Introduction – ‘People do not influence events. God directs everything and the Tsar, as God’s anointed, should not take advice from anyone...’ Tsar Nicholas II. The Russian system of government was based on autocracy. This was the belief that the Tsar had supreme power and authority over the country. In order to maintain his authority over a huge Empire, the Tsar relied on his ‘Pillars of Autocracy’; the Army, the Okhrana, the Civil Service, the Orthodox Church and the Nobility. These were needed to keep the potential opponents of Tsarism in check. Some historians have suggested that the Tsar was secure in his power. Marx called Russia ‘the last hope of the despots’. However, others such as Figes felt that the tsarist system was struggling to cope with the challenges of urbanisation by 1905.

Factor 2 =

**The Okhrana**

K – The Okhrana were the Tsar’s secret police. They had a series of informers who spied on opponents of the Tsar. They had unlimited powers and could flog, fine, exile, imprison or execute opponents. They used modern methods such as fingerprinting and detailed records to monitor revolutionaries.

A – The Okhrana were effective because they were hugely feared. Their informants made sure that the authorities were aware of potential threats. The fear of being arrested or exiled also dissuaded potential opponents from joining opposition groups.

CA – However, the Okhrana limited their control by exiling opponents like Lenin. Once they were out of the country, the Okhrana had no power over them. In addition, the Okhrana drove opposition underground, making them more secretive. This was significant as it made it more difficult to monitor opponents.

Evaluation – The Okhrana was absolutely vital in keeping the Tsar in power. It found out what political opponents were planning, and acted ruthlessly to prevent them from carrying out their actions. H – Figes – ‘’No subject of the tsar...could sleep securely in his bed...’

or

The brutality of the Okhrana added to resentment of the Tsarist regime and it lacked the resources to deal with widespread unrest. H – Thatcher – ‘The Okhrana was a relatively small organisation, with only a few thousand employees in a country of 140 million people.’

Factor 1 =

**The Army**

K – The Tsar had an enormous army of 1.5 million men. Included in this were elite regiments like the Cossacks.

A – This gave the Tsar a huge amount of power to crush opposition.

K – Between 1883 and 1903, troops were called out 1500 times to deal with unrest.

A- This suggests that the army was crucial in maintaining the Tsar’s authority.

CA - However, it also indicated that there was considerable opposition to the Tsar.

K – The army was headed by members of the nobility, who were loyal to the Tsar.

A – This was significant because the Tsar was able to rely on the loyalty of the army. This was because the officers relied on the Tsar to appoint them.

CA - However, it also undermined the efficiency of the army as promotion relied on connections rather than ability.

Evaluation – The army was vital in deterring and crushing revolts. H – Figes - ‘Nothing was more important to it (the Tsarist state) than the army’.

or

The frequent use of force shows that Russia was unstable and indeed contributed to that instability by alienating the people. Link to Russification. The combination of these two factors added to opposition.

Factor 4 =

**Civil Service**

K – The Civil Service were a middle-class organisation who ran the legal system, local government and the police.

A – Because civil servants relied on the government for their jobs, this ensured their loyalty to the Tsar.

CA - However, for every 1000 people in the Russian Empire there were only 4 state officials. This shows that the state had little influence over many areas of Russia.

K – The civil service were responsible for enforcing the laws on censorship. This restricted what was printed in newspapers and books, as well as controlling what was taught in universities and schools.

A- By restricting what people could read, the civil service helped to prevent the spread of revolutionary ideas.

CA - However, it was becoming harder to control access to information. This was because the number of university students was booming, as were the number of newspapers. Censorship also failed to control what was written in underground political pamphlets.

Evaluation – The Civil Service faced a huge challenge in maintaining control of an increasingly more literate Russia. This added to the pressures of running such an enormous Empire. H - Figes ‘the under government of the localities was the regime’s main flaw’.

Factor 3 =

**Orthodox Church**

K – The Orthodox Church taught Russians that they should obey the Tsar, who had been chosen by God.

A – This was significant because the vast majority of peasants were deeply religious, and therefore priests wielded a large degree of power over them.

K – The Church ran 41000 schools in Russia.

A- It can be argued that the Church were able to teach loyalty and obedience to the Tsar to children from an early age. This meant that many Russians grew up regarding the Tsar as their ‘little father’.

K – In one Moscow suburb of 40,000 people, there was only one church and one priest.

CA- This suggests that the Church had limited influence over industrial workers, compared to peasants.

K – The Russian Empire was home to many different religions, such as Catholic Poles and Jews.

CA- This meant that that the Orthodox Church had no influence over many parts of the Empire, especially in regions that were less likely to be loyal to the Tsar.

Evaluation – The Church was key in helping the Tsar to control the countryside. H – Figes – ‘The church was an essential propaganda weapon and a means of social control’.

Or

The Church was not as influential in controlling industrial areas of the country. H- Figes - ‘The Church ‘failed to create a popular religion for the world of factories and tenements’

Potential Questions

How secure was the Tsar’s hold on power in the years before 1905?

“The authority of the Tsarist state was never seriously challenged in the years before 1905.” How valid is this view?

Conclusion

Try to split your conclusion into two sections, which should mirror the argument that you have mentioned in your introduction. The second section should be the viewpoint that you agree with. Make sure that you refer back to the question and answer it.

On one hand a case can be made that the Tsar was fairly secure in his authority. The Church taught Russians to obey the Tsar, whilst the army and Okhrana would deal ruthlessly with those who didn’t. Political opponents found it hard to express their views as a result of censorship.

On the other hand, an argument can be made that the Tsar lacked real control over Russia. He had to use repression to deal with a wide range of opponents and this indicates that he was not secure. His heavy-handed policies such as Russification actually increased opposition, and as Russia became more industrialised and educated, this opposition could only increase.

Factor 5 =

**Russification**

K – Russification was a government policy which aimed to promote Russian language, religion and culture across the Empire. Russian was the only acceptable language in education, government offices and law courts. Russian officials were put in charge of non-Russian provinces. Non-Russians also had to pay high taxes to the Russian government.

A – This indicated that the Tsarist state was firmly in control as it was able to enforce its will across the Empire.

CA- However, it can be argued that this policy was counter-productive as it alienated non-Russians. As a result, many recruits to opposition political parties were Jewish or non-Russian e.g. Trotsky.

K - Russia underwent a rapid period of railway building in the 1800s.

A - This helped to encourage the spread of nationalist ideas. An example of this was seen in a peasant uprising in Ukraine in 1902. There were also boycotts of schools in Armenia and Georgia.

Evaluation – Russification demonstrated the state’s strength. The Tsar was able to impose his will on the people of the Empire. Link to the army crushing opponents of Russification.

or

Russification caused resentment and increased opposition to the Tsar. H – Figes – ‘The effect of the Russification campaign was to drive the non-Russians into the new anti-tsarist parties’.