

Summary of Factors that led to the Downfall of the Romanov Dynasty

1. Russia was changing

Early in the 20th century, Russia itself was in a state of change. No longer was it dominated by peasants who had no real means of standing up for themselves. Due to the need for industrialisation a new working class (proletariat) had risen, living and working together and sharing ideas. Due to the harsh conditions which they faced, revolutionary ideas were popular. These industrial workers often returned to their villages for summer and as such revolutionary ideas spread (Turning Points. Darlington. Et. Al.). The Russian people were demanding change but...

2. Nicholas was not changing

Nicholas was determined to keep Russia as an Autocracy and stated, "I shall uphold the principle of autocracy as firmly and as undeviatingly as did my late father" (Turning Points. Darlington. Et. Al.). We should keep in mind that his late father was Alexander III who repressed the people fairly severely. Reasons for Nicholas having this attitude include, the influence of Pobedonostsev and the fact that his Grandfather, the great reformer Alexander II, was assassinated by the people. **So we have this conflict, the people want Russia to change but Nicholas does not want Russia to change.**

3. Bloody Sunday

Not all the people knew this. Nicholas fostered this belief that he was the 'little father' to the people and they believed that it was the government who stopped Nicholas from understanding their plight. They believed if they could just see him face to face and present their requests to him, that everything would change. One event changed this belief forever. Father Gabon had organised a peaceful march to the Tsar's winter palace to present a petition to him. The troops however, misunderstood their intentions and fired upon the marchers. This event became known as Bloody Sunday and changed the people's attitude toward the Tsar forever. He became known now as, "Nicholas the Bloody".

4. The Russo-Japanese War

The Russo-Japanese War of 1904/5 had also been a disaster and raised serious questions about the credibility of the autocracy to maintain Russia as a world power.

5. Revolutionary activity and the October Manifesto

After "Bloody Sunday" there was a huge increase in revolutionary activity including strikes, peasant revolts and the very concerning mutiny on the battleship 'Potemkin'. Nicholas was forced to start granting major concessions. He began by creating the Duma, and elected parliament, but its power was severely limited and this did not satisfy. Ultimately he was forced

to grant the people a constitution in the form of the 'October Manifesto'. This did not satisfy all parties but was enough to make the middle-class and upper-class content for the moment and the working classes could not get enough support to force a revolution.

6. Going back on promises

Nicholas then began to go back on the promises of the October Manifesto and to manipulate the Duma so that it was effectively a, "docile and conservative body" (Dennett. Et. Al. Key Features of Modern History.). The Tsar then employed Peter Stolypin to repress revolutionary elements within society, particularly among the working class. While this policy was immediately effective, the discontent of the workers grew.

7. Living Conditions

During this entire time the living conditions of the peasants and the working class were deplorable. The workers had been demanding an 8 hour day but never received it. Peasants still owed redemption payments, taxes were high and they had barely enough land to work on. A number of revolutionary groups had emerged and were influential and revolutionary ideas were continuing to spread throughout Russia.

8. World War I

When WWI began, Russia rallied around the Tsar and the people were seemingly united. However, as Russia started to suffer defeat after defeat the people became disillusioned. The war placed a huge burden on the economy and infrastructure and the average person in the street suffered due to this. Many men were taken from the farm to be soldiers and grain production fell by 20% in 1916 (Darlington. Et. Al. Turning Points.). Nicholas went to the front to take charge of the war and boost morale but this only served to make him directly responsible for the defeats suffered by the army and it left a power vacuum back home.

9. Rasputin

Alexandra was left in charge but she was heavily influenced by Rasputin who appeared to her to be a Holy Man who could heal her son. His corruption and deplorable actions led to a total lack of confidence in the current autocracy. Even the government and nobles who had been mostly loyal to the autocracy up to this point, saw that there was a drastic need for change. Even after Rasputin's murder, confidence could not be restored. Russia was in turmoil.

10. The Duma had lost confidence in Nicholas II

The Duma and members of the Imperial family, at the beginning of 1917, had already spoken of removing Nicholas II due to his failure to address the growing problems in Russia.

11. The military turned on the autocracy

The last straw in the downfall of Nicholas II and the Romanov Dynasty was the way the army turned against it during the riots and demonstrations of March 1917. This mutiny by the army essentially sealed the fate of the autocracy. Without the support of the army they could control no one and as such Nicholas realised that he must now abdicate. When the offer was given to his brother Michael, he refused, and so ended the Romanov Dynasty.