



Alexander III (1881-1894)







Monuments to Alexander III

Study the two monuments of Alexander III

- They were erected after Alexander III's death in the reign of Nicholas II (1909 and 1912)
- Nicholas II approved of both, although one in particular is said to have caused a public scandal.

Which do you prefer and why?

Can these monuments tell us anything about the nature of Alexander III's rule?





This statue was built for Moscow, Nicholas II's favoured capital:

“The Tsar's giant figure was a mannequin without human expression, a monolithic incarnation of autocratic power. It was straight backed on its throne, hands on knees, encumbered with all the symbols of tsarist authority – the crown, the sceptre and orb, the imperial robe and full military dress...in the manner of a pharaoh with nothing to think about except the source of his own illimitable power.” (O Figes, p16)



This statue was erected in St Petersburg: “such an ingenious and formidable representation of autocracy in human form that after the revolution the Bolsheviks decided to leave it in place as a fearful reminder of the old regime...The rider and horse had been made to appear so heavy and solid that it seemed impossible for them to move.” (O Figes, p15)



What happened to the other statue?

Alexander's Manifesto of Unshakeable Autocracy

Find and highlight the following words:

- Autocracy
- Hereditary
- Sovereignty
- Divine
- Subjects

What do these words mean?

How many times do they appear?

Using these key words to help you, summarise the main theme of the speech in a sentence.

Autocracy	An autocracy is a system of government in which supreme power is concentrated in the hands of one person.
Hereditary	A title, office, or right conferred by or based on inheritance:
Sovereignty	The full right and power of a governing body to govern itself without any interference from outside sources or bodies.
Divine	God like or given powers.
Subjects	Member of a state other than its ruler, especially one owing allegiance to a monarch or other supreme ruler.

Alexander III's character and problems



Learning objective

We will understand the character of Alexander III and the problems that he faced.

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Issues that Alexander faced as he came to the throne

Task 1:

What problems/issues does Alexander III have to deal with as he comes to the throne?

Discuss in pairs and then we'll collate some ideas

Task 1:

What problems/issues does Alexander III have to deal with as he comes to the throne?

So what do you think?

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Character of Alexander III

- 6 Foot 4, broad shouldered and powerfully built. Gave of an air of immense authority.
- Extremely strong.
- Uncouth manners.
- Always dressed in military uniform
- Admired the Cossacks and their way of life, loyalty and orthodoxy.
- Modelled himself on Peter the Great.
- Brought up by his grandfather- evident in his military training
- He was strong willed, determined and ruthless
- Was limited in intellect but was diligent and honest.
- Gave up love affairs to marry his brother's wife, daughter of the King of Denmark.
- Devoted time to his family and played with his children.
- Disapproved of immoral behaviour and sanctioned family members that did so.

Task 2

Please write these points on your Alexander III sheet

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Konstantin Pobedonostsev 1827-1907

- Key figure because he was tutor to both Alexander III and Nicholas II
- 1880 was made Chief Procurator of the Holy Synod- gave him great influence over the Church- advised the Tsar on church matters and gave him governmental status.
- His role epitomised the connection between autocracy, orthodoxy and nationality.
- Held the **Slavophile** view that autocracy was the best for Russia and that the influence of 'western' liberalism would be a disaster.
- Convinced that firmness was the essential characteristic of good government and was a keen supporter of repressive measures
- Believed in Russification of all of society and was a devout anti-semite.

Task 3

Please write out these points on your Pobedonostsev sheet

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Task 4 Read the sources and answer the questions on the sheets.

Task 5 Repression or reform? What is the best strategy for Alexander III. Come up with a pro/con list for each option.

Resources

"If you do not pardon, but execute the criminals, you will have uprooted three or four out of hundreds; but evil breeds evil, and in place of those three or four, thirty or forty will grow up, and you will have let slip for ever the moment which is worth a whole age - the moment when you might have fulfilled the will of God, but did not do so - and you will pass for ever from the parting of the ways where you could have chosen good instead of evil, and you will sink for ever into that service of evil, called the Interest of the State ... One word of forgiveness and Christian love, spoken and carried out from the height of the throne, and the path of Christian rule which is before you, waiting to be trod, can destroy the evil which is corroding Russian. As wax before the fire, all Revolutionary struggles will melt away before the man-Tsar who fulfils the laws of Christ"

Open letter from Leo Tolstoy to Alexander III

1. Why does Tolstoy think that Alexander III should pardon the assassins?
2. What evidence is there of Tolstoy highlighting the role of the Tsar with Russian Christian Orthodoxy?

"either the inevitable revolution, which cannot be obviated by capital punishments; or voluntary compliance with the will of the people on the part of the Government. ... Your majesty has to decide. You have two ways before you; it is for you to choose which you will take."

Open letter from the People's Will to Alexander III

1. What options do the people will think are open to the Tsar?
2. What do they argue capital punishment will lead to?

'We proclaim this to all Our faithful subjects: God in His ineffable judgment has deemed it proper to culminate the glorious reign of Our beloved father with a martyr's death, and to lay the Holy duty of Autocratic Rule on us. It was not so much by stern orders as by goodness and kindness, which are also attributes of power, that He carried out the greatest undertaking of His reign--the emancipation of the enserfed peasants. In this he was able to elicit the cooperation of the noble [serf-] holders themselves, who always quick to the summons of the good and honorable. He established Justice in the Realm and, having made his subjects without exception free for all time, He summoned them to take charge of local administration and public works. May His memory be blessed through the ages!

The base and wicked murder of a Russian Sovereign by unworthy monsters from the people, done in the very midst of that faithful people, who were ready to lay down their lives for Him--this is a terrible and shameful matter, unheard of in Russia, which has darkened Our entire land with grief and terror. But in the midst of Our great grief, the voice of God orders Us courageously to undertake, in deference to Divine intention, the task of ruling, with faith in the strength and rightness [istina] of autocratic power. We are summoned to reaffirm that Power and preserve it for the benefit of the people from any encroachment.'

Alexander III's "Manifesto of Unshakeable Autocracy" April 1881

1. In what ways does Alexander praise his father?
2. What evidence is there that he intends to hold on to his power?

In a Democracy, the real rulers are the dexterous manipulators of votes, with their placemen, the mechanics who so skilfully operate the hidden springs which move the puppets in the arena of democratic elections. Men of this kind are ever ready with loud speeches lauding equality; in reality, they rule the people as any despot or military dictator might rule it.

The extension of the right to participate in elections is regarded as progress and as the conquest of freedom by democratic theorists, who hold that the more numerous the participants in political rights, the greater is the probability that all will employ this right in the interests of the public welfare, and for the increase of the freedom of the people. Experience proves a very different thing. The history of mankind bears witness that the most necessary and fruitful reforms -- the most durable measures -- emanated from the supreme will of statesmen, or from a minority enlightened by lofty ideas and deep knowledge, and that, on the contrary, the extension of the representative principle is accompanied by an abasement of political ideas and the vulgarization of opinions in the mass of the electors. It shows also that this extension -- in great States -- was inspired by secret aims to the centralization of power, or led directly to dictatorship. In France , universal suffrage was suppressed with the end of the Terror, and was re-established twice merely to affirm the autocracy of the two Napoleons. In Germany, the establishment of universal suffrage served merely to strengthen the high authority of a famous statesman [Bismarck] who had acquired popularity by the success of his policy. What its ultimate consequences will be, Heaven only knows!"

Pobedonostev's view on democracy taken from his autobiography, Reflections of a Russian Statesman, 1898

1. What reasons does Pobedonostev offer for why democracy doesn't work?