan Slav Russian nationalists as pro-western modernisers.

In 1864 came another major reform – the creation of the first elected local governments (**Zemstvos**). There were three categories of voters for these councils who were chosen for three years. As well as assemblies at local level there were provincial assemblies. There were also urban councils. In these assemblies there were assemblies and executive councils. The guiding principles here were respect for property and wealth. Regional and provincial nobles of the highest rank chaired the rural assemblies; the wealthy and titled had more voting power; those who paid the highest taxes had a greater representation. The councils were there to make improvements not to discuss matters pertaining to politics in a wider sense.

The consequences were not foreseen; because they were an outlet for political hopes and a chance for the educated elites to meet, there was some political development. Even a restricted electoral process encouraged hopes and demand for greater change. At no time was there an intention that there should be any greater political development. The Tsar was rooted in autocracy and the Zemstvos were a means to support it by making local administration more efficient.

The reforming impulse was also seen in law reforms. There was no equality before the law because the freed serfs were under a separate jurisdiction. There was a reorganisation of local and regional courts to hear relatively minor civil and criminal cases by local justices of the peace. The Judiciary was to be more independent of the state. Bribery of judges was to be reduced by paying them better and making their appointments permanent. The office of examining magistrate was created to take away the role of the police in establishing a legal case for the prosecution. These magistrates would decide whether there was justification for prosecution. The Higher courts too were reorganised with the huge reform of criminal trial by jury. In theory, the reforms were linked – a modern Russia without a mediaeval class system needed modern laws. More local consultation logically led to an independent judiciary and trial by jury. But the implications proved to be too much – what if traditional authority were eroded by new ideas? To deal with possible unrest, censorship was taken out of the jurisdiction of the new courts in 1866; crimes or possible crimes against the state also did not come within this system. Important political cases were tried by special courts from 1872. Flogging was retained as a punishment in prisons and in colonies of exiles; police powers to investigate political offences and prepare cases were restored in 1871.

The greater freedom in society as a whole and economic progress seemed to call for educational changes. If there was a move from serf to citizen and if Russia were to develop economically, then a literate workforce with greater technical skills would be needed. The liberal education minister Golovnin introduced a number of reforms in the Universities and a Charter for Secondary education; but he, like Miliukin and Samarin was dismissed in

a wave of fear about student radicalism following an assassination attempt on the Tsar in 1866. A more restricted curriculum based on classical studies was imposed, and moves towards more science – associated with liberalism and irreligion were discouraged. Inspectors were appointed to keep a close eye on primary schools to ensure that teachers were not encouraging disrespect for authority. The impact of reform was not really foreseen – such as the growth of radical ideas and the development of the Narodnik revolutionary movement. Alexander II lacked the intelligence to see what change might lead to and the confidence to deal with it. Instead there was a stop/go policy. At the end of the reign, there were considerations of extending the representative assemblies and increasing liberalism once more which were ended by the Tsar's assassination and Alexander III's dismissal of the liberal Loris-Melikov.

Army reforms and financial reforms pointed the way to the future. Universal conscription in 1874 pointed the way to a very large-scale armed force – with six years service and a long period in the reserve. This replaced the old-fashioned 25-year service, which was really the equivalent of a serf army. It also put the Russian state on the path to developing a modern army on the Prussian model. Economic reforms attempted to stabilise the currency and encourage foreign loans and investment. The Russo-Turkish war of 1877–78 revealed the limitations of the new armies and caused a financial crisis which saw the devaluation of the rouble and a loss of foreign confidence.

The situation facing Alexander III in 1881

The Russia of 1881 was a very different country in some ways to that of 1855. Personal serfdom had gone; local assemblies offered a taste of consultation and some political experience. Up to 1878 there had been financial reforms, a public budget and major reforms in finance; new notions of judicial independence and trial by jury had been introduced and there had been military changes. However, for all this there were strong elements of continuity. Autocracy dominated: Alexander III was educated in strictly orthodox ways; the power of traditional institutions like nobility and church was as strong as ever; the countryside was dominated by communal peasant agriculture and profitable market-based estates able to take advantage of new rail links – therefore the rich were getting richer and the poor remained poor. Tradition was still very strong. Pan Slav beliefs hailing tradition and the old Russia were stronger in official circles than Liberalism. The Opposition (like the remnants of the Narodniks, the People's Will and small groups of revolutionary anarchists) was still dependent on the influx of ideas and materials from a handful of exiles, and felt enough frustration to resort to violence and terrorism. The Crimean War was one measure of Russia's limitations at the start of the reign; by the end of the reign it was clear from the Russo-Turkish war of 1877–78 that Russia could not stand still. However Alexander III's situation in 1881 was different.

ANALYSIS

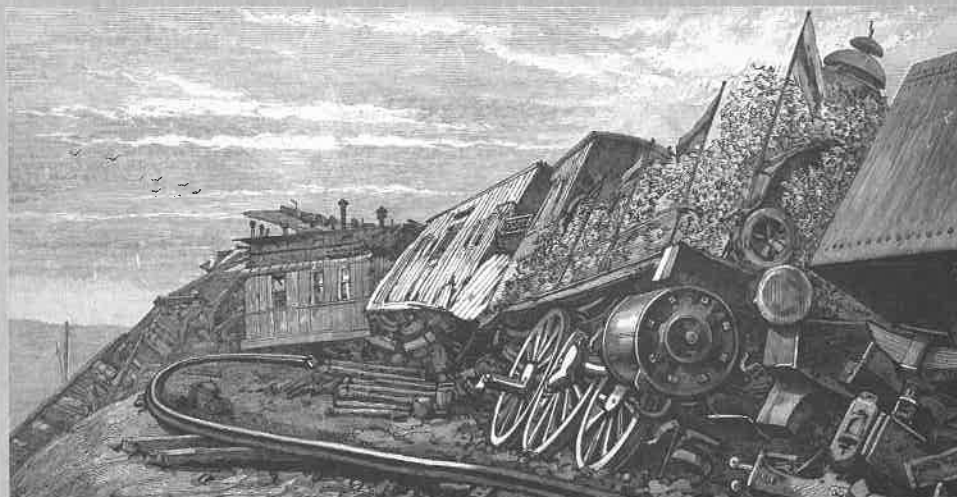
How did Alexander III's position compare with that of Alexander II in 1855?

Alexander II faced growing rural discontent and opposition from liberal elements in the upper class with the rigidity of the regime established by Nicholas I, but he did not face organised opposition with distinct ideologies and a commitment to terrorism. Total numbers of opponents may have been small, but as with the case of terrorist groups in the 21st century, small groups of dedicated and fanatical opponents can have a huge impact. The assassination of the Tsar generated a massive amount of insecurity and a determination to crush opposition and maintain tradition. Unlike his father, Alexander III did not approach his reign with optimism,

but a grim sense of duty – he wanted no celebrations for his coronation and his military background led him to consider himself a soldier at war with internal enemies.

The external situation, too, was threatening. For all Russia's good relations with Germany and her support of German unification, the results had been disappointing. When Russia needed support over the **Eastern Question** in 1878, she had not found it and had been forced to make unpopular concessions. She had expanded considerably in the east and the empire had grown, but relations with Britain, Austria and Germany had worsened; the alliance of Italy, Austria and Germany left her isolated and though there were treaties of friendship with Germany, there was a growing rift. Russia would need to have strong armed forces and this depended on economic growth.

So the basic dilemma was that the Tsar wanted a traditional Russia; he wanted no opposition; he wanted strict control over peasant communities; he wanted no growth in either local or national democracy. However, Russia could not retreat to a pre-industrial past, as it needed to be a great power and compete with other great powers. This meant that towns and industries and transport had to develop, but with that development came dangers. Workers gathered together would pick up new ideas. Communications would help the radical groups to spread ideas. A growing middle class would mean more intelligentsia, increasingly attracted to socialism. Modernisation would make the rigid autocracy seem old fashioned. The Tsar's train crash of 1888 is a perfect example of the problems he faced. The new trains gave Russia advantages – they developed the market opportunities of the peasants; they brought raw materials to factories; they carried the Tsar's troops; they unified the empire. But they also crashed.



The train crash of 1888. Tsar Alexander III sustained internal injuries in helping his family during this crash which contributed to his death in 1894.

On the face of it the reigns of Alexander II and Alexander III offer total contrasts, but there are similarities as well. Neither Tsar veered from a belief in autocracy, but had different strategies to preserve it – Alexander II by moderate reform, Alexander III by repression. Neither was consistent: the reforms were restricted by retreats from liberalism and an increase in state censorship and control; Alexander III did not entirely abandon concession and reform. Both were keen imperialists and expanded an essentially Russian empire; Alexander III was more determined to Russify his Empire, but the Polish revolt of 1863 showed the limits of Alexander II's liberal policies as severe repression was employed. Both encouraged economic and military development and neither really came to terms with the possible consequences.

The Eastern Question

This was the question of what would become of the decaying Ottoman (Turkish) Empire which still ruled large numbers of Balkan Christians? Russia was deeply concerned because the Turks mistreated the Balkan Christians who were Slavs and believed in the same Orthodox religion as the Russians.

Many in Russia wanted to protect the Balkan Christians and

end Turkish rule, establishing Russian domination instead. This was deeply opposed by Austria-Hungary, also a Balkan power, and by Britain who did not want to see Russian forces in the Eastern Mediterranean threaten the Suez Canal and the route to British India. So Europe was deeply concerned about the future of Turkey and the Balkans.

The ways in which Alexander III reacted to the situation

There were changes after 1881. Peasant redemption payments, set up after 1861 to pay the state for compensating landlords for the loss of serfs were reduced; a peasant land bank was established in 1882 to allow farmers access to capital for improvements; the poll tax was abolished in 1886. Interestingly, the regime took up an idea from Bismarck's Germany and regulated working conditions in factories in 1882 imposing official limits on hours worked by women and children. The Tsar was also a patron of the arts and encouraged the first collection of Russian art which now forms the Tretchyakov Museum. So the idea of Alexander III as an angry bigoted and reactionary figure needs some modification. But not much. The tone of the reign was set by its tragic beginning and by relentless repression and a desire for political and social control.

There was some pressure from below, not just from the Tsar's ministers but also from nationalist groups and the growing popularity of anti-Semitism which linked attacks on Jews with attacks on revolutionaries and traitors. The Tsar embraced both Russification and anti-Semitism. A famous comment on a law restricting Jewish entry to university reveals his attitude 'Let us never forget that it was the Jews who crucified Jesus'. A strong bond between the Orthodox Church and the Tsarist regime led to measures against Jews and a big rise in emigration. The same nationalism also put pressure on the nationalities to accept Russian language and control. Press censorship was increased in 1882; control over the peasants was increased by the appointment of land captains and a law making violation of contracts between landlords and tenants a criminal act. There was an increase in closed (secret) trials for political offences and the position of the Zemstvos was changed. The executive boards of all local and regional councils became government officials, becoming part of the state. The electorate was reduced: in elections to the Moscow city council for instance, voting rights were removed from 13,000 people, leaving only 7,000 of the richer electors. Peasants voted but peasant representatives to the Council had to be appointed. Thus the Tsar did not end the reforms of Alexander II but he ended any chance of them evolving into broader or more liberal changes. Serfdom was not restored, but peasant independence was reduced; assemblies still met but clearly as part of government, not as a means of control or criticism; university education was restricted and religious tolerance was eroded. The secret police – the **Okhrana** – became a much more important element in Russian life than it had done before. By modern standards the power of repression was not overwhelming, but the restrictions of the state were very widespread – writers, teachers, local councilors, peasants, Jews, Catholics, Protestants, Finns, Poles, Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Estonians, reformers, editors and students were caught up in growing state control. The bureaucracy, police and army were dedicated to enforcing religious, racial and national orthodoxy.

The Okhrana

The Okhrana dates back to 1881. Following the assassination of Alexander II a new Division for the Protection of Order and Social Security was set up. In Russian this was shortened to Okhrannoe Otdelenie (security division) and thence to Okhrana or Okhranka. Okhranka is more informal – an ironic reference – rather like the British use of ‘old bill’ for police by criminals. Its aims were spying, data collection on political offenders and infiltration of terrorist organisations. Plain clothes detectives collected information. There were specialist officers and undercover agent provocateurs who

led terrorists into actions for which they were arrested. There were branches in the Russian provinces and also abroad from 1883 to watch foreign exiles.

The Okhrana was abolished after the February revolution in 1917. Instead Lenin quickly set up his own secret political police, the Cheka – again having as its aim state security.

The Okhrana’s HQ was at 16 Fontanka in St. Petersburg – the house still stands.

ACTIVITY

Was Alexander II more successful than Alexander III in coping with the problems he inherited?

- 1 Write down the successful points of Alexander II’s policy on cards. These should be linked to the problems that he faced in 1855. If, for instance, one problem was that the Russian empire faced a mass of peasant discontent, how successful was Alexander II in solving it?
- 2 On the back write ways in which the Tsar had not been successful in dealing with the problem. For example, one side of the card might be ‘The Tsar was successful in persuading the nobility to accept a more modern Russia by emancipating the Serfs’. On the other hand, you might say that the serfs were not equal citizens and were not given freedom to cultivate land independently.
- 3 Do the same with Alexander III.

On the basis of the balance between the two sides of the cards, who was more successful? Share and debate your views with others in the class.

What was the situation facing Nicholas II?

With the death of Alexander III and the accession of Nicholas II the pressures of a dual policy of repression and quite rapid economic growth had changed the situation once more. Unlike Alexander II, Nicholas brought no humanitarian impulse or broad concern for change to his role. But neither was there a furious revulsion about terrorism to motivate a change of policy, as there was with Alexander III. Nicholas’s high-level tutors had made relatively little impact; his foreign travels had not brought a breath of vision; the Tsar’s outlook was more domestic and limited than either of his predecessors. An intelligent analysis of the situation in 1894 might have revealed a dangerous development of urban growth and a suffering and resentful working class gathered in large units in urban centres. Statistics revealed a growing population with huge pressure on land. Surveys did reveal low levels of literacy, productivity and Russian technical progress. Foreign expertise still dominated. Communications in Russia were worse than in any other of the great powers.

Nationalism was growing and resentment of Russification increasing in a way not true in 1855 or 1881. Russia’s anti-Semitic reputation was a moral blot, and religious and political

exiles took with them a resentment which blackened the reputation of the Tsar’s regime abroad. In the literature and political commentary of the time Russia was seen as an isolated and backward police state. The nobility’s political and economic power had increased with the result that a number of modern developments – in agriculture and military expertise, for instance – were made more difficult than in other countries. Even if the Tsar’s regime were to be maintained then changes would have to be made. Russia’s towns, industries and communications were developing in the 1890s at an unprecedented level and doing nothing was no more an option for Nicholas II than it had been for different reasons for Alexander II in 1855 or Alexander III in 1881.

These Tsars had ‘hit the ground running’ but it took war and revolution to shift Nicholas into change and this is a major difference between him and nearly all the other Russian rulers of the period. The other rulers, for good or ill, had quite distinct visions of change; this vision was lacking in Nicholas II.

How did Nicholas II react?

The changes that were made in Nicholas II’s reign were in some ways greater than those of his predecessors, but there is one overwhelming similarity. They were brought in after a period of crisis to conserve autocracy and the key features of traditional Russia as it was in 1894. They were much less motivated by a vague liberalism than the reforms of Alexander II. Their leading proponents in Nicholas II’s government were both strong supporters of autocracy and less liberal than some of the ministers of Alexander II thirty years before. Domestic policy did not really engage with the scope of economic and social change in this reign any more than it had under his predecessors, but the degree of change seemed greater.

Nicholas II continued the policy of state-supported industrial expansion (*see* Chapter 4), Russification and control of the nationalities in the Empire and suppression of political discontent. There was no sense of Russia moving in a different direction until a catastrophic war with Japan from 1904–5 led to a revolution. This revolution was seen as the most serious challenge to the regime since 1855 and was unique in its extent and scope (*see* pages 134–40).

Unlike his predecessors, Nicholas was forced to proclaim political concessions in the 1905 **October Manifesto** which promised a national parliament. The Tsar promised freedom of speech, press, association and conscience. There was to be an end to arbitrary arrest and a wide franchise was promised for the election of a new state Duma. No **UKASE** or Imperial edict would become law without the Dumas’s consent and the Duma would have a role in controlling officials. What had been too great a reform for Alexander II and unthinkable for Alexander III introduced a hope for a liberal Russia and was the biggest potential development of the period. Had it been successful, then Russia’s industrial modernisation would have been mirrored in its political development.

On one level the Manifesto, urged on a reluctant Tsar by an almost equally reluctant but realistic Count Witte, who had been most responsible for economic growth, was a success. It split the revolutionaries and swung moderate opinion back to the Tsar. On the other hand, the subsequent betrayal of the manifesto promises and the creation of only a token and restricted parliament eroded respect for the Tsar and failed to give him the cooperation of the nation in the war effort after 1914. Like the Emancipation of the Serfs of 1861 it promised more than it delivered.

The October Manifesto

This was issued in October 1905 on the advice of Count Witte to give concessions to the liberals who were demanding constitutional change. It offered freedom of press, conscience, speech, assembly and union, a legislative assembly (the Duma) elected by a limited franchise. The Duma would be consulted by the Tsar and given the right to pass laws. By 1906 the Tsar had regained power and made the position clear in the Fundamental Laws of 23 April 1906 which reasserted his autocratic powers, veto of any laws, appointment and dismissal of ministers and to hold government power.

UKASE

An arbitrary decree. In 1906 the Tsar reserved the right to rule by **UKASE** when the Duma was not in meeting – something he could decide on dismissing it.

The creation of a national assembly – the **Duma** (see below) – as a result of the promises of 1905, was the first outlet that political opposition had that was legal; it was a major step forward from the Zemstvos, but was treated in much the same way. That is to say the initially liberal and forward-looking reforms were eroded when the regime felt more confident that restrictions would not lead to revolution. The powers of the Duma were very limited and the voting qualifications amended in such a way as to favour the rich. At a time when the rich were actually getting richer, they were also given more political influence. When the crisis of war came and there was a need to involve the nation in Russia's greatest national effort, the Duma was not developed or used as a channel of communication with the nation. The war revealed the regime's attitude to democratic parliamentary government – that it was a foreign idea irrelevant to Russia. The Tsar's response to failure in war was rather similar to his father's response to the rail crash – he would take the weight. The effects on both men were similar – it hastened their deaths. The Tsar's perception in 1915, that in a modern state a situation might be saved by a leader with little or no military experience taking on the role of Commander in Chief leaving his unpopular German-born wife in charge at home, shows the limited ability of this regime to move with the times and the Tsar's bad judgement.

The Dumas

The First Duma was elected in the spring of 1906 on a wide franchise, from 19 May to the 21 July. There was little agreement on the power of the Duma. It was dissolved by the Tsar. The second Duma, 5 March to the 16 June 1907, was more radical and had even less agreement. After its dissolution restrictions on the electoral power of the lower classes as the electorate is reduced. The third Duma, 1907–1912, was more conservative in nature. Modest reforms were

agreed. No development of responsible government, i.e. control by the parliament over ministers, Ministers not responsible to the Duma but directly to the Tsar. No financial control by the Duma. The fourth Duma, 1912–1916, had little role in wartime administration. There was little attempt by government to use it in generating national enthusiasm for war. Strong criticisms were made of government and tension increased.

Tsarist Russia moved forward however after 1906 in many different ways. It adopted radical agrarian policies (see page 76). Its economic development continued rapidly. Railway development grew and military expenditure jumped dramatically as huge efforts were made to rebuild the ships sunk by the Japanese navy at the battle of Tsushima. Efforts were made to bring the army up to the level of its European counterparts, and foreign experts were used to modernise production. There was some attempt to come to terms with industrial working conditions and to offer measures of health insurance.

The key element of the previous reign, however, remained. As the celebrations for the 300th anniversary of the dynasty in 1913 showed, Russia remained essentially rooted in its autocratic past. The attempt to share power failed. Liberalism was increasingly discredited and political change was focused on the more extreme groups.

The story of the lack of development of parliamentary government has a parallel with most of the Tsarist reforms since 1855. They encouraged hopes of change which were not fulfilled. The agricultural reforms of Stolypin (see Chapter 3, pages 86–87) may have gone further in changing Russia from a communal to an individual agrarian society, but essentially were concerned with the arrangement of the peasants' own lands into new forms of **tenure**. They did not tackle the land hunger that population growth had brought to the countryside nor did they deal with the greater concentration of landed wealth into fewer

hands. During this period the bulk of **agrarian** produce being sold on the market came from private estates. The growth in urban markets and communications benefited this sector rather than the peasantry as a whole. Though there was more economic freedom, this was not matched by political freedom. Peasant discontent found more outlet in the revolutionary SRs than in Duma representation so when the regime tottered, there was little loyalty from a mass of peasants eager only to seize lands.

Economic growth both before and after the 1905 Revolution was promoted by the state just as it had been earlier. Neither Alexander III nor Nicholas II could see the implications of huge urban growth; neither provided adequate infrastructure for growing cities. Neither could even provide real law and order and prevent the hideous crime rise that accompanied urban growth. By 1914, slum districts became a noticeable feature of major cities and were unpoliceable with a modicum of personal safety only being preserved by lynch mob 'hue and cries'. Faced with potentially huge urban discontent, even Nicholas II's secret police, the Okhrana, were more in support of social and political reforms than the Tsar.

ACTIVITY

Which reign saw the most significant domestic reforms, Alexander II's or Nicholas II's?

Construct two arguments based on clearly supported points involving the strengths and weaknesses of their respective domestic policies.

In one Alexander II's reforms 'win', for example, the creation of the Zemstvos. In the other, Nicholas's reforms 'win' and, had not the war intervened, they might have given the monarchy the chance to survive. For example the October Manifesto.

Which argument seems the more convincing?

The problems facing the Provisional Government (March–October 1917)

The Provisional Government

They were a group of Duma deputies who took over the Government of Russia when the Tsar abdicated. They filled a gap until a new constitution could be established. They chose a chairman, Prince George Lvov who became Prime Minister, though reluctantly. No-one had expected the Tsarist regime to collapse so quickly, so both Lvov's leadership and the new government were temporary

measures. The Provisional Government faced another body claiming the right to rule in the Soviet. This was the Petrograd Soviet. Thus there were two bodies claiming authority. The Provisional Government never made their rule legitimate because by the time an assembly met to draw up a new constitution, Lenin was already in power and he sent it away in January 1918.

Few of Russia's long-term problems had really been solved before the First World War and the war had created many new ones, but the problems facing the **Provisional Government** in March 1917 were perhaps the most serious facing any of Russia's Tsars. Unlike the three Tsars the government did not come to power with any real legitimacy. So why should they rule at all? Not because of custom and inheritance or divine will. Not because of popular sovereignty, since Duma elections took place on such a restricted franchise. Not because they were people of outstanding ability: the new premier Prince Lvov was such a nonentity

Agrarian

To do with the countryside and farming. Agrarian disturbances are riots or violence by peasants.

Tenure

How land is officially owned. For example if land is Freehold Tenure it means it is owned outright. If it is Leasehold, then the occupier pays for it. Tenure literally means 'holding'.

Soviets

These were councils of workers that emerged in the Revolution of 1905. Hastily elected councils of workers and soldiers were formed again in February 1917. They sent representatives to a larger body – the St. Petersburg Soviet – which claimed power over the armed forces. All over Russia these councils were formed and there was an all Russian Congress of Soviets due to meet in October 1917. After the Bolsheviks seized power the Soviet became the unit of local government, though controlled by the Communist party.

KEY IDEA

Was democracy possible in the Russia of 1917?

Democracy can work in agrarian societies with limited traditions of parliament – as was shown in India after 1947. However, India had the British model; some talk of parliaments had been going on since 1909; the Indian middle class was educated on English lines with English traditions. Most important, anti-democratic groups were not strong and India did not try and establish a new democracy while engaged in a massive war and during wholesale peasant land seizures.

that few knew whom their new rulers were. Not because of a theory of history – later the Bolsheviks could claim that the laws of historical development had put them in power. Not because they represented a dominant class – the peasant parties might have claimed that; the Marxists could claim they represented a key class in the industrial workers, who would grow. Not because they were the only established body, because in the cities an alternative form of government – the **Soviets** – had been formed. This offered the problem of working with another body which claimed to control the armed forces. The Soviets claimed to represent the people. But whom did the Provisional Government represent – the liberal upper class; the small Russian middle class? Neither was a strong base from which to continue to rule.

Unlike the Tsars, they came with a clear liberal agenda in which they believed that the changes they made were not to preserve an outdated autocracy, but to introduce the benefits of 19th century liberalism. However, the context for establishing this was much more unfavourable than the context which the three Tsars had faced in preserving their ideal type of regime. The world in 1917 was a distinctly illiberal place, with freedom everywhere subordinated to the needs of war. It was extremely unlikely that without a liberal market economy, a strong educated middle class, a democratic tradition and a period of peace to ease a transition that Russia could suddenly become a liberal democracy. The great majority of the opposition did not believe in this and the supporters of the old regime had not valued it.

How did the Provisional Government react to their situation?

The liberal reforms after March 1917 were more whole-hearted than those of the Tsars but freedom of press, movement, association, political activity and the end of political police and control added to the problem. The enemies of democracy got free rein. The ability to change enough to meet a crisis situation was a common feature of the Provisional Government and the Tsars. The **peasant land seizures** were neither prevented nor recognised, leaving a state of uncertainty in the countryside. If the government had issued a Land Decree accepting the new ownership, then perhaps the history of Russia might have been different. But that would have been asking the liberal middle class politicians to betray their entire ethos of respect for property and law and order. Lenin, who had no interest in either could easily promise the peasants land; as could the peasants' own party the SRs. Lenin could also promise peace – international obligations to capitalist powers meant nothing and in any case he believed that a world revolution was on the way. But the Provisional Government needed foreign recognition, believed in honouring obligations and respecting the sacrifice millions had made. By 1917 they also ignored the fact that German militarism had been more successful than any democratic alternative in the war so far. In a way they were as controlled by ideology as the Tsars had been and the Commissars were to be. Had a constitution been established and elections held quickly then the Provisional Government might have achieved legitimacy. However, they allowed themselves to be distracted by the practical problems of organising all this in a time of war.

The problem for the Provisional Government was that that the Tsar had been overthrown by events in the capital rather than in the country as a whole. The revolution had spread to the cities, but the bulk of Russia had not been involved. Therefore the new political leaders were not known on a national level and the authority of the government had not been imposed nationally. Whole areas had drifted out of any control when the Tsarist regime collapsed – as was shown by the **peasant land seizures**. Troops were drifting home by late Summer; local police forces were disintegrating. The Provisional Government was having a

limited effect outside the capital by the time it was overthrown by the Bolsheviks – another group about which the majority in provincial Russia had a limited knowledge. The sheer size of Russia, its poor communications and education reduced the effectiveness of the Provisional Government. Russian traditions of disintegration at time of crisis made it hard for it to assert control.

Into this political vacuum came a number of competitors – the Soviets, the extremist groups and some discontented military units. However, none of these groups succeeded at this time. The Soviets did not succeed in controlling the government and a stronger leader, Kerensky, emerged; the Bolsheviks were suppressed in July and General **Kornilov's** attempt at a coup was defeated. However the cost of this was just too much; the Provisional government had survived but had not generated much support; its reforms had little impact on the wider population and clever and ruthless opponents made the most of the crises. Popular support for greater change was building; Lenin made good use of it and offered a range of promises which he neither could not meet nor really believed in. However, by a well-organised coup at just the right time (October), he gained control of the two major cities (St. Petersburg and Moscow) and proclaimed a new government.

BIOGRAPHY

Lavr Kornilov (1870–1918) was a career officer in the Russian army and fought against Austria in the First World War. Made Supreme Commander of the army of the Provisional Government in 1917 he bitterly disliked Lenin and any idea of peace. He thought that Kerensky wished him to occupy Petrograd and suppress the Bolsheviks. Kerensky

dismissed him on 9 September but he ordered an advance on the capital. The Bolsheviks organised a defence against what seemed like a military take over. Kornilov's troops were unable get to Petrograd and there was no take over. Kornilov was arrested, but escaped and was killed by a shell during the Civil War.

ACTIVITY

Why did the Provisional Government last such a short time, while Tsarist Russia survived the major crisis of 1905 and lasted for over three years in a terrible war?

This piece of analysis will help as a building block for the consideration of the whole period. Was it because Nicholas II and his ministers were more skilful than Kerensky and his colleagues or was it because the problems they faced were so much greater than those facing Nicholas II? You will be able to expand your ideas by considering why Lenin and the Bolsheviks, facing far more numerous enemies, did survive when the Provisional Government did not.

Think in terms of reading through the text, looking at some additional material on 1905 and its aftermath and on 1917. Then propose a *thesis* on the main reason that might explain this. See if your thesis is similar to others in the class.

Note: Whilst it is important to write your ideas down, do not go beyond a page and a half at most.

Peasant land seizure

In the Summer of 1917 there had been widespread takeovers of landed estates by the peasants. The government refused to authorise a widespread redistribution of land, so the peasants simply took it. This was accepted by Lenin in the Land Decree in November 1917.

The Time of Troubles

This is a reference to the large-scale wars and disturbances of the early 17th century in Russia in which the noble Boris Godunov took the throne and was challenged by a number of pretenders claiming to be Ivan the Terrible's heir Dmitri. The wars were brought to an end by the election of the first Romanov Tsar in 1613. This period was made famous by Pushkin's poem *Boris Godunov*, later the subject of the opera by Mussorgsky.

The situation facing Lenin

Lenin had a little more legitimacy than the Provisional Government. He could claim that by the Marxist view of history (suitably adapted to suit his position) and by popular support he ruled in the name of the people. In March 1917 there had been few alternatives to some sort of provisional rule by the only elected body in Russian, the Duma. Lenin claimed that there was now a real alternative – rule by the industrial proletariat through the Bolsheviks, the party destined to rule in the name of these workers. Many did not agree. None of the Tsars had faced a succession crisis on the level of the Civil War which followed Lenin's accession to power; and none of his successors faced such acute challenges to their power (see pages 144–48, Chapter 5). For historical parallels one would have to go to the early 17th century and the 'Time of Troubles'. More dominated by ideology than any of their predecessors, the Bolsheviks issued decree after decree revolutionising Russia. Most were meaningless because they were unenforceable. The peasants were sitting on the lands they had seized from the nobles and landowners in the summer of 1917. The workers still faced the hardships they had faced throughout the war. Opposition – among nationalities, former Tsarists, and liberals – solidified around hatred of the very harsh Brest-Litvsk peace treaty (see page 68, Chapter 2) that Lenin agreed with the Germans in March 1918. Foreign powers joined in such as Britain, France, Japan and the USA and Russia spiraled into chaos. It was not the first time that a regime had faced widespread violence and opposition but even compared with 1905 or the peasant riots of the 1850s, or the Polish Revolt, this was unprecedented.

How did Lenin respond to the challenges that faced the Bolsheviks after the October Revolution?

What was unprecedented, too, was the level of determination and energy shown by Lenin and the Bolsheviks. Lenin was convinced that world-wide revolution would follow, and in this exalted mood was prepared to sign away to the Germans large areas of western Russia in a separate peace, the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. This decision tipped the scales as opposition gathered against what seemed to be a tragic waste of 5 million Russian casualties. Lenin was faced with not only establishing a completely new type of state, but also defending it against a variety of enemies, the so-called Whites, and also peasant resistance, the Greens.

Not intellectually limited, or weak in any way, Lenin showed himself to be more Tsarist than the Tsars. Power was rapidly centralised and decisions taken with a complete ruthlessness. Any suggestion that power was to be shared was ended by the dispersal of the Constituent Assembly after one day in January 1918. The elections had not given the Bolsheviks a majority, so as the assembly was clearly flying in the face of History, it had to go into the dustbin of History. There was a short-lived alliance with the left wing of the SRs, from whom Lenin had virtually stolen his peasant policy, but other parties like the Mensheviks were seen as enemies and persecuted. To fight the war for control of Russia and implement a series of hasty communist decrees, the strictest control was needed: grain was confiscated, hostages taken and killed; the war was fought without any restraint. The secret police were quickly reinstated as the Cheka. Any controls necessary were imposed, whatever the cost and resistance met by extreme force: White officers had their epaulettes nailed to their shoulders in some areas and some naked Polish officers were impaled on branches of trees. Even more so than for the Tsars, defeat was unthinkable. The period of War Communism turned Russia, at least that part controlled by the Bolsheviks, into an armed camp. The element of discussion in the party was subordinated to a disciplined unity. Opposition to left and right was repressed. Lenin became the target of assassination

by leftist terrorists just as the Tsars had been. Meanwhile hopes of a world-wide revolution faded. The revival of the Workers' International organisations of the previous century took place with the founding of the **Comintern** in 1919, but Russian domination was vital. This was also true of the old Empire: the nationalities were brought under soviet control and hopes of independence were dashed. Communism became a means of binding together the nationalities to Russia as much as loyalty to the Tsar had been. Bolsheviks from outside great Russia, such as the Georgian Stalin were also eager to repress their fellow nationalities and force them into Soviet control. The term Union of Soviet Socialist Republics disguised the maintenance of political control.

By 1921 against all odds, the Bolsheviks had crushed internal and external resistance, foreign powers had left and the Poles had been driven back. But the costs were huge. Both sides, Reds and Whites, had waged war violently and against civilians as well as troops. Agriculture was disrupted by a programme of huge requisitioning and there were major revolts on the level of post-1861 or 1905. Industry had declined. There had been major droughts, famine and a humiliating dependence on American humanitarian aid. There was an opposition movement among the very class that the Bolsheviks represented, and even the sailors of Kronstadt – previously the heart of the revolutionary movement – had mutinied and had to be bloodily suppressed. In 1921 Lenin was forced to give way massively on the party's major policies – he allowed private trade in the countryside and small-scale industrial enterprise. In contrast, the party was rigidly controlled by a ban on factions. Already the death toll of political trials was mounting and the **Cheka** enforced a high level of supervision and political repression. But the heart of Bolshevik policy had gone, as had Lenin's health. The preservation of the Bolshevik state had been an amazing achievement, but how much was left of the original idealism of the Bolsheviks and how far had Lenin been forced to become more and more like the Tsars he so hated?

Stretch and challenge

To what extent do you consider Lenin to be a Red Tsar and why?

At this point, a more extended synoptic view can be attempted.

1. Read the following arguments carefully and make a judgement on whether Lenin was a Red Tsar.
2. Look at how much continuity there was between Russia before February 1917 and between October 1917 and January 1924.

What follows is included to be evaluated, not accepted as true. You may disagree with the criteria for establishing how Tsarist Lenin was. This is fine and you can use your own ways of judging the issue, if they can be defended. You may find some of the arguments which follow much more plausible than others. Think about why. You may wish to bring in material of your own. The object of the exercise is to offer a power point presentation to the class showing to what extent you consider Lenin to be a Red Tsar and offering clear evidence for your view.

The 'Red Tsar' argument

In order to discuss this then certain aspects of Tsarism have to be identified and it has to be kept in mind that, even since 1855, not all the Tsars had behaved in the same way.

The Comintern

The third Workers International Socialist Organisation (March 1919 to May 1943). The first International Socialist Organisation lasted from 1864–76; the second from 1889 to the First World War. The third was the first dominated by an actual Socialist workers' state. Its aim was to spread revolution and it coordinated socialist movements in other countries. The Comintern became a tool of the Russian leaders rather than a genuine international workers organisation. It was revived after the second world war as Cominform.

The Cheka

This was the Russian Extraordinary Commission for the Struggle against Counter Revolution and Sabotage – founded late in 1917 by Felix Dzerzhinsky. It was the heir to the Okhrana which had ended when the Tsar fell in March 1917. Russia was without a secret police for only a few months in the entire period 1855–1964.

ACTIVITY

Taking these as at least some of the possible criteria, does Lenin emerge as a new Tsar or is the discontinuity with the Tsarist era more significant than any similarities?

Some of the characteristics of the post-1855 Tsarist regimes were as follows.

- 1 A continuing belief in autocracy – the rule of a divinely chosen individual to whom the Russian people owe obedience. The monarch represents something higher and something deeply rooted in the Russian past.
- 2 Tsarism depended on control by the state bureaucracy of key elements in Russian life. In theory the land was the Tsar's, there was a huge input into economic development and the Tsar was closely linked to the spiritual and religious life of the country through the Orthodox Church. The Tsar had control over opinion, censored publications and political life.
- 3 Russia's destiny and that of its Rulers were seen as linked. The Tsars did not retreat behind ministers but played a leading part in decision making, accepting this as a matter of responsibility.
- 4 Despite all this, the aristocracy since 1855 had accepted a degree of change and was prepared to try and adapt to circumstances. They looked back to Tsars who had taken their Empire forward in the past and attempted modernisation.
- 5 The Tsars were major cultural patrons and promoted new architecture and the arts, though without allowing complete freedom of expression.

The argument for continuity

Ideology and power

Lenin did not claim to be divinely chosen but there was more behind his claims to power than simply himself. He did not base his right to be obeyed on having been elected, like a democratic politician. Nor did he base his claim to power on his own political abilities or administrative skills. He did look to a higher source of legitimacy, like the Tsars. This was not religion, but the laws of History. In Marxist theory, revolution takes place when the historical process has reached a certain point. The French Revolution took place when bourgeois capitalist elements in the economy had reached such a point that the time was ripe for the old feudal regime based on land ownership to be overthrown. By 1918 Capitalism had entered its final phase – Imperialism. That had brought about war which had been a disaster for the old regimes. Now it was the time for the proletariat to take over, just as the middle classes had taken over before them. History not God was the higher power and Marx not Jesus was its prophet, but Lenin was guided by something beyond himself, just as the Tsar was guided by his obligations to God as a divinely appointed ruler.

A lot followed from this that made Lenin like a Tsar. He had a higher purpose. All three Tsars since 1855 had grappled with fears of change because they felt that had to maintain autocracy as a duty to God. Autocracy went beyond a conviction that rule by a single person was the best way to get results, or to help their country. It was a binding duty and a real ideology. Lenin, too, felt a huge responsibility to be guided by an ideology and to meet his historical destiny, whatever the costs.

The state and the people

The Tsars had inherited a monarchy with an aristocracy owing service to the Tsar and all lands belonging to the Tsars. By 1855 this had been modified in practice, but there was no contractual idea of a mutual obligation by rulers and ruled. The state was very dominant in theory if not in practice. The elements of the state – the bureaucracy, the army and the official church – were much stronger than was the case, say in America or Britain. In strict

Marxist theory the state would wither away after the Revolution and the state was simply a means of class oppression. But in the short term, the state would be used by those who had taken power for the workers to impose a dictatorship of the proletariat. The state would be used against the class enemies of the workers until the time that the golden age would emerge of true socialism. So Lenin, like the Tsars needed a strong state.

The bureaucracy

The official bureaucracy remained. The so-called Lenin Recruitment drafted thousands into the party and the measures taken to control Russian economic life demanded a considerable administrative machine which was to be a major feature of Soviet life. The police apparatus was important for both Tsarist and Leninist Russia: for instance, the Okhrana was replicated by the new Cheka early in the Soviet regime.

The army

The army was a major element in Lenin's Russia because of the Civil War. The Red Army fought dissidents just as the Imperial army had; it was at war with foreign powers just as the Imperial army was. The Red Army struggled with Polish forces just as the Imperial army had. The functions of both Imperial forces and Red forces in suppressing internal dissent remained the same. Indeed this reached its highest point under Stalin when police and army uniforms were made the same. This political deployment of regular military forces had not been a feature generally of America or Western Europe in the period 1855–1917. Nor was it general practice after the First World War. Lenin inherited and developed a particular feature of Tsarist Russia.

Industry

In economic terms, the state in Russia had been a major contributor. Businesses were not nationalised, but were heavily dependent on the state to commission and purchase products, to provide investment and infrastructure. The massive industrial expansion after 1891 would not have been possible without the state. Lenin took over industry for the state, so in a sense went further, but he did not move far from Tsarist industrial policy, especially with the greater influence of the state on production that had occurred during the war.

Rural life

In agriculture, the state – or the Tsar – was a major landowner; the state dictated much about the organisation of landowning and in theory the land was the states. Lenin permitted greater freedom initially to the peasants, but he made it clear that all land belonged to the people – not individually but collectively. As the people's will was interpreted by the party and the party was the state, then really the land was owned by the state on behalf of the people. Like the Tsars, Lenin reserved the right to control the land. When he needed to, he took the products of the land by wartime requisitioning.

The church

The Orthodox Church which had supported the Tsarist regime was not obviously a pillar of Lenin's rule. However, both regimes rested firmly on doctrines – Orthodox Christianity and Marxism; both had an interest in spreading these doctrines; both liked ceremonies; both taught ideologies in schools. There is greater contrast between, say, Britain and France which were largely secular societies whose politics was not based on theories and ideology

and in which religion was essentially a private matter, than there is between Lenin's Russia and the Russia of the Tsars where ideologies played a much larger role.

The role of the leader

The Russian Empire

The Tsars believed strongly in personal responsibilities. The Emancipation was driven at key points by Alexander II himself and the nature of the state changed because of the ideas and personality of the ruler. Alexander III too ruled personally. The liberal direction in which Russia was heading was reversed because of the personal influence of the Tsar. Nicholas II, a less thoughtful or forceful personality nevertheless saw his duty in terms of personal leadership and went further than his two predecessors in taking personal charge of the armed forces in a major war. A cabinet system did not exist; advice was given by ministers personally. There was even after 1905 and the creation of a Duma, little mechanism for controlling the Tsars or formal limitations on their power. The main limitations were practical; the repressive forces at their command were, by modern standards, relatively limited; communications in their vast empire were poor; there was the threat of urban riots, national resistance, peasant violence which offered considerable dangers. There was too the need to consider international opinion.

The USSR

Lenin as a Bolshevik leader before 1917 had been part of a loosely-knit revolutionary movement. There were considerable differences of opinion within the Social Democrats which meant that Lenin's ideas were scrutinised and criticised in a way that none of the Tsar's views had been. Lenin was a fierce debater and found plenty of opposition to his views about the nature of the party and the interpretation of Marxist theory. As Bolsheviks were spread all over Europe and Russia, the establishment of any firm central control was difficult and Lenin was not a Tsar of his party before 1917. In 1917 his ideas were greeted with some horror by his party comrades. His insistence on taking power was thought unrealistic and inconsistent with the views of Marx. How could true Communism come before the necessary bourgeois phase in a country's history had been developed? Only by applying all his powers of persuasion and his natural leadership qualities did Lenin persuade the Bolsheviks to support a take over in October 1917. After that, Lenin ruled not as undisputed 'Tsar' but with a cabinet of Commissars. So on the face of it, a head of a party which openly discussed both theory and tactics, could not really be a Tsar. Lenin's colleagues offered opposition and sometimes advice that no Tsar would have received. Lenin was advised to curtail his affair with Inessa Armand after his wife had complained to the Central Committee! Lenin had on occasion to plead, to offer his resignation; and he had to persuade and cajole the Party Congresses in a way that the Tsar did not. Yet, for all this key decisions were Lenin's. The most important of these were the timing of the Revolution. Lenin personally encouraged the harshest repression in the Civil War; he pushed through the acceptance of the peace Treaty with the Germans, the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk; his energies were behind the economic measures which rapidly nationalised finance and industry. Above all the Land policy, which seemed to give lands to the peasants in November 1917 against all Marxist theory, was his policy.

Lenin saw most of all that power must come first and that the opportunity for taking power must be seized. He saw that keeping power by any means must be the priority; his interpretation of Marxism was the theoretical basis of the new regime. When he deviated

from ideology or even what the bulk of the party believed, as with the introduction of the New Economic Policy in 1921, then his personal authority and persuasion were the key to the change.

In appearance and manner, Lenin was far from appearing a Tsar – but the worker's cap and the three-piece suit (Fig. 1.4) were as much symbols as all the robes and uniforms of the Tsars (Fig. 1.5).



Figure 1.4 This propaganda poster shows the iconic depiction of Lenin.



Figure 1.5 Nicholas II reviewing troops in 1915. The photo shows a short man – the splendid horse, the sword, the military uniform seem very different from Lenin.

Modernisation and adaptability

None of the Tsars after 1855 was totally opposed to change. Whether it arrived as economic development, or offering concessions to the peasants, or attempting some sort of institutional development, they did not stand still. They were also forced to adapt to changing circumstances by wars or the emergence of discontent. But they did not change the fundamental political philosophy of their regime. Autocracy and tradition remained. In this respect, Lenin can be seen to be in line with the Tsarist tradition. Once Communism had been established as the dominant ideology, this never changed. Lenin's Ban on Factions restricted discussion. Opposition was not allowed to function; there was little chance for any alternative political philosophy to be debated. However, there were adjustments to circumstances. Lenin made concessions to the peasantry first in November 1917 with the Land Decree and then in March 1921 with the New Economic Policy. In no way did Lenin give up the theory that land belonged to the people as a whole; in no way did he give up his belief that collective agriculture was beneficial. In practice, to keep power, he made concessions. This is very similar to Nicholas II after 1905. Autocracy was central, but to keep power there had to be elections, a new national Duma and the concept of 'loyal opposition'. Alexander II offered a series of modernising reforms which were curtailed if they seemed to be a threat to the underlying autocracy. Even Alexander III made some concessions to the peasantry. Conservatives opposed even the limited Tsarist reforms, just as those in the Communist party who looked back to the strict orthodoxy of Marx were concerned about the concessions made in 1921. The Tsars found reforming ministers who were nevertheless deeply committed to the underlying principles of the regime. Lenin found in the party those who accepted and defended change – like Nikolai Bukharin who defended the NEP concessions. The difference is that Alexander II and Nicholas II were more prepared to compromise their underlying principle of concentrated power than was Lenin. The local councils in town and countryside offered opportunities for debate and participation. Nicholas II's Duma marked a big departure from total absolute monarchy even if its powers were limited. Lenin offered no such political concession or opportunity. Aware that economic change is linked to political change, there was a determination to maintain the political monopoly of the Bolsheviks at all costs and not to even offer the possibility of a 'loyal opposition'. In that respect he was closer to the rigidity of Alexander III and possibly 'more Tsarist than the Tsars'.

The arts

The Tsars and Lenin shared artistic interests. Culture was an important political weapon for both; for the Tsars Russian cultural achievements were linked to Russian national pride and cultural superiority over the subject peoples. The grandeur of the palaces and the royal architecture was a visual expression of autocracy. The state offered patronage – even Alexander III had a keen interest in Russian art and established a major gallery. Russian art thrived after 1855. The Imperial opera and ballet saw a golden age of masterpieces by Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, and the young Stravinsky. Elite patronage was an important element. Innovation was not discouraged and the roots of the post-war avant-garde developments in painting (Fig. 1.6), architecture and music can be seen in pre-war culture.

The Revolution provided a different sort of stimulation. With a sense of political re-birth, many artists were moved to develop new ideas that they had been considering before 1917 and to take them forward (Fig. 1.7). In many ways artistic developments happened regardless of revolution, but in some cases were inspired by Lenin's new Russia



Figure 1.6 Ilya Repin, *Ukrainian Girl by a Fence*, 1876. Oil on canvas. The Art Museum of Belarus, Minsk, Belarus.



Figure 1.7 *Improvisation 209*, Vasilii Vasilliyevich Kandinsky, 1917. Collection of the Surikov Museum of Art, Krasnoyarsk.

The distance between Repin's portrait and Kandinsky's abstraction (Figs 1.6 and 1.7) is huge, but both the Tsarist and Leninist regimes saw flourishing artistic life, which did not seem to depend on political liberty.

A major difference is the politicisation of art under Lenin. Initially this did not compromise artistic standards as the best artists of the day, like Dimitri Moor, made Soviet posters works of art. Also, nascent cinema was used to take propaganda to the countryside in a way unknown under the Tsars.

More avant-garde posters show the influence of artists like Malevich and Kandinsky. Later Soviet art was far more conservative. The same is true of music. Shostakovich's 2nd and 3rd symphonies combine intense modernism with praise of the revolution. The composer Alexander Mosolov tried to put the sounds of an iron foundry into music.

The argument for discontinuity

The dominant theme of rule under the Tsars was essentially conservatism. The ceremonial, the vocabulary – the recitation of the Tsar's long list of titles – the lifestyle were essentially backward looking. The reforms which were made were the result of external pressure – mainly war or threat of revolution. Tsarism compared even with similar regimes in Europe was old fashioned from 1855–1917, and there was little sense of vision or progress. The three Tsars from 1855 were essentially holding back more fundamental change. The closest

Sources

A To Tsaritsyn Province Labour Committee

You are directed as a battle order to take decisive measures to mobilise 3,000 men and 8,000 women for the Astrakhan Fishing Industry without fail. Implementation is your personal responsibility.

B Lenin, Chairman of the Defence Council, 25 March 1921

At a stroke, 11,000 people would be drafted into forced labour. Treat the Jews and urban inhabitants of the Ukraine with an iron rod; transfer them to the front; do not let them into any government agencies.

C Draft resolution of Policy in the Ukraine, 21 November 1919

11 August 1918.
Letter to V. A. Kuraev and other Bolshevik leaders in Penza province

Hang (hang without fail, so that people see) no fewer than one hundred known Kulaks, rich men, and bloodsuckers.

Publish their names

Take from them all their grain

Designate hostages

Strangle to death the bloodsucking Kulaks

Telegraph receipt and implementation

Yours

Lenin

D To Comrade Berzin, 14 August 1918

Do not spare money on publications in three or four languages (propaganda). The Berliners will send some more money; if the scum delay, complain to me formally

Yours

Lenin

Letters all quoted in: Richard Pipes, *The Unknown Lenin*, 1996

that they came to a dynamic mission was Pan Slavism, and even that was mostly reduced to its more negative aspects of Russification. This cannot be compared to the strong sense of vision and forward movement which motivated Lenin. His philosophy was based on progress towards a golden age of socialism, not back to golden age of Tsarist grandeur. His famous saying 'One step forward, two steps back' was a realisation of the huge difficulties that he faced in pursuing a vision, but to see him as trying to preserve power for its own sake on the model of the Tsars is wrong. It is a superficial comparison to say that both rulers were motivated by something higher when their political outlooks and philosophies were so very different. There is no equivalent in any Tsar's outlook to the influence of Marxist theory on Lenin.

It is true that the state did not wither away under Lenin and that it was violent and oppressive. But the nature of state control was very different. The state bureaucracy of the Tsars was often inefficient, as the wars of 1904–5 and 1914–17 showed; it was slow and inadequate. It could be cruel, but often this was a result of poor communications and inefficient control from the centre. Its procedures were cumbersome, but it owed its ethos to service to a Tsar seen as the father of his people. The Soviet state was highly politicised and its ethos dominated by class war. The domination of local areas from the centre was a strong feature of Lenin's rule and he engaged in a sort of micro management that the Tsars did not.

Lenin: a personal rule

The revelation of Lenin's correspondence show him personally ordering slave labour, executions, hostages, waging class war, directing propaganda and acknowledging funds received from Germany.

There are similarities – the Tsars repressed, they punished; there was terror and encouragement for the populace to obey. However, there is a new element in Lenin's personalised control over the minutiae of the process and the sheer scale of politically directed violence that is alien to the world of the Tsars. The use of the party to carry out repression has no real parallel in Tsarist times. The world of Lenin seems much closer to that of twentieth centuries dictators like Hitler, Mao ZeDong and the inheritor of the system, Stalin, than to Alexander II and his successors. Comparisons can be made superficially, but the evidence from letters and telegrams sent by Lenin seems to place him in a different world from that of the Russian rulers.

In terms of the economic development, there are more differences than similarities. The motivation for the collective farms, which Lenin tried with limited success to promote, was different from the motivation of Alexander II and III to sustain traditional peasant farming. Lenin was looking forward to a Soviet agriculture in which the peasant would be a sort of rural proletarian. The Tsars, on the other hand, were seeking to preserve traditional authority. Imposing requisitioning on the peasants went beyond anything attempted by the Tsars, who would never have interfered with property to that extent. The direct control of industry and finance imposed by a rapid series of decrees went beyond the indirect impact of the Tsarist state on industry, even in the First World War. The lack of care about money supply and the roaring inflation of the Lenin period were in marked contrast to the Tsars preference for secure money and foreign confidence. The Tsars lived in a world where they needed to interact with other countries; Lenin lived in a fantasy world where other countries were enemies or territories ripe for control.

As has been clear both Lenin and the Tsars were deeply personal rulers. What is without parallel is the period where Lenin was too ill after having a stroke in 1923 to rule effectively and power passed to the triumvirate of Trotsky, Kamenev and Zinoviev (see Fig. 2.3, page 69).

Source

23 July 1919, Lenin to Stalin

The revolution in Italy should be spurred on. Hungary should be sovietised and perhaps also Czechoslovakia and Romania. Lithuania should be sovietised first and then handed over to the Lithuanian people.

In ignoring pleas from Jewish communities in Poland to stop attacks on Jews by the Red army; in having no sympathy for nationalist feelings and revealing a clear intention to bring all

parts of the Tsarist empire under control, Lenin reveals similarities with certain aspects of the Tsars, but it is the notion of sovietizing that marks the real discontinuity. The emphasis is not on Russian or Imperial control of internal nationalities and other countries, but the use of class war and political propaganda. Lenin's imperialism was more effective, systematic and politicised than that of Tsars and that makes him more than just a Red Tsar.

Letters all quoted in: Richard Pipes, *The Unknown Lenin*, 1996

The personal responsibility of Lenin for key decisions can be illustrated by sources on the execution of the Tsar and his family July 1918.

Sources

A Memoirs of Yurovsky

A leading Bolshevik in Ekaterinburg wrote in his memoirs of 1922 that as the newly appointed commandant of the House of Special Purpose (where the Tsar and his family were imprisoned) he established a harsher regime 'until a definite decision came from the centre' about the fate of the Tsar

Lenin Dmitri Volkogonov, p. 214, 1995

B Nikunin, a participant in the executions:

There was a volley of shots: one, two, three! Some of the royal family weren't quite dead and had to be finished off later. In my opinion we did the job humanely. I doubt if the Urals Soviet would have taken the responsibility themselves, you know, for the shooting, without an order from Lenin, or one of the other leaders without their unspoken agreement.

C Ioffe, the ambassador in Berlin wrote in his memoirs that he was simply told that the Tsar had been executed:

I knew nothing of his wife and family. I thought they were alive. When Dzerzhinsky visited Berlin, incognito, I made him tell me the whole truth. He told me that Lenin had expressly forbidden that I should be told anything. He had said 'Better if Ioffe knows nothing, It'll be easier for him to lie'.

D Trotsky writing in his diary, recalled in 1935

I asked Sverdlov in passing, 'Oh yes, and where is the Tsar?' 'It's all over; he has been shot'..... 'And who made the decision?' I asked. 'We decided it here; Lenin believed we shouldn't leave the Whites a live banner to rally around, especially in the present circumstances'.

(All these quoted in Volkogonov, *Lenin*)

This indicates a personal level of decision making with a strong element of cynicism and deliberate deception beyond what might be described as Tsarist behaviours but comparable perhaps to that of a Hitler, Stalin or Napoleon.

The way that Lenin's incapacity was covered up – he was a sick man since the assassination attempt made by the SR Fanya Kaplan in August 1918, who did think Lenin was a sort of Tsar as she had been an active terrorist against Tsarist officials before the revolution – may indicate that the Bolsheviks believed that Lenin had the mystique of a Tsar. However the cult of Lenin, which began in his lifetime and grew to epic proportions after his death, continuing until the fall of Communism, went beyond *any* posthumous cult image of any of the Tsars. The evidence can be seen today by visitors to his embalmed body in the tomb outside the Kremlin. The leader as a sort of god was a unique phenomenon rather than a continuation of Tsarist practice.

Reform and change

Lenin, like Alexander II and Nicholas II, like Khrushchev but less like Stalin or Alexander III, bent in the face of widespread opposition and the realities of the political situation. Faced with a huge peasant revolt in Tambov province, evidence of a workers' opposition, a considerable revolt by the sailors of the Kronstadt naval base (not incidentally the same ones who had been loyal supporters of the revolution, as the rebels of 1921 were recently drafted into the naval base) Lenin, gave way to survive.

However, it is doubtful if this makes him in any similar to the Tsars. There is little suggestion that the Tsars were hostile to the Russian peasants or saw them as a means to create a new industrial society (and when this caused massive resentment gave concessions which they knew were temporary). There is no suggestion that the Tsars were so dominated by class hatred that they were willing to destroy sections of their subjects in a way that Lenin envisaged for the richer peasants. There is no suggestion that the Tsars were so hostile to representative democracy that they controlled all outlets for expression and all democratic institutions. Nicholas II may not have liked his Duma and may have restricted its powers and controlled its electorate, but he did not, as did Lenin, go to the Duma and lounge contemptuously in the chamber before dispersing it with troops after one day. Nor did any Tsar justify concessions by reference to a theory which claimed that they had been planned all along: Lenin justified an obvious retreat in 1921 by claiming that NEP was necessary in ideological terms and had been pre-planned from the start. This type of outrageous political lie was not a common feature of Tsarism.

One of Lenin's closest pre-Revolutionary comrades summed him up in a memoir published in Paris in 1937,

'No one else possessed the secret of Lenin's hypnotic power over people, or rather his dominance over them. They unswervingly followed only Lenin as the sole undisputed leader. Lenin represented that rare phenomenon in Russia, a man with iron will, indomitable energy, who poured fanatical faith into the movement and the cause, and had no less faith in himself. ... Behind these good qualities lurked great deficiencies, negative qualities, more appropriate perhaps in a mediaeval or Asiatic conqueror.'
(Volkogonov, p. 81.)

If Lenin were like a Tsar, it was not a Tsar of the previous century, as none of them had these qualities or aspired to that sort of leadership.

The arts

Here the comparison is at its most superficial. Russian art did flourish in the late Tsarist period and it did flourish in the Lenin period. However, the atmospheres of the period were different and the priorities of art were different. Thoughtful artists like Tchaikovsky and

Chekhov were representative of a depressed feeling. Tchaikovsky's best work has a sense of dissolution and despair made more poignant by the obvious beauties. It is also quite conservative – his first symphony differs very little in terms of harmony or orchestration from his last. This is true of much of the art, music and architecture of the post-1855 period, and foreign influences are very strong.

Folk songs are often orchestrated in the French or German style in Russian music. The influence of French art is very pronounced: just as foreign investment dominated Russian industry, so French and German techniques and aesthetics dominated much of Russian cultural life. This was less true of literature, but there is a distinctly pessimistic air in much of the writing. Chekhov's plays do not celebrate a new world; they reflect on the passing of the old. What most pleased foreign observers was the celebration of a Russia that never was in Diaghilev's clever commercialisation of Russian folk art in dance and Bakst's colourful reworking of traditional elements in Russian art. The artistic developments under Lenin inhabit a different world, because Lenin's regime, for all its brutality and dictatorship, looked forward and required positive attitudes from the art that it patronised. Those who rejected this, like Rakhmaninov, went abroad.

Traditionalists like Glazunov and Miaskovsky who remained had to put a positive spin on their essentially late-Tsarist music. In Lenin's Russia, prominence was given to the adaptation by the avant-garde to social and political needs. New buildings were for the people. Cubist or abstract art was turned into posters to exhort support for the Bolsheviks. In the end, this 'formalism' was condemned and political art became much more old-fashioned; but the temporary alliance of a radical state with radical art produced a very different artistic atmosphere and very different products from those of the pre-1914 period, and comparisons break down.

Sources

- A** Marcel Liebman, *Leninism under Lenin*, 1975
- B** Edward Acton, *Rethinking the Russian Revolution*, 1990

Let there be no misconception, however, the authority that Lenin enjoyed had nothing dictatorial about it, and if he sometimes sought to impose his on his followers an attitude of unconditional acceptance, he aimed to do this not so much to ensure allegiance to himself personally, but to obtain unity round a theory that he believed to be correct

In a few short years Lenin was able to do so much that it is hard to believe one man capable of it. The party had become a state within a state, its dictatorship a fact. Religion had been replaced by the harsh Bolshevik ideology of Leninism. Party absolutism had replaced Tsarist autocracy... The fact that Lenin's system survived for seventy years depended on its harsh authoritarianism and the manipulation of the public mind than any inherent virtues.

Sources A and B: Dmitri Volkogonov, *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Empire*, 1998

The fact that Lenin's policies were adopted owed as much to the fact that they were in accordance with rank and file radicalism as to Lenin's persuasiveness. Lenin was perhaps not an all-powerful dictator, and if he is to be criticised it should be on the grounds of ill-founded optimism, rather than insincerity

The situation facing Stalin

Lenin's death in 1924 led to a period of collective leadership. There were some very influential figures in the ruling council, the **Politburo**. It was the bureaucrat, the General secretary, whom Lenin had seen as 'too rude' to be trusted, that emerged as the leader. Stalin emerged as the dominant influence on policy gradually, but was seen as the heir to Lenin by the end of 1926 when the so-called 'left' opposition to him in the Politburo was removed and his greatest possible rival **Trotsky** forced into exile. But his ascendancy might be dated from the defeat of the supporters of **NEP** – the so-called 'right opposition' in 1928. Bukharin said to his former rival Kamenev,

'Stalin is a Genghis Khan, an unscrupulous intriguer who sacrifices everything to the preservation of his power.' (Quoted Radzinsky, *Stalin*.)

In January 1929 Stalin confirmed his ascendancy and Trotsky was sent out of Russia. The former influential Bolsheviks were powerless and the central committee was dominated by Stalin supporters.

BIOGRAPHY

Trotsky (Lev Davidovich Bronstein) 1879–1940 was a Ukrainian Jew. He was a revolutionary activist who met Lenin in London in 1902. He tried to unite the Bolshevik and Menshevik wings of the Social Democrats and was associated with the more moderate Mensheviks for a time. In 1905 he organised the first Soviet during the Revolution. Arrested after the Revolution he escaped and was a revolutionary in exile. He came back to Russia from the USA in 1917 and organised the Military Revolutionary

Committee, masterminding the actual Bolshevik take over in October. As Commissar for war he took a leading part in the victory of the Civil War and was the creator of the Red Army. He failed to take the initiative and gain power after Lenin died and was pushed out of office and out of Russia by Stalin. He opposed Stalin's foreign and industrial policy in the 1920s and condemned Stalin's purges in the 1930s. He was eventually murdered in Mexico by a Stalinist agent.

Unlike Lenin, Stalin had risen to power through a long process of using the Soviet system and in the face of talented rivals. Lenin had always been seen as a potential leader. Stalin had been portrayed by his enemies as a provincial boor and dull bureaucrat. In reality Stalin was a well-read and relatively cultivated person, more highly regarded by Lenin than has been thought. However, unlike the Tsars he had not necessarily been expected to rule. Unlike the Tsars and Lenin he had had to intrigue, use the party, use the cult of Lenin and exploit divisions among his possible rivals and Trotsky's reluctance to use his military connections to establish his power. So Stalin's rise was untypical of the period.

However, the problems he faced were by no means untypical for the period 1855–1964. Unlike Alexander II in 1855, Stalin did not face the results of an unsuccessful war, but in a sense the effects of both the First World War and the Civil War were still being felt.

Unlike Nicholas II, in 1905 there were no revolutionary outbreaks to cope with, but like Nicholas he had to consider the ongoing survival of the regime.

Unlike Lenin, he did not have to establish a completely new form of Communist state – that had been done and was even gaining some international recognition. However, like Lenin, he did face the problem of establishing something new – a communist state that was

Politburo

The ruling executive body of Communist Russia – equivalent to the British cabinet

NEP

The New Economic Policy was introduced by Lenin in March 1921. It replaced requisitioning (seizure) of crops by a tax in kind and allowed private trade by the peasants. It also allowed smaller industrial businesses to be owned and to trade privately. It was seen as a betrayal of hard line Communists; but in reality it was the only way for the regime to survive.

not based on peasant landowning but on communal agriculture which would support a massive industrial drive. Stalin was faced with the need to undertake a second revolution almost as momentous as the first in order that Communism could become a reality and that the regime could be secure. A continuing peasant society with a slow-growing mostly private industry would, in the Communist view, which linked economic and political factors, lead to counter-revolution. Also, the USSR was not strong enough to withstand a foreign invasion. A repeat of the defeats by the smaller foreign powers of 1904–5 (or indeed 1853–56 or 1877–78) might well result in the fall of Communism. Disputes with Britain and anti-Communist sentiment in the USA, the strengthening of bonds between France and Germany, and the French diplomatic links with anti-Communist countries such as Poland, made this more of a reality for Stalin than it seems to be in retrospect. The countries of Eastern Europe were predominantly right wing, as was Italy. The USSR was isolated; for example, Communists were persecuted in China. The strengthening of defences was as much a priority for Stalin as it had been for the Tsars and was to be for Khrushchev facing an ongoing arms race with the West. In terms of infrastructure, Russia needed to advance as much as it did under the Tsars; there were *still* backward communications. However, like his predecessors, Stalin did not approach these problems in a disinterested way. Development was associated with the need to secure his own power and to destroy his real and imagined enemies. Stalin was deeply influenced by Marxist theory in a way that the Tsars, of course, were not. Lenin had had to adapt theory to reality, but Stalin was in a stronger position to apply it. What the balance was in Stalin's internal policies between, on the one hand, the rational consideration of Russia's economic, social, defence and political problems and, on the other hand the desire to dominate and to exercise power on a ruthless scale, is still debated. Also still under debate was whether Stalin's ideas were *reflecting* strong elements within the party or were *manipulating* the party into policies of massive social and economic change for his own advantage.

How did Stalin respond to the situation?

What characterised Stalin's domestic policies was their sheer lack of compromise, in contrast with the policies of all the other rulers in this period, and the enormous scale of change that he effected. Though it is possible to see similarities in aspects of the economic policy with what had gone before, the massive scale of industrialisation makes Stalin's policies unique. The collectivisation of agriculture might have gone back to Russian traditions and some might think it recreated aspects of serfdom and communal farming. However, the scale of violence applied in the countryside and the disruption this caused have no real parallel. The social changes involved have something in common with the impact of population growth and urbanisation under the Tsars, but again the transformation in society was so great that comparison is not really justified. Finally, the massive impact of state power on the population which, though not uniform throughout Stalin's rule, marked out another unique feature: that of unprecedented terror.

Stalin was not the only ruler to repress the Russian people. For most of the period there was a heavy reliance on state power to prevent opposition and to enforce policies about which there was little possibility of public discussion. Exile, penal colonies in remote and bleak parts of the Empire, harsh prisons, spies and fear were aspects of Russian life which were common to Tsarist and Communist rule. However Stalin's rule differs in two significant respects: firstly in scale and secondly in the phenomenon of the Purges. These have no real parallel before or after his rule in the widespread effects they had on the life of the people and the development of the country.

ACTIVITY

Can Stalin be seen as a Red Tsar?

- Look at the criteria of the Stretch and challenge activity on page 25.
- Make up five arguments for this proposition and five against. Put your ideas clearly on post-its and on a board, marked *Stalin as Tsar*, stick up your arguments with some supporting evidence. On a board marked *Stalin not a Tsar* put your post-its for this view.
- When the class has finished, look at the arguments and come to a conclusion.

Write down that conclusion on no more than two sides of A4.

Year	Death sentences	Those sent to camps or prisons	Those exiled	Other measures
1921	9,701	21,724	1817	2587
1922	1,962	2,656	166	1,219
1923	414	2,336	2,044	
1924	2,550	4,151	5,724	
1925	2,433	6,851	6,274	437
1926	990	7,547	8,571	696
1927	2,303	12,267	11,235	171
1928	869	16,211	15,640	1,037
1929	2,019	25,853	24,517	3,741
1930	20,201	114,443	58,816	14,609
1931	10,651	105,683	63,269	1,093
1932	22,738	73,946	36,017	29,228
1933	2,154	138,903	54,262	44,435
1934	2,056	59,451	5,994	11,498
1935	1,229	185,846	33,601	46,400
1936	1,118	219,418	23,719	30,415
1937	353,074	429,311	1,355	6,914
1938	328,618	205,509	16,342	3,289
1939	2,552	54,666	3,783	2,888
1940	1,649	65,727	2,142	2,288
1941	8,011	65,000	1,200	1,210
1942	23,278	88,809	7,072	5,249
1943	3,029	70,610	649	821
1944	3,029	70,610	666	458
1945	2,896	116,681	1,647	668
1946	2,896	117,943	1,498	957
1948	–	72,509	419	298
1949	–	64,509	10,316	300
1950	475	54,466	5,225	475
1951	1,609	49,142	3,425	599
1952	1,612	25,824	773	591
1953 (first half)	198	7,894	38	273
TOTAL	799,455	2,634,397	425,512	215,942

Figures taken from B. P. Kurashvili (1996), *A History of the Stalin's System*, quoted in Moshe Lewin, *The Soviet Century*, Verso 2005

Table 1.1 The number of people whom the Security forces of the soviet regime, the 'secret police', brought to trial and their fate between 1921 and 1953, when Stalin died.

Gulag

This was the name given to the prison/labour camps which spread throughout the Communist USSR, particularly under Stalin. Often situated in cold and remote regions, they housed millions of prisoners, especially in the late 1930s. Conditions were inhumane and death rates were high for the ZEKs (prisoners). They were still heavily used after 1945 though fell into disuse after Stalin's death.

KGB

The KGB was the Committee for State Security; the name given to the secret police, spy and security organisation of Russia from 1954–1991.

Kulak

peasants who owned their own farm and as a result were strongly opposed to communist Collectivisation. The term 'kulak' literally meant 'fist' – the idea was to encourage a sturdy Russian peasant middle class to stand between the state and the masses. Under Communism it came to mean 'tightfisted'. (See also Chapter 3.)

VOZHD

The title Stalin adopted. It roughly means 'the Boss' or the Chief. Stalin was in theory only the Secretary of the Party; in practice he was the national leader.

The scale

Huge numbers are often spoken of when the 'Gulags' or prison/labour camps of the Stalin period are discussed. After 1989 more documentation was available and the statistics in Table 1.1 are based less on 'guesstimates' than the record keeping which the Soviet administration valued.

To help to put these extraordinary figures into some sort of perspective: The KGB brought 5413 criminal prosecutions to court between 1959 and 1962. They brought 58,298 in for suspicion of anti-Soviet activities between 1967–70.

The figures for those executed between 1921 and 1953 exceed the total British war dead for the First World War.

Political violence had been part of the Soviet regime since the beginning. The Civil War had been a particularly bitter experience with mass executions, tortures and imprisonment. While the level of violence fell after 1921 it never disappeared. In effect another civil war in the countryside increased the political violence, with agrarian resistance being met with force and class warfare waged on the so-called 'kulaks'. The death toll here was high and the famines, which followed the disruption of the countryside, can be seen as an additional punishment imposed by the state on its people.

Added to this was a political struggle within the party which led to the disgrace of both right and left opposition groups and the strengthening of the centre group of the party leadership under Stalin. In 1933 there was a large-scale 'purging' of the party membership, with perhaps 400,000 expulsions. With the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 and the rise to power of Hitler in 1933, there is no doubt that Russia did face potential enemies. Hitler had made quite explicit that he linked the threat from the Jews and the Communists to Germany and thought that Judaeo-Bolshevism must be eliminated: that Germans needed 'Lebensraum' in Slav lands. The dangers exceeded anything faced by the Tsars or perhaps even Lenin, as the determination of the allied intervention force during the Civil War 1919–20 was not great and allied action was not popular in their home countries. Given this, there was an unprecedented need for internal discipline and security.

Stalin did face opposition from his own party about the conduct of the Five-Year Plans. A possible rival was Sergei Kirov, the Leningrad Party boss who was assassinated in 1934. Kirov's death was used as justification for the existence of counter-revolutionary plots.

There followed a series of Show Trials of leading party members in 1936. At first elite groups were chosen. Tortured and pressured, they admitted working against the Soviet system and were executed. The accusations spread to the armed forces, to specialists in industry, to managers, to ethnic groups (like the Polish communists) then to 'kulaks' and ordinary soviet citizens. The persecutions reached a peak in 1937 and fell away by 1939, but the atmosphere of suspicion and fear they created were unique in the period and more akin to the random persecutions of Ivan the Terrible or Peter the Great.

While this fantastic terror was going on, Soviet society was becoming more diverse, the economy was growing, the population rising, public works flourishing and the arts offering more conservative products but with a strong flavour. Composers like Shostakovich may have had a bag packed ready for when they were arrested at night and taken to imprisonment and possible death, but they produced distinctive Soviet music, some of it, like the composer's fifth symphony, among the most distinguished works of the century.

Cinema reflected a world far removed from the backward Russia of the early 20th century and presiding over this modernisation was the new Tsar – the VOZHD – the 'Leader' now seen as all-knowing and infallible by a dazed nation.

Though it was Stalin who was dazed by Hitler's invasion of 1941 – the great Leader distrusted millions of totally innocent people but had a seemingly complete faith in a pathological German dictator who had widely written that his intention was to destroy Communism and enslave the Russian people and who had built a huge army to do just that!

Wartime Russia resisted the Germans with a superhuman effort, but at least a million and a half collaborated and guerrilla warfare was being waged by anti-Soviet partisans well after the defeat of Germany. Stalin saw no reason to change the basic policies which had produced victory and established him as complete dictator. The post-war years saw the application of the basic tenets of Stalinism to Eastern Europe and even more stress on central control at home. There was a likelihood that the purges of the 1930s would begin again in Russia in 1953 (they had already been a feature of the new so-called Eastern European 'satellite states'). However Stalin died before this could be implemented.

ACTIVITY

Can Stalin be considered similar or different to Lenin?

- Make up five arguments that there was considerable continuity between Stalin's dictatorship and that of Lenin and make up five arguments that there was no real continuity.
- Share your arguments with the class, using post-its on two boards.
- Then write on no more than two sides of A4 your view as to how similar Stalin and Lenin were as rulers of Russia.

What problems faced Khrushchev?

Like Stalin, he had to dominate the Politburo and eliminate rivals. In the Stalinist tradition, Beria was shot; other rivals lost influence and were demoted. There was something of a repeat of the post-Lenin era but the death toll was not comparable, and when Khrushchev himself was ousted in 1964 he was not tried and executed. The Stalinist terror had left huge scars and Khrushchev had the problem of dismantling the repressive system but not ending the control the party had over its people and its enlarged empire.

Khrushchev faced a similar situation to Alexander II – to maintain the power he needed to make reforms. Unlike Nicholas II he was not being forced into this by unsuccessful war and popular revolution. But as with Alexander II his own inclinations, more liberal elements among the elite, discontents among the subject nations and a need for a more effective and modern economy to match rival nations were pressures for change. He lacked the liberal background of the Provisional Government of 1917; he did not inherit power like the Tsars, but like Stalin he had intrigued and struggled for power. Like all his predecessors he was strongly opinionated, but unlike them he came from a peasant background and had actually worked in industry.

How did Khrushchev respond to the situation?

The fear of popular uprising in 1953 can be seen by Beria bringing in tanks and troops into Moscow after Stalin's death. For all the repression of Stalin's last years and the absence of any indication of organised opposition, the leaders of Russia were still nervous enough to do this. Beria gave the orders, but the tanks could not save him from his enemies in government and he was tried and shot as a supposed British agent. The feeling was that the Soviet people could not endure the high levels of repression of the Stalin era. Amnesties, the gradual dismantling of the Gulags, a reduction in political arrests and execution, and the

Hitler's invasion

Stalin believed that Hitler would be faithful to the pact of friendship signed in August 1939 and ignored warnings from agents that the Germans were preparing for an invasion of Russia. Stalin was so shaken by Hitler breaking his word that he became withdrawn and issued orders for some time after the invasion.

BIOGRAPHY

Lavrenti Beria was one of Stalin's major henchmen. A fellow Georgian born in 1899 he replaced Yezhov as Commissar for Internal Affairs, the head of Russia's security forces. Made a Marshal of the USSR in 1945 he was the major figure behind Stalin's repression. Corrupt and toadying, he alienated the army and other members of the Politburo who had him shot when Stalin died.

public admission, at least to the Party in the 1956 Congress that errors had been made and that Stalin had pursued a 'cult of personality' were indications that high profile leadership on a sort of 'Red Tsar' level – with statues, uniforms, processions, ceremonies, a sort of adulatory court of followers – had given way to a more normal form of European political leadership. The new law code of 1958 limited the power of the police; but rather like Alexander II's introduction of trial by jury, could be overridden if necessary.

However there was a break with many aspects of the Stalin era, just as Alexander II broke with many aspects of the reign of his more repressive predecessor, Nicholas I. The naming of towns after the great VOZHD or leader had seemed to indicate that not only was Stalin aiming to emulate the Tsars but to go beyond them. Old titles were not enough. Stalin had taken entirely new ones like 'Generalissimo' and had been proclaimed an 'all-knowing expert' in every aspect of life – arts, science, and foreign affairs. This had gone beyond what was claimed by the Tsars since 1855 though it may have been true of earlier megalomaniac rulers like Peter the Great. Khrushchev did not appear in uniforms, was not an icon, condemned the cult of personality and did not destroy his rivals like an oriental despot. But he was not a liberal politician like the men of the Provisional Government either.

Khrushchev, unlike Stalin, did not rise by promoting a cult of the former leader, but rather by removing Stalin's supporters from office and suggesting a new way forward based on more concessions to consumers, more freedom of expression and better relations with the West. The most original feature of his rise to power was his accusation in the 1956 Party Congress that Stalin was a despot and had suppressed the people. It was Stalin who had ordered the purges, been behind Kirov's murder and left Russia unprepared for German attack in 1941. In other respects there were similarities. Like Stalin he had controlled the party machine as general secretary, like Lenin he condemned the former regime.

For the first time since the Zemstvos created by Alexander II, there was a move to decentralise and give more authority to the localities. A hundred regional councils, the *sovnarkhozy* were given control over production and not the central production ministries. Like Alexander II, this reform was challenged by revolt. The Tsar's liberalism had been checked by the emergence of terrorism; Khrushchev's changes were threatened by the 1956 Hungarian revolt. However he overcame conservative opposition and gave more power to local party officials.

Like Stalin, he faced some opposition in the party, but interestingly his opponents, Malenkov, Kaganovich and foreign minister Shepilov who tried to oust him in 1957 ended up with demotion to lesser posts, and not in KGB torture chambers. Kaganovich, one of Stalin's associates ended up managing a cement factory. Khrushchev certainly had the best sense of humour of any of Russia's rulers in the period. However, one characteristic that Khrushchev shared with his predecessors was a careful fostering of his own authority. When Marshal Zhukov aimed at more independence for the Red Army from the control of the party, he was ousted (October 1957). Then in 1958 Khrushchev became Premier. The party and the state were well within his control and the expansion of party membership to ten million gave him huge powers of patronage.

However the trappings of power, that Stalin and the Tsars so cultivated, were not emulated – in a person of Khrushchev's appearance, they would have been ludicrous. Nor did he adopt the head teacher persona of Lenin. He behaved in an uncouth way at home and abroad and posed as a simple farmer. To stress the change, Stalin was removed from Lenin's tomb in 1961 and the large number of places named after him and his allies were changed back. Stalino became once again Donetsk; Molotov became Perm again; Stalinsk became Novokuznetsk. To remain true to the Bolshevik past, Leningrad remained. Lenin remained an icon because his simple image – the overcoat – the suit – could be linked to Khrushchev's lack of grandeur

and his rumpled suits. But like Lenin, power was focused on him; he took key decisions and initiatives; he had huge control over the party and he played on his personal traits of character, exploiting outrageous behaviour, such as banging his shoe on the table at a UN meeting when the British prime minister Macmillan was speaking (Macmillan wittily asked for a translation). In the end that was his downfall. Personally associated with grand plans to bring more agricultural land into cultivation than the total sown acreage of 1928, pledged to increase the living standards and pledged to take the pressure off the Soviet defence spending by 'peaceful co-existence', failure would rebound directly on him and not the collective leadership of the party. By 1964 the Virgin Lands Scheme was showing weaknesses (see pages 95–98) and food shortages were evident; consumer goods had not flourished in line with expectations. Peaceful coexistence had given way to a massive example of confrontation with the USA (the Cuban missile crisis of 1962) in which nuclear war had been a possibility and troops and police had crushed a demonstration by workers (in 1962 at Novocherkassk) in the spirit, if not of Stalin, then at least that of Nicholas II at *Bloody Sunday*. For all their faults, Russia's leaders since 1855 were imposing figures who kept their dignity and maintained the mystique of government. Khrushchev was not an imposing or dignified figure and he could not offer much in the way of leadership quality in place of that sustained success.

Stretch and challenge

Which of Russia's rulers from 1855 to 1964 served the interests of the Russian people best?

- 1 This can be approached by first of all deciding how the interests of the Russian people can be interpreted. Discuss this with a partner and draw up a list of categories (for example, who offered the Russian people more freedom; who offered the most opportunities; who offered more security).
- 2 Then consider what each ruler offered and try to colour-code your notes according to the list of categories.
- 3 Then establish a thesis.

Does the answer depend on what benefits are considered? Did Kerensky offer greater liberty than other rulers, but Stalin offer greater opportunities? Did Lenin offer more equality, but was the greatest benefit the break from the past offered by Alexander II? Were the interests of the people in a largely agrarian society best served by traditionalists like Alexander III or Nicholas II, who tried to protect the people against violent political change?

Note: The important elements in this exercise are reflection and comparison. You will need to take time to think about this and to discuss it inside and outside the classroom, using the material in this book and your other research to make a frame for your thesis. You will not find a complete answer in a book or by a search on the internet. The thesis will need comparison of the key figures and categories.

Conclusion

You have now completed an overview of the period by looking at the similarities and contrasts of the rulers of Russia from 1855 to 1964. Later chapters will look in more detail at government, the economy and the impact of war. However, before moving on, you need to make an interim judgement by completing the exercise above. This can be reviewed and added to later in the course: reflection and additional knowledge will probably alter your view. But it is important that you do begin to make judgements.