

History A Level: Tsarist and Communist Russia

AQA AS/A Level History 7041/7042 Tsarist and Communist Russia, 1855–1964, 1H

Over the next two years you will be studying for an A Level in the above-mentioned course. Below is an outline of what you will study. If you would like to find out more detail, visit the AQA A Level History pages here: [AQA | History | AS and A-level | History](#)

This booklet is designed to give you a taste of some of the key individuals and themes of the course and to introduce you to the type of work you can expect to embark upon in lessons and independently.

Year 12: Part one: Autocracy, Reform and Revolution: Russia, 1855–1917

Trying to preserve autocracy, 1855–1894 (Alexander II, Alexander III, Nicholas II)

- Political authority and the state of Russia: autocracy; the political, social and economic condition of Russia in 1855 and the impact of the Crimean War
- Political authority and attempts at reform: Alexander II; emancipation of the serfs and attempts at domestic and military reform
- Government and Tsars: Alexander II and Alexander III as rulers; attitudes to and imposition of autocracy; key developments
- Political authority in action: Russification; treatment of ethnic minorities and Jews
- Opposition: ideas and ideologies; individuals; liberals and radical groups and the Tsarist reaction
- Economic and social developments: industrial developments and the land issue; social divisions; nobles, landowners and position of the peasantry; the cultural influence of the Church

The collapse of autocracy, 1894–1917 (Nicholas II)

- Political authority, government and Tsar; Nicholas II as ruler: political developments to 1914; 1905 Revolution; Duma government
- Economic developments to 1914: industrial and agricultural growth and change
- Social developments to 1914: change and conditions of working and living in towns and countryside; social divisions; cultural changes
- Opposition: ideas and ideologies, liberalism, socialism; Marxism; individuals and radical groups
- Political authority, opposition and the state of Russia in wartime: the political, economic and social problems of wartime; opposition and the collapse of autocracy; the political developments of 1917
- Political authority, opposition and government: the Bolshevik takeover and the establishment of Bolshevik government by December 1917; opposition

Year 13: Part two: the Soviet Union, 1917–1964 (A Level only)

The emergence of Communist dictatorship, 1917–1941 (Lenin, Stalin)

- Political authority and government: new leaders and ideologies; Lenin's Russia, ideology and change; Stalin's rise, ideology and change
- Political authority and government: the consolidation of Bolshevik authority and development of the Stalinist dictatorship
- Economic developments: Lenin's decrees; the Stalinist economy; collectivisation and the Five Year Plans
- Social developments: effect of Leninist/Stalinist rule on class, women, young people, religion and national minorities; propaganda and cultural change
- Opposition: faction; the Red Terror and the purges
- The political, economic and social condition of the Soviet Union by 1941

The Stalinist dictatorship and reaction, 1941–1964 (Stalin, Khrushchev)




- Political authority, opposition and the state of Russia in wartime: the political, economic and social impact of war; effect on Stalin, government and 'the people'
- Political authority and government to 1953: High Stalinism; the revival of terror; destruction of 'supposed' opposition and cult of personality; the power vacuum on Stalin's death
- Political authority and government: Khrushchev's rise to power; policies and ideology; de-Stalinisation; political and party change
- Economic and social developments: changes in industrial organisation from Stalin to Khrushchev; agriculture and the Virgin Lands scheme; social and cultural change from Stalin to Khrushchev
- Opposition: cultural dissidents; communist divisions; hardliners and reformers; opponents of Khrushchev and his fall from power
- The political, economic and social condition of the Soviet Union by 1964

Your exam in Year 13 will involve writing **two essays in answer to questions on the themes of the course** and around the concepts of cause, consequence, change, continuity, similarity, difference and significance. You will be given a statement and will need to argue in favour and against it towards a conclusion explaining how far you agree.

You will also write an **essay analysing and evaluating how convincing you find three different historians' interpretations** on a given topic of the course. This is not dissimilar to the interpretations question you have practiced at GCSE. The interpretation extracts will be longer and more complex, but you will once again compare them to your own knowledge to reach a judgement on how convincing you find the argument overall.


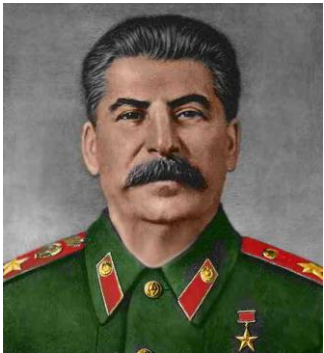

Russian Government: From Autocracy to Totalitarianism

Below are the names, dates and images of the leaders of Russia during the period you will study as your unit on Russian history. For centuries before our period, Russia was run by an autocratic government. This means rule by one (usually) man who has absolute power. In February and October 1917 Russia experienced revolutions whereby the monarchy (known as the tsars) was overthrown in favour of a representative democracy (known as the Provisional Government), which was in turn overthrown by a Communist group called the Bolsheviks. The Bolsheviks later changed their name to the Communist Party.

Tsars		
Tsar Alexander II	Tsar Alexander III	Tsar Nicholas II
		

August von Haxthausen *Studies on the Interior of Russia*, 1844

A leader is absolutely indispensable in the Russian life. The Russian selects a father if God has taken his natural father from him... One must keep this point clearly in mind if one is to understand the position of the Tsar. Russian society is very much like a colony of bees, in which royalty is a natural necessity. Just as the colony would cease to exist without the queen so, too, would Russian society cease to exist without the Tsar

Communists		
Vladimir Lenin	Stalin	Nikita Khrushchev
		

Lenin speaking in 1921

There are only two kinds of government possible in Russia – a government by the soviets or a government headed by a tsar

Snapshots of History

TASK: What can you suggest about the similarities and differences between Tsarist rulers and communist rulers from images? What can learn and infer about Russian history from these sources?

Below each source, explain what it might suggest about the nature of government or the nature of Russia at the time. **BE SPECIFIC!** Point to/ describe **EXACTLY** which aspects of the source suggest this to you!!

Please note: you will **NOT** be analysing and evaluating sources as part of your unit on Russia (we analyse and evaluate interpretations). Nonetheless, we will, of course, use sources to inform and elucidate our studies.



(Coronation of Tsar Alexander III & Tsarina Maria Fyodorovna)



(Emancipation of the Russian serfs by Alexander II in 1861)



Communism and Autocracy: Similarities and Differences

TASK: Read through the information comparing tsarism with communism. Use it to help you complete the matching activity on page 6.

Autocracy	Communism
Differences	
View of history	
In autocratic theory history is based around a more organic view of society. A stable social hierarchy is a natural feature of society in all historical periods and it must be preserved. Things are the way they are because order must be preserved. Change is therefore a potentially threatening occurrence and must be managed from above. Autocratic thinkers such as Pobedonostev believed that the Tsarist system in Russia was the natural political and social model for Russian society and it must be preserved at all costs	In communist theory history is seen as being part of a dialectical process involving class conflict. History would therefore inevitably move through different stages. The final one being the communist period where there was no government and no class system. Communist would have viewed Russian society in the nineteenth century as being in the feudal stage where the economic system was based on land and the political system was autocratic
View of human nature	
The autocratic view of history and society was underpinned by a particular and highly pessimistic view of human nature. In this theoretical framework most people were naturally aggressive, lazy selfish and ignorant. A strong leader and a highly centralised form of government would be required to keep such a population under control. This was the reason why autocracy was an appropriate system for Russia.	Communists believed that human nature was neither inherently good nor inherently bad. It was instead shaped by the historical circumstances in which it was found. If peasants were violent or lazy this was because they had been brutalised by the autocratic system. If people were acted in a self-interested way in capitalist societies it was because the existence of private property forced them to compete for resources. In a true communist society human nature would develop in a more altruistic way.
View of society	
The autocratic view of society was essentially conservative. This meant that the status quo must be preserved at all costs.	In sharp contrast to the autocrats Marxists had a very radical view of society which led them to believe that the status quo must be challenged and altered in a dramatic fashion. It was their aim to use revolution to create a new society
Similarities	
Dislike of democracy	
Autocrats regarded any form of democracy as a bad thing because it gave power to those least capable of exercising it in an appropriate manner. Absolute power should be exercised by the autocrat at all times. This order was divinely ordained and could not be altered. Within this framework there was no room for the concept of a loyal opposition.	Communists were similarly disillusioned by democracy because they saw it as only guaranteeing a limited form of equality. Liberal democratic regimes protected property rights and therefore allowed the working class to be exploited. Communist regimes existed to promote real equality and true democracy. To achieve this they created a short term 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. This regime would lead the revolution and create a classless society.
Power in the hands of a small group or just one person	
In autocratic theory there is a fundamental belief that power must be held in the hands of a small group or one person. All the tsars from Alexander II to Nicholas II believed that autocracy was something that should be preserved because it was the most effective means of governing a country like Russia and because it had a religious basis. This was the case even when they made concessions to opposition movements, for instance when Nicholas II accepted the existence of the Duma in 1905	Communists also believed that power should be concentrated in the hands of a small group of people. This was the means by which society would make the transition from the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' to the true communist society.
Both shared an aversion to open societies	
Within autocracy there was a natural aversion to open societies where freedom of expression is an accepted norm. This is because autocrats do not believe they need to seek legitimacy from the people they rule over. It is assumed that the autocrat represents the interests of the population. All the tsars sought to suppress or control opposition and when they did concede that it should exist, such as under Nicolas II it tended to be when this position was forced upon them and it was seen as necessary you the maintenance of autocracy.	If anything intolerance of opposition was even stronger within the communist tradition. Lenin dealt ruthlessly with political opposition because he believed a diversity of opinion distracted people from the true course of the revolution. It was only him and his close followers who understood the true meaning of Marxism. Both autocracies and tsarist societies were to differing degrees police states. It could be argued that the communist regimes took this idea to a greater level and were more effective as police states.
Both believe in the personification of power	
Within autocracy there was a very strong sense of the personification of power. The person of the Tsar was especially important as this was where sovereignty was located. This can most obviously be seen in the perception of the Tsar as the 'Little Father'.	The personification of power was also a key element within Lenin's interpretation of Marxist theory. For Lenin it was an essential component in suppressing opposition in the early stages of the revolution. Stalin took this to a higher level when he adopted and perfected a 'cult of personality' as means of consolidating his own power. Within both ideological frameworks this personification of power can help to provide a common focal point for people in a country as large and diverse as Russia.
Attitude to reform	
Within autocracy there was natural aversion to any reforming tendencies especially in the political sphere. Reform tended to be seen as the beginning of the process of dismantling the autocratic regime. When it was tolerated such as in the era of Alexander II or Nicolas II it was very much seen as a policy aimed at reforming to preserve and was managed from above.	In theory Communists objected to reform because they saw it as undermining true change which could only be achieved by revolution. Reform would always tend to towards marrying elements of the past with elements of change and in this way it would never really be an effective means to transform society in a radical way. They saw all reform as naturally being about reforming to preserve. Interestingly however when communist regimes established themselves the attitude to reform did alter slightly. Under Khrushchev you do see aspects of the reform to preserve idea.

Change and Continuity

TASK:

Read the following statements carefully. Try to match up the example with appropriate change it illustrates. Try also to put the correct communist example with its Tsarist counterpart. Then make an overall judgement, based on what you know at this point: was there more change or continuity between the tsarist and Communist regimes? What KIND of change, if there was some?

1.	2	3	4	5	6	7
<p>Tsarist reforms were driven by the need to conserve. Reforms were often pragmatic and reactive rather than ideologically driven. Thus industrialisation was largely part of Alexander III's attempt to modernise Russia and maintain her Great Power status. Nicholas II did not believe Russia had modernised quickly enough up to 1906 and this part of the driving motivation behind Stolypin's reforms.</p>	<p>The Tsars used religion to reinforce obedience to the autocratic system. Priest's salaries were paid by the state and over 250 churches were built by the state in the 1880s and 1890s. Alexander III increased church control over education as a way of defeating revolutionary ideas. In addition to this Russian Orthodoxy was a central feature in the Tsarist policy of Russification which was seen as a means to maintain control over the Empire.</p>	<p>The Tsarist Okhrana tended to target political opponents and infiltrate individual parties exposing them to the full rigour of the law but even under Alexander III when martial law was introduced it was not applied to all parts of the Empire. The numbers arrested and executed do not compare with the Terror of 1937 or even to the deaths under Lenin's Red Terror.</p>	<p>The Tsarist regimes reliance on propaganda was less pronounced than under the Communist regime. This was because their rule was more firmly established than that of the communists and they were less inclined to control all aspects of society and were not intent on creating a totally new type of society.</p>	<p>Pobedonostov saw autocracy as a means by which the worst excesses of human nature were restrained. Such a view of the state's role has a negative conception of human nature. Tsarist governments when they did introduce reforms often did so to prevent unrest as much as to improve character.</p>	<p>Tsarist system was based firmly on the idea that a social hierarchy was a natural feature of society and one which was fundamental to keeping order. Alexander III reinstated the central role of the nobility when he introduced Land Captains and later Nicholas II wanted a second chamber in the Dumas which would represent the interests of the nobility.</p>	<p>In the Tsarist period different views of government policy were allowed. This Witte favoured western type reform and Plehvre opposed it. Similarly Tsars may have resented the criticisms of the Zemstva but they tolerated its existence. even Alexander III. . The Zemstva was allowed to present petitions demanding change and the Duma was allowed to criticise the Tsar under Nicholas II's reign.</p>

A	B	C	D	E	F	G
<p>The communist repression of the 1930s was more systematic since rather than trying to exterminate certain minority groups within society they conducted a mass sweep on the whole of Russian society in the Purges (1936-9) and the Terror (1937). They targeted precise individuals but also whole groups such as army generals, Kulaks and any 'suspect elements' such as priests.</p>	<p>Art under the communists was politicised to in order to serve the regime in a way it had never been under the Tsars. The early creativity on the 1920s gave way to Socialist Realism which became an official doctrine. It was to be pursued in all cultural forms, art, literature and theatre. In 1932 Stalin called for the 'engineering of the human soul'. Writers such as Osip Mendelstam and later Dmitri Shostakovich had their works banned and Both Mendelstarm and Alexander Solzhenitsyn spent many years in the Gulags for falling foul of the Stalinist censors.</p>	<p>Communist believed that homosovieticus or soviet man would be selfless and altruistic – reflecting soviet ideals. The cultural revolution aimed to create this by encouraging purely proletarian culture. Books and movies showed this new view of mankind. Ostrovsky's How Steel was produced showed a worker heroically putting his comrades and the needs of the revolution before himself.</p>	<p>By contrast both Lenin and later Stalin introduced reforms which were justified by them on an ideological basis. In Stalin's case collectivisation was not just about modernising Russia and supporting industrialisation. It was about transforming Russia into a socialist society.</p>	<p>Lenin's decrees on land and the abolition of privilege were the first steps towards ending private property and social class. Stalin's emphasis on improving educational opportunities for the working class was part of his attempt to improve to improve social mobility.</p>	<p>In 1924 Lenin proclaimed all parties illegal and 500 Mensheviks were arrested and put on trial. Repression also became more extreme within the governing class in a way that it was not during the Tsarist period. In 1921 there was a ban on all factions. During Stalin's period there were purges of the Party and key figures were put on trail. It was mostly revolutionaries who were put on trial in the Tsarist period.</p>	<p>Communists attacked religion as a rival ideology, irreconcilable with their own anti-religious goals. During War Communism the Red Army and Komsomol were used to plunder churches in the 1930s over 163 bishops were executed. Even under Khrushchev the most 'liberal' of communist rulers the church was repressed. He closed 14,000 of the churches 22,000 churches</p>

How was Russia governed 1855 – 1964?

TASK:

1. Read through the info on pages 7 - 13. These pages summarise the nature of government under each of the leaders you will study over the course of your History A Level.
2. Use this information to complete the activity on page 14. Use the table to summarise each government's approach to governing: their ideology, tactics of repression and the freedoms enjoyed by the Russian people at the time. Don't worry too much if there is some detail that you don't quite understand – focus on what you DO and on gaining a sense of what changed and what didn't in the areas identified in the table.
3. Turn your summary table into an evaluation: track the level of freedom enjoyed in Russia on the graph provided on page 15. *Make sure you include a justification for your judgement!*

Forms of Government: The Autocrats

Alexander II: The reforming Tsar



Political changes

Zemstva

- (1) A new form of local assembly designed and introduced – the Zemstava
- (2) They operated a two-tier system, district zemstvo, sending a proportion of their members to a higher regional assembly.
- (3) The vote was weighted heavily towards local landowners but peasants had 38% of the vote.
- (4) The Zemstva had responsibility for local schooling, medical provision and road building
- (5) In 1870 the Zemstva structure was extended to the towns as the dumy were introduced. Russia's eight largest cities were given Dumy

In 1865 Alexander rejected the request for a national assembly, but just before his assassination in 1881 he conceded that some form of national assembly might be needed.

Political Freedoms	Police State Repression
<p>Alexander II always resisted demands for a national assembly until shortly before his death. His ultimate aim was to preserve the autocratic system but he did concede to a degree of reform in local government. The Zemstva were introduced in the 1860s and they gave representation to peasants, townspeople and nobles (heavily weighted in favour of the nobles). In 1870 the Zemstva system was extended to the towns and the Dumy</p>	<p>The beginning of Alexander's reign saw attempts to strengthen the rule of law and create a civil society. He ended separate courts for separate classes and made the judiciary more independent. In addition to this Alexander's relaxation of censorship allowed more criticism of the regime to develop. In 1865 the press were allowed to discuss government policy and in 1863 prepublication codes were relaxed but not removed.</p> <p>There were however limitations to his reforming tendencies. Opponents of the regime were still tried in special military courts and the secret police or Third Section were used extensively to repress revolutionaries. In the 1870s Alexander sent as many as 150,000 political prisoners into exile. In 1877 he set up a special department of the senate to try political cases.</p>
Personal Freedoms	Social and Economic Freedoms
<p>Alexander's reign saw a number of significant developments improving the personal freedom of certain social groups. The most dramatic was the emancipation of the serfs in 1861. He also relaxed aspects of the policy of Russification by allowing Russian Jews to settle anywhere in the Empire</p>	<p>Emancipation was designed to allow peasants to break away from the Mir and a new class of independent wealthy peasants began to develop but they were still a very small minority of the rural population.</p>

Alexander III: The reactionary Tsar



Political changes

Zemstva

- (1) Alexander III retained the Zemstva system but reduced the powers they had.
- (2) Under the Safeguard System the Zemstva officials or the Zemstvas themselves could be dismissed.
- (3) The introduction of the Land Captains in 1889 further reduced the power of the Zemstva because the new Land Captains were given the power to interfere with local government.
- (4) In addition to this the proportion of peasant representation was reduced.

Alexander III also brought the Zemstva system under more centralised control by making them subservient to local governors appointed by the Tsar

Political Freedoms	Police State Repression
<p>Like his father Alexander III was keen to maintain the autocratic system but he was less willing to reform to preserve. He rejected any attempt to set up a national assembly. Instead he adopted a policy of more centralisation. This manifested itself in his attempt to bring the Zemstva under the control of the Safeguard system which allowed government ministers to suspend local government if necessary. The level of peasant representation in the Zemstvas was reduced. He also sought to re-establish the power of traditional elites by introducing Land Captains to supervise the Mir. With new property requirements for voting, the electorate of St. Petersburg decreased from around 21,000 to around 8,000, and the electorate of Moscow decreased from around 20,000 to around 7,000.</p>	<p>Alexander III wanted to strengthen the coercive powers of the state to protect against the threat of revolutionaries. In 1881 he introduced the Statute Concerning Measures for the Protection of State Security. This gave government far reaching powers to interfere with civil liberties in times of emergency. In addition to this he updated and modernised the secret police. The Okhrana was formed in 1881 with the sole aim of preserving order and tackling political opposition to the regime. Censorship was also increased. Newspapers which had been warned three times about their content could be closed down and a special committee of government was set up with power to close libraries if they contained books deemed subversive</p>
Personal Freedoms	Social and Economic Freedoms
<p>Unlike his father Alexander III was committed to a policy of Russification. During his reign religious minorities, particularly the Jews experienced significant reductions in personal freedom. In 1882 he introduced the 'Provisional or Temporary Rules' which banned Jews from settling in rural areas or even owning and managing land. They were also prevented from holding any administrative office or becoming a lawyer. These rules lasted until 1917. In 1892 their representation in town councils was also restricted and in 1887 restrictions were placed on the numbers of Jews who could attend university</p>	<p>Alexander made some modest attempts to stimulate agricultural development by reducing redemption payments and In 1883 the Peasant's Land Bank was created. Its aim was to lend peasants the money to buy land. It contributed to a gradual increase on the overall percentage of peasant ownership of land</p>

Nicholas II: Reform and Reaction

Nicholas faced a series of (what have been termed) revolutions during his reign. The first occurred in 1905 and resulted in the Tsar issuing the October Manifesto – a range of changes to the tsarist system, including a degree of elected representation in government. He continued to rule until another revolution in February 1917 forced him to abdicate. No other member of the royal family wanted to take the throne and thereafter autocracy in Russia was dead.



Political changes

Duma -1905

- (1) The October Manifesto had promised: freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of the press, a constitution that would be drawn up in 1906 to include a bicameral legislative parliament

The constitutional monarchy

- (1) For the first time in History Russia had a nationally elected assembly.
- (2) The lower house was popularly elected. The vote was given to the peasants. Voting was indirect.
- (3) The Tsar retained the right to dissolve the Duma and hold elections whenever he saw fit.
- (4) He could also rule by Decree in emergencies

Between 1906 and 1914 Russia had four Dumas. The first two proved unworkable because of the balance of political parties. And the third and fourth Dumas were more amenable because the franchise had been narrowed by Stolypin in 1907. He increased the landowners share of the vote to almost 50% and reduced that of the peasantry and urban workers

Political Freedoms	Police State Repression
<p>Nicholas was a committed autocrat who shared his father’s views on the maintenance of the autocracy. His instincts were to coerce rather than to conciliate and for much of the early part of his reign he did little to change the nature of Russian government but unlike his father he faced challenges to his authority which necessitated some degree of reform. In 1905 he issued the October Manifesto which promised very significant political reforms. The Duma was a national representative body with the right to debate policy for the Empire. Members of the Duma were granted immunity. This means they could attack the government without fear of persecution. Political parties were made legal and the right to free speech was granted as was the right to join trade unions. However the Fundamental Law of April of 1906 ensured that the Tsar retained the power to suspend any law. In the years which followed 1905 the representative element of the Duma was reduced significantly as Stolypin sought to reassert engineer a more stable Duma.</p>	<p>Despite introducing very significant reforms aimed at preserving autocracy Stolypin, Nicholas’ chief minister, combined reform with repression. In particular he aimed to tackle the threat from potential revolutionaries. In 1906 he introduced martial law and set up a network of military courts, with sweeping powers. Between 1906 and 1911 there were over 2500 executions in Russia. This gave rise to the nickname ‘Stolypin’s Necktie’. Agitators who incited people to violence still faced the risk of arrest and deportation to Siberia and the army were used against strikers killing and wounding in the process. In 1912 when miners in Lena Goldfields went on strike to demand higher wages troops opened fire killing a large number of strikers(200 dead and 100 wounded)</p>
Personal Freedoms	Social and Economic Freedoms
<p>Nicholas like his father believed strongly in a policy of Russification and under his rule there was little improvement in discrimination against the Jews. In the period 1903-1906 a wave of anti-semitic pogroms in Kishinev were the result of anti-semitic propaganda published by groups funded by Viacheslav Plehve, Minister of the Interior.</p>	<p>Stolypin’s agricultural reforms made significant steps towards liberalising agriculture by enabling individual peasants to leave the <i>mir</i>. As a consequence of this by 1914 as many as 20% of peasants had obtained ownership of their land and 14% of land had been withdrawn from the commune.</p>

Forms of Government: The Liberals

The Provisional Government:

following the abdication of Nicholas II, Russia was briefly run by a provisional government. This consisted of the last Duma under Tsar Nicholas and the intention was that they would rule until a permanent Constituent Assembly could be elected by the Russian people. But this government was overthrown by the Bolsheviks in a violent uprising known as the October Revolution.



Political changes

PG Feb 1917: Democratic Republic

- (1) Announced an immediate amnesty for all political prisoners.
- (2) Replaced the police by a people's militia with an elected administration
- (3) Introduced fully independent judges and abolished capital punishment and exile.
- (4) Removed all the restrictions on the right to free speech, press, union assembly and strikes.
- (5) Abolished discrimination on the basis of class, religion and nationality
- (6) Introduced local self-government elected on the basis of a direct, secret ballot.
- (7) Prepared for a meeting of a constituent Assembly to draw up a constitution. This would be followed by a general election to secure a democratic government

Political Freedoms	Police State Repression
Russia was to become a democratic republic in which all adults had the right to vote.	The PG moved quickly to establish the independence of the judiciary and the rule of law. Within a few days of coming to power all police departments were abolished and all provisional governors and their deputies were sacked. Political prisoners were released. Robert Service has stated that under the PG 'Russia became freer than any other country even at peace'
Personal Freedoms	Social and Economic Freedoms
Unlike any previous regime the PG abolished all forms of discrimination based on class, race or nationality. All the peoples of Russia would henceforth be treated equally.	Despite the promise of significant advances in political freedom the PG was undermined by its lack of progress on fundamental questions affecting the economic well-being of the country. They decided against withdrawal from the war and delayed a decision on the land question. This meant that living and working conditions for most ordinary Russians deteriorated.

Forms of Government: The Communists



Lenin: 1917-1924

Political changes

End of Democracy Centralisation Party Control Dictatorship of the Proletariat

- (1) Lenin allowed elections for the **Constituent Assembly** to take place because it was too late for him to prevent them. When the CA met in January of 1918 he used the Red Guards to close it down. This was a bitter end to the dreams of Russian Liberals. There would not be another democratically elected body until the end of Communism in 1918. Lenin's justification for this was that the October revolution represented the full expression of the people's will..
- (1) Under Lenin the Bolshevik Party became the ruling Party and Party became synonymous with the State. The ruling Central Committee of the Communist Party became the executive power in Russia. It was called the **Sovnarkom**.
- (2) Lenin's Government was highly centralised and the **Sovnarkom** which was intended to reflect the will of the All-Russian Congress of the Bolshevik Party was in reality Lenin's mouthpiece. Power was exercised from the top down.
- (3) In 1919 the **Politburo** was set up forming a small circle of people at the top of the Communist Party and soon took precedence of the **Sovnarkom**. The Sovnarkom had up to 40 members and the Politburo had only 7.
- (4) At the 10th Party Congress in 1921 Lenin adopted measures to further stifle debate within the Party, by announcing a ban on factions within the party. In reality this meant that once decisions were taken they had to be accepted by everyone.
- (5) Centralisation in government was mirrored by centralisation in economic matters. In December 1917 Lenin set up the Veshenkha to take charge of all aspects of economic life.
- (6) In theory Russia had a 'dictatorship of the proletariat', in practice all decisions were taken by Lenin.

Political Freedoms

In theory the regime set up by Lenin existed to advance the interests of the Russian working class. In this sense it professed to be a truer democracy than that offered under the PG. In reality Lenin removed all vestiges of the democratic gains made by the Russian people under the PG. The Constituent Assembly was closed down in 1918 and the Bolshevik Party became the ruling party in a one party state. In 1921 all other parties were officially banned. This was a highly centralised form of government where Lenin became a dictator. Lenin also abolished the Zemstvos and the city Dumys. In the 1920s Russian workers were brought under the control of the state. They lost the freedoms they gained in 1905 and were forbidden from questioning orders, negotiating pay rates and could be punished for not meeting targets.

Police State

Repression and Terror

Lenin's Russia became a police state to an even greater extent than that under the Tsars. On coming to power in 1918 Lenin promptly reinstated press censorship and set up a secret police called the Cheka which was intended to be far more efficient and ruthless than anything which had existed under the Tsars. This police force numbered as many 250,000 by 1921. The rule of law and separation of powers were completely ignored as the Cheka ruthlessly suppressed political opponents of the new regime. Unlike the Tsars he did not allow political opponents to go into exile and he used the police state to suppress entire social classes such as the Kulaks. Anyone described as counter-revolutionary was likely to find themselves victims of the Cheka's ruthless measures. Unlike the secret police under the Tsars the Cheka were involved to a much greater extent in all aspects of government policy: social, economic, political. There were no public trials which could be used as a means of discrediting the regime such as the trial of Vera Zasulich in 1878. This was in sharp contrast to the way in which trials had occurred under some of the Tsars.

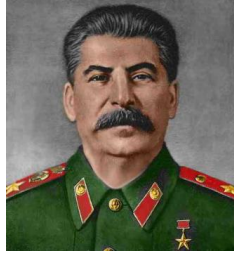
Personal Freedoms

Lenin's regime sought to destroy the Orthodox Church, seeing it as a vital pillar of the Tsarist regime. When he came to power the church was immediately separated from the state and made to pay punitive taxes. It lost all the property it had the local churches were shut down. Many Russians especially in rural communities resented this interference in a vital part of their lives. The attacks on religion were seen as attacks on beliefs they had held strongly for generations. Peasants continued to pray and worship but they could no longer do so in public. By the time of Lenin's death in 1924 over 300 bishops had been executed and 10,000 priest had been sent to prison camps. Judaism and Islam did not escape this fate. They too were often pilloried in communist propaganda.

Social and Economic Freedoms

The relaxed economic conditions afforded to peasants under the NEP allowed wealthier Kulaks to prosper and take advantage of the free markets and growth of private trade. This was also the case with the NEPMEN who were able to gain wealth by acting as middle men between peasant producers and urban consumers. Not all groups benefited equally. Industrial workers made few gains under either War Communism or the NEP although the latter allowed them to obtain food more easily. In addition to this entire social classes lost fundamental freedoms under the new communist regime. The abolition of private property meant Russian nobles lost wealth and prestige. And the middle class were discriminated against in the new system of rationing introduced during War Communism. They became non-people.

Stalin: 1929-1953



The Second Revolution – The Great Turn

Political Changes – The 1936 Constitution

- (1) Stalin saw himself as completing the revolution which had been started by Lenin.
- (2) As with Lenin the Soviet Union remained a one-party state with the Communist Party as the controlling group.
- (3) In 1936 he gave the Soviet Union a new constitution which theoretically guaranteed Russian people a range of rights. These included universal suffrage and a Bill of Rights. In reality however these rights existed only on paper as there was only one party allowed and within that party all power was concentrated in the hands of the Supreme Leader. Stalin was supported by a handpicked **Presidium**.
- (4) Like Lenin, Stalin also claimed to be giving Soviet citizens a truer form of democracy.

Political Freedoms	Police State Repression and Terror
<p>The 1936 Constitution gave Soviet citizens all sorts of theoretical rights which would be instantly recognisable to those living in liberal democracies, such as the right to vote, freedom of speech and a Bill of Rights. In reality this regime was more autocratic than any that had gone before. Stalin’s control over all aspects of life was unrivalled and in this respect his regime is best described as totalitarian rather than autocratic.</p>	<p>Stalin built on the coercive apparatus set up Lenin to keep control of the Russian population. In 1933/34 he centralised all the major law enforcement agencies: the civilian police, the secret police, labour camp commandants and guards. All these bodies were put under the control of the NKVD(Stalin’s equivalent of the Cheka) which was directly answerable to Stalin. In 1934 he signed the Decree Against Terrorist Acts which gave the NKVD almost limitless powers to pursue enemies of the state. Under such system arbitrary arrest and summary execution became the norm on a scale never before witnessed even in Russia, under the Tsars or Lenin. Historians, Getty and Naumov write that "The population of all labour camps, labour colonies, and prisons on 1 January 1939, near the end of the Great Purges, was 2,022,976. This gives us a total increase in the camp and prison population in 1937-38 of 1,006,030.". In terms of figures for those who died we know that between 1934 and 1953, 1,053,829 persons died in the camps of the GULAG. ...some 86,582 people perished in prisons between 1939 and 1951. ...between 1930 and 1952–53, 786,098 ‘counter-revolutionaries’ were executed. Finally, we know that, from 1932 through 1940, 389,521 peasants died in places of "kulak" resettlement. Together ...a total of a little more than 2.3 million.’</p> <p>It is estimated that one person in every eight was arrested during the purges and almost every family suffered the loss of at least one of its members during the terror.</p> <p>Compare these figures to those you have for any other leader. Remember Lenin started off the communist repressive regime and his targets were much wider than those of the Tsars including not just political opponents but classes such as the Kulaks who were deemed ideologically unsound. Stalin took this even further using terror as a means of repressing and controlling an entire population. This is another area where it is possible to see the distinction between autocratic forms of government and those which are totalitarian – <u>the widening and deepening of repression</u></p>

(Stalin)

Personal Freedoms	Social and Economic Freedoms
<p>Like Lenin before him Stalin continued the policy of persecution of the Church. In 1928 Stalin launched a new campaign against the church. Orthodox churches were closed as well as mosques and synagogues. In 1940 there were 500 churches open for worship in Russia. In 1917 there had been 50,000.</p> <p>Other aspects of personal freedom which were severely curtailed under the Tsars included the freedom of writes and artists to express ideas. Stalin saw all cultural forms as subordinate to the Soviet regime. They existed celebrate the achievements of the state and not to express individual viewpoint. In 1932 Stalin called for the ‘engineering of the human soul’. Writers such as Osip Mendelstam and later Dmitri Shostakovich had their works banned and Both Mendelstarm and Alexander Solzhenitsyn spent many years in the Gulags for falling foul of the Stalinist censors.</p> <p>Whilst the Tsars often censored political writings authors were much less likely to feel under pressure to conform to the states demands. During Tsarist period reign there was strong tradition of writing which was critical of aspects of Tsarist society. Writers such as Turgenev and Gogol wrote novels with very political themes.</p> <p>This is one key difference between Tsarist and Communist regimes which illustrates the evolving totalitarian nature of communist rule particularly under Stalin.</p>	<p>Under Stalin the Russian economy achieved a higher level of centralisation than at any other time in Russian history. On coming to power he abandoned the NEP and banned all aspects of private trade and ownership. This in effect that there were none of the opportunities for entrepreneurship which had existed before even under Lenin.</p> <p>However there were other opportunities for social improvement under Stalin which were not there before. One means to advancement was through the Party and Stalin actually encouraged wider working class membership. In education there were wider opportunities for university education. The number of graduate engineers alone rose from 47,000 in 1928 to 289,000 in 1941. These kinds of opportunities were completely absent in the Tsarist period. Educational opportunities for women also improved by 1940 over 60% of university undergraduates were women.</p> <p>The process of industrialisation created an increased demand for white collar workers: inspectors, clerks, managers, technical specialist etc. By the end of the 1930s this group constituted 16% of the working population. More educated workers were ideally placed to take advantage of such employment possibilities</p> <p>Such opportunities had been virtually non-existent in the Tsarist period but the gains made in this are need to be balanced against unprecedented levels of control and repression in other areas of life. To say nothing of falling living standards for most ordinary Russians.</p>

Khrushchev 1955-1964



Political Changes

(1) Khrushchev refused to abandon the communist system but he did want to reform it to address the harsher elements of Stalin’s reign. This policy became known as – de-Stalinisation

Political Freedoms	Police State Repression
<p>Khrushchev did not want to abandon the communist system(The Soviet Union would remain a one party state). Like Alexander II he adopted a policy of reforming to preserve. This involved the rejection of the worst excesses of Stalinism. In 1956 Khrushchev was granted the right to speak to the 20th Party Congress where he made a speech denouncing Stalin’s use of terror. His aim was not to abandon the communist system but to moderate and humanise the Soviet system.</p>	<p>Khrushchev moved to reduce some of the excesses of Stalinist repression. In 1954 Stalin’s Chief of Secret Police Beria was arrested and executed as a traitor. Millions of political prisoners were released and many of the forced labour camps were closed. It was also more acceptable to criticise Stalin’s rule. This relaxation also extended to the satellite states but his crushing of the Hungarian rising in 1956 exposed the limitation sof his commitment to greater freedom.</p>
Personal Freedoms	Social and Economic Freedoms
<p>His rule did not bring an increase in personal freedoms as there was no easing of the pressure on religious groups. Orthodox churches were demolished in great numbers leaving only 7500 places of worship for Orthodox Christians. In 1960 there had been 20,000 churches. Muslim and Jewish places of worship met with the same fate. Atheism was introduced as a subject on the school curriculum</p>	<p>There was no move away from the communist economic model to compare with Lenin’s NEP in the 1920s but Khrushchev did attempt to improve the quality of life for Russian people by producing more consumer goods and raising living standards via attempts to reward workers and peasants with higher wages and better housing.</p>

	Autocracy			Liberalism	Communism		
	Alex II	Alex II	Nicholas II	Pro Gov	Lenin	Stalin	Khrushchev
Ideological perceptions							
Political Freedoms							
Police State and the rule of law							
Repression Terror							
Personal freedoms							
Social and economic freedoms							

Under which form of government did Russia people enjoy the most freedom?



Alex II

Alex III

Nicholas II

Pro Gov

Lenin

Stalin

Khrushchev

Autocracy

Liberalism

Communism

Historians' interpretations: what has been argued?

Passage A

The main events of his reign were, first and very foremost the freeing of the serfs; then, and partly in connection with this reform, real changes in local government, justice, education and the army. As so often happens, reform and relaxation were followed by protests, manifested notably by a revolutionary movement. The 'Tsar Emancipator' also had to cope with two burdens that had afflicted his father; cholera and the Poles. These trials led to reaction, and there was a partial return to tactics of repression. However, just before his assassination and having, as he thought, succeeded in calming the Empire, Alexander was considering a new series of reforms to relieve political pressures. Throughout the reign there was steady economic progress expansion in Central Asia, some attempt to overcome the financial consequences of the Crimean War and a continuation of railway-building. In foreign affairs there was a rather unnecessary war against Turkey but Alexander was able to avoid other large-scale conflicts.

J.N. Westwood, *Endurance and Endeavour: Russian History 1812-2001*, Oxford University Press, 2002

Passage B

In view of Alexander II's character- he was rather indolent and indecisive and despite public displays of emotion and kindheartedness capable of maintaining a severe police regime with all its attendant cruelties- it is surprising that it was especially his reign that became associated with the period of great reforms in Russian history. To the extent that in an autocracy good deeds are credited to the autocrat personally, he earned the title 'Tsar Liberator'. Nevertheless, his personal contribution to reforms was less positive than his more admiring biographers would have us believe. In many ways his influence impeded the practical realisation of reforms that had become law. He was indecisive and throughout his reign alternated between reforming impulses and reaction. As his advisers he selected both true reformers such as Dimitri Milyutin and extreme conservatives, men such as Dimitri Tolstoy, and kept both in office simultaneously, it was only with reluctance that Alexander took up the root cause of Russia's social ills, the problem of the serfs. Once a programme of emancipation had been devised, the other practical reforms of his reign followed from that.

The 'great reforms' of the 1860s did not liberate the Russian people. The process was so gradual, and the contrast between aspirations, the laws of the state and the realities of the situation were so star, that the degree of discontent was raised more by the hope of reform than satisfied by their application.

J. Grenville, *Europe Reshaped*, Blackwell, 1999.

TASK: Read through each interpretation of Alexander II (Passage A and B) above.

Question: What does each historian argue was the impact of Alexander II's policies on the people of Russia?

1. Identify 3 arguments made about the impact of Alexander II's policies on the people of Russia in each extract. (You may feel that there are more than 3 arguments made – choose the three that you think are most central to the overall interpretation)
2. Summarise these in the table below.
3. Try to summarise in your own words the OVERALL argument made by each historian on the subject.

	Argument 1	Argument 2	Argument 3	Overall argument
J N Westwood				
J Grenville				

Digging deep and going wide in your understanding

Unlike at GCSE, simply reading and taking notes on the textbook is not enough to get top marks at A Level. You will need to go beyond the textbook to achieve the depth and nuance of understanding of key themes and questions that form the basis of A* level work. Therefore you will be expected to read around the course, which will include assigned articles, like this one, and chapters or extracts from academic works.

Reading sample: *Creating the Soviet State* by Jonathan Davis

TASK: Read the article on the establishment of the Soviet state after the October Revolution in 1917. As you read, consider where you might see change and continuity in approaches to governing Russia. Consider also the nature of the Socialist ideology that Lenin at least claimed he was seeking to establish. How far do you think ideology was the motivation behind his policies and how far do you think these were pragmatic responses to ensure the Bolsheviks were able to establish and maintain control?

Once you have read the article, write short responses (no more than half a page) to the questions posed at the end:

1. What do you understand by “socialism” as adopted in Russia?
2. What factors prevented the Russian people from maintaining the soviets as their preferred form of government?
3. How far was the emergence of a Soviet state an accident of history?

Extension:

What criticisms do you think other historians might make of Davis’ argument? What might be an alternative view to the one he puts forward?

Podcasts and film

In addition to written resources, there are an increasing number of podcasts and videos available online which will help to enhance your understanding.

Have a watch/ listen to one or more of the following:

Summary of events - From Nicholas I to death of Alexander II

- Narrative history, NOT all of which is directly useful, but helpful for context (esp build-up of territory/ foreign policy). Summaries in 10 minute chunks.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-pggjsJ-g8>

Summary of events - From death of Alexander II to

- Narrative history, NOT all of which is directly useful, but helpful for context. Summaries in 10 minute chunks.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JQVjH4xFrdI>

Emancipation

- Melvyn Bragg and guests discuss Tsar Alexander II's 1861 decree that freed 30 million Russians from serfdom, an act of reform that followed Russia's defeat in the Crimean War.
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0b2gspd>

Alexander II's assassination

- Melvyn Bragg discusses the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881, by a gang of Russian terrorists, which led to start of the revolutionary era in Russia.
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p003k9b2>

Lenin

- Melvyn Bragg investigates what drove the Soviet leader Lenin, and enabled him to develop a model to export communism and build an original political system that remained intact for over seventy years.
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00546pv>

WW1

- Discussion of the Great Powers in WW1 and now, considering how their roles have changes

- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b047bs63>
- Download available of *St Petersburg: Revolution*
- The Romanovs ruled Russia for centuries until World War One brought revolution and an abrupt end to their imperial reign. Allan Little explores the legacy of revolution and the hidden impact of WW1 on Russian policy today.
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02sx67d>

Causes of February Revolution 1917

- Judith Devlin, UCD, discusses the factors involved in the build up to the February Revolution in Russia in 1917 and how this led to collapse of the Romanov dynasty.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KxLtilhD4wU>
- Gresham College lectures, Prof Dominic Lieven
- The dilemmas of modern empire and monarchy will be discussed, firstly in general terms and then specifically in terms of Russia. What were the key challenges facing Nicholas II and why was he unable to meet them, both in the domestic and international contexts. The lecture will explain how the effects of Russia's involvement in the First World War firstly undermined all support for the monarchy and led to its sudden collapse in February 1917, and subsequently allowed the Bolsheviks to overthrow the Provisional Government so easily eight months later. The transcript and downloadable versions of the lecture are available from the Gresham College website: <https://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-an...>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=whdt5xCzwHQ>

October Revolution

- Gresham College lectures, Prof Catherine Merridale
- Why did Lenin's Bolsheviks take power in October 1917? The earlier (February) revolution and the hopes it raised, the complex realities of power, and the political and social history of Russia leading up to the coup will be explored, asking why liberal or parliamentary government already appeared unrealistic. Why was Lenin's role so crucial? Who were his supporters, and what did they make of his plans? How, as a Marxist, did he justify the seizure of power and would the October Revolution have been possible without him? How in this centenary year, are these events being commemorated in Putin's Russia? The transcript and downloadable versions of the lecture are available from the Gresham College website: <https://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-an...>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zRIzW7A9lhs>

Thank you for your hard work in preparing for your History A Level. We look forward to welcoming you to the study of History at Sixth Form in September!