



[These Bitesize notes are from 2015 and have been taken down.]

## Long-term causes of the Russian Revolution

The Romanov dynasty had lasted 300 years but Nicholas II, who ascended the throne in 1894, turned out to be the last *tsar* of Russia. How did such an ancient monarchy collapse so spectacularly?

### Summary

February or March - October or November? The Russian calendar was 13 days behind the rest of the world, so its February Revolution actually took place in March, and what was called the October Revolution happened in November!

This fact, of course, gives a clue as to why the Romanov dynasty fell in 1917 - it was **out of date**. In comparison, Italy and Spain had modernised their calendars in 1582!

All the institutions that supported the monarchy - such as the **Church**, the **nobility** and the faithful loyalty of the **peasants** - came from the Middle Ages.

Meanwhile, **new, modern forces** were threatening the monarchy such as the **middle class**, an **industrial working class** and **Marxism**.

In 1894, Nicholas II was an **autocrat**. He ruled alone and unquestioned, but he had a **weak personality**, and his power was increasingly based on the military might of the *Cossacks* and on the **Okhrana** (the secret police). These were two-edged strengths - they kept him in power, but they made him increasingly unpopular.

### More detail

- **Big** - Russia was too big to rule. In 1913, it stretched 4,000 miles from Europe to Alaska, and comprised 125 million people.
- **Backward** - Russia was backward. It had few roads and limited industrialisation. Most people were still peasants.
- **Weak** - Russia was militarily weak. It had lost a war with Japan in 1904.
- **Disunited** - Russia had many different nationalities, languages and religions.
- **Autocracy** - the government of Russia, which Nicholas ruled over alone, was far too much work for one man.
- **Proletariat** - Russia was industrialising and the workers, eg in St Petersburg, were poor and oppressed. On Bloody Sunday 1905, they went on a peaceful march to ask the tsar to help them, but the Cossacks attacked them.
- **Bourgeois** - the representatives of the new middle class industrialists. They called themselves the Kadets and wanted Russia to have a constitution like England's. In 1905, there was a revolution and they managed to force Nicholas to create a Duma (parliament), but it had no real power.
- **Revolutionaries** - for instance, the Social Revolutionaries and the Marxists - split into the Mensheviks who wanted peaceful change and the Bolsheviks who wanted a revolution - committed acts of terrorism such as the murder of Prime Minister Stolypin in 1911.