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The Russian Revolution



**INTRODUCTION
REPORT**

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Introduction

The Russian Revolution was one of the most important events in history, leading to a significant change in worldwide culture and ideology. The events that brought about the Soviet Union generated a new way of thinking about the economy, the society and the government. The Bolsheviks set out to cure Russia of all the injustices that arose from class differences and succeeded in some ways, impacting the understanding of capitalism even to this day. The Revolution would divide the modern world into two factions and would forever change millions of lives. One might ask: was such a drastic action truly necessary to set the circumstances right? In order to truly understand the nature of societies today, one must recognize the reasons for such a revolution and its significance. It wasn't just an instant of dissatisfaction, or influence of other countries that lead into a revolution. For more than two centuries, the tsardom kept on prioritizing the extending of its borders, and dismissed the needs of its settled land.

Gradually, the circumstances further deteriorated for citizens, caused by a huge gap in social and economic conditions for different people groups. The causes of the Russian Revolution mainly came from centuries of oppression towards the lower classes by the Tsarist regime and Nicholas's failures in World War I. While rural agrarian peasants had been emancipated from serfdom in 1861, they still resented paying redemption payments to the state, and demanded communal tender of the land they worked. Peasant disturbances increased and sometimes full revolts occurred, all with the goal of securing ownership of their land. Russia consisted mainly of poor farming peasants, with 1.5% of the population owning 25% of the land. Politically, most areas of the Russian society had long been dissatisfied with the existing autocratic system. They had no representation in government, and the Tsar remained out of touch with the people's problems. A huge wall kept the government and those who lived in the country apart. Tsar Nicholas II claimed power from God, as all monarchs would do, and urged everyone to follow him, a tough father, but he did absolutely nothing regarding recurring issues among the public. The farming tools became obsolete with time and there was no real investment from the government, which meant that the agriculture -the primary source of income for most peasants- was no longer sustainable. When peasants pleaded for what they needed, the answer that the imperial government gave was violence. From there on, the economy, which was already on the verge of collapse, crashed. When the bottom of the food chain fell into pieces, the rest easily shattered with.

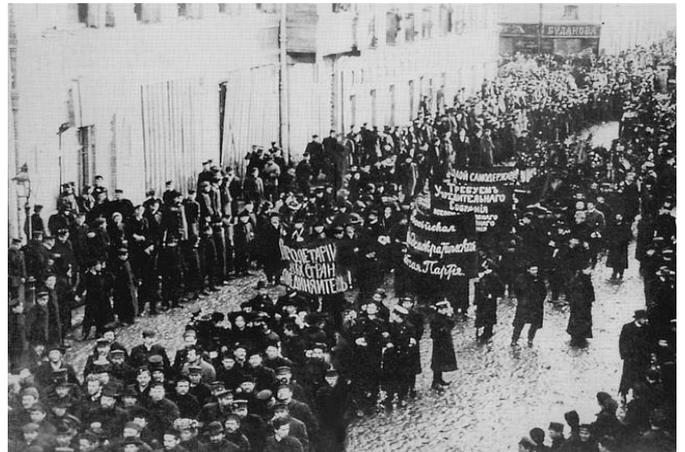


A peasant revolt in a village located near Siberia

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Scarcity became a huge problem due to rough weather, and Tsar Nicholas took no action that could solve the existing issues or suppress the riots.

Eventually, Bloody Sunday would take place, leaving an unpleasant memory for all Russians. After that point on, military action against the government was inevitable. The Tsardom, along with its allies, would need to take action in order to regain the support of its people, and those who believed in a cause would need to gather forces against the imperial government to take what they claimed to be theirs.



Bloody Sunday, where thousands were slaughtered by the Tsar's command

Definition of Key Terms

Communism: a system in which goods are owned in common and are available to all as needed, where private property does not exist (*Merriam - Webster*)

Socialism: any of various economic and political theories advocating collective or governmental ownership and administration of the means of production and distribution of goods, where there is no private property (*Merriam - Webster*)

Imperialism: a system in which a country rules other countries, sometimes having used force to get power over them (*Cambridge Dictionary*)

Tsardom: A form of absolute monarchy aligned with the beliefs of the Eastern Orthodox church, practiced only in Russia, where all royals and aristocracy must pay respects to one house only.

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General Overview

The two commonly accepted reasons for the Russian Revolution are the spreading popularity of the ideologies of socialism and communism combined with the negative effects of the ongoing war. Although not the same, both socialism and communism were against capitalism and, in a time of war where poverty increased everywhere around the world, both gained popularity as the war went on. As people started to publicly address the adverse effects of war and the incapability of the government of ending it, communist leaders immediately gained support.

The Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP) had already been aligned with socialism long before the revolution, since its establishment in 1898 and had gained support from the working class. The party stood united until 1903, when a dispute between two of the most active members, Vladimir Lenin and Julius Martov, divided the party into two factions: Bolsheviks and Mensheviks respectively. Bolsheviks followed Lenin and his beliefs, and Mensheviks followed Martov and his beliefs. Bolshevik means majority and Menshevik means minority, whereas the division of factions in the party were the opposite of their names. Both factions wanted revolution but disagreed on their perception of how it should be done. Bolsheviks were in favor of ending the middle class and aristocracy completely and taking charge of Russia, whereas Mensheviks were in favor of a more gradual revolution and working with the aforementioned social classes instead of destroying them. More importantly, Mensheviks did not want to overthrow the Tsar and his autocracy, and wanted to improve the Tsar's council and the government instead. Their view on the existing imperial government of Russia was what drew the line between Mensheviks and Bolsheviks, resulting in even more conflicts during the revolution itself.

The formation of parties with such differing ideologies from the status quo was an indirect result of the liberal wave across Europe. As it did with most European states, the effects of the French Revolution would finally be demonstrated in the Tsardom.

Also, in situations of poverty and conflict, people search ways to escape of their current states and thrive to regain hope, and Russia had given many reasons for its people to revolt. The 19th century had been tough for Russia. The previous tsar, Alexander II, had been assassinated after emancipating serfdom. Though it was thought to be a progressive step by more liberal countries, the Russians were neither used to nor ready for a change that significant. Peasants were still bound to labor obligations; no real freedom had been given, and the royal only lost political and social power. After the emancipation, chaos slowly took over.

In 1891, a famine resulted in the death of 400,000, and affected millions of citizens. Tsar Alexander III stood in his father's place, but even he was affected by the famine. Shortly after his arrival to the throne, he died of disease, and his inexperienced son, Nicholas II, had to assume the throne. He was very indecisive and failed to understand the Russian mentality. A major stampede in Moscow occurred



Vladimir Lenin, returned from his exile, addressing and recruiting the soldiers in Moscow's Red Square.

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during festivities following Nicholas II's coronation, as crowds, worried that the supplies of free souvenirs would run out, rushed for the stalls to get them. This resulted in the deaths of over 1,300 people. A familiar scenario was witnessed in Europe: the monarchs lived in luxury, while poverty spread over the land, though nothing could be done either way. The liberal press blamed Tsar Nicholas II for all the mistakes in the country, but there was a bigger picture. Change is no easy thing to bear, and there was a clash between the ways of the old and new. A decade had passed since the coronation of Nicholas II, and the Tsar issued the October Manifesto, promising civil liberties (such as freedom of speech) and an elected parliament (Duma). As a result, momentous restrictions were implemented on the absolute power of the Russian monarch, and a de facto constitution (the Fundamental Laws of 1906) had been issued. The elected parliament's state was very rocky, and a coup d'etat disrupted the Duma's situation even more. Additionally, the country had just suffered major losses from World War I. From there on, the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party would have opportunity to administer the government, if could seize the moment.

The Imperialist Government

With the Russian Empire being officially established in 1721, the Empire was ruled with Tsarist autocracy or Tsarism until the Russian Revolution in 1917. Tsarism is a type of monarchy where the monarch is called the Tsar, and was practiced only in the Russian Empire. As every monarchy is ruled by a royal family and their branches of aristocrats, the Russian Empire was ruled by the House of Romanov. The Imperialist Government is also referred to as the Russian Imperial Romanov family. The Romanov Dynasty practiced Orthodox Christianity, and so did the Russian people. Although it is named the Imperialist Government, the Russian Empire's imperialism differed from Western Imperialism in various aspects. The Russians never went overseas to find colonies during the Age of Discovery and expanded from land to nearby countries instead, making Russia the largest country on earth even today. Whether or not to call the government imperialist was a debate in the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP), which was also one of the reasons that led the party to be separated as Mensheviks and Bolsheviks. Although the reigning monarch of the Imperialist Government was Tsar Nicholas II, the government had multiple bodies such as the Imperial Council, the State Duma, the Council of Ministers and the Senate. The economy depended mainly on mining before serfdom was abolished in 1861. After the abolition, heavy industrial jobs made up the economy. Just before the Russian Revolution, World the Russian Empire was an active participant within the Allied Powers in World War I. The War was one of the main reasons for the rebellion of the RSDLP, which shortly led to the breakout of the Russian Revolution and eventually, to Russia's withdrawal from the war.



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The Communist Party

The Communist Party of the Soviet Union originated from the Bolshevik faction of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party (RSDWP), also referred to as the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP). The Bolshevik faction and later on the Communist Party was led by Vladimir Lenin, who is considered to be one of the main figures of the Russian Revolution. Lenin and the Bolsheviks' idea of government revolved around the system of democratic centralism, which meant that as every member and every body of the party was free to state opinions and vote on a matter, the result of the election was strictly binding over every member and body. Their idea of government systems were the main opposition between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks in the RSDWP, whereas Mensheviks wanted to implement their rightist ideology on their desired democratic government system, led by Julius Martov. Bolsheviks and Mensheviks stood united under the RSDWP until the Russian Revolution in 1917.



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