

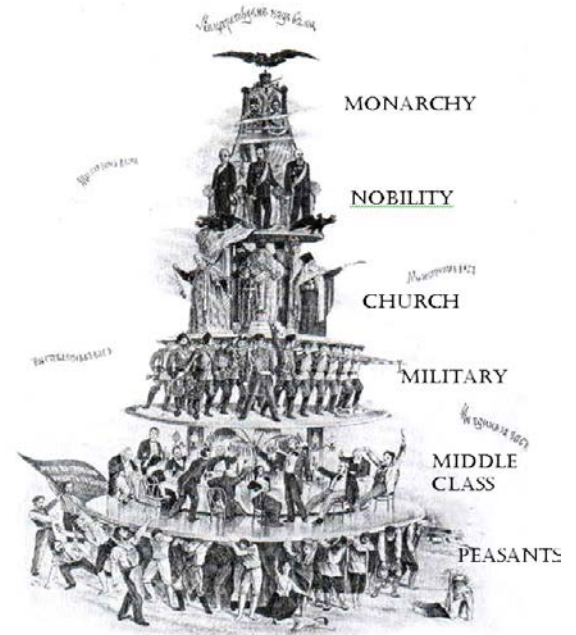
Czarist Russia

Power Distribution in Czarist Russia

Czar (meaning supreme ruler or Caesar) was the title for the absolute monarch in Russia. The czar and his advisors controlled the government, economy, military and religious institutions. For hundreds of years, Russian people accepted this system and felt powerless to change it. The government owned most of the factories and farms and was the nation's largest employer, controlling trade and money. Only people who served as officers or administrators could achieve noble rank. The nobles made up less than one percent of the population yet they controlled most of Russia's wealth. The labor of the poor supported the luxurious lifestyle of the wealthy landowners.

How is Russia under the Czar similar to other nations we learned about cycle 1?

SOCIAL STRUCTURE IN CZARIST RUSSIA



Czar Alexander III (1881-1894)

Alexander III came to power under difficult circumstances. His father Alexander II, was assassinated by a group of revolutionaries who wanted to take away the Czar's power. To wipe out these revolutionaries, Alexander III used harsh measures. He imposed strict censorship codes on published materials and written documents, including private letters. His secret police carefully watched both secondary schools and universities. Teachers had to send detailed reports on every student. Political prisoners were exiled to prisons in Siberia, a region of eastern and central Russia.

As a little girl, I remember that in my father's parlor hung a large colored portrait of Alexander III... It was only whispered at night, when doors were locked and shutters closed tightly – the czar was a cruel tyrant...

The czar was always sending us commands, - you shall not do this and you shall not do that, - till there was very little left that we might do, except pay taxes and die. One positive command he gave us: You shall honor your emperor. In the every congregation a prayer must be said for the czar's health... On a royal birthday, every house must fly a flag, or the owner of the house would be dragged to the police station and forced to pay a fine...

-Mary Antin 1890

If you lived in Russia in the late 1800's, would you have supported Czar Alexander III ?

Czar Nicholas II (1894-1917)

Upon the death of Alexander III in 1894, his son Nicholas II assumed the throne of Russia. By this time, life for the average Russian peasant was almost unbearable.

Watch the video clip and answer the questions below:

1. List and explain all of the problems facing Russia under Nicholas II.

Protestors march on the Czar's palace

On Sunday, January 22, 1905, 200,000 Russian workers, braving bitter cold and snow, marched on the Winter Palace of Czar Nicolas II in St. Petersburg. Led by a priest, they intended to deliver a petition of grievances to the czar. They said:

"If you are not responsive to our petition, we will die here on this square before your palace, for we have nowhere else to go... For there are but two roads; one leading to liberty and happiness and the other to the tomb. Point, Sire, to either of them, we will take it, even if it leads to death."

Petition to Nicholas II:

- Freedom and security of the person, liberty of speech, of the press, of conscience in matters of religion.
- Public Education for all
- Equality of all persons before the law.
- The immediate release of all prisoners who have suffered for their beliefs
- An eight hour working day
- Representation in the government for the working classes.
- A normal working wage.



With a partner, read and analyze the goals of the workers above ↑. Then, pretending that you are a Russian revolutionary, create a 2-4 line song, rap, or poem based on your (the workers) demands.

1905 Revolution: Bloody Sunday

Watch the video clip and answer the questions below:

1. How did the soldiers respond to the protestors?

October Manifesto – 1905

After repeated strikes, the murder of the governor General of Moscow at the Kremlin, the setting on fire of many upper-class estates, Nicholas II released a document known as the October Manifesto.

Watch the video clip and answer the questions below:

1. How did the people respond to Bloody Sunday?

2. What did Nicholas decide to do?

Discuss: Does the Manifesto of 1905 satisfy the demands of the workers?

Conditions in the factories were extremely harsh and little concern was shown for the workers' health and safety. Attempts by workers to form trade unions were resisted by the factory owners. 1904 was a bad year for Russian workers. Prices of essential goods rose so quickly that worker's salaries could not pay for their cost of living any longer. Over 110,000 workers in St. Petersburg went out on strike.

In order to distract the unhappy Russians from his **despotic** (absolute) rule, Nicholas II hoped that a war with Japan would bring Russia much needed glory.

The Russo-Japanese War was a disaster for the Czar. The Russian armies suffered a series of defeats in the battlefields because they were ill-equipped, badly-armed and poorly trained. The corruption and the inefficiency of the government were exposed during the war. Transportation broke down, bread prices soared even more.

1905 Revolution: Bloody Sunday

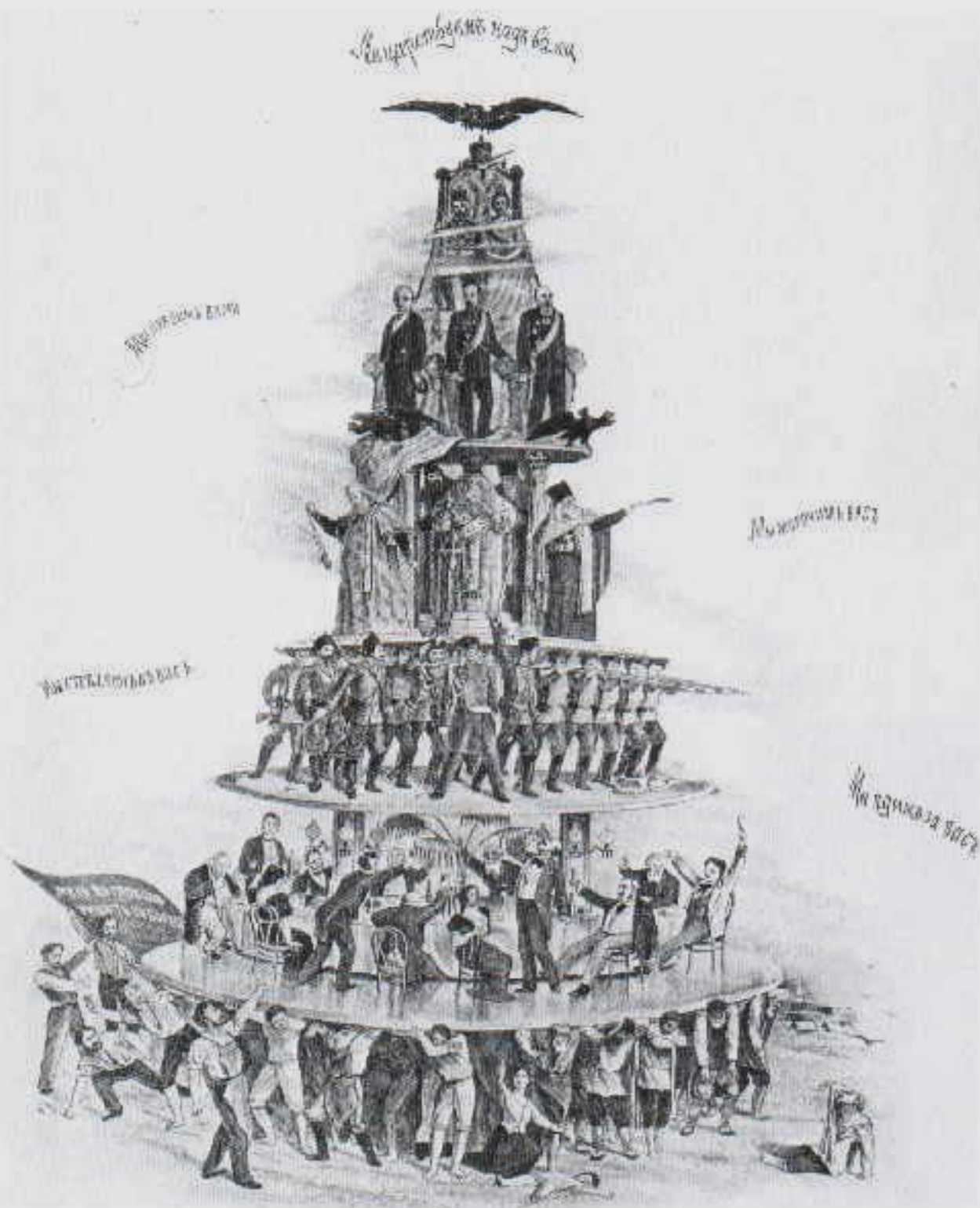
The city's security forces fired into the crowd, killing or wounding thousands. In the months following "Bloody Sunday," Russia was torn by strikes and assassinations of czarist officials.

October Manifesto

The disturbances and unrest in St Petersburg, Moscow and in many other parts of our Empire have filled our heart with great and profound sorrow. The welfare of the Russian Sovereign and His people is inseparable and national sorrow is His too. The present disturbances could give rise to national instability and present a threat to the unity of Our State... We have therefore ordered the government to take the following measures in fulfillment of our unbending will:

1. Fundamental civil freedoms will be granted to the population, including real personal inviolability (protection of rights), freedom of conscience, speech, assembly and association.
2. Participation in the Duma (legislative assembly) will be granted to those classes of the population which are at present deprived of voting powers. There will be no delay to the creation of the Duma.
3. It is established as an unshakeable rule that no law can come into force without its approval by the State Duma and representatives of the people will be given the opportunity to take real part in the supervision of the legality of government bodies.

"We call on all true sons of Russia to remember the homeland, to help put a stop to this unprecedented unrest and, together with this, to devote all their strength to the restoration of peace to their native land."



Imperial Russia's social structure depicted in an anonymous cartoon of 1900 issued by the Union of Russian Socialists.

