Alexander II - Extent of Reform

Background information of Russia:
• 75% of Russians lives in Urals
• Many racial groups and different cultures
• Less than half the population were Russian by birth
• Greek orthodox, Georgians, Finns, Lutherans, Baltic Germans, Estonians, Latvians, Ukrainians, Poles etc
• Seen as world power — were actually militarily and economically weak
• Lack of industrialisation compared to western powers
• Serfdom: System where poor peasants were owned by wealthy landowners and were forced to work for them
• Serfs — forced into conscription
• Serfs did not know what they were fighting for, lack of nationalism

Nicholas I (1796-1855)
• 153: Nicholas I ruled Romanov dynasty
• Divine right
• Autocracy, Orthodoxy, Nationality
• Secret police in 1826
• Minorities repressed, censorship enforced, revolt crushed, traveling prohibited
• Crimean War (1853-1856), Russia = wanted to expand power to Baltic states and middle East
• Conflict with Brits and French who had trading intents and feared Russian expansion in Ottoman lands
• Russia lost war, shows incompetence of Russian armies and inadequacy of battlefield medicine
• Russia exposed for weak military, incompetent military leadership, technologically backwards, and disloyal troops and lack of devotion to national cause

Alexander II (1855-1881)
• Educated by Liberal tutor Vasily Zhuosvksy
• Finished Crimean war, negotiated treaty of Paris
• Humiliation of Crimean lead him to want to lessen aristocracy, develop Natural resources, reduce corruption, modernise Russia
• Emancipation of the Serfs 1861
• Why did people want to free serfs?
  1. Serfdom prevented industrial growth
     - Tied to the land
     - Lack of consumers of industrial goods
  2. Prevented modernisation of Agriculture
     - Landowners = debt
     - No grain surplus to export
  3. Army needed reforms, but Serfs were conscripted to 25+ years
     - Problems w/ Crimean war
     - Short conscription and serfs sent home could lead to uprisings
  4. To stop peasant revolts
  5. Moral and intellectual argument
     - Lazy upper class
     - Slavery

Nicholas I: Secret committees to investigate end of serfdom
• Gentry complained about losing land and peasants did not no land meaning they couldn’t survive
• Secret committees = not successful

Alexander II: Secret committee on Peasant Affairs - lots of people against it
• Lots of compromise
• 1861 = Great Emancipation Statute —> Only affected privately owned serfs

3 STAGES OF EMANCIPATION:
1. Freedom
   - Serfs = full rights of citizens
   - Marriage