Explain why WWI was so unpopular amongst the Russian people

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Military defeats</th>
<th>In 1914 there were two military defeats at the battles of Tannenburg and the Masurin Lakes. Over 250,000 troops were killed, wounded or taken prisoner. In 1915 the Germans advanced 300 miles into Russia. 1 millions died in a failed counter-attack</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor Preparation</td>
<td>The Russian troops were badly led and had insufficient weapons. Nearly a million soldiers were without rifles and many had no boots</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conditions in Russia</td>
<td>Fifteen million men were drafted into the army which meant that there were not enough left to run the factories or farm the land. 600 factories had to close</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transport system</td>
<td>There were not enough trains to keep the towns and army supplied with food. Food supplies dried up and so prices rose, but wages did not</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inflation</td>
<td>To pay for the war the government printed more money which caused the rouble to lose its value. Between 1914 and 1917 there was a 400% rise in inflation. This caused strikes and demonstrations</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Tsar takes charge</td>
<td>In August 1915 the Tsar took personal charge of the army. This was a mistake because he was a weak and incompetent commander. He now made himself personally responsible for Russia's military failures.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Tsarina</td>
<td>In the absence of the Tsar the Tsarina (Alexandra) was left in charge of the government. Her German nationality caused people to mistrust her</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Describe the influence of Rasputin

1. The Tsarina heavily relied upon Rasputin particularly in the selection of ministers
2. There were rumours that the pair were German agents seeking to undermine the war effort
3. The Tsar and Tsarina (following Rasputin's control of their son's haemophilia) refused to listen to the stories of his wild lifestyle
4. This weakened the reputation of the Tsar and Tsarina and shocked the nobles.
5. In December 1916 a small group, led by Prince Yusupov, assassinated Rasputin
2.1.3 Discontent in Pre-Revolutionary Russia

November 9, 2015

The First World War had a massive impact on Russia. From the 13 million soldiers who were mobilized, 9.15 million were casualties.
War and revolution

In August 1914 Russia entered the First World War. Tensions in the country seemed to disappear. The Tsar seemed genuinely popular with his people and there was an instant display of patriotism. The Tsar’s action was applauded. Workers, peasants and aristocrats all joined in the patriotic enthusiasm. Anti-government strikes and demonstrations were abandoned. The good feeling, however, was very short-lived. As the war continued, the Tsar began to lose the support of key sectors of Russian society.

The army

The Russian army was a huge army of conscripts. At first, the soldiers were enthusiastic, as was the rest of society. Even so, many peasants felt that they were fighting to defend their country against the Germans rather than showing any loyalty to the Tsar. You can read about the Russian campaigns in the war on page 42. Russian soldiers fought bravely, but they stood little chance against the German army. They were badly led and treated appallingly by their aristocrat officers. They were also poorly supported by the industries at home. They were short of rifles, ammunition, artillery and shells. Many did not even have boots.

The Tsar took personal command of the armed forces in September 1915. This made little difference to the war, since Nicholas was not a particularly able commander. However, it did mean that people held Nicholas personally responsible for the defeats and the blunders. The defeats and huge losses continued throughout 1916. It is not surprising that by 1917 there was deep discontent in the army and that many soldiers were supporters of the revolutionary Bolshevik Party.

SOURCE 23

The army had neither wagons nor horses nor first aid supplies... We visited the Warsaw station where there were about 17,000 men wounded in battle. At the station we found a terrible scene: on the platform in dirt, filth and cold, on the ground, even without straw, wounded men, who filled the air with heart-rending cries, dolefully asked: ‘For God’s sake order them to dress our wounds. For five days we have not been attended to.’

From a report by Michael Rodzianko, President of the Duma.

Peasants, workers and the ethnic minorities

It did not take long for the strain of war to alienate the peasants and the workers. The huge casualty figures took their toll. In August 1916, the local governor of the village of Grushvka reported that the war had killed 13 per cent of the population of the village. This left many widows and orphans needing state war pensions which they did not always receive.

Despite the losses, food production remained high until 1916. By then, the government could not always be relied on to pay for the food produced. The government planned to take food by force but abandoned the idea because it feared it might spark a widespread revolt. There actually was a revolt in central Asian Russia when the Tsar tried to conscript Muslims into the army. It was brutally suppressed by the army.

By 1916 there was much discontent in the cities. War contracts created an extra 3.5 million industrial jobs between 1914 and 1916. The workers got little in the way of extra wages. They also had to cope with even worse overcrowding than before the war. There were fuel shortages. There were also food shortages. What made it worse was that there was enough food and fuel, but it could not be transported to the cities. The rail network could not cope with the needs of the army, industry and the populations of the cities. As 1916 turned into 1917, many working men and women stood and shivered in bread queues and cursed the Tsar.
The middle classes

The middle classes did not suffer in the same way as the peasants and workers, but they too were unhappy with the Tsar by the end of 1916. Many middle-class activists in the zemstva were appalled by reports such as Source 23. They set up their own medical organisations along the lines of the modern Red Cross, or joined war committees to send other supplies to the troops. These organisations were generally far more effective than the government agencies. By 1916 many industrialists were complaining that they could not fulfil their war contracts because of a shortage of raw materials (especially metals) and fuel. In 1915 an alliance of Duma politicians, the Progressive Bloc, had urged the Tsar to work with them in a more representative style of government that would unite the people. The Tsar dismissed the Duma a month later.

The aristocracy

The situation was so bad by late 1916 that the Council of the United Nobility was calling for the Tsar to step down. The junior officers in the army had suffered devastating losses in the war. Many of these officers were the future of the aristocrat class. The conscription of 13 million peasants also threatened aristocrats’ livelihoods, because they had no workers for their estates. Most of all, many of the leading aristocrats were appalled by the influence of Rasputin over the government of Russia. When the Tsar left Petrograd (the new Russian version of the Germanic name St Petersburg) to take charge of the army, he left his wife in control of the country. The fact that she was German started rumours flying in the capital. There were also rumours of an affair between her and Rasputin. Ministers were dismissed and then replaced. The concerns were so serious that a group of leading aristocrats murdered Rasputin in December 1916.

The March revolution

As 1917 dawned, few people had great hopes for the survival of the Tsar’s regime. In January strikes broke out all over Russia. In February the strikes spread. They were supported and even joined by members of the army. The Tsar’s best troops lay dead on the battlefields. These soldiers were recent conscripts and had more in common with the strikers than their officers. On 7 March workers at the Putlov steelworks in Petrograd went on strike. They joined with thousands of women — it was International Women’s Day — and other discontented workers demanding that the government provide bread. From 7 to 10 March the number of striking workers rose to 250,000. Industry came to a standstill. The Duma set up a Provisional Committee to take over the government. The Tsar ordered them to disband. They refused. On 12 March the Tsar ordered his army to put down the revolt by force. They refused. This was the decisive moment. Some soldiers even shot their own officers and joined the demonstrators. They marched to the Duma demanding that they take over the government. Reluctantly, the Duma leaders accepted — they had always wanted reform rather than revolution, but now there seemed no choice.

On the same day, revolutionaries set up the Petrograd Soviet again, and began taking control of food supplies to the city. They set up soldiers’ committees, undermining the authority of the officers. It was not clear who was in charge of Russia, but it was obvious that the Tsar was not! On 15 March he issued a statement that he was abdicating. There was an initial plan for his brother Michael to take over, but Michael refused: Russia had finished with Tsars.