Demography

The first census carried out in Imperial Russia in 1897 revealed a population of 126 million people, the largest population in all of Europe. Imperial Russia’s population was increasing at a rapid rate during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with a population estimated at 40 million in 1815, growing to 161 million in 1910 and further expanding to 165 million in 1914. The census also indicated a diverse ethnic population, with sixty different nationalities officially recorded.

The population of the Russian Empire included Poles, Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Jews, Tatars, Kazaks, Cossacks, Germans and Armenians, among other ethnic minorities.

Social classes

In 1902, Tsar Nicholas II said: ‘I conceive Russia as a landed estate, of which the proprietor is the Tsar, the administrator is the nobility, and the workers are the peasantry.’ Imperial Russians were born into a specific social class, with little opportunity for social mobility. The census of 1897 identified five general social classes, loosely defined as the ruling class, upper class, commercial class, working class and peasants. The distribution of these classes was uneven, as is the case in many societies.

Over four-fifths of the population were peasants, most of whom lacked formal education and had a low standard of living. The small proportion of working class or urban industrial workers (which grew to some extent in the early twentieth century) was similarly underprivileged. The commercial or professional middle class, which again grew a little in this period, represented a slim proportion of the overall population. This group enjoyed some wealth and opportunity. Finally, the ruling class represented the smallest class in Imperial Russia. The disparity between social classes and, more importantly, the unequal distribution of wealth and privilege, served as another potential problem for the tsarist government. There were many contradictions, in that great wealth existed alongside dire poverty, modern technology appeared in city areas but not rural areas and oppression was at different times accepted and resisted.

Class structure in Imperial Russia according to the 1897 census.

Peasants before a Ussuri River sternwheeler.
DID YOU KNOW?
Many Russian peasants believed that to be poor was to be virtuous.

DID YOU KNOW?
In Imperial Russia it was considered good breeding to be fluent in French. Upper class Russians would often break into French when they didn’t want the servants to know what they were saying!

Visual Analysis
Look carefully at the cartoon of Imperial Russia.
1 Identify the groups depicted in the visual.
2 Identify three details in the representation that criticise the traditional order.
3 Using your broader knowledge and the image, explain this representation’s view of the problems experienced by Imperial Russia in the late nineteenth century.
4 Discuss the strengths and limitations of this cartoon as a representation of power relations in Tsarist Russia.
### SOCIAL CLASSES IN IMPERIAL RUSSIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ruling class</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>Tsar&lt;br&gt;Tsar's family&lt;br&gt;Members of government: State Council of Imperial Russia, Cabinet of Ministers, Senate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper class</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>Nobility&lt;br&gt;Gentry&lt;br&gt;Hereditary landowners&lt;br&gt;Nobles&lt;br&gt;Wealthy merchants&lt;br&gt;Church leaders&lt;br&gt;Bureaucratic leaders&lt;br&gt;High-ranked army officials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial and professional middle class</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>Small-scale manufacturers&lt;br&gt;Factory managers&lt;br&gt;Technical specialists&lt;br&gt;Clerks&lt;br&gt;White-collar workers&lt;br&gt;Educated thinkers, writers and artists, known as ‘intelligentsia’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial working class</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>Urban workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peasants</td>
<td>82.0%</td>
<td>Agricultural workforce</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Privileged class**<br>Disproportionate wealth<br>Autocrats and rulers of Imperial Russia<br>High incomes and privileges<br>Low workload in general<br>Exemption from more oppressive rules<br>Each group tended to monitor the behaviour of its competitors, ensuring that other groups didn’t get more than their share of resources / power<br>A handful of trusted people were appointed by Tsar to keep other groups under control<br>Developed towards the end of the 1800s due to the growth of heavy industries in major cities and light industries in towns<br>Characterised by a lack of unity between different professions<br>Some feared protest from classes below them<br>Merchants (business people), especially Jewish ones, viewed with a level of suspicion by government<br>Growing class due to increasing industrialisation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries<br>Population concentrated in a limited number of city centres<br>Worked in factories that employed thousands of workers<br>Extremely poor working conditions<br>Worked long hours, often 14-15 hours a day<br>Earned low, but fluctuating, wages<br>Extremely poor living and working conditions<br>Overcrowded and impoverished living<br>High rates of illiteracy<br>Often resistant to change<br>Starvation and disease a common feature of life<br>Financially dependent on landowners<br>Many reliant on subsistence farming
The conditions experienced by Russia’s industrial working class were explored by government factory inspectors during the 1800s. The following excerpts give an insight into the appalling situation of many factories:

Many of the workers in the steel mills are...literally ‘working with fire.’ For when steel is smelted, the metal is heated white-hot for stamping and rolling rails... The intensity of flaming light is undoubtedly harmful to the eyes... There are two twelve-hour shifts a day...In cloth factory no. 48 which is typical of such establishments ‘...there was no ventilation at all... Moving around these machines is extremely hazardous, and accidents could easily happen to the...[most careful of] workers.’

Sergei Kruchinsky wrote in 1894 about the terrible working and living conditions of peasants:

[I]t is difficult to conceive of more exhausting work...When moving the hay...the peasants do not allow themselves more than six hours rest out of the twenty-four...They hardly ever taste meat... The ordinary run of villagers, during eight months out of the twelve, eats bread mixed with husks, pounded straw or birch bark...A whole third of our peasantry has become landless [rural workers] in modern Russia.4

Such daily conditions among factory workers and peasants fed into anti-government feeling in these quarters and among members of the intelligentsia.

ACTIVITY 3

Cartoon

In pairs, draw a cartoon representing the main socio-economic classes in Australia today.

Each group should have a voice/thought bubble or similar label.

The tsars

Tsar Nicholas II: ‘Those who believe they can share in government dream senseless dreams.’

The origins of modern-day Russia lay in the sixth and seventh centuries, when groups of Slavic people moved from Eastern Europe to central Siberia. Trading centres emerged on the major rivers, until the ninth century when Scandinavian invaders established rule from Kiev. The Scandinavians were integrated into the Slavic community but were later defeated by a Mongol invasion in the thirteenth century. It was then that a city-state centred on Moscow was born. Despite having poor farming land, Moscow provided strong trading routes and was well protected by surrounding forest regions, making it an ideal centre from which to rule. Eventually Mongolian reign weakened and the first independent nation-state of Russia was established under the rule of Ivan III, the Grand Prince of Moscow (1462-1505). Ivan III shared many of the beliefs of the Mongols, claiming rule over all the Russian people and demanding unconditional service to the nation-state. He established the notion of absolute autocracy, based around a central government, where the Grand Prince was landowner of all Russian territory and, above all, God’s representative on earth.

4 Kruchinsky, cited in Bucklow and Russell, Russia, 37-8.
Ivan the Terrible
Ivan IV (1543-1584), also called Ivan the Terrible, was the first Russian ruler to adopt the title of Tsar. He established many of the autocratic practices adopted by the Romanovs. Ruling from the religious capital, Moscow, Ivan IV established a clear partnership between the Orthodox Church and the state, a relationship that was to continue well into the Romanov era. The Church controlled the Russian education system to a large extent; consequently the system lacked scientific grounding. During Ivan's reign the economic and political power of the nobility and landowners was severely restricted, seeing the redistribution of land to those who served the state in military or administrative roles. A new gentry was formed, as peasants became increasingly indebted to landowners, serving under contracts and paying rent through produce and service. This system eventually grew into serfdom or slavery.

Michael Romanov
The Time of Troubles (1598-1613), a period of turbulence and confusion marked by disputed leadership, national conflict and social crisis, ended with the Russian defeat of the Poles in Moscow in 1613. Without a leader, a national assembly (zemskii sabor) was called, comprising delegates from almost every level of society. It was the Assembly's task to select a new tsar. Michael Romanov was the chosen candidate, marking the beginning of a 300-year dynasty.

Michael Romanov was linked to the old regime of Ivan the Terrible through his marriage to his 'good wife' Anastacia Romanova. The Romanovs were a popular family with the masses. Michael's grandfather, Nikita, the brother of Anastacia, had defended victims of Ivan the Terrible, while his father remained a prisoner of the Poles at the time of the zemskii sabor. Michael, at the age of sixteen, remained untouched by the Poles during their occupation of Russia and was considered to have favourable relations with the Cossacks. Romanov was crowned Tsar on 21 July 1613.

Michael Romanov continued the autocratic practices of Ivan IV, with the power of the tsar remaining virtually unlimited. In one way or another, all Russians were obliged to serve the state; the peasants through the payment of taxes and army or civil service, the landlords through similar service and merchants through financing new state industries.

Peter the Great
During the early years of Romanov rule Peter I (1682-1725), Peter the Great, initiated a period of Westernisation and modernisation based on European principles. The new western capital, St Petersbourg, was situated on the Baltic and was European in style. In addition to modernisation, the period of Peter's rule was characterised by foreign wars and, subsequently, a period of economic difficulty. Much of the economic burden fell on peasants, whose situation began to worsen during this time. Conscription was extended to twenty-five years' service - a peasant could be ordered to join the army by tsar or landlord. Peasant taxes also increased, as did services due to landlords. As the powers of landlords increased further, peasants were prohibited from leaving the land without permission. In short, peasants, or serfs, had become almost entirely obligated to their masters. Over time, as the situation for peasants gradually deteriorated, the standing of the landlord increased, further widening the gap between the two groups. Many peasants staged riots, but none of these led to significant reform in the short term.
The rule of the Romanov family continued until 1917. The era featured limited modernisation and reform. For example, serfs were emancipated (freed) in 1861 and there was a ‘great spurt’ of industrialisation in 1893-1903. Despite this there was little economic or political modernisation in Russia compared with the rest of Europe and the country retained an autocratic monarchy throughout. In response, anti-tsarist sentiment thrived in various radical and liberal groups, even despite censorship, and continued to do so as the twentieth century approached. When Marxist ideals filtered into Russia and radical groups began to form an underground movement, the regime was threatened in a way it had never been before. This, coupled with internal and international crises, weakened the capacity of the ruling class to meet challenges to its authority, eventually leading to revolution in 1905 and 1917.

Catherine the Great
Following the reign of Peter the Great, Russia was to see the rule of two women, most notably Catherine II of Russia (1762-1796) or Catherine the Great. Coming to the throne through a bloodless coup, Catherine succeeded her husband, Peter III (1762), a precedent enabled by the succession of Catherine I from her husband Peter I. Catherine II’s reign was punctuated by wars, extended diplomatic relations with Western Europe and the expansion of the empire. Catherine’s achievements and progressive thinking allowed her to become one of Russia’s best-known rulers. She is thought to have been comparatively enlightened, while retaining a firm hand over the empire. Catherine was significantly influenced by, and encouraging of, the intelligentsia, or educated class. This group was later to play an integral role in the development of reformist and revolutionary sentiment. Catherine’s reign ended in 1796 when she died from a stroke. She was succeeded by Paul I (1796-1801) and later Alexander I (1801-1825).

Nicholas I
The reign of Nicholas I, which followed the attempted coup by the Decembrists in 1825, was characterised by conservatism and rigid authority. Committed to shielding the Russian people from Western-style ideas, Nicholas enforced strict censorship, conformity and obedience to the tsar. His regime was one built on the idea of service; the landowning nobility was to serve the tsar and the peasants were to serve the landowners. Interestingly, though, Nicholas appointed a small number of trusted people to keep a check on the abuse of power by government officials.

Under Nicholas I, peasants and serfs had few opportunities for social or economic mobility. In general, peasants saw little opportunity for change and demonstrated little desire for it. Economically, Russia remained stagnant while the rest of Europe modernised. Agriculture, the most prominent form of Russian commerce, relied on outdated methods such as strip fields and common pastures, while almost all trade was instigated by foreigners.

Industry was gradually increased throughout the century, with 340,000 industrial workers in 1825 rising to 800,000 in 1856.

The influence of the Orthodox Church remained strong during this time, aided by Nicholas’ suppression of reformist ideas from outside. Despite this, the intelligentsia spread Western ideas in defiance of the secret police – the works of Herzen, Belkinin, Kropotkin and Tolstoy were circulated. A division emerged between those who supported Western influences and the so-called ‘Slavophiles’ who wanted to protect Russia’s traditional values and culture.
Nicholas II

Upon the death of his father (Alexander III) in 1894, Nicholas is believed to have burst into tears, sobbing to his cousin, 'What is going to happen to me and to all of Russia? I am not prepared to be a tsar. I never wanted to become one. I know nothing of the business of ruling. I have no idea of even how to talk to the ministers.' His rule was plagued by disaster from the very start, with over one-thousand people killed in a surging crowd at his coronation in 1896. Tsar Nicholas II believed himself to be ill-fated and, later in his rule, reflected on this early incident as being the beginning of his downfall. Despite his misgivings about becoming Tsar of All-Russia, Nicholas was a staunch advocate of autocracy. He was, as Richard Pipes suggests, 'committed to absolutism in part because he believed himself duty-bound by his coronation oath to uphold this system, and in part because he felt convinced that the intellectuals were incapable of administering the empire.' It was this unwavering commitment to autocratic rule that characterised the reign of the last tsar, a reign plagued by crises, challenges to authority and, finally, revolution. For many historians, such as John Fite, it was Nicholas' 'weakness of will' that led to his demise; he is described as 'poorly educated, narrow in intellectual horizons, a wretchedly bad judge of people, isolated from Russian society... [with a] lack of grasp of the realities of the country.' Orlando Figes, however, contends that 'it was not a “weakness of will” that was the undoing of the last tsar but, on the contrary, a wilful determination to rule from the throne, despite the fact that he clearly lacked the necessary qualities to do so.'

ACTIVITY 4

Romanov Family Tree

Construct a family tree for the Romanovs, showing the relationships between the various tsars and tsarinas and their periods of rule.

Tsarist political structures

Sergei Witte: 'The outside world should not be surprised that we have an imperfect government, but that we have a government at all. With many nationalities, many languages, and a nation largely illiterate, the marvel is that the country can be held together even by autocratic means.'

As Richard Pipes put it, 'It was as if the greatest empire in the world...were an artificial construction without organic unity, held together by wires, all of which converged in the person of the monarch.' The tsarist system was one based on the theory of absolute authority, where the tsar (emperor), was believed to have been divinely appointed, with direct authority from God. Having unlimited executive, legislative and judicial power, the tsar's word was law, to be questioned by no one. The Fundamental Laws of the Empire in 1832 expressed this view, describing the 'unlimited' and 'autocratic' powers of the monarch, by whom 'God himself commands his supreme power to be obeyed.' Traditionally, the tsar was cherished and revered by the masses, who viewed their divine ruler as their 'little father'.

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8 R. Pipes, Russian Revolution, 336.
Imperial Russia remained unique in modern-day Europe, maintaining what was seen as an old-fashioned form of government in a continent shifting away from autocratic rule. In the late nineteenth century the majority of Western nations had modernised to incorporate some form of representative or democratic government. The autocratic institution in Imperial Russia remained at odds with mainstream political thought in Europe, despite the country’s involvement in many continental affairs. At the core of the system were three key bodies: the State Council of Imperial Russia (also called the Imperial Council), the Cabinet of Ministers and the Senate. The State Council was comprised of the tsar’s personal advisors. These advisors were appointed directly by the tsar and answered directly to him, reducing the legitimacy and accountability of this group. Similarly, the Cabinet of Ministers, again appointed by and responsible to the tsar alone, managed individual portfolios. In reality, members of this ‘cabinet’ worked separately in their independent departments and did not function as a group. Finally, the Senate worked to transform the will of the tsar into law. Significantly, none of these bodies or individuals could restrict or question the power of the tsar; it was simply their role to enact his commands. As Alan Wood put it, ‘a word from the Tsar was sufficient to alter, override or abolish any existing legislation or institution.’ Imperial Russia did not support or facilitate a parliament in any form, nor did it employ democratically-elected officials. Political parties were officially banned and protest was met with censorship, imprisonment or exile.

There is evidence to suggest that rights were granted by the tsars to groups of people, not to individuals. In other words, types of officials were allowed certain freedoms (or freedom from restrictions and punishments), and in turn these officials policed the behaviour of other groups. This situation is described by Jane Burbank as an ‘imperial rights regime’. In general, however, the preservation of the tsarist system relied on the unique functioning of four key groups in society: the bureaucracy, provincial governments, the Russian Orthodox Church and the police.

Bureaucracy

Russian proverb: ‘Any stick will do to beat a thief but only a rouble will help you with an official.’

Peter the Great had attempted to modernise Russia during his reign, by introducing a civil service to coordinate and administer government services. By the mid-nineteenth century, however, this had become a corrupt and inefficient organisation. Responsible for government administration, law, police and the militia at a local and national level, the bureaucracy or civil service held the power to control almost all facets of everyday life.

The organisation was separated into fourteen different levels, each distinguished by their unique uniform – a symbol of official rank and social status. Given the prestige and considerable income that came with a post in the civil service, the bureaucrats were understandably opposed to reform, preferring to maintain their positions in the noble upper class that had been created by this institution. As Pipes explains, ‘on being admitted to the [civil] service, a Russian official swore loyalty, not to the state or the nation, but to the person of the ruler. He served entirely at the pleasure of the monarch and his own immediate superiors.’ The corrupt and inefficient nature of
the bureaucracy made it virtually pointless to challenge or question the civil service, unless the claimant had connections within the organisation or had the means to pay a bribe. Arguably, during Nicholas II’s reign the bureaucracy had become strongly associated with corruption.

Almost all requests took far too long to resolve, if at all. Finally, the concept of *proizvod*, loosely translated as ‘arbitrariness’ (at the whim of the individual), made for a service of inconsistencies and inequities; again, a burden to be shouldered by ordinary people.

**Provincial governments**

According to Figes, ‘to lovers of liberty the provincial Governor was the very personification of Tsarist oppression and despotism.’ Imperial Russia was divided into 96 provinces (local areas); each presided over by a provincial governor and governing body. In a similar fashion to government ministers, provincial governors were appointed by the tsar and reported directly to him. These men possessed considerable power in the day-to-day organisation of provincial areas, supported by *zemstvos*, the rural councils. Despite being elected bodies, often involving progressively-minded delegates, these councils were largely comprised of the nobility and their actions often favoured this class.

Provincial governments were responsible for the administration of key local services, such as local police, public works, education and health. Despite being officially answerable to the Ministry of the Interior, provincial government and the governors themselves benefited from a close relationship with the imperial court. This relationship enabled them to ignore the demands of the ministers in St Petersburg, a benefit they often exercised, especially when issues were at odds with the interests of the nobility. The governors provided the central government with a connection to people living outside the main cities.

From the 1860s onwards, provincial governors were given licence to create their own laws at the local level. The idea of ‘arbitrariness’ was applied, leading to inconsistent and, often, self-interested decision-making.

**Russian Orthodox Church**

Since 989 AD the Russian Orthodox Church had been the official religion of the Russian Empire. The Orthodox Church was a form of Christianity, independent from outside religious bodies since the fifteenth century. As such, it promoted a distinctly Russian character. The Church became an expression of Russian culture and was an integral organisation in the operation of autocracy throughout the empire.

Under state control from 1721, the Church was intrinsically linked with the tsar. The oath of the clergy was ‘to defend, unsparingly all the powers, rights and prerogatives belonging to the High autocracy of his Majesty.’ While the tsar could not officially intervene in matters of faith, he did, however, exert influence over the Church’s highest regulating body, the Holy Synod. The tsar appointed to the position of Procurator of the Holy Synod a secular (non-religious) person and through this avenue maintained close connections with the Church. The influence of the Church was immense, reinforcing the absolute rule of the tsar and preaching obligation, duty and

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St Basil’s Cathedral.
service. In the late nineteenth century the Church reinforced conservative values, supporting the strict style of autocracy promoted by Tsar Nicholas II and fiercely opposing political change.

Police

While the national military was used for defence and repression in Imperial Russia, the tsar and his administration relied on two separate police forces. The Okhrana, the tsar's secret police force, was designed to protect the political interests of state. The tsar relied on this group to monitor agitators, suspected enemies of the state and revolutionaries and to deal with these groups through imprisonment, exile and, occasionally, execution. A standard police force existed for general law and order. The police were limited in numbers, therefore in order to control the large population severe oppressive actions were often employed. In addition to these two organisations, a group of men from the Don River region near the Black Sea, the Cossacks, formed an elite military-style group, or militia. These men operated on horseback and were rewarded for their service through grants of land. They were renowned for their loyalty to the autocracy.

ACTIVITY 5

Concept Map

Using this book and at least THREE other sources, draw a concept map or flow chart that represents the political structure of the tsarist system.

Include the following groups: Tsar, State Council of Imperial Russia, Cabinet of Ministers, Senate, army, Russian Orthodox Church, Okhrana, police force, civil service (central), provincial government, zemstvos.

Outside influences

Throughout the nineteenth century, the autocracy was reaffirmed by successful military campaigns, most notably the Russian victory over Napoleon in 1812, which buoyed national identity and patriotism. However, partly due to the influence of the French revolution in the late eighteenth century, autocracy was beginning to be viewed very differently throughout Europe. In turn, Western ideas began filtering into Russia, mostly through well-travelled nobles. Many of these nobles, influenced by ideas of enlightenment and revolution, sought modernisation and change in Imperial Russia, with Western ideology growing more prevalent throughout the nineteenth century. Alan Wood describes the 'great division' that existed between two societies in Imperial Russia: on the one hand, an 'educated, Westernised [group]...a fully fledged, leisured, land-and-serf-owning nobility enjoying most, if not all, of the privileges of a European aristocracy' and, on the other hand, 'the Russian people...the enserfed peasants, who continued to be ruthlessly exploited, fleeced and conscripted...sunk in a vast swamp of ignorance, misery, superstition and periodic famine.'

When Tsar Alexander I died in 1825 there was confusion over who was to be his successor. His eldest son, Grand Duke Constantine Pavlovich, had three
years earlier renounced his claim to the throne. But since this was not widely known, allegiance was sworn to him. Following subsequent investigation, Constantine’s younger brother Nicholas was pronounced the rightful successor and was affirmed as Tsar Nicholas I (1825-1855). Groups such as the Decembrists, inspired by the Jacobins and French revolutionaries, emerged during this period to take advantage of the political uncertainty. Acting under the guise of defending the rightful heir to the throne – Constantine – the Decembrists attempted to overthrow the monarchy and promote political change and modernisation in Imperial Russia. The coup proved unsuccessful and was brutally suppressed by Nicholas I, who executed the leaders and exiled supporters.

National crises

Crimean War

Russian involvement in the Crimean War (1853-56) was a catalyst for the most extreme economic and political reform in Imperial Russia. The separation of the Turkish (Ottoman) Empire in the mid-nineteenth century saw Slavic nationalist groups mounting a case for independence. Russia had long considered itself protector of Slavs, who were Orthodox Christians in a largely Muslim empire. The separation of the Ottoman Empire provided Nicholas I with a legitimate reason to wage war on the Turks. In reality, Imperial Russia sought to extend its influence in southeast Europe and gain
DID YOU KNOW?
An official committee investigating the conditions of Russia's peasantry reported to Count Witte in 1903, 'When the harvest is normal the peasant obtains thirty percent less nutrition than is physiologically required.'

control of the valuable Balkan states and Black Sea area. This was, however, to prove disastrous, as the Russian Empire found herself at war with not only Turkey, but also England and France. Plagued by poor supplies, an inefficient transport system and an uneducated and corrupt military leadership, the Crimean War was a military disaster for Russia, revealing not only the country's military weaknesses and antiquated combat style, but also its lack of industrial and social sophistication. Added to this, the war placed enormous strain on the economy, leading the government to surrender. It became obvious to the regime that Russia needed to modernise its military and in order to do this, significant industrialisation was required.

The fall of Sebastopol; Capture of the Malakoff tower (artist's impression).

Famine
In 1891-2 there was a famine in Russia. While few people died directly from starvation, many died from associated disease. According to David Lilly, the tsarist government managed to prevent mass starvation and total economic collapse, but its attempt to lessen the effects of the famine through better employment failed:

One of the major impediments to efficient relief was the lack of cooperation between various ministries. The famine brought into view the corruption and inefficiency of the government, and showed how St. Petersburg was so out of touch with [most] of the country. It also exposed the dire poverty of the peasants, which could be traced back to emancipation...This famine, which pointed out the weakness of their social structure, should have been a huge warning to the government. [But] the tsarist regimes...failed to address...Russia’s massive agricultural problems [which] helped lead to the government's downfall. 17

This and other instances demonstrate that, at times of crisis, the central government's lack of proper infrastructure and organisation made it ineffective in tackling large social problems.

17 D. Lilly, 'Russian Famine'.

Introducing Russia (Pre-1904)