

The peoples of Russia

The population of the Russian Empire rose rapidly in the second half of the nineteenth century. The census of 1897 showed the different nationalities in the Russian Empire of 126 million people. The chart below shows in millions those with over 250,000 native speakers:

Great Russians	55.6	Bashkirs	1.3
Ukrainians	22.4	Lithuanians	1.2
Poles	7.9	Armenians	1.2
White Russians	5.8	Romanians	1.1
Jews	5.0	Estonians	1.0
Kirghiz	4.0	Moldavians	1.0
Tatars	3.4	Georgians	0.8
Finns	3.1	Tadzhiks	0.3
Germans	1.8	Turkmen	0.3
Latvians	1.4		

Source 4

Submission may cause you to believe there is uniformity among us, but I must undeceive you; there is no other country where is found such diversity of races, of manners, of religion, and of mind, as in Russia. The diversity lies at the bottom, the uniformity appears on the surface, and the unity is only apparent.

Tsar Nicholas I quoted by the Marquis de Custine in 1843



▲ Nomadic tribesmen from Turkistan at the end of the nineteenth century.

Activity

Getting to know Russia

Divide your class into six groups. Each group should research one of the following six areas:

- The Ukraine
- The region around Archangel and Murmansk
- The Central Siberian Plateau
- The Vladivostok region
- The Moscow region
- Kazakhstan

KEY SKILLS

Try to find out all you can about each region's climate, main physical features, natural vegetation, main centres of population, population density, religion, ethnicity and cultural traditions. You should also try to construct a simple timeline for the history of each region since AD 1000.

Resources, such as atlases, CD Roms and encyclopaedias, can be found in the reference sections of your school, college or local libraries. You may also find the following websites useful:

- www.dur.ac.uk
- www.departments.bucknell.edu/russian/history.html
- www.interknowledge.com/russia

When you have completed your research, you must present it to the rest of your group. This can be done in an oral presentation, a class display (which you may find useful for further reference) or as an IT package. You could of course do all of these.

This could be planned to meet the requirements for the key skill of information technology. You should search for and use visual materials, maps, timelines and pictures to illustrate your points from more than one electronic source and create a new way of presenting statistical information in your report. If you prepare two presentations, one for a Y7 class as well as one for your own, you will meet the requirements for Information Technology 3.3.

Source 3

- ▲ The nationalities of Imperial Russia

Think about

- ▲ What proportion of Imperial peoples were Great Russians?
- ▲ Which of these peoples are now independent?

Think about

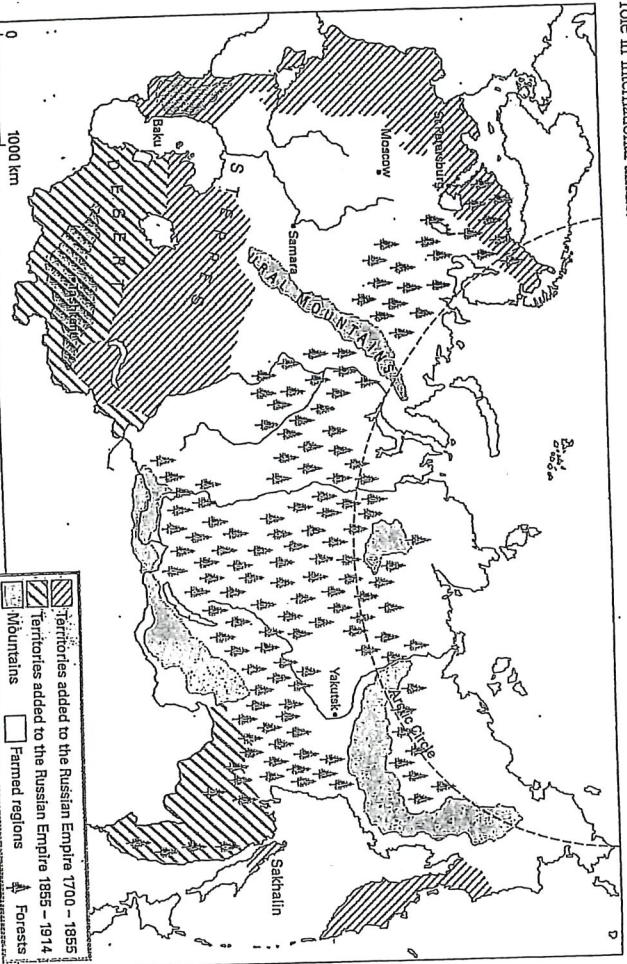
- ▲ Why would this diversity make Russia difficult to govern?
- ▲ What was happening to Germany and Italy in the nineteenth century?

The making of modern Russia

The lands making up modern Russia have had a turbulent and colourful history. The richer more fertile areas of western Russia have been fought over for centuries. The capital of the Russian state, first established by Prince Vladimir in Novgorod, moved to Kiev and then to Moscow. Mongols from the east overran much of the country in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. As their grip weakened, the Grand Dukes of Muscovy began to unite what is now Russian territory from their Kremlin fortress. Ivan III (1462-1505) was the first ruler to call himself 'Ruler of all Russia'. To build the Russian Empire, Russian rulers fought wars, successful and unsuccessful, with Poland, Sweden, France, China and Turkey, as well as countless lesser states.

In 1613, after years of internal division, Michael Romanov was elected Tsar (Emperor) of Russia by the National Assembly. His direct descendants were to rule until they were overthrown by revolution in 1917. The two giants of the Romanov family, Peter the Great (1682-1725) and Catherine the Great (1762-1796), ruled in the eighteenth century. In many ways their aims for Russia were similar. They both added considerably to Russia's lands by war, but also saw Russia as backward and in need of modernization along western lines. Peter built a new capital, St Petersburg, on the Baltic Sea, looking out to the west and far from Russia's traditional hinterland. Catherine the Great continued Peter's conquests, and also was influenced enormously by the progressive thinkers of Western Europe, and France especially.

In the wars against Napoleon, Russia had to suffer the indignity of the capture of Moscow by French troops in 1812. However, in 1814, victorious Russian troops marched through the streets of Paris. As long as the size of armies was the main determinant of national power, Russia would be able to play a major role in international affairs.



Timeline

- 1687 Kariachka conquered
- 1703 St Petersburg founded
- 1706 Sweden defeated
- 1732 Winter Palace begun
- 1772 First partition of Poland
- 1781-6 The Ukraine absorbed into Russia
- 1784 First Russian settlement in Alaska
- 1801 Tsar Paul murdered
- 1806 Daghestan and Baku conquered
- 1809 Finland annexed by Russia
- 1812 Napoleon's army entered Moscow
- 1814 Russian troops entered Paris
- 1816-9 Serfdom abolished in the Baltic provinces
- 1830 Polish rebellion
- 1838 First Russian railway begun

Source 6

- ✓ The growth of Imperial Russia 1700-1914

Note

Russia's rulers had despised constitutional government for a long time. Tsar Ivan the Terrible wrote to England's Elizabeth I in 1570: 'In your land people rule beside you, and not only people but trading peasants.'

Key term

Autocracy is unlimited government by one person.

Think about

- ▶ Haxthausen's book was commissioned by the Tsar. Does this make it unreliable for us today?

Quotation

He was surrounded by advisers whom he trusted. Most of his advisers were men of honour and integrity.

I. Golovine, a Russian exile, writing in 1845

How was Russia ruled?

By 1855 in Western Europe, constitutional government had taken hold in most countries. This means that the powers of monarchs, where they existed, were constrained by a framework of law and also often by representative institutions, such as the Parliament in Britain. Russia seemed to many outsiders to be a survival from a former age. In 1832 Nicholas I (1825-1855) issued the Fundamental Laws to remove any doubt about his position. They began:

Source 7

The Emperor of all the Russias is an autocratic and unlimited monarch. God himself ordains that all must bow to his supreme power, not only out of fear but also out of conscience.

Nicholas not only wanted to be obeyed, but he also expected his subjects to accept his total authority willingly. All the Romanovs had been brought up to believe that this was their God-given birthright. The motto of Nicholas' regime was 'Autocracy, orthodoxy, nationality'. Some foreign visitors were impressed by this system of government.

Source 8

A leader is absolutely indispensable in the Russian's 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 its queen, so, too, would Russian society cease to exist without the Tsar.

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

However, Nicholas I could not rule a state of over 60 million people alone. His power was exercised by others acting on his behalf. These people were drawn almost exclusively from the nobility. The Imperial Council of State met regularly to advise the Tsar on policy matters and discuss proposed new laws, though in practice the Tsar often ignored it. Ministers who ran the 13 individual government departments supervised the work of the government. The legal system was overseen by the Senate, which, for example, tried serious political offences. This was made up of the highest members of the aristocracy. All who served on these bodies were appointed directly by the Tsar, and could be sacked at any time. The Tsar could accept or reject their advice as he wished. In addition, the Tsar had his own 'Personal Chancellery of his Imperial Majesty'. Divided into three sections, the first acted as the Tsar's personal secretary, the second consisted of legal experts and the notorious Third Section controlled the political police.

A country as vast as Russia needed many administrators. In 1855 there were 114,000 of them. The provincial governors were the key figures away from the capital. Russia was divided into 50 provinces, and each province was subdivided into 20 districts. Within each province the gentry had their own assemblies, meeting every three years. These assemblies elected judges and chiefs of police in each district. Since these posts were unpaid and carried heavy responsibilities, not everyone wanted them. However, the nobility for

generations had a strong tradition of service to the crown, either in government or the army. This was no longer obligatory as it had been under Peter the Great, but it was expected of a man of standing in the community. They made up the local officials and governors as well as the senior personnel in the ministries in St Petersburg, and were free of taxes as a result.

This did not mean that Russia was well governed. The Marquis de Custine in 1843 quoted Nicholas I as follows:

Source 9

Happy the machine of government is very simple in my country; for, with distances which render everything difficult, if the form of government was complicated, the head of one man would not suffice for its requirements.

Some nobles and many lower officials at all levels saw government service as a way to increase their income, principally by creaming off taxes and receiving bribes. So desperate was Nicholas I to get some kind of control over his administration that he forced all local governors to send in reports each year. However, when they were submitted, he was the first to acknowledge they were packs of lies! In 1849 the Ministry of the Interior alone produced 31,122,211 official papers. Every document was recorded in a ledger and then copied out in copperplate script by a clerk. It was then either filed or dispatched to another office. Keeping on top of this mountain of paperwork flooding in from all over the Empire was virtually impossible. Of these 31 million over 165,000 were marked 'urgent!' Since communications in Russia were so poor, it could take months for a report to reach St Petersburg, months for it to be considered and months more for a reply to reach the sender. Inevitably, therefore, provincial governors and local officials had a great degree of freedom to act as they wished.

The lack of political freedom forced any opposition to resort to violence as its only effective means of influencing the government. Violence could take the form of peasant revolts, of which there were over 1400 in the first 60 years of the nineteenth century, or acts of terrorism. Nicholas I set up the Third Section of the Imperial Chancellery, a secret police force which successfully operated against dissidents opposed to the regime. Censorship was not, however, total, since some discussion of Russia's ills was permitted. Gogol's book *Dead Souls* (Source 12) was published in 1842.

Apart from the secret police, there were only a few thousand law enforcement officers in Russia. The nobility was expected to control its own districts. If law and order broke down, the army was sent in. The army, numbering about 1,400,000 men in 1875, was also a key to maintaining the Tsarist autocracy. At the time our study begins, the officers were taken from the nobility, while the ranks were forced conscripts of the tax-paying serfs. The term of service was 25 years, which meant a lifetime for most ordinary soldiers. They were taken, usually against their will, to distant parts of the Empire, leaving wives and families behind. After three years away, wives and husbands were allowed to remarry. When they were discharged, however, they returned to nothing or begged on the streets of the towns and cities. The army was used to put down internal disturbances as well as to fight wars against Russia's enemies.

Religion

Faith, and especially the Orthodox Church, was much in evidence throughout European Russia. The gilded domes and minarets of its churches still dominate the skylines of town and village today.

Every simple peasant home had a 'red corner' with its icon(s). These icons played an important part in the ceremonies of family and national life, being brought out to bless marriages and baptisms, as well as armies going off to fight. Religious celebrations also determined the nation's holidays, of which there were 90 per year according to some estimates. The Orthodox Church was not independent of the State, but was controlled by the Holy Synod, chaired by a government minister. The Tsar, Tsarevich (the Tsar's son) and their wives all had by law to be members. The Tsar had absolute power over Church finance and appointments. Priests received their meagre wages from the State, which they supplemented by working in the fields alongside their parishioners and by charges for their services. Only they could register births, marriages and deaths. The members of the many monasteries were often materially better off, and only they were allowed to rise up the religious hierarchy. The Church was a strong pillar supporting the government, emphasizing to all in society the importance of obedience to authority, whether it was political or religious. Much evidence suggests that religious belief was not just a thin veneer, but a profoundly held conviction for most Russians.

For many Russians there was a strong element of mysticism in these religious beliefs. Millions of Orthodox Christians, the Old Believers, had broken with the official Church, when it introduced new services in the seventeenth century. They said that the Orthodox Church was acting as the agent of the Antichrist. Many of these, and other Orthodox believers, fasted regularly, and consulted 'holy men' for advice about their problems. Some of these 'holy men' wandered around Russia begging, relying on the charity of believers to support them. Some claimed to have healing powers; others, called Hlysts, fasted or beat themselves or indulged in sexual orgies, believing that only after great sin could you feel real repentance.

The Orthodox Church was a strong support for the Russian status quo. By preaching blind obedience to God, it encouraged blind obedience to social superiors and ultimately the Tsars. The decorations within the churches themselves were bound by rigid rules, as shown in Source 10.



Research

- 1 Find out more about Russian icons. Which famous ones played an important role in the history of the Russian state?
- 2 Find in your local library or your music department a CD of Russian church music. Rachmaninov's Vespers would be a good example. What is striking about the music? What is the atmosphere it tries to create?

Think about

- Does this prove that religion was important in people's daily lives?

Source 10

- The interior of the Cathedral of the Assumption in the Kremlin. Here the Tsars were crowned. The positioning of the icons on the walls was governed by strict rules. Prophets of the Old Testament were at the top and feast days in the Orthodox calendar were in the second tier. In the deepest tier is Christ enthroned surrounded by the apostles and the Virgin Mary, and finally saints with a special link to this church at the bottom.

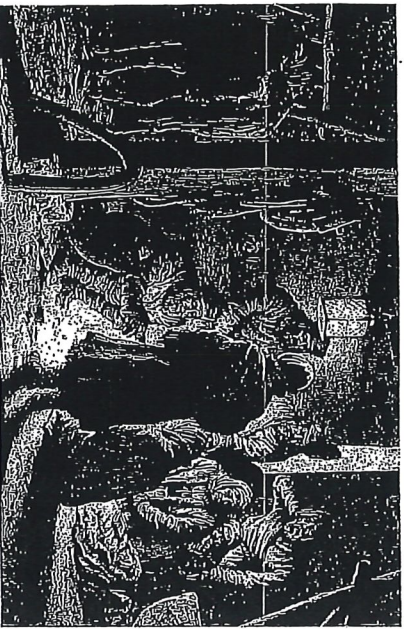
Think about

- What view of society and their place in it might worshippers have taken from their churches?

to other religious groups, however, were treated so sympathetically by the state. Jews were subject to rigorous controls, which restricted their employment and where they lived. In particular, they were subject to random but murderous attacks from their Christian neighbours called *pogroms* – often with the tacit support of the government. It was preferable, after all, to have Russians attacking Jews rather than attacking the government itself.

Russian society

Out of the 60 million people in European Russia in 1895, 50 million were peasant serfs. Roughly half of these were privately owned by the gentry and the other half by the State. To all intents and purposes they were slaves. At the end of the eighteenth century the gentry had been confirmed in their right to physically punish or send into the army the peasants they owned. Peasants either performed *barshchina* (labour) for their landlord or paid him *otrok* (cash). In return, they received a house, a garden and a share of the crops grown on the common fields. Life for the peasants was hard. They could be arbitrarily sold and brutally flogged on top of their backbreaking daily work. A General Staff report in 1860 reported that the staple diet of peasants was cabbage soup, rye bread and gruel made from wheat or millet and milk. Their houses were little better than huts, often with only one room they shared with their animals.



Nicolaï Gogol described a neglected village in his novel *Dead Souls*, published in 1842.

Source 12

The timber walls of the *izbas* (huts) were dark and old: many of the roofs were so full of holes they looked like grainbags... There was no glass in the windows of the little cabins; some were stuffed with rags, or women's petticoats.

It would be wrong to generalize too much about the condition of the peasantry. Some serfs lived very comfortably, depending on the fertility of their soil and the harshness of their climate. As in medieval England, the landlord's permission was necessary for any change in a serf's life, such as getting married or leaving the village. Peasants also owed loyalty to their *mir*, village community. It was responsible for collecting the poll tax paid by all adult

Note

Islam was Russia's second most popular religion.

Note

While this diet may sound less than stimulating to us today, it probably compares favourably with that of many workers in Britain at the same time.

Think about

- ▶ What can we learn from Source 11 about rural life in nineteenth-century Russia?
- ▶ What reservations might a historian have about this as evidence?

Source 11

▶ A painting of starving peasants during the 1891–92 famine.

Facts and figures

Village elders, usually older and more successful peasants, controlled the *mir*.

Historical debate

Not all historians accept the view that the serfs were living in such a dreadful condition. Some argue that they were better off than peasants in France at the same time, and that their position was improving before 1895. Freedom for peasants in France meant perhaps only the freedom to starve.

Source 13

Will not agriculture suffer as well? Will not many fields lie fallow, and many granaries stay empty? After all, the bread on our markets comes, for the most part, not from the free farmers but from the gentry... Freed from the surveillance of the masters... the peasants will take to drinking and villany. Karamzin, *Memoir on Ancient and Modern Russia*, 1817

Source 14

▶ Serfs gather outside their master's mansion outside Moscow to hear the news of their emancipation (freedom) in 1861 (see page 26).

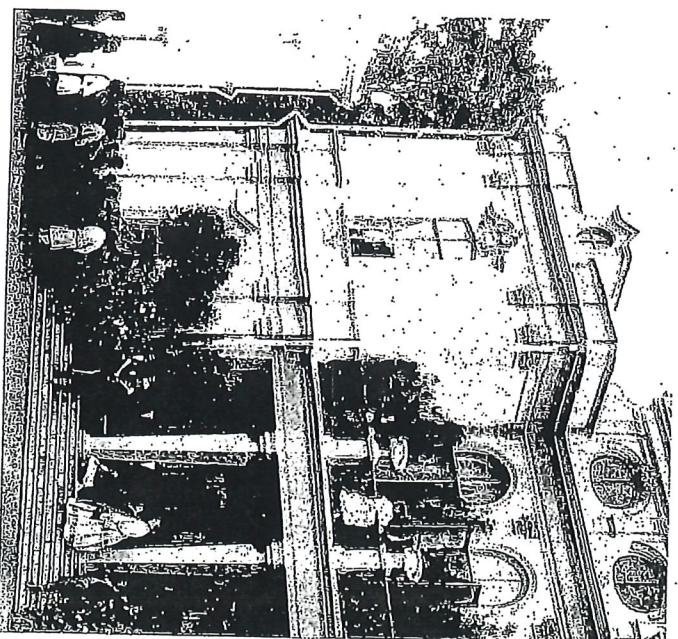
Think about

- ▶ What can we learn from Source 14 about the relationship between social classes in mid-nineteenth-century Russia?

males, and also had to choose soldiers for the army when ordered. The *mir* was responsible for dividing up the open fields between families, and redistributing them when it became necessary, if families increased in size. Open field farming in strips and serfdom made the introduction of new farming methods unlikely. What incentive did a landlord have to try to farm more efficiently when his labour force cost him nothing? How could an individual peasant try new methods when farming was done co-operatively in the open fields? Most importantly of all, there was no incentive for serfs to produce more than they could consume themselves, for there was no one to buy it.

Thus agriculture and village life continued as it had for centuries. The limit of the serfs' world was his village boundary and the nearest market. Life expectancy was poor – only about 35 years in the second half of the nineteenth century. The only escapes from the anxieties and hardship of ordinary life were in the solace of religion and the bottle. Illiteracy also made it almost impossible for peasants to change their lives and prospects.

However, the system was supported by many of the upper class. In Source 13 one member of the gentry asks himself what would happen if serfdom were to be abolished.



Life for the landlords, too, was not always perhaps as you might imagine.

Many landlords were mortgaged to the hilt to finance the life in their manor houses to which they felt entitled. According to Fyges, one third of the land and two thirds of the peasants were mortgaged to the State bank or other noble banks in 1859. This forced nobles to sell off their assets little by little. Few took any real interest in their estates but left them in the hands of managers and bailiffs.

Some of the leading members of the nobility, however, like the Yusupovs, were fabulously wealthy, living in palaces in St Petersburg and Moscow and owning thousands of acres of arable land, mines and forests. Working your way up in the Tsar's service was one certain way to financial success. The royal family was generous to its servants.

Russia had only a small middle class of professional people – doctors, lawyers, university teachers. However, the interest in the Enlightenment in Western Europe encouraged a renaissance in Russian culture during the nineteenth century. Travel abroad in the early years of the century had made many writers and educated people critical of backward Russia. This growing criticism spread through some of the officer class and resulted in the Decembrist Rising in 1825. Six hundred members of the leading noble families were put on trial after this collapsed.

It did not stop the open dissatisfaction with Russia's ancient institutions, especially the autocracy and serfdom. The novelist Dostoevsky, for example, spent some of his life as a 'guest' of the Tsar in the Peter and Paul prison in St Petersburg. Nicholas I restricted passports, making foreign travel almost impossible, in order to try to stop the spread of democratic ideas. Education was similarly restricted. When Nicholas died in 1855, less than 1 per cent of the population was enrolled in schools, and there were only 3500 students enrolled in Russia's six universities. He had also introduced an increasing censorship of publications and even the examination of personal letters by his Third Section of secret police. In 1848, liberal revolutions broke out throughout Europe. Nicholas I responded to this by increasing repression. Indeed fear was perhaps the overriding theme of royal government. The standing army in 1850 was over 1 million, and this in a country nominally at peace. There remained a great distance between the monarchy and the peasantry on the one hand and the forward-looking, free-thinking educated classes on the other.

The royal family

At the apex of society stood the Tsar and his family. The whole of social life for the upper classes revolved around the royal court. The daughters of the nobility were introduced to the court. Great banquets and balls were held throughout the year in the royal palaces. The Marquis de Custine, a French traveller, described one such event in 1839:

Source 18

The interior of the grand gallery in which they danced was arranged with a marvellous luxury. Fifteen hundred boxes of the rarest plants in flower formed a grove of fragrant greenery. At one of the extremities of the hall, amid thickets of exotic plants, a fountain threw up a column of fresh and sparkling water: its spray, illumined by the innumerable wax lights, shone like the dust of diamonds.

Marquis de Custine, *Empire of the Tsar*, 1843

The Tsar spent much of the year at the Winter Palace in St Petersburg, but also visited the Kremlin in Moscow and other palaces in the countryside and by the sea in the Crimea. The members of the royal family were educated to believe in their divine mission to rule Russia, as shown in Source 7.

The Romanov family was wealthy. G. King thought that it was certainly the richest family in the world, and estimated that the personal fortune of Nicholas II when he ascended the throne in 1894 was almost \$20 billion, of which

Note

The Enlightenment in the eighteenth century urged an end to tradition and privilege, and its replacement by government based on reason and science.

Think about

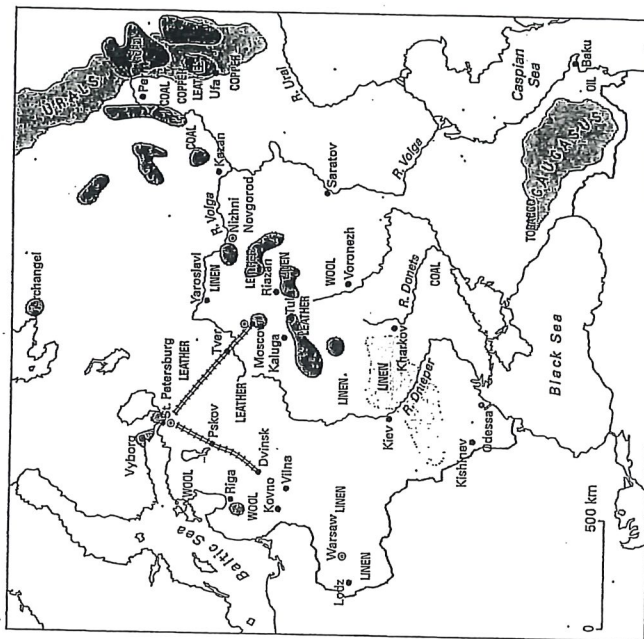
- ▶ How did the Marquis de Custine react to the ballroom scene?
- ▶ Do you think he is a trustworthy witness for us today?

\$1 billion was held in gold. He personally owned 150 million acres. This view has been questioned by other historians who have pointed out how poor the Tsars were, in comparison with the British royal family!

The Russian economy

Peter the Great and Catherine the Great had tried desperately to modernize Russia, but seemed to have had little success. The Russian population was growing rapidly throughout the nineteenth century. In 1855 it stood at about 70 million, if all Russian territories are included. By 1897 it had risen to 126 million. Given the harsh winters and short growing period in many areas of Russia, its backward farming methods and the poor quality of much of Russia's soil, the growth of population placed an increasing strain on limited resources. Any bad harvests had a devastating effect on the rural poor. Grain, was by far the most important Russian export, accounting for about 40 per cent of total value. In the main she exported raw materials and imported finished goods from Europe and further afield. Trade was made difficult by the fact that Russia in 1855 did not have one port that was ice-free for all of the year.

In many European countries the nineteenth century was a period of rapid industrial growth. In 1800 Russia had been the world's greatest producer of pig-iron, but by 1855 Britain produced ten times more. Austria produced more cast iron. Russia faced great difficulties in matching the pace of industrialization, because it had an underdeveloped banking system, making investment difficult, and it lacked a pool of labour for new industries. This may appear odd in view of the growing population, but most of this was tied to the villages by serfdom. Most Russians were so poor that there was very little demand at home for industrial products. After bad harvests when food prices shot up, demand for manufactured goods collapsed.



The Russian frontier 1815-1914

- Principal cities
- Railways built by 1860
- Factory development before 1860
- Industries expanding rapidly from 1860
- Centres of iron and steel production
- Sugar factories

Principal exports:
Wheat, rye, cereals, flour, flax, hemp, wool, animal fat, lard, seeds, wood, wood products, paper

Source 16

▶ The industrial development of Russia up to 1860

Facts and figures

Comparison of average income per head (in roubles in 1861)

Russia	71
UK	323
USA	450
Germany	175
France	150
Italy	183

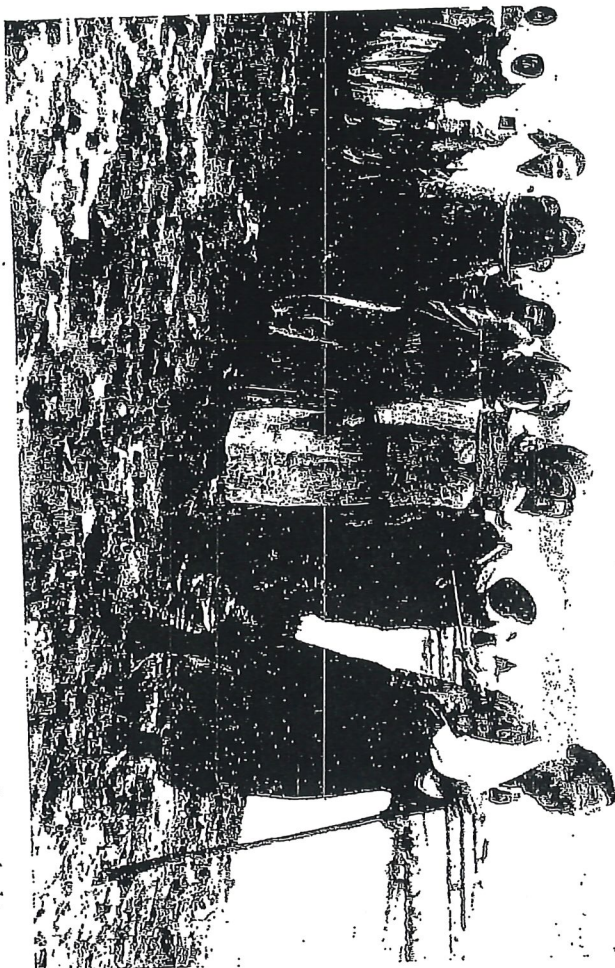
Quotation

It is Russia's historic destiny to lag behind.

Moscow, Alexander II and the Modernisation of Russia, 1958

Communications and transport difficulties also hampered development. By 1860 Russia had about 1600 km of railway, compared to Britain's 15,000. The railway link between St Petersburg and Moscow was opened in 1851, after much opposition. Nicholas I's Minister of Finance said that the railways were 'a malady of our age!' Given the fact that Russia's roads were also little more than mud tracks in many areas, these transport problems were formidable, making the transport of raw materials and finished goods difficult at the best of times but almost impossible during the spring thaw and autumn rains. Russia's great rivers provided important arteries for trade, but of course they were frozen for many months.

Source 17



▲ A group of women haul a transport barge along the River Volga at the end of the nineteenth century.



High tariffs, taxes on goods imported into Russia, made foreign goods expensive. The guarantee of high prices encouraged investors to set up businesses in Russia itself.

Activity

Make a list of the different difficulties Russia faced, then divide them into categories as in the chart on page 21 – military, political, economic and social. You will inevitably find some overlapping of issues! Try to be as exhaustive as possible. When you have decided on the nature of the problems facing Russia, try to suggest ways in which these problems might have been tackled. You will find this useful when you read how the new Tsar actually tried to tackle some of them.

For discussion

- 1 Which of all of these problems do you think was the most important and why?
- 2 Since Russia faced so many problems in the middle of the nineteenth century, and parts of that Empire are no longer ruled from Moscow today, it is easy to forget that it was an Empire of hundreds of years' standing and one that was still expanding. What glue kept the Russian peoples together?

	Problems	Possible Solutions
Military Difficulties preventing Russian military success		
Political Difficulties in the way Russia was governed		
Economic Problems facing Russian industry and agriculture		
Social Difficulties in the way that Russian people lived together in society		

Conclusion: Was Tsarist Russia a success?

Nicholas I died during the Crimean War, a war fought on Russian territory against British, French and Turkish forces. While the Russians had fought only the Turks in 1853, they had been successful. The Russian Black Sea Fleet had destroyed the Turkish navy in its own harbour at Sinope and its armies had advanced on all fronts against a weak enemy.

When British and French troops arrived in the Crimea, however, it was a different story. In a campaign, which has become a byword for incompetence and mismanagement on the British side, the heroism and patriotism of the Russian soldier could not make up for his lack of supplies and modern weaponry. In Russia, 25 million men were subject to military service but only 800,000 actually served. Most of those who did not were exempted because of poor health. Russian casualties were very high, perhaps as high as 500,000, the vast majority of which were caused by illness and disease rather than the fighting.

By December 1855 the government was exhausted of funds, the army was exhausted of supplies and recruits and there was rising popular anger with the war and the government. Nicholas I had tried hard to stamp out dissent, but it had little long-term effect. The cities had travelled in the more advanced countries of Europe, had seen their political systems and their advanced economies, and wanted to introduce them into Russia. But there were also many who regarded the West as the source of all Russia's problems – the growth of towns and cities, the spread of liberal ideas, the constant demands for change.

The new Tsar, Alexander II, was forced to ask the allies for a peace settlement, which limited Russia's power in the Near East. The internal problems facing the State were more difficult to solve, but without major changes it was clear that Russia could not play the part of a major power in European and world affairs. The past history of Russia showed that only the monarch could carry out sweeping changes, as Peter the Great had done early in the previous century. The great danger was that if there was no reform from above, there might be revolution from below, the consequences of which would be difficult to predict or contain.

How Alexander II tried to deal with the difficult situation he inherited is the subject of the next chapter.

Further reading

- i. Carr, *Major Problems in the History of Imperial Russia*, 1994
- ii. Thompson, *In Siberia*, 2000