

## 3

Alexander III and the  
age of reaction and  
counter-reform

1881–94

## INTRODUCTION

ALEXANDER ALEXANDROVICH, 1845–94,  
EMPEROR OF ALL RUSSIA 1881–94

As the second son, Alexander III, had not been groomed for tsardom, but pursued an army career until he was 20 when he then became heir presumptive on the death of his elder brother, Nicholas, in 1865. He had supported the nationalist opposition that had opposed many of Alexander II's views and reforms. His disapproval of his father's policies had been motivated not only by ideological differences on the issue of reform, but also by criticism of his father's relationship with, and subsequent marriage to, Princess Catherine Dolgorouky. His reign, which was marked by 13 years of peace and stability, saw a return to repression of political opposition and a conservative social policy. His domestic policy was particularly harsh, directed not only against revolutionaries but other liberal movements. His concern to preserve autocracy also led him to encourage a state-led, forced industrialisation programme that strengthened capitalism.

1 ↪ ALEXANDER III AND HIS SUITABILITY  
FOR TSARDOMA *Alexander III's personality*

According to one Russian biographer, Valentina Grigorievna Chernukha, he was a limited, unfit ruler whose 'personality dominated the statesman in him' and whose policies were doomed from the start, and pushed Russia further along the path to revolution. Known as 'Little Bulldog' within his family, they did not consider him to be fitting material for statesmanship and on the death of his brother, the heir, his aunt, the Grand Duchess Helen, had suggested that the crown should

See Picture 4 on  
page 65.



PICTURE 4  
Portrait of Alexander III,  
British Museum

pass to his younger brother, Vladimir. Alexander had had no preparation for ruling having been left 'almost entirely to his own devices during his childhood and young manhood'. He was not very intelligent, was slow to learn, and had a very inadequate knowledge of history, literature, economy and law. He was interested in all things military and by the time he became the heir he was a colonel, and *hetman* or leader of all the Cossack troops.

B *Alexander's training*

At the age of 20 his education was taken over by amongst others, the deeply conservative Konstantin Pobedonostsev (see page 67).

During the 15 years that he spent as heir presumptive, Alexander III represented the nationalist opposition of the political right. He opposed his father's reform policies, though never openly, on a number of occasions before he became tsar:

- 1 He disagreed with Alexander II on the issue of treatment of Russia's nationalities, particularly the Poles. He did not see the need either to reconcile Russia's nationalities to Russian rule or to consider European opinion of Russia. He was totally committed to a policy of *Russification* that was eventually to be speeded up during his time as tsar (see page 74).
- 2 He supported the continuing presence in government of ministers in favour of a policy of harsh repressive measures against political extremists whereas Alexander II tried to keep them out of state affairs when the country was peaceful.

## KEY ISSUES

*Differences between  
Alexander, and his  
father, the 'Tsar  
Liberator'.*

- 3 Alexander III supported those nobles who opposed Milyutin's plans to liberalise the army and his recruitment changes of 1874\* (see page 44).
- 4 He was in the 'party of action' in the events leading to the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-8 when Alexander II was concerned to avoid conflict.
- 5 Alexander III stressed the positive features of Russia's past that his father worked to end. They disagreed on the issue of judicial reforms that were acknowledged to be among Alexander II's most important work. Alexander III made it clear that he would revise them once he became tsar.

Alexander III increasingly became the focal point for other reactionaries while even those who did not support his ideas recognised that the future of Russia lay with him. Those ministers whom he had personally chosen were assured of his support and they in turn respected him.

### C His attitude as tsar

Alexander made it very clear at the beginning of his reign that he would never permit limitations on autocratic rule. His father's assassination had confirmed his hostility to reform. He was determined to re-enforce the authority of the tsar and to stamp out political opponents who posed a challenge. He rejected any suggestion of a western style parliamentary institution in the belief that it was foreign to Russia's tradition and history and was not wanted by the peasants. His belief that he had a mystical bond with the Russian peasants gave a Populist element to his rule. His conservative reactionary views were supported by the ministers he chose to advise him, particularly Konstantin Pobedonostsev and Count Dmitri Tolstoy. He was a strong supporter of Russian nationalism and Pan-Slavism and was determined to reverse the pro-German policy that had been adopted by his father and grandfather. There was a modernising element to his policies but his state-led industrialisation programme was motivated more by his concern to preserve autocracy and strengthen Russia as a great power.

## 2 ALEXANDER III – THE REACTIONARY TSAR

### A Appointment of ministers and advisers

Alexander began his reign with a proclamation announcing his determination to rule as an autocrat. This was followed by the appointment of conservative advisers, the most significant being Konstantin Pobedonostsev, Procurator of the Holy Synod, responsible for church affairs. He was known behind his back as the 'Black Tsar' and even Alexander was not totally uncritical declaring that 'one could freeze to death just listening to him all the time'.

### KONSTANTIN POBEDONOSTSEV (1827–1907)

He was tutor in legal matters to Alexander III and Nicholas II and exercised great influence as the champion of orthodoxy, autocracy and nationality. He had been a critic of Alexander II's liberalising policies and an opponent of democracy. In 1860-5 he was professor of Civil Law at Moscow University and was a member of the commission that prepared the judicial reforms of 1863. He became Procurator of the Holy Synod 1880-1905 and from then on his views became more fixed.

He was passionately intolerant of other faiths and as a nationalist he was hostile to minorities in the Empire. He was critical of Alexander II's liberalising policies and in his *Reflections of a Russian Statesman* (1898) he attacked parliamentary government as 'the great lie of our time'. He believed that he represented true Russians and was an important influence on re-enforcing Alexander III's conservative reactionary support for the principles of orthodoxy, autocracy and nationality. He genuinely believed that liberals were a threat to tsarist authority and blamed them for the political extremism and death of Alexander II. He supported a policy of repression and even came to criticise the legal reforms he had helped sponsor in the 1860s. In a memorandum sent to Alexander III in 1885, he attacked the separation of judicial and executive powers, argued for greater control of barristers by the courts and advised the abolition of trial by jury. He supported policies that would return Russia to a police state.

Pobedonostsev persuaded Alexander II to govern with the advice of a small body of experienced ministers. Serving as a Prime Minister, he influenced Alexander to appoint conservative reactionary ministers, who shared his conservative views.

### B Main features of 'counter-reform' policies 1881-95

Alexander began his reign by publicly hanging the five agents of the *People's Will* who had taken part in his father's assassination. Many aspects of Russian life subsequently experienced repression, including judicial organisation, the government, education of the Jews and Russia's nationalities. The emancipation of the serfs remained but the peasants came under the closer control of officials while agriculture stagnated. These policies led to a deep hatred of Alexander by Jews, Germans, revolutionaries, nationalities and those who broke from the Orthodox Church. Yet, Alexander was unique amongst the tsars in that he preserved peace throughout his reign, apart from some minor fighting in central Asia. In that respect it could be said that he deserved the title 'peacemaker'. However, he undoubtedly laid the foundations for the 1917 revolution.

## AN OVERVIEW OF THE MAIN FEATURES OF ALEXANDER III'S COUNTER-REFORMS

## Political (central government) and internal security

## Main features

- 1881: Defeat of proposals for constitutional reform after a series of conferences.

- Statute Concerning Measures for the Protection of State Security, 1881, or more generally the Law on Exceptional Measures gave the government far-reaching powers to interfere with civil liberties. If the situation was considered to be sufficiently critical, a Commander-in-Chief could be appointed to set up military police courts, confiscate property and arrest, imprison or fine people, remove elected officials and suppress publications.
- Formation of the *Okhrana*.

*Okhrana* were the secret police concerned with preservation of public order.

## Effects

- Indicated that Alexander III had no intention of 'completing the great reforms of Alexander II which remained unfinished'. He had every intention of preserving autocratic rule.
- Reforming ministers resign.
- The 1881 Law was used in some regions until the 1917 revolution.
- Revolutionary groups were weakened for a decade and activists were forced into exile.
- Alexander's reign appeared to be peaceful and stable but this was due more to a rigid system of repression based on executions and exile to Siberia rather than to a solution of their grievances.



PICTURE 5 'Russian Civilisation', forced labour in Siberia

George Kennan, *Siberia and the Exile System*, 1891. In 1885, George Kennan, who had lived in Russia as a young man, returned to the empire to carry out a report on the prison system.

Marching parties of convicts three or four hundred strong leave Tomsk for Irkutsk weekly throughout the whole year and make the journey of 1040 miles [1660 kilometres] in about three months... Each prisoner receives five cents a day in money for his subsistence and buys food for himself from peasants along the road who make a business of furnishing it... No distinction is made between common convicts and political convicts except that the latter if they are nobles or belong to one of the privileged classes receive seven and a half cents a day instead of five and are carried in carts instead of being forced to walk.

How useful is this source for revealing the size and scope of opposition under Alexander III?

## Political (local government) and internal security

## Main features

- Publications critical of the regime could be suspended indefinitely and editors prevented from publishing anything else.
- 1887: Defeat of attempts to assassinate Alexander by a group of student protestors. Followed by executions including Lenin's older brother, Alexander Ulyanov.
- 1884: Recommendations of Kakhanov Report that the *volost* should be responsible for all classes rejected.
- 1889: Office of *volost* justice of the peace abolished and their duties were transferred in the towns to city judges appointed by the Ministry of Justice and in the rural areas they were shared between the *uezd* member of the provincial assembly and a new officer – the Land Captain. The latter, drawn from the ranks of the local nobility, was elected by the provincial governor subject to the approval of the Ministry of the Interior.

## Effects

- Nobility continued to decline despite the introduction of the Land Captain.
- The peasantry resented being put under the authority of the Land Captain supervised by the Ministry of the Interior. They were prevented from developing self-government.
- Increased bureaucratic control and number of officials.
- Local self-government continued but was subject to constant interference by central government. The latter stifled local initiative in all aspects of its work including any attempts to improve people's welfare.
- The *zemstva* concentrated on improving local services including roads, fire-fighting and education.
- Slow pace to improvements in the cities and these were confined to the main streets while the outlying parts were neglected in terms of street cleaning and lighting.

Main features	Effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 1890: <i>Zemstva</i> Act changed the way in which membership was elected. This was determined by three electoral colleges that were dominated by the landowners while peasant representation was reduced and made indirect. <i>Zemstva</i> were under the disciplinary control of the Ministry of the Interior.</li> <li>● 1892: Municipal Government Act restricted, and thereby reduced, the electorate in the towns to owners of immovable property over a certain value.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Increase in the number of trained experts particularly doctors, teachers and engineers employed by the <i>zemstva</i> and cities. These were mainly young idealists who wanted to bring improvements to the people despite being poorly paid. They tended to be liberal or socialist in their political outlook and came to form an important group in favour of political reform. They were also active in cultivating a professional identity, which expressed itself in the formation of professional organisations. They regarded themselves as part of the intelligentsia rather than government officials.</li> </ul>

## Education

Main features	Effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 1882: Higher courses for women were to be gradually closed.</li> <li>● 1884: University Statute replaced that of 1863. It established state control over the universities in an attempt to stamp out riots, such as had occurred in 1882 in St Petersburg and Kazan.</li> <li>● 1886: Final closure of higher courses for women.</li> <li>● 1887: Increase in university fees to exclude all but the wealthy.</li> <li>● 1887: Fees in <i>gimnazii</i> were raised to keep out students from lower social ranks. This exclusion was emphasised in Delianov 'Cooks' Circular' of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Increase in the powers of government appointed inspectors who were made directly responsible to the curators.</li> <li>● University rectors, deans and lecturers were appointed by the Minister of Education rather than as in the past by the academic university boards.</li> <li>● Students were banned from belonging to student groups.</li> <li>● Reforms brought peace to the universities until 1887 when there was a fresh outburst of rioting.</li> <li>● Students continued to organise themselves in unofficial regional societies known as <i>zemlyachestva</i>. Their activities</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 1887 that stated that the secondary schools should exclude 'children of coachmen, servants, cooks, washerwomen, small shopkeepers and persons of similar type. Excepting for gifted children, it is completely unwarranted for the children of such people to be brought out of the social environment to which they belong.'</li> <li>● 1888: Vocational schools were set up.</li> <li>● 1890: New <i>gimnazii</i> curriculum reduced the amount of time spent studying Latin and Greek.</li> <li>● The church was given more control over primary education and was encouraged to set up church schools in the parish.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● were co-ordinated by a central committee known as the Union Council, the <i>soyuzny sovet</i>. By the end of the 1890s individuals active in illegal political movements used the Council to encourage student unrest.</li> <li>● Between 1892 and 1895 the number of children in <i>gimnazii</i> fell from 65 751 to 63 863 while the percentage of children of nobles and officials increased from 47 to 56%. However, the number in real schools rose from 17 500 to 26 000. Church schools increased from 4064 to 31 835. At the time of the 1897 census only 21% of the population were literate. The government believed that peasants should receive the minimum of education since it encouraged dangerous ideas.</li> </ul>
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## Judiciary

Main features	Effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 1885: Minister of Justice was given increased disciplinary powers over the judiciary.</li> <li>● 1887: Minister of Justice was given the power to order a trial to be held in camera to protect 'the dignity of state power.'</li> <li>● 1887: Term of service on <i>volost</i> courts was increased to three years.</li> <li>● 1889: Crimes against state officials were to be heard in special courts without a jury.</li> <li>● 1889: <i>Volost</i> justices were abolished and cases heard by them were transferred to the state appointed Land Captain.</li> <li>● 1889: Minister of Justice was given the power to appoint town judges instead of justices.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Legal reforms of Alexander II's reign were reversed, but not totally.</li> <li>● Increased government interference in the law courts.</li> <li>● Judges became liable to dismissal.</li> <li>● Trial by jury undermined.</li> </ul>

## Religion

Main features	Effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 1883: Dissenters were not allowed to build new centres of worship, wear religious clothes outside their church, or engage in religious propaganda. Any attempt to convert a member of the Orthodox church to a dissenting religion was punished by exile to Siberia.</li> <li>● 1894: <i>Stundism</i>, an evangelical sect, that had emerged in the Ukraine, about 1858, was declared 'an especially dangerous sect' and its prayer meetings were banned.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Pobedonostsev's policies to enforce Orthodoxy became associated with Alexander III's policy to <i>Russify</i> his nationalities. It caused resentment and encouraged the growth of nationalist movements.</li> </ul>

## 3 ALEXANDER III'S REFORMS

## AN OVERVIEW OF THE MAIN FEATURES OF ALEXANDER III'S REFORMS

## Political

Main features	Effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 1882: Kakhanov Commission set up to consider reform of administration at <i>Volost</i> and village levels (abolished in 1885).</li> <li>● Proposed to reconvene a <i>zemsky sobor</i>, an Assembly of the Land.</li> <li>● <i>Zemstva</i> continued to carry out improvements in the village.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Rejection of any prospect of constitutional government – autocracy upheld.</li> <li>● Some growth in the provision of primary education.</li> </ul>

## Social

Main features	Effects
<p><b>Gains made by peasantry</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 1881: Law to end 'temporary obligation'. This reform had been prepared by Loris-Melikov.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The 1881 Law was applied to 37 'internal provinces' of European Russia affecting about 15% of former serfs. Allotments were made compulsory and redemption payments were reduced.</li> </ul>

## Gains by the peasants

- 1883: Peasants' Land Bank gave peasants cheap credit to buy land though this had the danger of indebtedness. But it did increase substantially the share of the total land owned by peasants.
- 1883–6: Abolition of poll-tax.
- Inheritance tax placed a larger share of the financial burden on wealthy and privileged classes.
- Reduction in village authority over peasants with introduction of right of appeal to higher courts.

## Gains by the nobles

- 1885: Nobles' Land Bank.

## Gains by the workers

- 1882: Child labour was regulated and working hours were reduced.
- 1882–90: Laws to provide for compulsory education for young factory children.
- Reduction in hours worked by women at night.
- Reduction in unjust fines.
- Reduction in payment in kind instead of money.
- Factory inspectors appointed to enforce legislation and to supervise labourers' living and working conditions.

Despite good intentions to improve the conditions of rural and urban workers the reforms had limitations. This was partly due to the

- Rapid increase in population which increased the number of poor (see page 2).
- Corruption that meant the laws were not fully applied.
- Introduction of Land Captains and the increase in indirect taxes checked progress in the villages.
- Development of industry in the towns led to poor living conditions as houses were built quickly and cheaply but were still insufficient to meet demand. Families lived together in large sleeping halls and drunkenness, filth and immorality were commonplace.
- Poor health of town population as a result of the evils of town living but also long hours remained. In 1897 the average expectation of life at birth was 32 years.
- Whole families worked in the factories so that the care and education of children were neglected.

## Religion

Main features	Effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 1883: Dissenters, except <b>skoptsy</b>, were allowed to have passports, to engage in commercial and industrial activities, hold minor office and hold religious meetings in their homes.</li> <li>● 1893: Priests were paid a salary by the State.</li> </ul>	

**skoptsy** (meant castrates) and was a religious sect whose members deprived themselves of their manhood.

#### 4 ALEXANDER III AND THE POLICY OF RUSSIFICATION

Russification that had been apparent during the 1870s became the official policy under Alexander III as advisers committed to such a policy became more influential in government circles. His successor, Nicholas II continued with his policies until 1917. These were directed towards ensuring that 55% of the Empire's population (according to the 1897 Census), that was made up of nationalities lost all trace of their identity and became Russian in terms of their language, culture, religion, legal system and ruling elite. Education was geared to making nationalities loyal subjects of the tsar and the Russian nation. This included conscription into the Russian army to help in defence of the empire. This vigorous Russification policy was supported by

##### KEY ISSUE

Supporters of a Russification policy.

- 1 bureaucrats drawn from noble landowning families, who believed in order and uniformity
- 2 soldiers who were concerned with security issues particularly on Russia's borders in the Baltic, Bessarabia and Transcaucasia
- 3 orthodox priests, especially the Procurator of the Holy Synod, Konstantin Pobedonostsev, out of a sense of religious intolerance.

Policies were pursued which reflected growth in an increasingly aggressive national consciousness re-enforced by a more reactionary brand of Slavophilism (see page 15). These included attempts at complete unification of Western lands and the Trans-Caucasus (1860s), the Baltic provinces (1880s) and Finland (1890s) as well as the attack on the privileged status of Baltic Germans (since 1890s). A number of factors help to explain this shift in policy:

##### A Factors promoting a more vigorous Russification policy

- 1 The Polish revolts of 1830 and 1863 led Alexander III and his advisers to become disillusioned with the earlier liberal policy based on peaceful integration. They concluded that only a firm approach with the nationalities could guarantee survival of a united state. Some historians have described this attitude as the 'Polish syndrome'; a fear that liberal policies would lead to revolt and belief that repression would bring peace.
- 2 The widespread emergence of national liberation movements, which gained momentum in the 1860s with the emergence of national liberation movements in different parts of the Russian Empire. These emerged at different times reflecting the different 'age' or maturity of the country concerned. The Russian government's hope that it could halt the development of nationalist movements by taking a firm line had mixed results. They succeeded in slowing down nationalist movements amongst young nations between 1864 and 1905. However, among the Finns, Poles,

Lithuanians and Armenians as well as of Muslims on the Middle Volga, Russification policies acted as a stimulus to revolutionary movement that demanded independence. Non-Russians played a role disproportionate to their numbers, for example Latvians were 7.45 times more active than Russians, as shown in the following table:

Nationality	% Among the exiled	% Among the population	Ratio of % among the exiled to % among the population
Russians	43.5	43.5	1
Poles	17.6	6.2	2.84
Jews	15.8	3.9	4.05
Latvians	8.2	1.1	7.45
Ukrainians	4.2	12.5	0.34
Georgians	2.3	1.1	2.09
Armenians	1.9	0.9	2.11
Estonians	0.6	0.8	0.75
Byelorussians	0.4	4.6	0.09
Lithuanians	0.2	1.3	0.15
Others	5.4	0.2	0.22

TABLE 18  
Nationality of exiled revolutionaries in 1907-17

Identify (i) the most and (ii) the least active of revolutionaries.

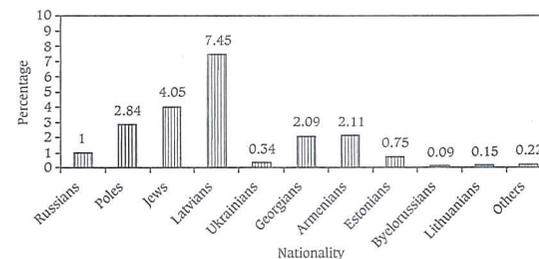


DIAGRAM 9

##### B Russia's treatment of her Jewish population

By the start of Alexander III's reign there were 5 million Jews who were confined to the area known as the Pale which consisted of Lithuania, Poland, the southwestern provinces including the Ukraine and White Russia. Their position had always been uneasy and they were subject to repeated persecution and violence as a result of the widespread resentment of their commercial and financial activities and position as moneylenders. There had been some relaxation during Alexander II's liberal phase but this had been short-lived. He had allowed certain groups – wealthy Jews, who paid more than a 1000 roubles in tax each year, university graduates and skilled craftsmen – to settle anywhere in the Empire, but this moderate policy was reversed after the 1863 Polish revolt. They were considered by some to have been responsible for the

revolt and anti-Semitic literature appeared, some of which was state financed. Hostility against the Jews increased in the 1870s:

- Jewish schools were closed
- restrictions were placed on the civil rights of Jews in the revision of town government in 1870. They were disbarred from holding office as mayor and membership on town councils was restricted to a third of the total.

The presence of Jews amongst revolutionary and nationalist groups in non-Russian parts of the Empire, along with the claim that they had been involved in the assassination of Alexander II, sealed their fate. Alexander III sanctioned a policy of savage persecution that continued under Nicholas II to 1917:

- 1 A series of pogroms broke out affecting 12 cities in 1881 and continued in another four cities in 1883. These were organised by the influential Holy League, an extreme nationalist and anti-Semitic organisation that had the support of Pobedonostsev and other high-ranking government officials. Activities took the form of armed gangs of men breaking into shops and houses in the Jewish parts of towns burning and looting property as well as beating, raping and killing anyone they encountered. It was claimed that these pogroms were the 'spontaneous demonstration of an outraged people' but in fact the men who took part had been well prepared. They had been indoctrinated with anti-Semitic propaganda, were often amply supplied with alcohol and were transported into the affected areas by train. Local authorities rarely took action against them since they had the protection of the Ministry of the Interior. Alexander III was persuaded by his advisers that the Jews were 'social parasites, demoralising every community into which they penetrated – a species of human vermin whom every government should seek to destroy for the general good' (Charles Lowe, *Alexander III of Russia*, Heinemann, 1895). However, Alexander III did not approve of the activities of the Holy League and it was banned in 1882.
- 2 The 'Provisional or Temporary Rules' were issued in 1882. These banned Jews from:
  - settling in rural areas, even inside the Pale, or from owning or managing land
  - holding any administrative office, or becoming a lawyer
  - running schools or printing books in Hebrew
  - marrying a Christian unless he gave up his religion
  - having the right of appeal against any court sentence.

The Rules were intended to be temporary but lasted until 1917. Alexander believed that the Jews' condition was 'preordained by the Gospels' and that they deserved punishment because they had crucified Christ. Few in government challenged this persecution apart from the liberal Michael Reutern. A commission was set up in 1883 to examine the status

#### KEY ISSUE

Main features of 'Provisional or Temporary Rules'

and position of Jews in Russian society and to make recommendations to revise the laws governing their position. It advised that Russia's Jews should be treated as Russians and not foreigners, that 'the system of repressive and discriminating measures must give way to a graduated system of emancipatory and equalising laws'. Nothing came of these recommendations.

Anti-Semitism had become securely established in government and society, particularly in areas that had a large Jewish population, such as the Ukraine and Lithuania resulting in escalation of policies between 1887 and 1893:

- 1887: the *Numerus clausus* set down quotas for Jews attending university
- 1889: persons of 'non-Christian persuasion' could only practise law with the permission of the Minister of Justice but this was not granted in the 10 years following the decree
- 1890: saw the deportation of foreign Jews from Russia and of Russian Jews from outside the Pale
- 1891: Alexander II's law of 1865 that had allowed Jewish craftsmen to settle beyond the Pale was repealed resulting in 2000 being deported from Moscow
- 1892: Municipal reform restricted representation of Jews on town councils within the Pale to not more than 10% of membership
- 1894: Jews were banned from selling spirits which became a state monopoly. This had been one of the few remaining important sources of income.

They had some success – Jewish businesses that had set up in the rural areas had to be sold at low prices while in the towns there was some decline in their trade, and hence profits. Jews who had settled beyond the Pale were forced to leave. Pogroms became a regular feature of Russian life, especially under Nicholas II who had a deep-rooted hatred of Jews. They occurred on an ever widening scale in 1903, 1905, 1906 and 1907 and provoked criticism in Britain and the United States. An estimated 225 000 ruined Jewish families left Russia for western Europe or the United States and South America during Alexander III's reign, while 2 million fled between 1914 and 1917 when they were treated as spies during World War I. They took with them a deep hatred of tsardom that would influence other nations to condemn Russia.

Those Jews who remained in Russia contained a large number of the intelligentsia and they became increasingly attracted to socialist and revolutionary ideas. There were large numbers of Jews amongst the Populists in the 1870s, while in the 1880s and 1890s interest shifted to Marxist socialism with its ideas of class warfare and the inevitability of revolution that would lead to the overthrow of tsarism. The year 1897 saw the formation of the General Union of Jewish Workers in Russia and Poland, the *Bund*, which was to play an important role in the development of a social democratic movement. It encouraged strikes and demonstrations against Russian autocracy as well as promoting the

#### KEY ISSUE

Escalation of policies 1887–93.

#### KEY ISSUE

To what extent were the regime's antisemitic policies successful?

idea of revolution amongst the people during the last years of Romanov rule. Russian Jews also became supporters of the Zionist movement that promoted the development of a Jewish nationalist identity.

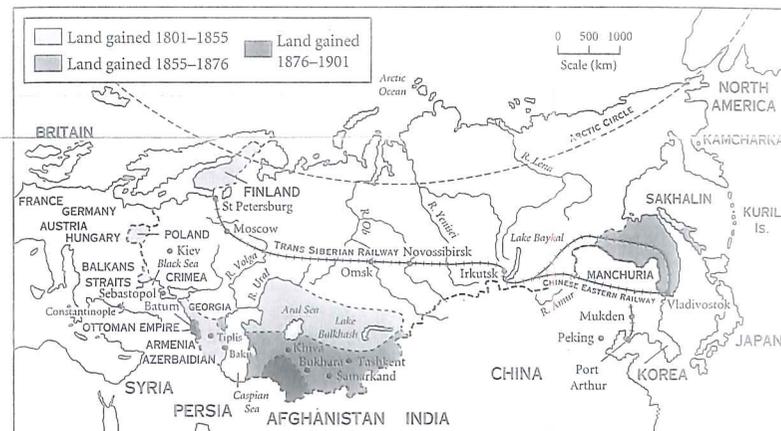
## 5 ECONOMIC CHANGE AND ITS SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Another one of the lessons learnt from the Crimean War was the need to modernise not only society but also the economy if Russia was to compete as a great power on equal terms with the more advanced industrial economies of the west, particularly Britain and Germany. There was also the need for Russia to develop her own resources rather than rely on foreign imports. The continuing backwardness of agriculture also showed the need to develop alternative sources of wealth. The military motivation for industrialisation meant that the initiative was taken by the State rather than by private individuals.

### A Main factors promoting Russia's economic development

Railways were significant in opening up the vast open spaces of Russia that could not be exploited by a suitable river or coastal navigation. They were used for colonising and for developing iron and coal industry in the Ukraine which became the major producer of iron. Railways made possible development of the oil-producing region of Baku on the Caspian Sea that was linked to the ports of the Black Sea. In its turn railway construction became an important customer of the iron and steel industries, accounting for 60% of total production by the 1890s. The cotton textile industry also benefited from the coming of the railways, both in terms of opening up new areas for the cultivation of raw cotton as well as finding new markets in Asia for the finished cotton goods. Apart from developing industry, they made possible more extensive cultivation of the Black Earth Zone and the steppe as well as extending Russian trade in the Far East. Some landowners became entrepreneurs, introducing hired labour, and modern farming techniques to expand production of wheat for the growing export markets of Odessa. These developments helped promote social change.

The need for a money economy had been fairly limited prior to the emancipation of the serfs. In a peasant based economy dealings took the form of services and payments in kind except in the case of the government which needed cash to pay for its growing military commitments. After the emancipation of the serfs in 1861 rural society was forced to develop a cash-based economy which led to social changes as relationships previously based on status and custom gave way to those based on contract and law.



MAP 6 Trans-Siberian and Chinese Eastern Railways

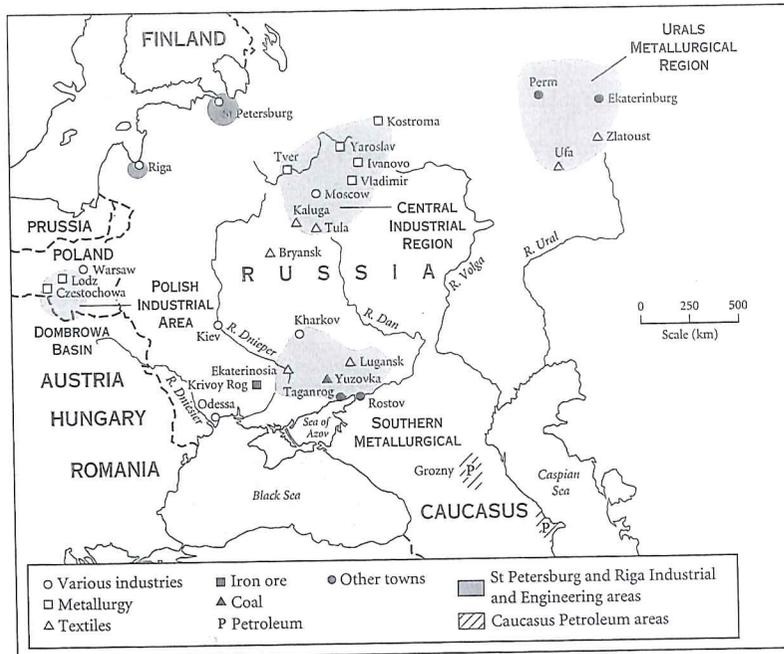
### B Main features of Russia's industrial organisation prior to 1890s

Prior to the 1890s and the intervention of Sergei Witte, the regime had no clear strategy for industrial development. There were three types of industrial enterprises:

- 1 State, 'proprietary' factories provided manufactures essential for national security, such as armaments and army clothing, saltpetre, gunfounding, and sailcloth, arms. Labour for these state-run factories was drawn from peasants on State and Crown lands, that were frequently attached to a factory for life and were sold with it, supplemented by prisoners of war, beggars, criminals, orphans and the wives of soldiers on service. Raw materials, such as wool, for the textile industries were obtained instead of taxes. The main problem in these state factories was the relatively low quality of the work carried out.
- 2 'Estate' factories, were developed in the eighteenth century by some nobles on their estates who used the labour of their serfs. Nobles who had no factories would sell or hire out their manufacturing serfs for service elsewhere. On the emancipation of the serfs the freed workers gave up working in the nobles' factories which were either sold, or died out, but some survived in the cotton and distilling industries.
- 3 'Domestic', 'kustar' industries developed alongside the estate factories. Peasants taught the craft skills acquired in the estate factories

to members of the family who remained at home. Home industries sprang up as a winter occupation in weaving, spinning, boat-making. Some peasants formed co-operative associations, known as *artels*, for the production of every kind of manufactured article and started a workshop, *svietetka*. Every kind of spinning, weaving and metal work, and the production of almost every article that could be made out of wood, bone or leather, was made in those *svietetka*. Some of peasant families progressed to become merchant manufacturers and contributed to the development of a middle class.

- 4 Private enterprise existed in only one industry prior to 1850 – cotton. It developed in St Petersburg and the district around Moscow, attracted by the availability of the rivers Oka and Volga that connected the district with the south and east while the forest region to the North provided both fuel and labour. The river Volga carried supplies of raw cotton from the Levant and Persia and when wood became scarce it carried naphtha oil.



MAP 7 *Russia's economic development*

### C *Contribution of Sergei Witte to Russia's industrialisation*

Sergei Witte, the minister responsible for Russia's drive towards modernisation in the 1890s, was a representative of the new breed of businessmen that were appearing in Russia in the closing years of the nineteenth century.

#### SERGEI YULYEVICH WITTE (1849–1915)

#### PROFILE

Born in Tiflis, the capital of Georgia in 1849, he was the son of a German or Dutch father while his mother was the daughter of a governor whose family was well known Pan-Slavists. He spent his early years in the Caucasus in the environment of minor provincial nobility. He graduated from Odessa University with a degree in Mathematics and entered government office in the service of the Governor-General in 1871 working for the Odessa Railway until 1877. When the company was sold to private business he remained as manager and made friends with leading capitalists including some who were Jewish. He became famous in 1883 with the publication of his book on railway tariffs that established his reputation as an expert on railway administration. This led to him being offered in 1889 responsibility for developing a new railway department within the Ministry of Finance. He established a reputation as an able and competent administrator and in 1892 was promoted to be Minister of Communications and then six months later, Minister of Finance 1892–1903. He subsequently became chairman of the Committee of Ministers 1903–6 and was one of the few ministers who had the power to partly choose his own cabinet.

Witte was, according to Hugh Seton-Watson, 'One of the outstanding statesmen of the nineteenth century, a brilliant organiser and a man of broad ideas'. He was in many respects an outsider in terms of his social background, his career in business and railway administration, and his marriage to a Jewish divorcee. Inevitably he had critics amongst the aristocracy some of whom played a role in his dismissal in 1903. There was a certain contradiction in his political thinking. He was a firm supporter of autocracy and admired Alexander III, but he also recognised the urgent need of Russia to modernise. He eventually abandoned his opposition to Parliamentary democracy and in 1905 supported the movement for political and constitutional reform that he saw as the complement to his economic modernisation. Witte was made the first Prime Minister in 1905 and succeeded in floating a loan of £80 million in Britain

and France, which freed Nicholas II from dependence on the Duma. He lost Nicholas's favour and was replaced by a reactionary. He never held office again and was an opponent of the 1914 War.

Witte gained the support and loyalty of Alexander III, as evidenced by his rapid promotion in 1892. His great financial skill succeeded in keeping the tsars from bankruptcy, especially by borrowing money from France, a policy that gave his critics the opportunity to accuse him of being too subservient to foreign capitalists. He was a faithful supporter of tsarism and had a good working relationship with Alexander III. This was based on Witte's admiration of Alexander for having secured a peaceful period for Russia and Alexander III's willingness to delegate authority to Witte. The latter's admiration for Alexander III is clearly shown in Witte's Memoirs in which he described Alexander as a tsar who was above 'all selfish interests that prevail among ordinary mortals, above all the egotistical and material interests that so often corrupt the human heart. (He) recognised that Russia could be made great only when it ceased being an exclusively agricultural country. A country without strongly developed industry could not be great.' There was also a personal motive for Witte's support of the regime. In the view of Theodore H. Von Laue, 'what perhaps endeared autocracy most to Witte at least in the reign of Alexander III was that under its firm protection a man could do a good job. Witte was an autocrat in his own right. Autocracy ... favoured men of his type. What he wanted was a secure position from which to direct the affairs entrusted to him. Under Alexander III, the last Romanov who made his will felt throughout the government, he could do his job with the efficiency that comes from the possession of a delegated share of absolute power' (Theodore H. von Laue, *Sergei Witte and the Industrialisation of Russia*, Colombia University Press, 1974).

### KEY ISSUE

#### Witte's policies.

He argued that if Russia did not modernise and become an industrialised country she would run the risk of becoming a colony as had occurred in the case of the Chinese Empire. He believed that the State should provide the means – transport, markets, money, to achieve industrial growth, but that private businessmen would take responsibility to develop industries and trade.

- 1 Home industries were protected against foreign competition by high import duties imposed in 1887 and again in 1891. The metal industry benefited most, as did the Moscow textile industry whereas textile producers in St Petersburg found that they had to pay more for their supplies of raw cotton by sea. Higher tariffs also increased government revenue.
- 2 Foreign investors, especially French and Belgian, were encouraged to invest in Russian industry.

- 3 A new rouble was introduced in 1897 linked to the gold standard in the hope of increasing investors' confidence. The rouble's value was fixed against other countries' currencies and was made freely convertible to gold in the hope that this would produce a more stable rouble and end the wild fluctuations of previous years.
- 4 Indirect taxes were raised to achieve a reserve of gold.
- 5 Railways, financed by foreign capital, were constructed to provide easier access to raw materials and to markets for finished goods. Witte's greatest achievement was the Trans-Siberian Railway and the Chinese Eastern Railway through northern Manchuria. The Trans-Siberian Railway, started in 1892, and completed as a single track by 1904, connected Moscow with Vladivostok on the Pacific. This was a massive undertaking covering a distance of 6000 km and had important economic and strategic advantages. It led to the economic development of western Siberia and a government sponsored plan for encouraging peasant migration from the overpopulated European Russia. Siberia proved attractive to the more enterprising peasants; it had never experienced serfdom and government control was less repressive. Under State encouragement it became an important supplier of grain, meat, butter for the markets of Moscow and St Petersburg as well as for England and Germany. In the eastern half the railway was used to transport troops and supplies to support Russia's Empire in the Far East.

See Map 6 on page 79.

#### Effects of Witte's policies

- 1 There was increased foreign investment rising from 26% in 1890 to 41% by 1915, but this was achieved at the cost of mortgaging revenue. By 1900, 20% of the budget was used to service the foreign debt, ten times as much as was spent on education. The number of foreign companies rose from 16 in 1888 to 269 in 1900. Witte's critics attacked him for over-dependence on foreign investment and loans.
- 2 Railways stimulated exports and foreign trade as a result of the lowering of transport costs. Russia's main customers were Germany, Britain and the Netherlands while China supplied tea and the United States raw cotton. The expansion of the railways also contributed to government revenue in terms of income earned from freight charges and passenger fares.

Year	Imports	Exports	Balance
1880	622.8	498.7	-
1890	406.6	692	+
1900	626	716	+

TABLE 19  
The Russian balance of trade  
1880–1900 (in millions of  
roubles)

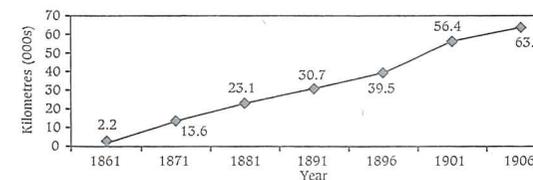


DIAGRAM 10  
Expansion in railway track  
construction 1861–1906

Year	St Petersburg	Moscow	Year	Coal	Pig iron	Oil	Grain
1881	928 000	753 500	1860	0.29	0.31	—	—
1890	1 033 600	1 038 600	1870	0.68	0.33	0.03	—
1897	1 264 700	1 174 000	1880	3.24	0.42	0.5	34
1900	1 439 600	1 345 000	1890	5.9	0.89	3.9	36
1910	1 905 600	1 617 700	1900	16.1	2.66	10.2	56
1914	2 217 500	1 762 700	1910	26.8	2.99	9.4	74

**TABLE 20**  
Growth of population in  
Russia's two main cities  
1881–1914

Years	Average annual rate of growth of industrial production (%)
1885–9	6.10
1890–9	8.03
1900–6	1.43
1907–13	6.25

**TABLE 22**  
Rates of industrial growth,  
1885–1913

- 3 Existing industries expanded and new ones developed. Coal, iron and oil industries developed rapidly, especially in the Ukraine, a centre of heavy metallurgical industry. The Caucasus region grew with development of its oil wells in Azerbaijan and manganese deposits in Georgia. Textiles continued to expand and to be the biggest industry in terms of its workforce, though there were changes in the relative significance of production areas. St Petersburg declined in relation to Moscow and Poland. A Russian engineering industry developed in St Petersburg along with centres in Moscow, the Baltic provinces and some centres in the south, to build the engines and wagons required by the railway industry.
- 4 Russia's average annual growth rate was higher than that of any other industrial country by the 1890s; (though this percentage was distorted by the fact that growth was from a lower base). Between 1894 and 1913, European Russia's national income grew by 50% which was comparable with France's 52%, Germany 58% but lower than that of Britain (70%) and Austria's 79%.
- 5 Industrialisation encouraged increased co-operation both between industrialists and between industrialists and the government.
- 6 Industrial production in all industries, apart from sugar factories and vodka distilleries, became more concentrated in larger factories. Domestic, *kustar* industries survived and continued to grow.
- 7 Witte's policies encouraged a further merging of rural and urban lifestyles. Increasingly peasants between the ages of 20 and 40 worked outside the village and then retired to their allotment of land and families.
- 8 Witte's industrialisation led to great social strains:
- the increase in import duties and indirect taxes in the 1890s reduced still further the already low standards of living suffered by the masses following a famine in 1891. The latter, caused by drought and crop failures, was the worst of the nineteenth century and resulted in the deaths of nearly half a million peasants from hunger between 1891 and 1892.

**TABLE 21**  
The tsarist economy: annual production (million tons)

- Witte's policies added to people's suffering, a fact that provided ammunition for his enemies to attack his policies. Although a law of 1897 shortened hours of work, conditions remained unhealthy and dangerous.
- Workers in factory and mining industries were protected by an inspectorate and in some cases medical care but they still had a miserable existence.
- The Russian factory order was brutal: the foreman had the power to pay, punish, discipline and sack his workers. The latter bitterly resented their low pay and working conditions.
- Although housing conditions varied between regions they tended to be universally bad. Workers were crowded together in wooden barracks with little ventilation or light, and with anywhere from two to seven families crowded together in family. Workers lived in one room which was divided into several cubicles separated from each other by boards. There was little privacy and people lived surrounded by noise and filth, but the increasing demand for living space as new peasant families moved into the towns forced up rents. These urban poor had little sense of belonging and proved to be easily responsive to the ideas of revolutionaries in Nicholas II's reign. They were joined by thousands of unskilled, casually employed or unemployed people who also flocked to the towns.
- Accidents were frequent in the metallurgical factories as indicated in Table 23.

Year	Deaths	Injuries
1890	245	3 508
1904	556	66 680

**TABLE 23**

Witte was very aware of these hardships but gambled that industrialisation would eventually lead to improved living standards before workers and peasants found them impossible to accept any more. He failed in the face of severe famine in the central Volga area 1898–9 and an industrial slump in 1899. Events were set in motion that led to the 1905 Russian Revolution.

See page 133.

## 6 THE END OF ALEXANDER III'S REGIME

Alexander III's failure to leave his son a secure inheritance was the inevitable consequence of the policies of the regime. Although he had kept peace it was at the expense of building up resentment amongst the masses and the growing class of intelligentsia. Critics of the regime had been forced to flee abroad and they swore revenge on the tsarist regime.

## 7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

A bibliography for Imperial Russia appears at the end of Chapter 4 on page 120.