

# **Tsarist Russia: Collapse of Tsarist rule**

# Question 1.

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**How important was war as a reason for the collapse of the Tsarist regime in 1917? Explain your answer.**

**Yes**

The Russo-Japanese War weakened Tsarist autocracy; it led to the 1905 Revolution and the October Manifesto; there were calls for reform; WW1 and its massive losses; the Tsar's personal command of the army which was disastrous; mutiny; shortages, etc.

**No**

Autocracy was out of date; living and working conditions in towns and cities; the land issue for peasants; the role of the Tsarina and Rasputin; political opposition; calls for a Duma; workers' councils; liberal and radical opposition, etc.

# Question 2.

Question	Answer
5	<p><b>How important were military defeats in weakening the Tsar's control in Russia by March 1917? Explain your answer.</b></p> <p><b>YES</b> – 1904–05 Russo-Japanese War led to mutiny, e.g. Potemkin; support of the army and navy rested on improved pay and conditions after 1905; military defeats led to worsening living and working conditions for workers who demanded change; military defeats in the First World War linked to Tsar when he assumed personal control of the army in 1915; desertion and mutinies increased; loss of support of Petrograd garrison, etc.</p> <p><b>NO</b> – More important – land issue not solved by Tsarist government; peasants were seizing land and attacking landlords; political opposition from liberals who wanted constitutional government; oppression of Stolypin's government; lack of power in the Dumas; Tsar's actions; government by the Tsarina and Rasputin; food and fuel shortages in the cities; inflation; strikes and riots; bread rationing, etc.</p>

# Question 3.

**5 How important was the First World War in the fall of Tsarist rule in Russia? Explain your answer.**

**Yes** Entered the war on wave of nationalistic fervour; quickly became clear that Russian troops were poorly led and equipped. Defeats and resentment caused Nicholas to take charge of the army in 1916; he took blame for further defeats, losses, shortages at home, and drawing of peasant workers away from the land to go to war; hunger and working conditions, protests and revolts, troops and workers combine. Rumours re Rasputin and Tsarina, all led to March Revolution 1917 and the abdication of the Tsar etc.

**No** There had been opposition well before 1917. Exiled and imprisoned groups opposed the Tsar. 1905 Revolution had exposed opposition. Stolypin's reforms had some effect – necktie resented. Duma ineffective. Tsar still believed in autocracy and not inclined to compromise with middle class, workers or peasants (wanted land). All elements in place before the war started. War was the catalyst etc. [40]

# Question 4.

**5 How significant was Tsar Nicholas II's decision to take personal control of the military as a cause of the March Revolution in 1917? Explain your answer.**

**YES** Nicholas II failed to listen to the advice of his ministers about war, shortages, policies; Tsar personally took command of Russian Army on Eastern Front in September 1915 and so was blamed for losses and defeats; Nicholas left Tsarina in charge of government who appointed ministers unwisely with advice from unpopular Rasputin – did not listen to Duma, etc.

**NO** Economic problems in Russia made worse due to First World War – inflation; food and supplies had shortages and bread rationing; soldiers mutinying; peasants' land issue still unresolved; growing political opposition from the left – SRs, Mensheviks and Bolsheviks; liberals (Kadets and Octobrists) and even aristocracy turning against Tsar and the war; unemployment due to factory closures; workers had longer hours; long term causes – failure of land reforms promised in October Manifesto; failure by Tsar to support the Duma, etc.

# Question 5.

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**How important were the actions of Nicholas II as a cause of the March Revolution of 1917? Explain your answer.**

**YES**

September 1915 Tsar Nicholas assumes supreme command of the Russian Army – this linked the military failures on the Eastern Front directly to the Tsar; Tsarist government begins to lose support; Russia had lost 1.7 million soldiers by 1915 with a further 3 million captured or missing – led to a decline in morale and patriotism; Tsarina left in charge of Russian government – she is unpopular due to her German heritage and her insistence on listening to Rasputin for advice on government ministers – led to rumours that they were both in league with the Germans; refusal of Tsar Nicholas II to reform government and autocracy in favour of constitutional monarchy, etc.

**NO**

Other factors more important – First World War led to food shortages and bread rationing in Russia; inflation led to workers' strikes; poor living and working conditions – low wages; problems in the countryside led to mutinies by peasant soldiers; land issue not solved; growth in liberal and socialist opposition – united front against Tsarist autocracy; Duma refused to follow Tsar's orders and created a Provisional Government, etc.

# Question 6.

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**How important were the personal weaknesses of Tsar Nicholas II as a cause of revolution in 1917? Explain your answer.**

YES – Tsar Nicholas II wanted to strictly maintain Tsarist autocracy and the Romanov dynasty; he resisted calls for democracy in 1894, calling it the agenda of senseless dreamer; Tsar's stance was only broken by the 1905 Revolution and the granting to the Duma; Russo-Japanese War (1904–05) defeat blamed on the Tsarist government and brought severe economic hardship for workers; Bloody Sunday casualties (up to 4000) blamed on the Tsar; Tsar reversed many of the terms of the October Manifesto with the Fundamental Laws in 1906; alienated the middle-classes, peasants and workers – temporary alliance in 1905 Revolution; Tsar reformed the Dumas to make them more conservative and blocked power of liberal and socialist parties; Tsar used repressive measures to crush opposition using the army and the Okhrana; Tsar assumed control of the army in 1915 – personal blame for military defeats; Nicholas II left the Tsarina in charge in St Petersburg – she made poor ministerial appointments, was suspected of being a German spy and took advice from the unpopular monk Rasputin which all served to weaken the Tsarist government etc.

NO – More important – poor working and living conditions in the towns: overcrowding in housing and low wages led to increased support for radical socialist parties, strikes and demonstrations; peasants support for the SRs over the land issue (lack of arable land and outdated farming methods) – many peasants began seizing land from the landlords; military defeats in 1904–05 and in 1914–15 weakened the Tsar's position; food and fuel shortages in the cities during the First World War led to rampant inflation and bread rationing; note – could include references to the Tsarina and Rasputin as a NO argument; demands for constitutional and democratic reform from middle-classes and moderate liberals such as the Kadet party etc.

# Question 7.

### Depth Study C: Russia, 1905–1941

#### 5 How important was the 1905 Revolution to the eventual overthrow of Tsarism in Russia? Explain your answer.

**Yes** First full scale national revolt, although focused on St Petersburg; concessions in the October Manifesto pleased the middle class and could encourage more demands; undermined respect for Nicholas II, especially after he reduced powers or dismissed Dumas; defeats in Russo-Japanese war had a bearing on the revolution and its outcome – a lesson not learned in 1914, etc.

**No** By 1914, Nicholas seemed to be in full control and popular as the war broke out; his repression by troops and Okhrana and Fundamental Laws seemed to have dealt with opposition; revolutionaries in exile; Nicholas was able to ignore the Manifesto and the Dumas; Stolypin's measures for agriculture and industry alleviated some distress – if not, then the 'necktie' was available; land issue for peasants not solved; WWI and its failures were important, etc.

# Question 8.

**5 How significant were social and economic problems in Russia as a cause of the March 1917 Revolution? Explain your answer.**

**YES** Food shortages were getting critical in 1917 – bread rationing; bread queues in winter of 1916 due to icing of railways led to high prices of food and fuel; shortage of male peasants as many were drafted into the Russian Army and agricultural production fell; coal and industrial materials were short and many factories closed making large numbers of workers unemployed; wages were not rising with inflation of food and fuel; workers worked longer hours; peasants still had an issue over land which had not been solved; economic backwardness continued from pre-1914, etc.

**NO** War had created huge numbers of casualties – over 1 million by end of 1914 and over 8 million by 1917; many soldiers died without weapons or ammunition; supplies of proper equipment failed to get to the front line including boots during the winters; Tsarist officers were blamed; Nicholas II made the mistake of heading to the Eastern front line and taking personal command – now blamed for defeats; Russia run by the German Tsarina under the unpopular influence of the monk Rasputin; Tsarina did not run government well; middle and upper classes began to abandon their support for the Tsarist regime; newspapers sent back bad news about the war; growing socialist opponents called for political change; 7 March Putilov strikes which spread into further demonstrations in Russian cities; Tsar ignored Duma's advice to sort problems at home; 12 March soldiers in Petrograd refused to fire on the crowds and some killed their officers and joined demonstrations and strike; failure of October Manifesto; survival of Tsarist autocracy, etc.

# Question 9.

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**How important were social and economic problems in Russia in the collapse of Tsarist rule by March 1917? Explain your answer.**

**YES** – Poor living and working conditions in the towns and cities for workers – cramped conditions, poor sanitation, disease and food supply issues; workers' wages low; lack of social reform towards workers by Stolypin 1906–11; led to growth of socialist/Marxist parties and trade unionism; peasants' land issue not solved – poorer peasants did not have access to enough land to make income; kulak class created by Stolypin's reforms led to tensions, riots and protests in the countryside – some peasants seized land from landlords; growth in Socialist Revolutionary's popularity; lack of pace in industrialisation – Russia was behind Germany, Britain and France; First World War led to food and fuel shortages in cities, inflation – highlighted the lack of adequate transportation infrastructure etc.

**NO** – More important – Tsarist autocracy and calls by liberals for further democratic reform; First World War and social and economic effects on government; Tsar's lack of support from army – desertions and Petrograd garrison supporting revolutionaries; actions of Tsar Nicholas II – went to front in 1915 and left Tsarina and Rasputin in charge of government which was deeply unpopular with all classes; took personal command of the army – meant he was blamed for failures; revolutionary and populist movements since 1905 – Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, SRs and liberals united in anti-Tsarism etc.

# Question 10.

**5 How important was Rasputin as a cause of growing opposition to Tsarist rule in Russia?  
Explain your answer.**

**Yes** Rasputin from a peasant background and mistrusted by aristocracy; linked to sexual deviancy; Tsarina, convinced he was sent by God to protect the Tsarovich, gave him an important position of influence at court due to his ability to control Alexei's haemophilia; Tsar censored newspaper reports about Rasputin; Tsar lost support of Duma over this; Tsar forced to support Rasputin due to Tsarina; during WWI, Tsarina left in charge of Russia and appointed ministers based on Rasputin's advice – led to even conservative support for Tsarism to drop; fired good and effective ministers – led to deterioration in the cities; cartoons ridiculed them – Tsar blamed for leaving them in charge, etc.

**No** Other factors more important – First World War going badly (huge defeats and loss of life) and Tsar blamed as he commanded forces on the Eastern Front; failures to make political reforms led to opposition from liberals and middle class in Duma; living and working conditions in cities – food and fuel shortages; socialist opposition from SRs and Social Democrats (Mensheviks and Bolsheviks); peasants and land issue not solved; already opposition since 1905 Revolution, etc.

# Question 11.

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**How important were the grievances of the peasantry in causing political disturbances in Russia up to March 1917? Explain your answer.**

**Yes**

80% of population were peasants; most lived in dreadful conditions; poor working conditions; life expectancy was around 40 years old in some areas; growing population led to calls for land reform by the peasants; some peasants supported the Social Revolutionaries who bred resentment; peasants used for Russian Army in 1904–5 war and First World War – huge casualties and desertions, etc. Peasants attacked landowners and seized land, crushed by Cossacks, by Tsar.

**No**

Most peasants remained loyal to the Tsar for most of the period; strong political and religious conservatism in rural areas; more important – growth in working class in the towns and cities; poor living and working conditions in the towns and in the factories; low pay; no government legislation to improve conditions or overcrowding; trade unions were illegal; Social Democrats gained support of working class – strong in Moscow and St Petersburg; middle class demanded better representation; First World War and shortages, inflation, casualties, 1905 Revolution, etc.

# Question 12.

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**How important was the role of the Tsarina in bringing about the downfall of the Tsarist government? Explain your answer.**

**YES**

Tsarina left in charge of Russian government with Rasputin as advisor in 1915 when Tsar assumed command of Russian forces; inexperienced at ruling and making decisions and easily manipulated by Rasputin; led to large amounts of criticism from liberals and even aristocratic monarchists; Tsarina was deeply unpopular in Russia due to her German heritage and dislike of Russia which she made public; Tsarina dismissed able ministers and their deputies in rapid succession; rumours of her and Rasputin as part of a German plot, etc.

**NO**

More important – First World War created poor conditions in Russia – starvation in the towns and countryside as some peasants hoarded grain; inflation due to high demand and low supply; fuel shortages; bread rationing; desertions in Russian Army due to poor conditions, lack of munitions on front line; need to farm land; land grabbing in the countryside; opposition groups in Russia gaining in popularity; strikes in the towns; poor working and living conditions in urban areas; Tsar assumed control in 1915 and was blamed for war losses, etc.

# Question 13.

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**How important was the demand for political reform as a reason for the March 1917 Revolution? Explain your answer.**

**YES** – Middle-class and liberals demanded greater representation and a constitutional monarchy; Tsar limited the membership of the third Duma and then dissolved it during the war – this led to many liberals supporting the March Revolution and the abdication of the Tsar; many workers demanded a socialist style government and formed soviets; SRs wanted a peasant based socialist society; Marxists (Bolsheviks and Mensheviks) wanted a workers' revolution and a communist style government; united in their opposition to tsarist autocracy in the March Revolution of 1917 etc.

**NO** – More important – First World War had led to large casualties for Russia (at least 1.8 million soldiers killed on the front); increased desertions and mutinies in the Russian army on the Eastern Front – many soldiers formed committees and refused to follow the orders of their officers; peasants' land issue unsolved – peasants demanded land reform; war had caused massive shortages of food and fuel in cities; peasants hoarded grain and this led to inflation; bread rationing in big cities like Moscow and St Petersburg; Tsar's actions – 1915 assumed command of the army – he was now blamed for military defeats; left Tsarina and Rasputin in charge, alienating the government ministers and the nobility etc.

# Question 14.

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**How important was agriculture as a cause of Russia's problems by March 1917? Explain your answer.**

**YES** – Peasants in countryside did not own the best land compared to Russian landlords; led to riots in countryside and killing of landlords, burning of property (peasant land issue); grain requisitioning during war time; peasants also made up the mass of the Russian Imperial Army and were not available during harvest which led to food shortages in the cities and inflation of food prices; led to mutiny on ships and desertion from front line; Russia's agriculture was undeveloped and still used old methods; lack of mechanisation and new farming methods; Stolypin's reforms encouraged a rich kulak class to grow at expense of poorer peasants who gained little leading to greater support for left-wing populist parties such as SRs, etc.

**NO** – More important – Tsarist autocracy outdated and did not allow proper representation or democracy demanded by some liberals and socialists; led to poor decision making; weaknesses of Tsar – 1915 went to front line as Supreme Commander leaving Tsarina and Rasputin in charge which alienated nobility and ministers; 1904–05 Russo-Japanese War humiliating defeat for Russia and caused socio-economic problems at home; led to Bloody Sunday and 1905 Revolution weakening Tsar who enacted October Manifesto which allowed Duma, individual rights and legalisation of political parties, many of which were anti-Tsarist; socio-economic effects of the First World War – food and fuel shortages, inflation in cities; workers' living and working conditions; growth of trade unionism and left-wing socialist/Marxist parties, etc.

# Question 15.

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**How important was Russia's autocratic political system as a reason for the regime's collapse by March 1917? Explain your answer.**

**YES** – Tsarist autocracy still in place by 1917 after 1906 Fundamental Laws; weakened Dumas which became more conservative; angered liberals and socialists; led to blame for economic problems in Russia such as inflation, undeveloped industry and agriculture; demands for Constituent Assembly and full representation; Tsar remained commander of army and Church + state; Tsar was personally blamed for defeats in Russo-Japanese War and First World War losses; Tsar unwilling to reform peasant land issue or improve living and working conditions in cities – helped cause Bloody Sunday incident in 1905, etc.

**NO** – More important – could look at socio-economic factors from YES arguments, e.g. living and working conditions, peasant land issue; impact of war on conditions and pay for workers; food and fuel shortages in cities and inflation; united anti-Tsarist front by 1917 of liberals and socialists; role of Tsarina and Rasputin; loss of support from army, sailors and Petrograd Garrison, impact of First World War- casualties, socio-economic impact etc.

The End.