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# Alexander II – 'Liberator' or Traditionalist? 1855–81

## INTRODUCTION

### ALEXANDER NIKOLAEVICH, 1818–81, EMPEROR OF ALL RUSSIA 1855–81

Crowned in the Cathedral of the Moscow Kremlin on 26 August 1856, Alexander's reign seems to be a contradiction. Known as the 'Tsar Liberator', he is associated with a number of important reforms, notably the abolition of serfdom, as well as changes in national, military and municipal organisation. He introduced local councils, and law courts, increased the provision of education, reformed finances and encouraged economic development. He also rethought foreign policy whereby Russia avoided overseas expansion and concentrated on strengthening its borders. In 1867, he sold Alaska and the Aleutian Islands to the United States. His greatest foreign policy achievement was the successful war of 1877–8 against the Ottoman Empire, resulting in the liberation of Bulgaria and annulment of the conditions of the Treaty of Paris of 1856, imposed after Russia's defeat in the Crimean War. This extensive record of 'Great Reforms' stood in marked contrast to the repression of his father's reign. The western historian, Terence Emmons has regarded them, as 'probably the greatest single piece of state-directed engineering in modern European history before the twentieth century'. However they did not solve the problems facing Russia in the second half of the nineteenth century or silence the mounting tide of criticism and opposition. Alexander's attempts to modernise were restricted by his refusal to surrender his autocratic powers. Prior to becoming tsar he did not show any liberal leanings. He had no general programme when he embarked on his reforms. Moreover, his liberal approach was short-lived. After the first attempt on his life on 4 April 1866 by a young student activist, Dmitri Karakozov, he became more conservative though the general trend throughout his reign was towards change. One Russian historian has said of Alexander's reforms that they were designed not to 'improve the lot of the people, develop the principle of elective representation, or lay the foundations of a state ruled by law... but to entrench the autocracy, strengthen military power, and expand the empire for the sake of Russia's greatness as Alexander II and his closest

associates understood it', Larisa Georgievna Zakharova, '*Emperor Alexander II, 1855–1881*, in the *Emperors and Empresses of Russia* (eds Donald J. Raleigh, M.E. Sharpe, 1996). This view is also taken by his English biographer, W.L. Mosse, who wrote of Alexander that, 'he proved himself not only a disappointing 'liberal' – if indeed that term can be applied to him – but more seriously an inefficient autocrat'. Far from silencing critics of the regime, protests mounted, along with attempts on his life. On 1 March 1881, Alexander died after two bomb attacks in St Petersburg by members of the revolutionary organisation 'The National Will'. The Cathedral of the Resurrection on Blood was built on the site of the murder.

## 1 ↪ ALEXANDER II: A TSAR IN THE MAKING

### A *Alexander's background and training*

The eldest son of Emperor Nicholas I, he came to the throne at the age of 36 on 19 February 1855. He was, according to one of his biographers, W.L. Mosse, 'perhaps the best prepared heir-apparent ever to ascend the Russian throne'. Alexander's education had been based on a



PICTURE 1 Alexander II, portrait as a young man

special 'Plan of Instruction' for 12 years of schooling which gave him a well-rounded education that included Russian and world history, natural science and languages – French, German, Polish and English.

He completed his education with a 7-month tour, by coach, of 30 Russian provinces that included a visit to Siberia, the first by a member of the Imperial family. He followed this with a 16-month tour of the leading countries of Western Europe 1838–9 during the course of which he met the 15 year old Princess Marie of Hesse Darmstadt, whom he subsequently married in 1842. On his return from his tour, Alexander was given a number of responsible posts by his father including membership of the Council of State, 1841 and Committee of Ministers, 1842 as well as being recognised as Nicholas's deputy during the Tsar's absence. He was also chairman of the committee responsible for building the St Petersburg–Moscow railway. He held a number of military titles and posts as well as a number of important civil appointments. He was made chairman of two Secret Committees on Peasant Affairs in 1846 and the Secret Committee on Household Serfs, 1848 though he defended the existing order.

### B Alexander's personality

A. White, a secretary in the American embassy, described Alexander in his 1905 autobiography as 'tall, like all the Romanovs, good-looking and with a very distinguished bearing, but he had much less of his father's majesty and was completely devoid of the latter's misplaced severity'. He had a sound and practical mind combined with a sense of duty to improve the well-being of his people. He recognised the necessity to free the serfs, promote economic growth and modernise the armed forces and government. However, he had limitations as a reformer. One of the ladies in waiting at the royal court, A.F. Tiutcheva, has left a very perceptive evaluation of Alexander II in her diary entry for January 1856. The following extract is from A.F. Tiutcheva's diary for this date and is quoted in D.J. Raleigh and A.A. Iskenderov (eds), *The Emperors and Empresses of Russia*, M.E. Sharpe.

The Tsar is the best of men. He would be a wonderful sovereign in a well-organised country and in a time of peace... But he lacks the temperament of a reformer. The empress lacks initiative as well... They are too kind, too pure, to understand people and to rule them. They do not have the energy or the impulse to take charge of events and direct them as they see fit; they lack passion... Without realising it himself, he has become involved in a struggle with powerful forces and dreadful elements he does not understand... They (the royal couple) do not know where they are going.

Apart from differences of outlook on the necessity for reform, Alexander was his father's son in other respects. He was a firm conservative and accepted the traditional view of his duty to uphold the principles

What, according to Tiutcheva, were Alexander's limitations as a reformer?

of autocratic government followed by his father. He refused to consider even the possibility of a Russian constitution for 25 years. To some he seemed even more of a conservative at a time when public opinion was beginning to make itself felt and even a Russian autocrat could no longer behave as he pleased. Alexander's determination to preserve his autocratic authority was revealed in a conversation with Otto Von Bismarck, then Prussia's ambassador to Russia, on 10 November 1861. In response to a question about the possibility of a constitution and liberal institutions in Russia, Alexander II said:

The people see their monarch as God's envoy, as their father and all-powerful master. This idea, which has the force almost of religious feeling, is inseparable from their personal dependency on me, and I am inclined to think that I am not mistaken. The crown gives me a feeling of authority; to forgo it would be to damage the nation's prestige. The profound respect that the Russian people have accorded the throne of their Tsar from time immemorial, arising from an innate feeling, cannot be dismissed. I would not hesitate to curtail the government's authoritarianism if I wanted to bring representatives of the nobility or the nation into it. God knows where we will end up regarding the question of the peasants and landowners if the Tsar's authority is insufficient to exercise decisive influence.

What were Alexander's reasons for rejecting a Constitution?

The above is from Alexander II's conversation with Otto Von Bismarck, then Prussia's ambassador to Russia, on 10 November 1861, quoted in D.J. Raleigh and A.A. Iskenderov (eds), *The Emperors and Empresses of Russia*, M.E. Sharpe.

## 2 ALEXANDER THE TSAR 'LIBERATOR'

### TIMELINE

- 1855 Alexander II becomes tsar
- 1856 Treaty of Paris ends the Crimean War. Alexander warns that serfdom must be abolished 'from above'
- 1857 Secret Committee of Ministers is set up to begin the process of freeing the serfs
- 1858 Ministers have to submit their reports to special commissions of the State Council, who will return them to the ministers with comments before they are presented to the tsar
- 1861 The Secret Committee becomes public as the Main Committee. Serfdom is abolished. A Commission is set up to look into reform of the legal system.
- 1862 Public budgets improve the system of auditing. A Ministry of Finance and state bank are created; tax collection is removed from the hands of private financiers and a large government staff is organised to deal with taxpayers
- 1862–74 Army and Navy are reformed
- 1863 Second Polish revolt occurs. Popular education is extended with more schools being opened in the countryside and secondary schools being allowed to admit women. Universities are given greater freedom

- 1864 Local government is reformed with the introduction of the *zemstva* (s. *zemstvo*).  
The judiciary is reformed
- 1865 Censorship is relaxed
- 1866 First assassination attempt is made on the tsar by Karakozov. State serfs are emancipated on more favourable terms to those belonging to the nobles. The *Zemstva's* right to tax is limited
- 1867 Restrictions are imposed on the *Zemstva's* right to publish their proceedings without the permission of administrative officials
- 1870 Municipal reform occurs with the introduction of the *Duma*, (pl. *Dumy*)
- 1872 Press Law provides for the transference of offences committed by the press from the jurisdiction of the courts to the Council of Ministers. Offences against the state, punishable by loss of rank, are transferred to a special session of the Senate unless the tsar decides to refer them to the Supreme Criminal Court
- 1873 Censorship laws are tightened
- 1874 Military service is reformed. Populist critics of the regime publish '*Going to the People*'
- 1875 Universal military liability is introduced
- 1877 Regulations on the conduct of troops during public disorders are introduced
- 1877–8 The Russo-Turkish war is fought
- 1878 Congress of Berlin imposes a diplomatic defeat on Russian ambitions to extend its control and influence in the Balkans at Turkey's expense. Cases involving public disobedience to civil authorities are removed from the jurisdiction of the normal criminal courts. Alexander appeals to all estates to defend public safety/social groups against the revolutionaries
- 1879 Alexander appoints the governor-generals of Moscow, Kiev, Warsaw, Kharkov, St Petersburg and Odessa as 'regional military dictators' with the power to use any measure necessary, including exile, to maintain peace in educational institutions. Security Law bans the sale of firearms. Police are armed with guns. Provincial governors are given the power to intervene in the affairs of the *Zemstva*
- 1880 Powers of provincial governors over the *Zemstva* are repealed  
*Zemstva* are invited to submit proposals for reform of local administration
- 1881 Alexander gives his approval to the setting up of a commission composed of representatives from the *Zemstva* and towns with consultative powers to examine legislative bills before submission to the State Council (Alexander III subsequently rejected this proposal). Alexander II is assassinated

### A Forces for change

Alexander had no sympathy for radical or liberal ideas, but he recognised that some improvements were necessary to preserve his autocratic system of government. He took a leading role in the reforms associated with the 1860s appointing reform-minded ministers to carry out his instructions. He was supported by a number of the leading members of his family who had liberal ideas. His brother, the Grand Duke Constantine supported emancipation of the serfs but even more important was his aunt, the liberal Grand Duchess Elena (Helen) Pavlovna. She was well respected in Russian public life helped by her work for soldiers during the Crimean War. Her palace was a meeting place for leading liberals

such as Nicholas Alexevich Milyutin (1818–72), who was made assistant Minister of the Interior in 1859. With the support of other liberal-minded nobles and officials who now came into public office with the new reign, he was the main driving force behind some of the key reforms until his dismissal in 1861. There were a number of other forces for change at work apart from those within the Imperial circle.

Force for change	Main features
Personal	Alexander II was seriously aware of the weakness of the Russian state. His recognition of the necessity to introduce reforms was crucial in an autocracy where the tsar held ultimate power to over-rule opposition from powerful vested interests. He quickly signalled his intentions by ending restrictions on the most 'dangerous' and radical groups in the country. He lessened the restrictions on university entrance so that a broader social range of students could attend, including those from the <i>Raznochintsy</i> . Restrictions on foreign travel were relaxed which opened the way for circulation of more foreign and Russian language publications by political exiles. In a speech to the nobility in Moscow on 30 March 1856, he made it clear that 'the existing system of serf owning cannot remain unchanged. It is better to abolish serfdom from above than to wait for the time when it begins to abolish itself from below. I ask you, gentlemen, to think of ways of doing this. Pass on my words to the nobles for consideration (quoted by G. Vernadsky (ed.), <i>A Source Book for Russian History from Early Times to 1973</i> . New Haven, Conn., Yale University Press, 1972).
Political – legacy of the Crimean War	The Crimean War revealed the weaknesses, and corruption, of leadership of the army. The latter depended on the loyalty of serfs who had been compulsorily enlisted but the hardship experienced by so many encouraged a more critical attitude. This ill feeling expressed itself in an increase in agricultural disturbances and riot. The shock of Russia's defeat in the Crimean War raised questions regarding the efficiency of the Russian army. It had lost its superiority over the French and English armies. Military advisers, such as General Dmitri Milyutin, later Minister of War, 1861–81 and a firm supporter of emancipation, warned Alexander that reform of the army was impossible while serfdom survived. He warned the tsar in 1867, 'thanks to the army, Russia became a first-class European power and only by maintaining the army can Russia uphold the position it has acquired'. However 'serfdom does not permit us to shorten the term of service nor to increase the number of those on indefinite leave so as to reduce the number of troops on hand' (quoted by Lionel Kochan and R. Abrahams, <i>The Making of Modern Russia</i> , Penguin 1983). The war also revealed the inadequacy of Russia's communications. It was recognised that railways were crucial for a speedy deployment of troops as well as for dispersal of goods. Poor distribution of grain had in the past led to local shortages to the detriment of landlord and serf. An improved transport system would help Russian cereal growers to compete in a world market. This would encourage the development of a commercialised system of farming once serfdom was ended. Transport meant increased mobility and migration of people to expanding areas of production whereas serfdom tied peasants to the village.
Moral	Various groups had expressed concern about the welfare of peasants under serfdom. In 1842 Nicholas I had declared to the Council of State, 'there can be no doubt that serfdom in its present situation in our country is an evil ... (It) cannot last for ever ... The only answer is thus to prepare the way for a gradual transition to a different order' (quoted by H. Seton-Watson, <i>The Russian Empire, 1801–1917</i> , OUP, 1967). The minority of landowners who supported emancipation were partly influenced by a concern for the welfare of the peasants as well as the economic deficiencies of serfdom. The Slavophile landowner, A.I. Koshelyov wrote a memorandum to the tsar early in 1858, in which he presented the argument that it was morally wrong for a landowner to own other

(continued overleaf)



**PICTURE 2**  
Russian Landowners and their Serfs, *Gambling for Souls*, from G. Doré, *Histoire de la sainte Russie*, 1854, Mansell Collection. A French caricature shows a contrast with the idyllic picture of rural life generally shown in Russian sources

**Force for change**      **Main features**

**Moral (continued)** human beings like possessions and that such ownership demoralised the landowner. 'This measure is more necessary for the welfare of our class itself than for the serfs. The abolition of the right to dispose of people like objects or like cattle is as much our liberation as theirs for at present we are under the yoke of a law that destroys still more in us than in the serfs any human quality' (quoted by H. Seton-Watson, *The Russian Empire, 1801–1917*, OUP, 1967).

**Economic** Criticism that serfdom was economically inefficient had been prevalent since the 1760s. Early nineteenth century educated Russians argued that free wage labour was more productive than forced labour because workers would lack the motivating influence of wages being determined by market forces. The benefits of free peasant labour had been demonstrated in Siberia, a fact brought out in the accounts of a Scottish visitor to the region in 1864. 'It was probably the growing prosperity of Siberia and the marked superiority of the population there, that induced the government to emancipate the serfs of Russia proper' (quoted by J. McManners, *Lectures in European History, 1789–1914*). The arguments of this group of pro-reformers were not supported by the great mass of provincial nobility who were ignorant of free labour principles. Serfdom, as we have seen from Chapter 1, had shown itself to be adaptable in terms of allowing some peasants to engage in paid work. Provincial opinion was more concerned with the social and political dangers of maintaining serfdom particularly peasant unrest. In the 1840s, Benckendorff, Head of the Secret Police, warned Nicholas I that, 'the whole mood of the people is concerned with one aim – emancipation ... Serfdom is a powder keg under the state, and

Year	Serfs mortgaged (millions)	Percentage of all serfs
1820	1.8	20
1830	4.5	37
1842	5.6	50
1855	6.6	61
1859	7.1	66

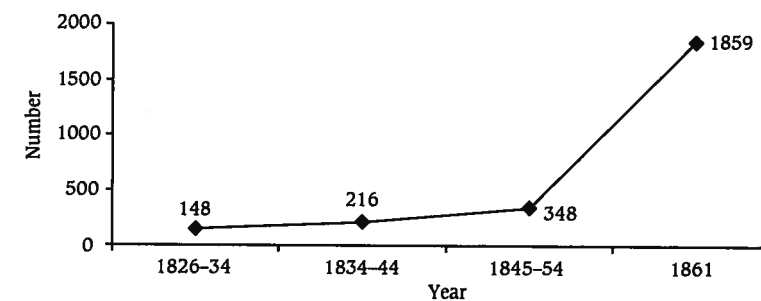
**TABLE 9**  
*Serfs mortgaged by owners 1820–59*

is the more dangerous because of the fact that the army itself consists of peasants. ... It is better to begin gradually, cautiously, than to wait until the process is started from below by the people themselves' (quoted in David Christian, *Imperial and Soviet Russia: Power, Privilege and the Challenge of Modernity*, Addison-Wesley Longman, 1986).

Serfdom was blamed for the rising debt contracted by nobles to finance their extravagant western lifestyles. By 1859 landlords had mortgaged 66% of their serfs as security for loans from the State Loan Bank. The State was also suffering from a decline in its revenues from the taxes paid by peasants, the poll tax and the obrok, in relation to its income from the tax on vodka. By 1855 the government was 54 million roubles in debt. To offset this, the nobles and the State increased their demand for grain causing famine among the peasantry who had been left with insufficient reserves.

**General**

The number of peasant disturbances increased from the 1840s leading to the Third Section reporting on rumours amongst serfs that, 'they expect a liberator, whom they call Metelkin', who will sweep (nobles) away' (quoted in H. Seton-Watson, *The Russian Empire, 1801–1917*, OUP, 1967). By 1859 the country faced a prospect of a peasant war, which was particularly worrying for rural nobles living on remote country estates, and the provincial governors and gendarmes.



**DIAGRAM 7**  
*Number of peasant disturbances 1826–61*

**B Main stages in the emancipation of the serfs**

Alexander appointed a secret committee in January 1857 to examine the issue of emancipation of the serfs under the chairmanship of Alexei Fedorovich Orlov, the strongly conservative president of the Council of State.

**ALEXEI FEDOROVICH ORLOV (1786–1861)**

Descended from a favourite of Catherine the Great, he had, 'that half-European, half-Asiatic lordly arrogance that had so recently produced among us a kind of powerful magic charm'. He had started his career as a soldier and policeman in the French Wars, 1805–14 and had participated in the suppression of various disturbances in Nicholas I's reign. He spent 12 years on the mission to Istanbul 1844–56, before becoming Head of the Third Section 1856–8. He resigned in 1861 due to illness.

**PROFILE**

**KEY ISSUE**

What were the main issues discussed by the committee?

The committee, composed of land-owning nobles and pro-emancipators made little progress. It spent months reading reports sent from the ministry of the interior and wasting sessions in discussing trivial matters. Alexander in a sense of frustration had his brother the Grand Duke Constantine, who was forceful and quick-tempered, join the committee in August to help speed up the process.

The tsar instructed the committee to explore a number of questions whether:

- 1 land owners should retain ownership of the whole of their land
- 2 emancipated serfs should be protected in their right to use part of the land
- 3 land owners should receive compensation only for such land as they granted to the peasants or also for the sacrifice of their rights over the persons of their serfs.

In November 1857 Alexander drew up a procedure based on the Nazimov rescript. This was prompted by a request from the representative, General V.L. Nazimov, of the landowners of Lithuania to free their serfs without land. He rejected this request in favour of serfs being allowed to keep their homesteads and buy them from their former lords within a stated period. They were to be allowed to rent land sufficient for their needs and be organised into communes. This reply, the Nazimov rescript, laid down the principles of emancipation. Nobles were instructed to set up provincial committees to collect evidence and eventually, after discussions, to present an emancipation plan to the tsar. Some of these regional committees could not agree and sent in majority and minority reports.

The publication of the rescript led to discussions in the press and opinion quickly divided.

- 1 The majority of the nobles were concerned to retain their economic and judicial control over their serfs.
- 2 Conservative opponents to reform argued that the security of the tsar and hence the state would be endangered.
- 3 Radical reformers proposed that the peasants should be given complete freedom and ownership of the land they held at the time of emancipation.

Alexander's response to these debates was to tighten censorship laws relating to the emancipation question. Landowners' fears of a peasant rebellion were well founded. During 1858 disturbances broke out in Estonia causing one of the pro-reform committee members to warn that 'if we deprive the peasants of the land we will set Russia alight'. Alexander was forced to intervene in the discussions. He closed the provincial assemblies and put the final stages of the process in the hands of an Editorial Commission of 38 members that was a sub-committee of the Main Committee. Reformers, led by Nicholas Alexevich Milyutin, dominated the commission that was made up of members of the bureaucracy and experts.

**KEY ISSUE**

What main arguments were expressed during the public discussions?

**PROFILE****NICHOLAS ALEXEVICH MILYUTIN  
(1818–72)**

He was one of the enlightened bureaucrats appointed by Alexander to carry out the preparations for the end of serfdom. His uncle, the liberal reformer Kiselyov, who had been in charge of state peasants 1834–56, had been an early influence. He had been a bureaucrat from 1835 becoming responsible for the reorganisation of St Petersburg municipal government in the late 1840s. His reputation as a radical meant that Alexander initially distrusted him but he had powerful patrons in the form of the minister of the interior, Lanskoj, and the Grand Duchess Elena. He was made deputy minister of the interior in the autumn of 1858 and became the main driving force behind emancipation. Between 1859–61 he was chairman of the commission for *zemstvo* local government reform until he was dismissed in 1861 for his liberalism. On that occasion Alexander II said, 'I am sorry to part with you, but I must. The nobility describe you as one of the reds' (W. Mosse, *Alexander II and the Modernisation of Russia*, English Universities Press, 1970). In 1863 he drafted reforms for *Russifying* Poland and became State-Secretary for Polish Affairs 1864–7 until he retired due to ill health. Two other leading supporters of reform joined him, his brother Dmitri, Minister of War, 1861–81 and Michael Reiter, Minister of Finance 1862–78.

There was bitter hostility between landowners and bureaucrats on the Editorial Commission. Two groups emerged:

- 1 Pro-reform group composed of noble landowners, which wanted a peaceful settlement of the serf problem in the interests of Russia's national greatness. They had little influence in St Petersburg.
- 2 'Red Party', composed of officials, writers, and journalists, who were more numerous and powerful. They were a formidable group in St Petersburg, but with sympathisers in the provinces.

The commission's work was concluded in October 1860 at which time several principles had been agreed:

- Abolition of serfdom was agreed in principle.
- Landowners retained ownership of the land.
- Peasants would be allowed to buy their houses and the surrounding land, *usad'ba* worked by them at the time of emancipation and would have access to further land to meet their needs.
- Peasants were to pay *obrok* or labour service for 2 years before becoming emancipated.
- Peasants were to make annual payments to buy their land.
- Peasants would be put under the control of the peasant commune, the *Mir*, whose powers would be strengthened though landlords would keep their policing powers.

**KEY ISSUE**

The emancipation.

- Peasants' land would not be secured at the expense of the landowners, but that the latter would be compensated for loss of land but not for loss of rights over their serfs.

The final proposals were approved and on 19 February the statutes were signed whereby 'the serfdom of peasants settled on estate owners' landed properties and of household serfs, is abolished forever'. Alexander had achieved, without bloodshed, a most momentous reform, which challenged the traditional structure of Russian society that had rested on the landowner. It brought Russia into the modern age.

The following is from Alexander II's Speech to the Council of State, January, 1861, quoted by G. Vernadsky (ed.), *Source Book for Russian History*, Yale University Press, 1972.

Why did Alexander II consider the 'liberation of the serfs ... to be a vital question for Russia'?

Why would 'further delay be disastrous to the state'?

Is it possible to tell whether Alexander was sympathetic to the condition of the serfs? Explain your answer with reference to the source.

How convincing is Alexander's claim that 'the approach to the matter was made on the initiative of the nobility itself'?

Assess the value of this speech to an historian studying the emancipation of the serfs.

axiomatic self-evident.

The matter of the liberation of the serfs, which has been submitted for the consideration of the State Council, I consider to be a vital question for Russia, upon which will depend the development of her strength and power ... I have another conviction, which is that this matter cannot be postponed...

For four years now it has dragged on and has been arousing various fears and anticipations among both the estate owners and the peasants. Any further delay could be disastrous to the state.... Although the apprehensions of the nobility are to a certain extent understandable, ... (I) shall never forget that the approach to the matter was made on the initiative of the nobility itself...

I hope, gentlemen, that on inspection of the drafts presented to the State Council, you will assure yourselves that all that can be done for the protection of the interests of the nobility has been done. If, on the other hand you find it necessary in any way to alter or to add to presented work, then I am ready to receive your comments; but I ask you only not to forget that the basis of the whole work must be the improvement of the life of the peasants, – an improvement not in words alone but in actual fact

My late father was continuously occupied with the thought of freeing the serfs. Sympathising completely with this thought, already in 1856 while in Moscow I called the attention of the leaders of the Moscow nobility to the necessity for them to occupy themselves with improving the life of the serfs, adding that serfdom could not continue forever and that it would therefore be better if the transformation took place from above rather, than from below.'

In this next extract from E. Acton, *Russia*, Longman, 1986, the author assesses the emancipation process.

The government's overriding concern to ensure domestic stability ruled out the possibility of landless Emancipation. It was axiomatic that peasant agriculture must not be jeopardised that the peasantry

must remain closely bound to the land and that the spectre of a restless landless proletariat must be avoided. The sharp rise in disturbances between 1857 and 1859 underlined the dangers of an excessively harsh settlement. Nevertheless while the statute was taking shape the nobility were able to reduce the quantity and quality of land in peasant hands and to extract limited amendments to the legislative proposals. In acquiescing the government was well aware that the final terms would provoke peasant hostility and took suitable precautions. In the capital the police told employers to work their men to the point of exhaustion the day before the terms were to be made known in order to leave them too weary to protest. The statute was promulgated during Lent in the hope that abstention would find the peasants in subdued mood. The military were fully alerted and when the village priest read out the details the police were in attendance to stifle the groans of disbelief with which they were met. Throughout the Tsar had made abundantly clear his wish to damage the position of the nobility as little as was compatible with social order and with the parlous condition of the State Treasury. In doing so he avoided confrontation: the State continued to be guided by a primary concern for the interests of the landed nobility.

### C Implementation of reforms

Abolition of serfdom did not happen immediately, but was phased in over a period of years. It was a gigantic task; at the time of emancipation about 50 million of the 60 million inhabitants of European Russia were peasants of one kind or another. Of these 23 million were the serfs of nobility and gentry, with fewer than 20 million being state peasants while the remainder belonged to other categories of serfs or non-serf peasants. The main problem lay with the landlords' serfs. Recognising the complexity of the land settlement and that it would vary between regions, the government provided for it to be phased in over a period of 2 years though in fact it took over 20 years for the whole process to be completed.

Phase	Main features
1 1861–63	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Twenty-three million landlords' serfs were given their freedom that removed them from the controls previously exercised by their owner. They controlled their own lives, could marry, travel, and have legal status. However, to avoid misunderstanding and to protect public and private interests, they were compelled to remain under the control of their lord for two years.</li> <li>● The landlord kept the land he had farmed for himself. In future this would be worked by hired labour, usually his ex-serfs.</li> <li>● The serfs were allowed to keep their own cottages and the surrounding area known as the <i>usad'ba</i>, but had to buy the other land they had worked. However, their small, scattered strips were not consolidated and since the meadows, pasture and woodland reverted to the landlord their customary rights to these areas actually declined. This was particularly the case in the rich fertile areas of the Black soil and middle Volga provinces, where the pressure for land was most acute. Here the serfs were worse off after emancipation.</li> </ul>

(continued overleaf)

In what ways might Acton use the evidence of Alexander's speech to the Council of State to support his conclusions on

- reasons for emancipation,
- Alexander's concern to have the support of the nobles,
- Alexander's concerns for the peasants,
- Alexander's concerns to balance the interests of the serf and the landowner.

Why, according to Acton, did the government fail to protect the interests of the nobles?

Phase	Main features
1 (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The communal open fields went to the <i>Mir</i> for use by all the ex-serfs. The peasant was still tied to the <i>Mir</i>. It continued to distribute the allotments, regulate the dues of each individual and to accept joint tax responsibility for all members. If a peasant left his village he surrendered all rights to the common land.</li> <li>● For the first two years peasants had to keep paying all the feudal dues they had paid before the reform and the landlord was not allowed to change their nature or extent. In return, the peasants were to continue farming the land they had used before.</li> <li>● During this two-year period inventories were drawn up identifying the land used by peasants along with their feudal dues and that claimed by the landlord.</li> </ul>
2 Started in 1863 but did not have a specific end date.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The ex-serfs remained in a state of 'temporary obligation'.</li> <li>● Communal courts replaced nobles' legal control over the peasants. They were managed by ex-serfs under the supervision of government officials and a peace officer who was a member of the nobility.</li> <li>● Arrangements were made for the distribution of land between landowner and peasants and for the size of the redemption payments.</li> </ul>
3 No fixed date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The final stage began once the agreement had been reached on the transfer of land.</li> <li>● Provision was made for the peasants to spread the repayment of the government loan over a 49 year period in the form of 'redemption payments'.</li> <li>● These payments became a form of direct taxation and were roughly equal to the amount that had been paid in feudal dues prior to emancipation.</li> <li>● Usually the land was over valued to the benefit of the landowner and to the disadvantage of the peasant. The latter found themselves burdened with debt aggravated by the continuing payment of the poll tax till 1886.</li> <li>● Once peasants had reached this final stage in the negotiations their legal and economic ties were transferred from the landlord to the commune and the government.</li> </ul>

The government was concerned that emancipation should be phased in peacefully and that private and public interests should be protected. To prevent confusion, it introduced an administrative structure to implement these changes. *Volosts* were a unit of local administration set up in the 19 February 1861 decree consisting of between 300 and 2000 people living in a number of villages, with its own law courts and administered by an assembly of representatives.

### D Effects of emancipation

#### HISTORIANS' DEBATE

#### Differing views of the effects of emancipation

Historians have varied in their assessment depending on whether they have taken a humanitarian, economic or political perspective.

##### Humanitarian

M.S. Anderson, *The Ascendancy of Europe 1815–1914*, 2nd edn, Longman, 1985.

Anderson views the events of 1861 as a moral improvement, claiming that 'the grant of individual freedom and a minimum of civil rights to twenty million people previously in bondage was the single greatest liberating measure in the whole history of Europe.'

J.N. Westwood, *Endurance and Endeavour; Russian History 1812–1986*, OUP, 1973.

Westwood's assessment of Alexander II was that 'with the possible exception of Khrushchev, no Russian ruler brought so much relief to so many of his people as did Alexander II, autocratic and conservative though he was'... 'Despite its imperfections the Emancipation was an enormous step forward'.

##### Economical

Historians have disagreed on the economic impact.

Martin McCauley and Peter Waldron, *The Emergence of the Modern Russian State 1855–1881*, Macmillan, 1986.

They have pointed to the decline in the size of peasants' agricultural holdings; by on average 4% though this loss was considerably higher in the more fertile regions. Peasants in the Steppe provinces saw a 23.3% decline and those in the Ukraine, 30.8%. There was an insufficient supply of fertile land for distribution that affected both the peasantry and nobility.

Alexander Gerschenkron, *The Beginnings of Russian Industrialisation*, Soviet Studies, 1970.

He argues that emancipation delayed economic development due to the introduction of internal passports to regulate the movement of peasants in their district. This restriction prevented the development of a mobile labour force. In addition, the debt incurred by peasants to make the redemption payments reduced their purchasing power and hence the volume of internal demand.

M.E. Falkus, *The Industrialisation of Russia*, Macmillan, 1972.

He rejects the view that internal passports were restrictive. He argues that large numbers were issued and that there was an increase in labour supply as a result of the loss in land ownership by so many peasants. Moreover the long time scale adopted to make redemption payments made these another form of the rent that had been previously paid to landlords.

##### Political

W. Mosse, *Alexander II and the Modernisation of Russia*, English University Press, 1970.

They stress the limitations of the administrative, judicial, military, even financial reforms that followed in the wake of 1861. Commissions, often working in isolation prepared these reforms. However, they were weakened by rival or hostile influences. They argued that Alexander missed the opportunity to build a new Russia because of his determination to preserve his autocratic inheritance. He also failed to provide central co-ordination. According to this line of interpretation 'Alexander in the end succeeded after immense labours in making of the new Russia an incomplete and uncomfortable dwelling where friends and opponents of innovation felt almost equally ill at ease' (quoted by W. Mosse).

### E Summary of main effects of emancipation

Social group	Gains	Losses
Peasants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Given freedom from noble interference and control of their lives.</li> <li>End to feudal dues and payments in kind</li> <li>Some peasants increased land holding.</li> <li>Freed from fear of being forced to do military service</li> <li>Mir's powers strengthened, represented local autonomy.</li> <li>Freedom to move both within Russia and emigrate, usually to Germany or America.</li> <li>A new class of rich peasant emerged, the Kulaks, who developed as private owners and were resented by the peasants.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overall loss of land.</li> <li>Need to rent additional land at higher prices.</li> <li>Over-valuation of land one source estimating that ex-serfs paid on average 134% of the free market price for their land</li> <li>Increased debt as redemption payments were spread over 49 years but government failed to keep its promise of helping to fund these payments.</li> <li>Higher tax burden.</li> <li>Still subject to special communal courts, the <i>volosts</i>, so did not have full citizen rights.</li> <li>Mir tended to replace the gentry in terms of controlling the lives of peasants and their independence. It allocated the small parcels of land, organised the dues and had responsibility for the payment of taxes and redemption payments on a village basis.</li> <li>Mir's regular reallocation of land based on changing family circumstances discouraged peasants from improving their land so that farming became based on an extensive rather than intensive basis.</li> <li>Subsistence farming made peasants more vulnerable to famine.</li> <li>Long-term decline in the average size of peasant holding or <i>nadiel</i> as the result of the right of each male child born in the <i>Mir</i> to land.</li> <li>Loss of privileges and protection.</li> <li>Remained tied to the village by redemption payments.</li> <li>Loss of security with removal of landlord protection.</li> <li>Discontent continued. Peasants felt disappointed and disillusioned and many rioted. The Ministry of the Interior reported 647 riots in the first four months of 1861, 1159 for the whole year affecting 1176 estates and requiring the army to restore order on 337 estates.</li> </ul>

Sir Donald Mackenzie Wallace, *Russia on the eve of War and Revolution*, C.E. Black (ed.), Random House, 1961, in which an English traveller commented on peasants' loss of security.

If the serfs had a great many ill-defined obligations to fulfill [under serfdom], such as the carting of the master's grain to market... they had, on the other hand, a good many ill defined privileges. They grazed their cattle during a part of the year on the manor land; they received firewood and occasionally logs for repairing their huts; sometimes the proprietor lent them or gave them a cow or a horse when they had

been visited by the cattle plague or the horse stealer; and in times of famine they could look to their master for support. All this has now come to an end. Their burdens and their privileges have been swept away together, and been replaced by clearly defined, unbending, unelastic legal relations. They now have to pay the market price for every stick of firewood that they burn, for every log that they require for repairing their houses, and for every rood of land on which to graze their cattle. Nothing is now to be had gratis. The demand to pay is encountered at every step. If a cow dies or a horse is stolen, the owner can no longer go to the proprietor with the hope of receiving a present, or at least a loan without interest, but must, if he has no ready money, apply to the village usurer, who probably considers twenty or thirty per cent as a by no means exorbitant rate of interest.

What privileges were lost by serfs after emancipation?

What was the implication of this loss?

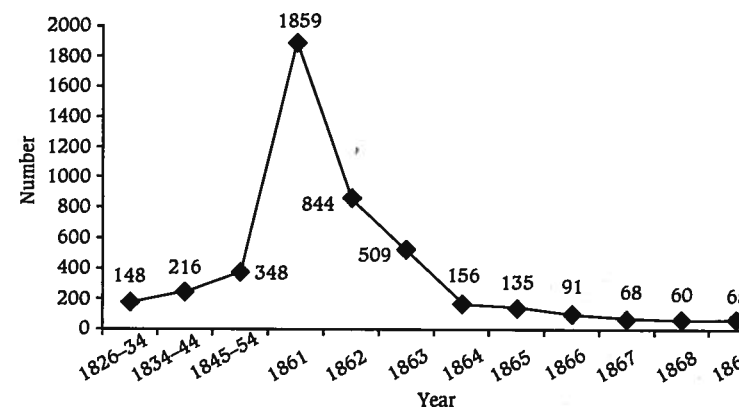
What is the value to a historian of eye-witness accounts by foreign observers?

Year	Size of peasant holding	
	Central industrial region	North-eastern region
1860	4	8.4
1880	3.3	5.2
1890	2.6	3.3

TABLE 10 Decline in the average peasant holdings 1860-90 (in *dessyatiny*) (1 *dessyatina* = 2.7 acres = 1.09 hectares)

Region	Before emancipation	After emancipation	Change (%)
Less fertile region (15 provinces)	13 944 000	13 390 000	-4
More fertile black soil and eastern provinces (21)	14 016 000	10 709 000	-23.6
Russian Poland	7 737 000	10 901 000	40.9

TABLE 11 Peasant land holdings before and after emancipation (in *dessyatiny*) (1 *dessyatina* = 2.7 acres = 1.09 hectares)



What evidence is there to support the view that 'the peasants felt that they had gained something from emancipation'?

DIAGRAM 8 Number of peasant disturbances in Russia 1826-69



Social group	Gains	Losses
Land-owners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some increased the size of their estates.</li> <li>Compensated for loss of rights over serfs with increased local administrative powers through the <i>zemstva</i>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many became poorer.</li> <li>Loss of legal ownership of their serfs and the compulsory feudal dues that were paid in labour, goods or in some case money.</li> <li>Loss of land – in some cases up to a third.</li> <li>Redemption payments used to repay old debts.</li> <li>Political and economic power and influence declined in local affairs. Led some liberal-minded landowners to demand the introduction of elected local government assemblies, and an independent judiciary with power to prosecute corrupt officials and freedom of the press. Alexander refused such demands.</li> <li>Power over conscription declined necessitating military reforms to establish a reserve peasant army.</li> <li>Majority of gentry remained conservative and resentful of change. Some employed estate managers but others sold and moved to towns.</li> </ul>

Year	Amount of land held
1867	87
1882	71
1911	43

**TABLE 12** Decline in land ownership by the nobles (in million *dessyatiny*) (1 *dessyatina* = 2.7 acres = 1.09 hectares)

From the Petition to Tsar Alexander II by the Tula gentry, December 1861, quoted by Terence Emmons, *The Russian Landed Gentry and the Peasant Emancipation of 1861*, Cambridge University Press, 1968.

The legislation ... has so far proven unsatisfactory. The difficulties and conflicts of interest arising from it disturb the economy, sow destructive discord between peasant and landowner and cause incalculable harm to agriculture. The Gentry deprived of more than half of the land belonging to them in exchange for a direct money payment, which does not correspond to its value, are unable to receive income from the land remaining to them because the obligatory labour of free men is unthinkable and in view of the surplus allotment of land to the peasants hired labour is unprofitable. As a result the quantity of grain on the market has decreased and will decrease still more in the future. A loss to the state is inevitable and taking into consideration the rapid destruction of the forests which the landowners are incapable of reserving and the destruction of many factories and various other industrial enterprises for whose continuation there are no means, the damage to the economic strength of the state will be immediate. The Gentry class that has always preceded all other classes on the path to enlightenment and goodwill will through no fault of its own come to complete ruin.

Why, according to the gentry, had 'the legislation ... so far proven unsatisfactory' from the perspective of:

- relationships
- prosperity of the gentry
- prosperity of the state.

What aspects of their argument were most likely to appeal to the state?

Social group	Gains	Losses
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Old abuses questioned.</li> <li>New local government structure introduced based on the <i>zemstva</i>.</li> <li>Decline of labour services encouraged the spread of a money economy and businesslike initiatives.</li> <li>More questioning attitude encouraged amongst nobles and peasants.</li> <li>New spirit of enterprise fostered amongst some.</li> <li>Encouragement given to growth of railways, banking, industry and cities.</li> <li>Removal of nobles' legal powers necessitated legal reforms.</li> <li>Growth of liberalism amongst some sections led them to press for further reforms.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Technical backwardness of agriculture emphasised.</li> <li>Increased sense of resentment felt by nobles and peasantry benefited the increasing number of intellectuals who challenged autocracy</li> </ul>

## F Administrative reforms

The abolition of the legal and judicial control of the gentry over their serfs required a new system of local government. Alexander appointed a Commission in 1860 under the chairmanship of the liberal reformer, N.A. Milyutin, soon to be replaced by Petr Valuyev, Minister of the Interior.

The Commission decided on a system of elected rural local councils, known as *zemstva* (singular: *zemstvo*) at district and provincial level elected by three separate electoral colleges – for nobles, townspeople and peasants. The nobility dominated the *zemstva* allowing them to preserve their local authority as compensation for their losses of 1861. The *zemstva* were given limited powers to approve local community projects, such as road, prisons, public health, poor relief education and industrial construction. Other areas of local government, such as powers to levy state and local taxes, appoint officials, and maintain law and order remained with the governors appointed by the tsar. Similar elected councils for the towns were established in 1870 with the introduction of the *Duma*.

Liberal hopes that these governmental reforms would lead to a national assembly were defeated by Alexander's refusal to surrender his autocratic control. He was supported by:

- 1** Reactionary landowners who feared a loss of their social privileges.
- 2** High officials who wanted to preserve their power and prestige.
- 3** Progressives, both within and outside the government, who feared that a National Assembly would be dominated by the landowners who would block social progress wanted to delay change until the masses were educated enough to take part in an assembly of the people. Until that time arrived they were prepared to stay with autocracy.

A **reactionary** is one who is opposed to progress and reform.

**KEY ISSUE**

To what extent did the zemstva benefit from these reforms?

The *zemstva*, for all their limitations, provided for local initiative in place of administrative control. Westwood observed that their local knowledge 'enabled them to do a good job, where a St Petersburg official would have failed'. They became critical of the regime as they became more concerned with local issues, particularly in the field of education, and welfare. Liberal minded teachers, doctors and scientists were appointed who became a focal point for further reform later in the nineteenth century.

*Zemstva* had a number of weaknesses that limited their effectiveness. Dominated by the nobility, they spread slowly with the result that by 1914 only 43 of 70 provinces had introduced them. Accounting for an average 41% of the voters to *uezd* assemblies they dominated the percentage of seats in the *zemstva* which allowed them to continue to run local affairs to their advantage.

**TABLE 13** Percentage distribution of seats in zemstva institution 1865-7

1865-7	Nobles	Merchants	Peasants	Priestly families
District/Uezd	42	10.5	38	6.5
Provincial	74	11	10.5	4

Most were not interested in their responsibilities particularly when provincial governors had the power to reverse those *zemstva* decisions they considered 'contrary to the laws and to the general welfare of the state'. Westwood has written of the *zemstva* that their success 'demonstrate that the people were indeed capable of looking after their own affairs'. The failure to follow up this success with a corresponding widening of public participation in central government meant that there was no concerted effort to make a success of the new institutions. This failure was also apparent with the new judicial system of 1864.

**G Judicial reforms**

The judicial system inherited by Alexander II was chaotic, arbitrary, secret and cruel leading to the setting up of a committee of officials from the Ministry of Justice. They were ordered to work out 'those fundamental principles, the undoubted merit of which is at present recognised by science and the experience of Europe, in accordance with which Russia's judicial institutions must be reorganised' (quoted by W. Mosse, *Alexander II and the Modernisation of Russia*, English Universities Press, 1958). Over the next 3 years the Council of State and Alexander considered its proposals before giving their approval in 1864 followed by their introduction in 1865 by new regional courts.

Crimes by high officials were taken out of the jurisdiction of local courts and tried by special procedures. In 1872, a special bench of the Senate tried crimes against the state while the Ministry of the Interior was given the power to banish to other parts of the country anyone regarded as dangerous or politically suspicious. Ecclesiastical courts and courts martial were excluded from the 1864 law.

**KEY ISSUE**

How did Alexander II propose to reform the main abuses in the judicial system?

Abuses	Reforms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Different courts for separate classes at local level</li> <li>● Cases could be transferred between them leading to years of delay</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Equality before the law ending the system of separate courts for separate estates (classes)</li> <li>● New lower courts, <i>volost</i>, to replace serf owner as local magistrate</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Unqualified and often illiterate judges</li> <li>● Court secretaries, who wrote down decisions, exercised great power</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Judges to be better trained</li> <li>● Justices, elected for three years by local councils</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Police had a judicial role; they not only investigated crimes but also in some cases imposed punishment, usually fines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Separation of judicial and administrative powers making for a more independent judiciary</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Bribery and abuse of power were encouraged due to low salaries paid to police and judges</li> <li>● Villages carried legal responsibility for offences committed by a member; and could be liable to pay fines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Judges to be better paid</li> <li>● Judges to be removable by government</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The accused never saw the judges; evidence was submitted in writing and considered according to a rigid guideline of rules based on its acceptability, e.g. a confession, or collaborating statements of two independent witnesses</li> <li>● Bribery of witnesses</li> <li>● Accused had no opportunity to challenge evidence</li> <li>● The lower the social rank of the individual the more difficult to achieve justice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Evidence to be considered in the open, and a defence counsel allowed</li> <li>● Trial by jury for criminal cases</li> <li>● Trial of petty cases by Justices of the Peace</li> <li>● Public tribunals</li> <li>● Simplification of court procedure to speed up decisions</li> <li>● Accused had the right of appeal to a conference of justices of the peace at provincial level</li> <li>● Press coverage of cases</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Savage sentences and punishments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Flogging to be reduced</li> <li>● Offences carried a reprimand, fines (up to 300 roubles) and prison sentences of 3 months to a year</li> </ul>

The system of justice established by these reforms, considered good, fair and less corrupt, made a major contribution to the modernisation of Russia. According the H. Seton-Watson, 'it raised general moral and even political standards'... 'for a long time the court-room was the one place in Russia where real freedom of speech prevailed, and its main champion was the lawyer'. Alexander's reforms helped promote a climate based on rule of law. The court of the justices of the peace was one of the most valuable new judicial institutions.

**KEY ISSUE**

What were the beneficial effects of these reforms?

**KEY ISSUE**

What were the limitations of these reforms?

The new system had numerous imperfections. There was a shortage of trained lawyers in the early years and they were still influenced by the government who controlled their promotion prospects. The bureaucracy continued to intervene so that trial by jury was not universally enforced; it was excluded in Poland, the western provinces and the Caucasus. The separate *volost* courts for the peasantry kept them outside the judicial system emphasising their existence as a separate group and preventing equality before the law. Apart from the peasantry other groups remained outside the new system: government officials, priests, military, critics of the regime and revolutionaries. The latter group continued to be harassed by the secret police of the Third Section (not abolished until 1880), and to face the risk of arbitrary administrative arrest and in the 1870s trial by special courts.

**H Military reforms**

Reform of the army was made necessary by two events: defeat of Russia in the Crimean War 1854–6 and the abolition of serfdom that affected conscription of the rank and file. Responsibility was put in the hands of Dmitri Milyutin, Minister of War, 1861–81 who aimed to remove the abuses that had become apparent during the Crimean campaign. Recognising the necessity for greater efficiency and fairness, he showed little regard for established privileges introducing a number of radical reforms over a 20-year period:

- 1 Modern weapons, such as rifles and screw-driven, ironclad steamships, were introduced to make Russia more competitive with her European rivals. Greater emphasis was put on engineering including the construction of strategic railways to improve transport, provisioning and medical care of troops.
- 2 The officer corps was given proper training with the introduction of military colleges, which admitted non-noble recruits. Promotion became more open to make leadership more effective. Privates were allowed to rise to officer rank on grounds of merit alone.
- 3 Administration was improved with the introduction of 15 regional commands. The Military Code was reviewed and changes were introduced in military courts procedure.
- 4 Dmitri Milyutin's most significant change was in the system of enlistment. He had criticised serf-based conscription and had pressed for the 1861 abolition. He aimed to create a smaller, more professional and less expensive army by:
  - ending the practice of drafting convicts into the army
  - ending military colonies
  - reducing the size of annual conscription to 100
  - reducing the length of service to 15 years' active service and ten years 'leave' in the reserves
  - extending liability to military service to all classes, including nobles, at the age of 21
  - improving morale by reducing the number of offences that carried capital punishment and abolishing flogging.

**KEY ISSUE**

In what respects did Milyutin's reforms end class privilege in the army?

His reforms were opposed by the nobility and merchants who disliked the prospect of service in the ranks. They used the press, public discussions and private influence with the tsar to prevent the enlistment reforms being introduced but Alexander gave his royal assent in 1874 and they became law in 1875.

Reduction in the length of military service during peacetime was cheaper than keeping a large standing army of a million men. This was a significant saving in government expenditure when the army and navy had accounted for 45% of spending in the 1846 Budget. A smaller more professional and less class-ridden army developed and was soon put to the test in 1877 when Russia found herself at war with Turkey. The latter was defeated, though it took longer than expected, even though Turkey was in decline. In other respects however, Milyutin had restored Russia's international reputation. The army also developed a trained reserve that could be readily mobilised when required. Incentives to encourage a more educated recruit helped the spread of literacy; two to three million soldiers were educated in the 1870s–90s.

Despite efforts to make the system fairer, people could still be represented by substitutes and officers remained heavily aristocratic. The army was still based on peasant conscripts so that high levels of illiteracy amongst the recruits reduced the effectiveness of training. This was evident in the wars fought by Russia in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She only defeated the Turks after months of bitter fighting 1877–8 and suffered a humiliating defeat by Japan 1904–5 and Germany 1914–17. Problems of supply and provisioning as well as leadership remained.

**I Education**

The standard of teaching improved as responsibility was transferred from the Church to the new *zemstva* in 1864. Popular education was widely extended:

- Schools were declared open to all classes and the number of primary schools in the countryside grew from 8000 in 1856 to 23 000 in 1880. Their curriculum aimed to 'strengthen religious and moral notions and to spread basic knowledge'.
- Secondary schools grew both in terms of numbers and in an extension to include women (1864) resulting in a doubling of numbers to 800 000 during the 1860s. Secondary schools were open to 'children of all estates, without distinction of profession, or religious belief' of their parents. Their curriculum was extended so that *gimnazii* could focus either on a study of the classics, (Latin and Greek), or modern subjects (natural science and drawing). All secondary schools taught divinity, history, geography, Russian language and literature and mathematics.
- Universities were given greater independence in 1863, though this was short-lived. Revolutionary disturbances in the 1870s led to the re-introduction of state supervision.

**KEY ISSUE**

What were the beneficial effects of these reforms?

**KEY ISSUE**

What were the limitations of these reforms?

**KEY ISSUE**

What were the beneficial effects of these reforms?

University numbers grew from 3600 to 10000 as did revolutionary activity. According to one historian, 'the efforts of Tsarism to survive, and reform in order to conserve, inevitably increased the numbers of the educated and potentially critical' (T. Kemp, *Industrialisation of Nineteenth Century Europe*, 1969).

The government retained the right to veto university appointments and to ban student organisations particularly after the reactionary disturbances. In 1861 many universities were closed and students were prosecuted for criticising the regime.

**J Censorship**

Censorship was re-organised and relaxed though with limited success:

- 1862 censorship was moved to the Ministry of the Interior
- 1863 prepublication codes were reduced resulting in the publication of liberal ideas and anything that was not considered dangerous to the regime
- 1865 the Press was allowed to discuss government policy
- foreign publications were allowed into Russia but their sale was subject to political approval
- editors were given more freedom over what they could publish.

However, publishers remained uncertain of where responsibility lay with the survival of separate ecclesiastical and military censorships while the regime retained control over what was written and read.

The relaxation of censorship encouraged a growth in the number of books and of political journalism. The number of books published grew from 1020 in 1855 to 1836 in 1864 and 10691 by 1894, the latter number was equal to the combined British and American output. Public opinion became more educated especially as the judicial reforms led to more openness in the conduct of trials. However, growth in criticism provoked a counter-reaction in the 1870s and tight censorship returned (see Section 4 below).

**K Financial and economic reforms**

Reutern attempted to improve the auditing of accounts and the collection of revenue but there was no real tax reform. Russia's currency, the rouble, was not stabilised and a third of government expenditure went to repay old debts. Foreign trade, banking and a planned railway network were also encouraged but with mixed success. Government guarantee of an annual dividend attracted foreign investors and the amount of track and traffic grew. This boosted fuel, metallurgy and engineering industries along with grain producers but few railway lines proved profitable.

**KEY ISSUE**

Main features of Count Michael Reutern's financial reforms, 1862–78

**TABLE 14** Growth in Russian railways during Alexander II's reign

Year	Mileage	Freight traffic (million tons)
1866	3 000	3
1883	14 700	24

Period	Annual volume (in million poods)
1861–5	76
1876–80	257

**TABLE 15** Increase in Russian grain during Alexander II's reign (1 pood = 36 lb = 16.36 kg)

**3 ASSESSMENT OF ALEXANDER II'S REFORMS**

Study the collection of sources below and answer the questions that follow:

The great reform laws of 1860–5 altered the structure of the empire fundamentally, but years were to elapse before their practical effect was fully felt. Officials learned only gradually to work cooperatively within the new system, and the state machinery as well as the minds of the masses had to be adjusted to radically changed circumstances. In the meantime the progressives, belonging to all classes of the population, became impatient. Socialist tendencies increased, and in 1863 a revolt occurred in Poland that was suppressed with unnecessary brutality. In 1866, in a growingly tense atmosphere, an attempt on the life of Alexander II, the 'Tsar Liberator' was made.

Russian intellectuals interpreted Alexander's reforms as an attempt to perpetuate the existing political system. Historical opinion has for the most part agreed with this assessment. Florinsky, for example, has suggested that the reforms were nothing more than 'half-hearted concessions on the part of those who (with some exceptions) hated to see the disappearance of the old order and tried to save as much of it as circumstances would allow. The response of the Russian intelligentsia was the Populist 'going to the people' in 1874. When this failed, propaganda gave way to terrorism, which culminated in the assassination of Alexander II in 1881. Although it did not achieve its objective of igniting a revolution in Russia, Populism was nevertheless significant. It made a start in developing the political consciousness of the people and its terrorist actions inspired later insurrectionists. The Social Revolutionaries, descendants of Populism, were the most important insurgent group at the turn of the century.

When Alexander II became Tsar in 1855, the Russian state was in desperate need of fundamental reform. The programme of reforms introduced by him was radical in comparison with previous Russian experience, but it did not go far enough. The government's commitment to modernise Russia through a process of westernisation was moderated by its concern to perpetuate the interests of its ruling social class. This approach alienated the Russian intelligentsia and, in so doing, undermined the stability of the regime, compelling it to rely on repression for its preservation. This strategy succeeded for some time, but in the long term it was likely to achieve precisely the opposite of its intended effect.

**SOURCE B** From Carl Watts, *Alexander II's Reforms, Causes and Consequences*, *History Review*, December 1998, number 32, in which the author assesses the impact of Alexander II's reforms.

**SOURCE A**

From Walther Kirchner, *Russian History*, Harper Perennial/Harper Collins, 1991.

Using the evidence of the two sources, what do you consider to have been Alexander's main aims in sponsoring reform?

How successful were Alexander's reforms?

What can you learn from the sources of the reasons for growth in opposition to the regime?

'The Tsar Liberator' was a victim of the unresolved conflict between social reform and the doctrine of political autocracy' (H. Seton-Watson, *Decline of Imperial Russia*, 1964). Using the evidence of the sources, how far would you agree with this interpretation of Alexander and his reforms?

## 4 THE GROWTH OF A REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT

### A Who were the revolutionaries?

Alexander's reforms failed to satisfy his critics among the liberal and socialist ranks. With the relaxation in press censorship, liberals, radical students and a growing body of socialists openly discussed liberal and radical political ideas in the 1860s, the lead being taken by radical journalists. A number of manifestos were published which all contained the same grievance. 'The sovereign has betrayed the hopes of the people, the freedom he has given them is not real and is not what the people dreamed of and need'. They also agreed that their aim was that, 'we want all citizens of Russia to enjoy equal rights, we do not want privilege to exist, we want ability and education, rather than birth, to confer the right to high position, we want appointments to public office to follow the elective principle' (G. Vernadsky *et al.* (eds), *A Sourcebook for Russian History from Earliest Times to 1917*, Yale University Press, 1972). In 1862 a group of student radicals published the manifesto 'Young Russia' in which they argued that revolution was the only solution.

The following is from this student revolutionary manifesto, *Young Russia*, 1862, quoted by G. Vernadsky *et al.* (eds), *A Sourcebook for Russian History from Earliest Times to 1917*, Yale University Press, 1972.

Society is at present divided into two groups that are hostile to one another because their interests are diametrically opposed. The party that is oppressed by all and humiliated by all is the party of the common people. Over it stands a small group of contented and happy men. They are the landowners... the merchants... the government officials – in short all those who possess property either inherited or acquired. At their heart stands the Tsar. They cannot exist without him or he without them. If either falls the other will be destroyed... This is the imperial party. There is only one way out of this oppressive and terrible situation which is destroying contemporary man and that is revolution – bloody and merciless revolution...

The most important of the student revolutionary groups was the *Organisation*, started in 1863 at Moscow University with the aim of moulding public opinion to accept a general rebellion. There was a high level of peasant and student unrest and disturbances during the 1860s including a failed attempt on Alexander's life in 1866. These revolutionary developments divided educated Russian society. Many liberals abandoned their liberalism and became either conservative nationalists or radicals. Alexander blamed the educational system for encouraging the spread of seditious ideas. He replaced the liberal

#### KEY ISSUE

'Young Russia'.

Q Which social groups were identified as members of the imperial party?

#### KEY ISSUE

The organisation.

reformers and progressives who had carried through the 'Great Reforms' with outspoken reactionaries. They recommended a strengthening of the police, tighter control of universities and the press and an extension of the policy of *Russification* of nationalities, policies that characterised the last 15 years of Alexander's reign.

### B The Populist movement

Despite its policy of repression revolutionary activity continued in the 1870s in the form of the Populist movement, the *Narodniks* (name derived from *v narod* 'To the people') and the *Narodnaya Volya* (*The People's Will*). Both posed a real threat to the regime. The Populists aimed to achieve their ideal of a perfect society based on the peasant and the village commune. Between 1873 and 1874, 2000–3000 educated Populists from the nobility and intelligentsia decided to 'Go to the People'. They visited peasant villages to share in the 'true' life of the peasant and to educate them to rise up in rebellion against the tsar and establish a Populist State. An account of the experiences of one Populist, Catherine Breshkovskaya, the daughter of a noble and later a founder of the Socialist Revolutionary Party, is given below. This extract is from her memoirs in which she describes her experiences as a Populist in the town of Smela, a centre of the sugar-beet industry, quoted in T. Riha, *Readings in Russian Civilisation*, University of Chicago Press, 1964.

To the request that he (an old man whose hut room she shared) help me in my revolutionary propaganda in Smela the old man answered: 'I have no strength left. I have been cruelly punished. One soldier stood on one arm, another on the other, and two on my legs. I was beaten, beaten until the earth was soaked with blood. That is how I was flogged. And that did not happen merely once or twice. I was exiled to Siberia, came back, and began all over again; but I can't do it any more.'

[Other peasants] made no protest against my proposal to prepare the soil for a general revolt; but it was evident that the recent punishments (after the 1861–3 uprisings) had made a terrible impression on them. They said as one man: 'If everyone agreed to rise at the same time, if you went around and talked to all the people, then it could be done. We tried several times to rise. We demanded our rights to the land. It was useless. Soldiers were sent down and the people were punished and ruined.'

The peasants viewed the Populists with deep suspicion; and either beat them up or reported them to the police. Populism had failed. Two major trials of 243 young revolutionaries were held in 1877–8 (see Section 6C below). Those who escaped arrest or who had escaped from their place of 'administrative exile' kept the revolutionary movement alive.

#### KEY ISSUE

*The People's Will.*

Q How useful is this source for accounting for failure of the Populists to rouse the peasants to rebel?

### C Divisions in the Populist ranks

Some decided that revolution would not come from the conservative and traditional peasants. They turned their attention to the ideas of Karl Marx and to revolution based on the industrial workers. Other groups retained faith in the peasants but tried a new approach. One such group was known as 'Land and Liberty', *Zemlya I volya* that appeared in 1876. After their experiences in the early 1870s they recognised the need for a strong central organisation that enforced discipline through its ranks if they were to succeed against the state machine of repression. H. Seton-Watson has described what emerged as the 'first revolutionary party in Russia'. Its leaders developed a highly organised system of central and local command which included a section dealing with escapes from prison of arrested members, assassinations of government officials as revenge for ill treatment of revolutionaries and the discovery and punishment of traitors or police spies. Support for the revolutionaries grew as discontent increased with Russia's involvement in war against Turkey in 1877–8. They continued the ideal of 'Going to the people' but learning from the failure of the mid-1870s, they adopted a different approach. This was based on revolutionaries, dressed in peasant clothes, going to work in villages as doctors, teachers or skilled workmen, helping to organise them to resist tsarist officials and landlords. It was apparent however that the peasants would not stage a revolution from below and by 1879 the Land and Freedom movement had died away.

It was at this point that division appeared in the ranks of the revolutionaries over the future direction of the revolutionary movement and the methods to be pursued.

- 1 *Black Partition*, *Chorny peredyel*, led by Plekhanov, centred their activities on the condition of the peasantry whose interests they aimed to advance through political reform and mass agitation rather than violence.
- 2 *People's Will*, *Narodnaya Volya* believed in political terrorism and directed all their attention on the assassination of the tsar which was successfully achieved on 1 March 1881, when Alexander was fatally injured in the second of two bomb attacks.

This division brought Populism to an end.

### D Significance of Populism

Its methods had proved to be very expensive not only in money but also in membership, many of whom were arrested after each outrage. Its activities had alienated many members of the public who had accepted its arguments but not its methods. However, it should not be dismissed as a complete failure. It succeeded in promoting a political awareness in many people and its ideology and actions influenced later generations of revolutionaries particularly the **Socialist Revolutionaries**.

#### KEY ISSUE

The growth of political terrorism.

**Socialist Revolutionaries** were committed to democratic socialism. They believed in the right of people to govern themselves. As heirs to the Populists they attached importance to peasant organisations, which accounts for the support they gained from sections of the peasantry. They played a role in encouraging peasant discontent.

## 5 THE REGIME TAKES A REACTIONARY TURN – 1865

It is generally acknowledged that 1865–6 was a watershed, not only in politics but also in the personal life of Alexander. His eldest son died while his wife, whose health was shattered by tuberculosis, retreated into a private life. Alexander alienated leading members of his family when he embarked on a relationship with a young princess, Catherine Dolgorouky, who 'alone could give him a new life'. She was given private apartments in the Winter Palace; four children were born to the relationship before they were eventually married a year before his assassination. Close liberal members of his family who had encouraged Alexander to pursue his programme of reform lost influence. Grand Duke Constantine and Grand Duchess Helen found it increasingly difficult to obtain an audience with the tsar.

In politics, the golden age of reform was coming to an end. Alexander found himself under pressure from the right and the left. He rejected reformist demands for a general assembly of elected representatives from throughout Russia to discuss the common needs of the entire state. Extreme conservatives wanted a break on further reform, a view supported by Alexander after the failed attempt on his life. His interest in, and commitment to, reform declined as he became increasingly exhausted by criticism from all sides.

#### KEY ISSUE

Significance of 1865–6.



**PICTURE 3**  
Tsar Alexander II, Princess Catherine Dolgorouky and their elder children, George and Olga, c. 1879

## 6 ALEXANDER THE TRADITIONALIST

### A Ministerial changes

Alexander replaced his liberal reforming ministers with conservatives including Count Peter Shuvalov, who was made chief of police in charge of the Third Section (1866-74). His appointment heralded the return to a conservative atmosphere and a policy of repression.

### B Educational reforms

Alexander's reactionary Minister of Education, Count Tolstoy, (not the well-known author) blamed the university curriculum for the spread of revolutionary ideas. Subjects that encouraged independent thought, like history, science, modern languages and even Russian, were replaced with Mathematics, Latin, Greek and Church history. At the same time a few extreme left publications were closed down. In 1871, a formal division was made between schools, called *gimnaziya*, that concentrated on a classical education and modern subject schools, called 'real schools'. Only *gimnaziya* students could progress to university while students from 'real schools' went on to higher technical institutions. Despite these reactionary policies Tolstoy's educational policy did show some liberal aspects. He increased the number of teacher training colleges and although he disapproved, he had to accept Moscow University's decision to organise lectures for women.

Extension in the provision of education is evident in the substantial increase in schools as shown by the following table:

Year	Number of gimnazii	Number of students	Number of 'real schools'
1863	94	31 132 (boys)	N/A
1876	203	52 455	23
1881	270	Less than 50 000 (includes girls)	79 (17 484)

Students moved to Switzerland to study a wider curriculum and also to listen freely to professional agitators and anarchists. Others found themselves either expelled from the universities for revolutionary activities or recalled home from abroad as part of the regime's *Russification* policy. The net result was the same. There was an increase in the number of disenchanted intelligentsia; socialists, Populists and many joined the ranks of the revolutionaries.

### C The 'Shuvalov era'

A conservative with a military and police background, Shuvalov had opposed Alexander's reforms of the 1860s. He brought other reactionary conservatives into office who supported increased use of rule by

decree, use of military courts to try cases of political violence, a tightening up of censorship including banning some periodicals, student co-operatives and processions. These measures had some effect in the later 1860s, though the few liberals who remained in office, such as Nicholas Milyutin, opposed them. A diary entry for 31 December 1873 reveals Milyutin's bitter feelings:

The following is an extract from Nicholas Milyutin's diary entry of 31 December 1873, quoted by Hugh Seton-Watson, *The Russian Empire 1801-1917*, OUP, 1967.

For me 1873 passed like a dark cloud; only sad impressions are left of it. In no preceding year did I endure so much unpleasantness annoyance and failure. The intrigue begun long ago against me grew to full maturity and unfolded in all its ugliness. ... Everything is done under the exclusive influence of Count Shuvalov who has terrified the emperor with his daily reports about frightful dangers to which allegedly the state and the sovereign himself are exposed. ... Under the pretext of protection of the emperor's person and of the monarchy Shuvalov interferes in everything and all matters are decided in accordance with his whisperings. He has surrounded the emperor with his people; all new appointments are made at his instructions. ... Such is the milieu in which I am condemned to operate. Is it possible for one man to fight against a whole powerful gang? What a devastating and disgusting contrast with the atmosphere in which I entered the government 13 years ago! Then everything was striving forwards; now everything is pulling backwards. Then the emperor sympathised with progress, he was moving forward; now he has lost confidence in everything be created, in everything that surrounds him, even in himself.

Revolutionary activity increased between 1873 and 1877 leading to the arrest of 1611 Populists, 15% being women, some of who died in prison from ill treatment. Two major public trials were held: 'trial of the 50' who belonged to the Moscow group of young revolutionaries and 'trial of 193', amidst intense propagandist activity. Relatively 'mild' sentences were passed provoking the regime to send those freed into administrative exile in Siberia.

Social group	Number
Noble	279
Non-noble official	117
Priest	197
Merchant	33
Jew	68
*Meshchane	92
*Peasant	138

milieu environment.

What main pressures were experienced by Milyutin and other liberally inclined ministers?

TABLE 17 Social composition of the revolutionaries tried 1877-8 (\* refers to legal status not actual occupation and probably represented children of city workers)

#### KEY ISSUE

What were the effects of these reforms?

TABLE 16 Growth in educational provision 1863-81

Why did the number of students in gimnazii decline?

### D *Signs of relaxation of repression 1880*

Shuvalov's appointment as ambassador to London in 1874 removed the main reactionary associated with repression and opened the way for liberals to regain influence. Conservatives were replaced by more liberal ministers particularly Loris-Melikov, who headed a Supreme Commission set up in 1880 to consider reform to meet the revolutionary challenge. Loris-Melikov abolished the Third Section and transferred its functions to the Police.

Loris-Melikov realising that the *zemstva* expected reform proposed a plan for a limited involvement of elected persons in legislation based on an administrative and a financial commission, composed of appointed experts. Alexander was assassinated before the government's plans could be published. The hopes of revolutionaries that his death would be followed by a collapse of the regime were not realised. Despite the presence of revolutionary forces there had never been the practical possibility that they could seize power. There was never a crisis in the affairs of the ruling body; the bureaucracy, police and army remained loyal. It was only when the loyalty of the armed forces was lost as a consequence of humiliating defeat in war that the revolutions of 1905 and 1917 became possible. In the case of 1905 it was only a partial loss and that is one of the reasons for the successful recovery of the regime; in 1917 it became permanent forcing Tsar Nicholas II to abdicate.

## 7 ↪ RUSSIAN EXPANSION

Alexander expanded into Central Asia acquiring Turkestan, Tashkent, and Samarkand which established Russia on the eastern shores of the Caspian Sea. A substantial portion of the ruling group and of society as a whole thought that such expansion would make it possible for the country to restore its military and political prestige after its defeat in the Crimean War, but the policy brought her into conflict with England.

## 8 ↪ RUSSIA'S RELATIONS WITH THE WEST

### A *Relations with France*

Russia's friendship with France in the late 1850s and early 1860s, after the hostilities of the Crimean War was short-lived. Relations between the two powers became strained due to French sympathy for the Poles during their second revolt against the Russian regime in 1863. This strain was intensified as a result of Alexander II's growing support for France's enemy, Prussia. In 1870, Alexander refused to respond to the appeals of the French government for help and protection when it was threatened by a Prussian invasion. The tsar made clear his Prussian sympathies, even though a substantial portion of Russian society and its ruling bureaucracy did not share them.

### B *Relations with Prussia*

To some extent, Alexander's attitude toward Prussia was influenced by a number of considerations:

- 1 He hoped that a Franco-Prussian War would force France into accepting a reopening of the Dardanelle and Bosphorus Straits to Russian warships.
- 2 He had strong personal and family sympathies with the King of Prussia, who was his uncle. Russia remained neutral when Prussia went to war against France's neutrality, but sent Russian officers, doctors, and field hospitals to serve in the German army. Alexander II, in supporting Prussia against France, did not recognise the threat implied to Russia in the formation of a strong, militarised, neighbouring power.

### C *Relations with Austria*

Reconciliation with Austria-Hungary was also achieved. Russia, Germany and Austria-Hungary formed the Three Emperors' League in October 1873.

### D *Relations with Turkey*

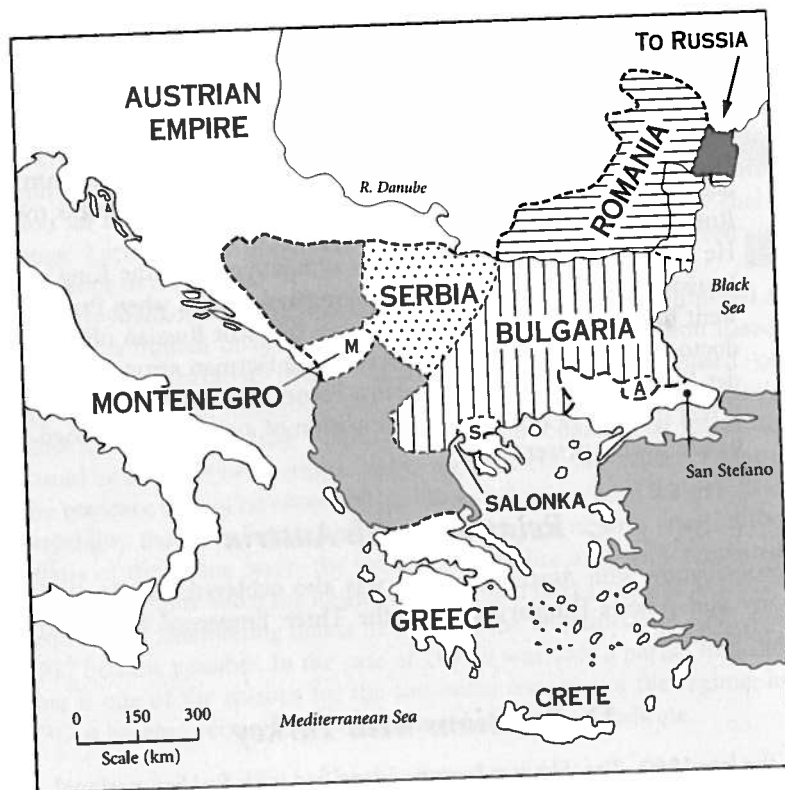
In the late 1860s, Pan-Slavism became identified with Russian nationalism and expansionism. Amongst the minority Slav people it promised security, the brotherhood of equal Slav nations – Catholic and Protestant as well as Orthodox. As far as Alexander and his advisers were concerned their attitude towards Russia's relations with Slav minorities in the declining Turkish Empire was more cautious and conservative. Ambitions to extend Russian control in Constantinople and the Black Sea region continued as did encouragement of subject nationalities to oppose Turkish rule.

In 1875 trouble broke out again in the Balkans with revolts in Bosnia and Herzegovina followed by Russian intervention in 1877 on behalf of the Slav peoples of the Balkans to protect them against Turkish cruelties. In the war that followed Russia had some successes but the substantial gains she made in the first treaty of San Stefano that followed were reversed by an international congress called by Britain in Berlin (see Map 4).

- 1 Turkey would lose most of her territory in Europe.
- 2 A new large state of Bulgaria was created stretching from the Danube to the Aegean.
- 3 Armenia and Bessarabia were given to Russia.
- 4 Austria received Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- 5 Serbia and Montenegro were made independent.

Britain refused to recognise these arrangements because Bulgaria would have fallen under Russian influence. The issue was referred to another





**MAP 4**  
The Balkans – territorial  
arrangements at  
San Stefano, 1878



**MAP 5**  
The Balkans – territorial  
arrangements at the Congress of  
Berlin, 1878

international conference in Berlin, 1878, though many of the points in dispute were settled in a series of secret agreements that Britain signed with Russia, Austria and Turkey before the congress met.

The Congress of Berlin was dominated by the British Prime Minister, Disraeli, who was opposed to any suggestion of an increase in Russia's power (see Map 5).

- The 'Big Bulgaria' of San Stefano was divided into three:
  - (a) The south and west, Macedonia, was returned to Turkey.
  - (b) The north became independent as Bulgaria but under the influence of Russia.
  - (c) The southern region was returned to Turkey.
- Britain was given Cyprus.
- Russia kept her gains in Bessarabia.
- Bosnia Herzegovina continued to be administered by Austria.
- Serbia and Montenegro remained independent but lost some land.

**1** Britain had succeeded in propping up the Turkish Empire though unrest continued. The Christian Balkan League declared war against Turkey in 1912 and events in this region eventually provoked outbreak of a European war in 1914.

**2** The Congress also laid the foundations for the future hostility between Austria and Russia and of suspicion between Germany and Russia.

**3** Russia's gains had been drastically reduced. Russia's obvious diplomatic defeat increased the government's difficulties at home. The upsurge of patriotism roused by the war to free the Slavs succeeded in silencing the regime's critics only temporarily. When terror was revived the tsar had become the target.

**KEY ISSUE**

*Significance of the Russo-Turkish War 1877–8.*

**9 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

A general bibliography for Russia under the tsars appears on page 120 of Chapter 4.

Specific resources on Alexander II include: Mosse, *Alexander II and the Modernisation of Russia*, English University Press, 1970 and a number of articles in publications specifically aimed at VI formers – Peter Neville, *Tsar Alexander II Liberator or Traditionalist?* *Modern History Review*, vol. 9, issue 1, September 1997, Carl Peter Watts, *Alexander II's Reforms*, *History Review*, Number 32, December 1998; David Moon, *Defeat in War Leads to Rapid Russian Reforms: Benefits Undermined by Restrictions*, *New Perspective*, vol. 1, number 1, September 1995.

## Essay planning sheet: significance essay

**Title:** How successful was Alexander II in solving the problems facing Russia during his reign?

**Introduction:** Perception of Alexander II's reign as a progressive period compared with the repression of his father, Nicholas I's reign. Alexander's major reforms of the 1860s appeared to be transforming Russia from a medieval to a modern state, but these were only half successful as a result of the return to repression in the 1870s.

Para.	Problem	Policies	Assessment of success
1	Stagnation in agriculture – could not compete with cheap grain produced in new countries, such as America. Serfdom was no longer profitable and the nobles who governed the serfs were bankrupt.	Process of the emancipation of the serfs – including special administrative arrangements – the <i>volost</i> .	Gains and losses to the peasants and to the nobility. Effect on level of riot and popular disturbances by peasants. Effect on agriculture – the economic structure of society remained relatively unchanged – dominance of the <i>Mir</i> – continuing backwardness carried on after 1881.
2	Backwardness of the economy and society affected the ability of the regime to raise sufficient income to support its European and expansionist role. The general backwardness of society had revealed itself in the defeat of the Crimean War.	The reforms of Reutern – building of railways to improve communications and help increase trade and hence revenue.	Victory in the Russo-Turkish war 1877–8. Expansion in Asia.
3	Increasing bureaucracy and a collapsing system of government led to demands by liberal reformers for a more representative government. Also need to remove some of the more glaring abuses in the administration of justice.	Extensive programme of reform of local government – <i>Zemstva</i> , of the army by Milyutin and judicial reforms.	Beneficial effects of these reforms but also limitations. <i>Zemstva</i> not given adequate authority and they did not develop into representative institutions. Problems that remained – the autocratic basis of government. Noble dominance of the bureaucracy – resisted radical reform proposals.

Para.	Problem	Policies	Assessment of success
4	Growing unrest amongst the peasantry and criticism from the intelligentsia had led to increasing repression. Alexander II saw a threat to the authority of the tsar if he did not renew the Russian state through 'reform from above'.	Relaxation of censorship controls – temporary	Change after 1866 – growth of populism and political terrorism – underlying problems remained – Alexander II's main aim – reform to preserve autocracy – so that radical reform was beyond the power and intention of the regime – lesson not lost on would be reformers.

**Conclusion:** Alexander II's reforms helped prolong the life of the regime though he did not solve its underlying problems. In the longer term the new course he had adopted would conflict with Russian traditions and lead eventually to the death of the tsarist order in 1917.