

RUSSIAN REVOLUTION - 1917



INTRODUCTION

Russian Empire - one of the largest empires of the world, stretching from Eastern Europe across Asia and into North America.

Rulers of the Russian empire - The Czars.

In 1917, after more than 300 years, overthrew the Czarist regime and won new freedom for the people of Russia.

The revolutionary ideas of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels as employed by Vladimir Lenin, Leon Trotsky and others, to empower the proletariat, to create a society that was based on economic and social justice.

A series of revolutions in 1917, which destroyed the Tsarist autocracy & led to the creation of the Soviet Union

In the 1st revolution of February 1917, The Tsar was overthrown and replaced by a provisional government.

In the 2nd revolution, during October, the Provisional Government was removed and replaced with a Bolshevik (Communist) government, resulting in the creation of the world's first communist country.



HOW WAS RUSSIA GOVERNED?

- Tsar; Romanov family since 1613
- Nobles and Clergy: Landowning class
- Serfs: 90%, lived in 750,000 small villages
- Untouched by enlightened ideas that had swept Western Europe during that time.
- Continued to be governed like it had been for the previous 3 centuries – under the autocratic rule of the Romanov dynasty.
- Ruled alone and did not permit any opposition.
- No real representative bodies for the people, freedom of expression was limited, the press was not free, books were censored, opposition leaders were either executed/ exiled to Siberia and so forth.
- Even the Russian Parliament, Duma, was ignored by the Czar whenever he wanted to.
- All of these factors led to the people of Russia being totally frustrated by the Romanov dynasty; manifested itself in many demonstrations and strikes against the Czarist regime, many of which were brutally suppressed by the Czar.

CONDITION OF RUSSIA IN 1905

Difficult to govern	Russian Empire covered 1/6 th of the worlds land surface Population of 125 million Many different nationalities
Tsar was an autocrat	He could make laws and govern as he wished No parliament and political parties were banned He took advice from a Committee of Ministers which he chose from the rich nobles
No opposition to the Tsar	Newspapers and books were censored The Okhrana (secret police) removed all opposition groups Opposition groups were sent to prison camps in Siberia
The Nobles and Middle Class	The nobles formed 0.1% of the population but owned over 25% of the land A middle class (bourgeoisie) began to emerge following industrialisation They demanded a say in how the country was run
Peasants	80% of the population were peasants Primitive farming methods and poor crops meant that food shortages were common Living conditions were terrible – many families lived in a single room
Industrial Workers	Conditions for industrial workers were poor Many houses had no running water or sewage system Workers were employed for long hours and wages were low Trade unions were banned and strikes were illegal





Czar Nicholas II (1894-1917)- Last Czar

PROBLEMS

1. Autocracy: weak not charismatic- family man – spend with his wife Tsarina and their 5 children- knew little about the people governed
2. Alexis, Son suffered from hemophilia, a blood disorder - not expected to reach adulthood
3. Religion : believed he had been chosen by God to rule –none can challenge him

THE OPPOSITION TO THE TSAR

1. Liberals – Made up of Middle class people – wanted a parliament (Duma)
2. Social Revolutionaries – Wanted to seize power by revolution. Wanted the land to be taken from the nobility and given to the peasants
3. Social Democrats – Followed the teachings of Karl Marx. Wanted a revolution to bring communist government.

The Mensheviks wanted a **Big Party** so that power was spread amongst many.

The Bolsheviks (led by Lenin) believed that power should lay with a **Core Elite**.

Alexander III



Nicholas II

**Alexandra III, wife of
Nicholas**



Olga



Tatiana



Marie



Anastasia



Alexie



THE DISCONTENT OF THE WORKERS



- Industrial revolution in Europe -Huge increase in the urban industrial working class population in Russia.
- Industrialisation - late in Russia.
- Huge iron foundries, textile factories and engineering firms were set up.
- By 1900 20% of Russians were workers living in cities.
- The industrial working classes lived in cramped urban dwellings, were paid low wages, were denied any sort of rights in the workplace and so forth.
- By the end of the 19th C, this class became conscious of their rights.
- Undertook many strikes and agitations.
- Political awareness among the industrial workers.

THE DISCONTENT OF THE PEASANTS



- Russia - a rural society with over 90% of the people being poor peasants.
- Peasantry dissatisfaction became one of the major causes of the revolution.
- Until 1861 the peasants had belonged to their masters, who could buy and sell them like animals.
- When the peasants were freed in 1861 they were given small amounts of land.
- Agriculture was in desperate need of modernisation.
- A majority of the peasants - illiterate and, thus, were not in any position to find alternative sources of work.
- Czarist policies had also resulted in extremely unequal distribution of land in Russia.

RUSSIFICATION

The policy of Russification, i.e., the suppression of the languages, literature, and culture of the non-Russian nationalities was introduced by the Romanovs in an effort to create some uniformity in society and, thus, make administration easier.

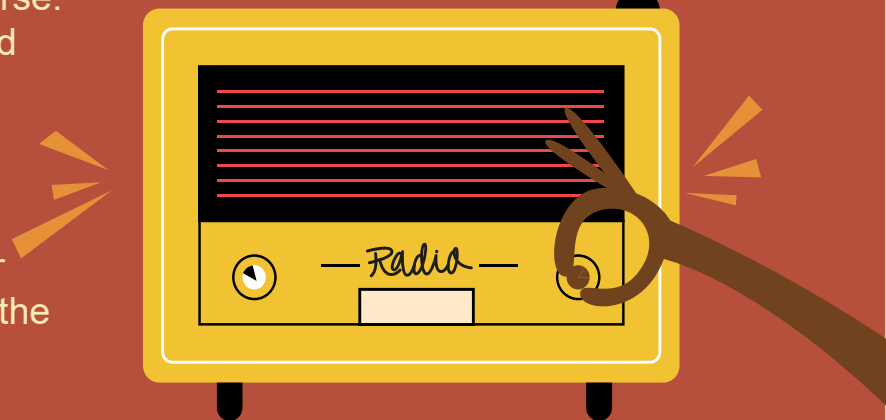
There was always tension between the European and the Asian residents of the Russian empire.

The policy of Russification made things worse. The relationship between the minorities and the majority 'white' Russians was almost colonial in nature.

The regions of Caucasia, Kazakhstan, Russian Poland etc were exploited for their raw material, but no attention was paid for the development of these regions.

This made the people of these regions resentful and angry with the Romanovs, which played an important role in the revolution of 1917.

Prominent revolutionaries emerged from the various minorities in Russia, for example Leo Trotsky.



The Growth of Revolutionary Ideas

- The extreme inequality and oppression - ground for revolutionary ideas.
- In the 19th century, educated & politically conscious class of people emerged, like writers, philosophers, activists- whose radical ideas germinated throughout the Russian empire.
- Books of writers like Pushkin, Gogol, Tolstoy, Turgenev, Dostoevsky and Chekov, were widely read-influenced the Russian people.
- Despotism Czarist regime also gave rise to several revolutionary movements in Russia
- An increase in the popularity of the philosophy of Karl Marx.
- Finally, there was also an emergence of two political parties :
 - The Social Democratic Party (S.D): a party formed in 1898 to unite various revolutionary movements under one banner.
 - The Socialist Revolutionaries (S.R): a party whose ideology was largely derived from the populist movements of the 1860s.
- In 1903, the Socialist Democratic Party split into two factions, i.e., the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks. Despite their ideological differences, both the Social Democrats and the Social Revolutionaries were united by their hatred of the Czarist regime.



THE OPPOSITION OF THE COMMUNISTS

Many middle-class Liberals and Social Revolutionaries opposed the rule of the Tsar, but the most revolutionary were the Social Democrats / Communists.

The Communists believed in the ideas of Karl Marx.

Marx claimed that history is all about the struggles between the classes. He claimed that the capitalist system was unfair because the factory owners (bourgeois) made profits from the toils of the workers (proletariat).

The Russian Communists were divided into the Bolsheviks led by Lenin and the Mensheviks led by Trotsky.



Russia's Military and Diplomatic Humiliation in 1904-05

A turning point for the Czarist regime was the Russian-Japanese War
Dispute with Japan over Manchuria(North –East China).

Result of increasingly expansionist Russian foreign policy in the East.

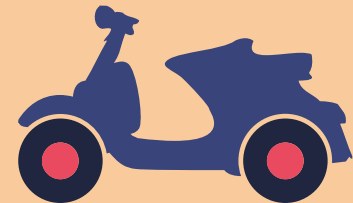
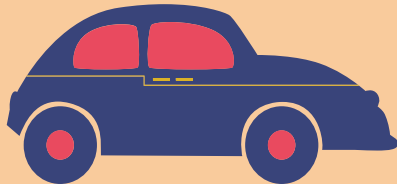
Intended as a way to increase the prestige of the autocracy at home & abroad, but resulted in a humiliating defeat for Russia. 1st time an Asian power had defeated a European war
With the defeat, Japan emerged as a major threat to Russian interests in the east and, in Russia, even moderates lost confidence in the old regime.

Poverty on the rise

The military disaster and humiliation faced by Russia again proved to the rottenness of the Russian regime.

After the defeat, the government, fearing that uprisings and civil unrest, asked various revolutionary groups to submit a list of demands.

An eleven point charter was submitted to Nicholas II which included basic rights of citizens.
Through these eleven points, a dent was made to the 200 year old absolutist rule by the Romanovs.





1905 REVOLUTION

01.

PEASANTS & WORKERS

Growing discontent due to living conditions and poor harvests - Growing discontent due to working and living conditions.

02.

MIDDLE CLASS

Wanted a say in how the country was run (democracy)

03.

RUSO-JAPANESE WAR

The war made conditions worse in Russia. It disrupted food supplies which caused prices to rise

04.

BLOODY SUNDAY

Father Gapon led a crowd of 200,000 workers through the streets of St Petersburg to the Tsar's Winter Palace - intended to deliver a petition listing their grievances: higher wages , Get out of the war, a shorter work day, better working conditions ; a legislative assembly, universal manhood suffrage .Czarist troops open fire on a peaceful demonstration of workers in St Petersburg. when news of 96 dead and hundreds more wounded escaped, public opinion almost universally turned against the old regime.



The eleven point charter that was submitted to Nicholas II forced the Russian government to start initiating reforms.

Under the pressure of mass demonstrations, Czar Nicholas II issued his famous 'October Manifesto' of 1905 - promised sweeping reforms that included the right to freedom of speech, association, assembly and press.

A legislature known as the Duma endowed with legislative functions and the control over the law of the land was also promised. Nicholas also promised the right to vote for workers. Nicholas II's promise to set up the Duma amounted to the surrender of autocratic and despotic power by the Czar and his ministers.

Although Nicholas II diluted many of the concessions he had made in the October Manifesto, the revolution of 1905 revealed to the people what united public action was capable of.

In later years, Czar Nicholas II routinely ignored the Duma and did what he liked.

The failure of the Duma experiment of limited constitutional monarchy eventually led to a more radical revolution which put an end to the despotic and reactionary regime of Czar Nicholas II.

FAILURE OF DUMA



RUSSIA FAILURE IN THE 1ST WORLD

WAR

- In the first few months of the 1st WW, Russia fought better than had been expected. Russian forces attacked Germany and Austria-Hungary in 1914 and were only pushed back after fierce fighting at the battle of Tannenberg.
- Military defeats: In 1914 there were 2 military defeats at the battles of Tannenberg and the Masurian Lakes. Over 250,000 troops were killed, wounded or taken prisoner. In 1915 the Germans advanced 300 miles into Russia. 1 million died in a failed counter-attack
- Poor Preparation: The Russian troops were badly led and had insufficient weapons. Nearly a million soldiers were without rifles and many had no boots
- Conditions in Russia: 15 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
- Transport system: 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
- Inflation: 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
- The Tsar takes charge : In August 1915 the Tsar took personal charge of the army. This was a mistake because he was a weak and incompetent commander.
- The Tsarina : In the absence of the Tsar the Tsarina (Alexandra) was left in charge of the government. Her German nationality caused people to mistrust her

Rasputin and Scandal

While Tsar Nicholas II was absent commanding Russian forces during the First World War, he left the day to day running of Russia in the control of his wife Tsarina Alexandra.

Alexandra came increasingly under the influence of Gregory Rasputin, a 'holy man' who appeared to be able to heal the haemophilia of Prince Alexis, the heir to the throne.

He wasn't trusted by the government or people and had many enemies.

Rasputin used his power to win effective control of the Russian govt. But this aroused envy and he was murdered in 1916.

His influence undermined the prestige of the royal family, but his murder came too late to save them.



The February Revolution 1917

CAUSES (Abdication of the Tsar) - Russia was difficult to govern - Problems with Tsar Nicholas' autocratic rule - Bloody Sunday - Failure of the 1905 - Impact of WWI - Rasputin - Short term causes (1. By February 1917 Russia was in chaos. 2. Food and fuel shortages, together with temperatures of 35 degrees below freezing, led to growing discontent 3. Strikes became common as workers demanded higher wages and better conditions)

Russia fared so badly in the First World War there was a spontaneous uprising against the Tsar in February 1917. This was sparked off by food riots, poor working conditions and the failure to win the war. The Russian army refused to shoot at the demonstrators and joined forces with them. Lenin, in exile in Switzerland, raced to Petrograd so that he could attempt to seize control of the revolution.

Marchers through the streets shouting "Bread, bread, bread"; Troops refused to fire on demonstrators

Czar abdicated (resigned) March 15th 1917; Russia continued in WWI

Revolutionary socialists plotted own course. Many set up Soviets, councils of workers and soldiers

In March 1917, without the support of the army, the Tsar was forced to abdicate and a Provisional Government was set up under Prince Lvov and Kerensky.



OCTOBER (BOLSHEVIK) REVOLUTION- 1917

After the overthrow of Czar Nicholas II, the authority of the state was now in dual hands; the Duma and the Provisional government on one side and the Petrograd Soviet of Worker Deputies on the other.

Provisional govt was in outlook and composition, a bourgeois / middle class govt - composed of the cadets / constitutional democrats- moderates & led by Alexander Kerensky and Milinkov, minister of foreign affairs.

Promulgated a number of liberal reforms as in the western countries – freedom of speech , association , religion , press . At the same time it declared for continuance of the war and sought to stimulate the patriotism of the masses.

But in a politically backward country people cared little for the reforms . Their demands- Lead by Vladimir Lenin "Peace, Land, and Bread"- Won support of people (especially peasants)- drifted towards socialism – liberals were overthrown and provisional govt collapsed. Kerensky fled from Russia – Bolsheviks led by Lenin and Trotsky seized the reign .

Lenin united the workers and peasants. Lenin -the President and Trotsky , the Foreign Minister. The Central govt passed into the hands of the Bolshevik party. Thus the communists had succeeded in seizing power. "Peace, land and bread" - the slogan of the communists and all opposition to the new government was ruthlessly crushed.

RULE OF LENIN

1920-1924



Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (1870-1924) - the leader of the Bolshevik party. Born in 1870. A man of revolutionary ideas. In 1893, he went to St.Petersburg where he became a great leader of the communists. Began organizing the labourers for the future revolution. 1895, he was arrested and sentenced to imprisonment & exiled to Siberia. He returned back to Russia in 1900, after he was set free. During the train back to Russia, Lenin composed his famous 'April Thesis'. In the thesis, he demanded, among other things, the immediate transfer of power to the Soviet and an immediate end to the First World War, and the merger of all banks into one national bank controlled by the Soviets.

Unable to bear the hostile attitude of the Russian govt, Lenin left Russia and went to Switzerland & published a newspaper called "Istraka. In 1917, at the time of Russian Revolution, Lenin returned back to Russia. Lenin along with Trotsky created a new spirit in Russia and among the Russians. Lenin organized an intensive and sustained propaganda campaign against the provisional government. Lenin held public meetings and denounced the provisional government and called for "all power to the Soviets". Infused with the leadership of Lenin, the popularity of the Bolshevik increased dramatically.

The Bolshevik Revolution established a socialist govt. Lenin became the PM in the new govt Lenin's aims were to establish peace, confiscation of all landed property, recognition of the supreme authority of the soviets and the election of a constitutional convention.

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR)

- The political structure of Soviet Russia was determined by a constitution promulgated in 1918.
- it was a federation wherein all the states were equal.
- Every city/ country were to have a Soviet or a council of workmen. Local Soviets chose delegates to represent them in the provincial Soviets ->All-Russian Congress of Soviets. It enjoyed the supreme power. The government was controlled by the communist party. The members of the legislature called the Supreme Soviets were to be elected only from the communist party. The executive was called the Council of the Peoples' Commissars. It was controlled by the Presidium which was the party executive. In 1923 the Soviet Socialist Republic of Russia was united with the other Soviet Republics such as Ukraine and White Russia and formed the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Economic and Social Restoration

- The economic creed of Bolshevik was based upon Marxian Socialism.
- Sought to overthrow the social order based upon capitalism.
- abolition of all private capital and the nationalization of land and other instruments of production.
- Lenin proclaimed a New Economic Policy or the NEP. A combination of State Socialism and private capitalism.
- The requisition of foodstuffs from the peasants was abandoned. Instead they were required to pay a fixed tax, at first in kind and after 1924 in cash. The peasants could sell their surplus produce in the open market after the payment of tax. Private enterprise in a small scale was allowed. To secure liquid capital, were allowed to foreign capitalists for large scale agriculture and engineering profit sharing concessions projects. However, the state retained the option of purchasing the products of such concerns. The state owned retails were setup and Consumer cooperative societies were encouraged.
- Stimulated production and brought it to pre war levels

- **Economic Reforms included the New Economic Plan (NEP)**
 - Allowed some capitalist ventures
 - State controlled large industries and banks
 - Peasants controlled small plots of land and their own crops
- **Political Reforms**
 - Bolshevik party became Communist Party
 - Russia becomes the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

1924

Lenin Dies

Power Vacuum

Leon Trotsky vs Joseph Stalin

Stalin takes control

Decides to create a totalitarian
state

SIGNIFICANCE

- Put an end to the autocratic/despotic rule of the czar and paved the way for the Bolshevik rule.
- First great experiment in the implementation of the ideas of marxism- leninism to actually govern a country.
- Challenged the existing state and social structure and offered an alternative to capitalism.
- Put Russia on the road to modernity and progress by bringing her out of the backwardness.
- The economic planning of soviet Russia, particularly the five year plans not only provided a model of development for underdeveloped countries like India, but also for advanced nations. Took Russia into the realms of technological advancement and progress in the for advanced nations.
- Took Russia into the realms of technological advancement and progress in the fields of sports, science, industry, etc.
- Transformed the nation from being a European backwater into one of the two sole superpowers.
- Encouraged class antagonism and class conflict.
- The traditional power of clergy, nobles and the bourgeoisie were liquidated and state power was monopolised by the communist and its leadership in the name of 'dictatorship of the proletariat'.
- The USSR was to become, at least for a few years, a beacon of hope for the working classes all over the world and provided inspiration for people in colonized nations to overthrow their imperialist government.

QUICK TIMELINE

1917- Czar abdicated (resigned) March 15th 1917

1917- Duma set up provisional government eventually led by Alexander (after Czar abdicates March 1917)

1917- October (Bolshevik) Revolution led by Lenin “Peace, Land and Bread”

1918- March 3rd Bolsheviks accept Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, ending WWI with Germany.

1919- Red Armies (Bolsheviks) vs. White Armies (Supported Royal Family and Mensheviks)

1920- Red Armies defeat White Armies

1920-1924- Lenin in Power: NEP, Bolshevik Communist Party, Russia becomes Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

1924- Lenin dies, Trotsky vs. Stalin Stalin wins= Totalitarian state

