

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

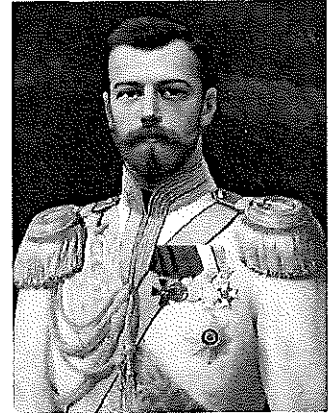
Tsarist Russia

Until 1917, Russia was ruled by a Tsar. Nicholas II had become Tsar in 1894. He was a ruler who has absolute control over the country - an autocrat. People who spoke out against the government were sent to prison. Rioters were attacked by the Cossacks (Russian soldiers).

In 1905 there had been a revolution against the rule of the Tsar. In order to keep his position, Nicholas had been forced to accept a Duma (parliament) but nothing really changed, Nicholas kept power and if members of the Duma disagreed with him they were sent away.

In 1914 Germany declared war on Russia and in 1915, Nicholas took control of the army. The Russians faced a series of defeats and Nicholas was blamed.

While Nicholas was at the front fighting the war, his wife Alexandra was left in charge of the country. She was very influenced by the holy man Rasputin. People resented the influence of Rasputin and he was murdered. The Romanovs were very unpopular. By 1917 there were food and fuel shortages. High unemployment meant that huge numbers of people were living in poverty. People were dying.



Communism

Karl Marx (1818-1883) had said that industrialisation had made the middle classes rich and powerful but had made the workers slaves. He said that the workers should rebel and take power away from the rich. He believed that nothing should be privately owned and that everything should be commonly owned. This theory is called communism. A group of people called the Bolsheviks believed that the royal family should be overthrown and communism introduced.

The leader of the Bolsheviks was Vladimir Lenin but he had been forced to leave Russia to avoid being imprisoned. Lenin continued to be leader of the Bolsheviks while in exile – publishing communist leaflets and raising money for their cause. He also spoke against the war.

The February Revolution

In February 1917, people rioted on the streets in Russia. They were joined by soldiers and members of the Duma. Nicholas II was forced to abdicate and a new provisional government took over. Many Bolsheviks, including Joseph Stalin believed that the Russian people would not accept a Socialist government and supported the provisional government led by Alexander Kerensky, who was named President of Russia. The workers, soldiers and peasants elected their own councils called Soviets. The Soviets were as powerful as the government.

The October Revolution

Kerensky had not ended the war as the people had hoped but had planned a new offensive against the Germans. Soldiers began deserting and returning to their homes. Many of them used their weapons to take land from the rich.

In April 1917, **Vladimir Lenin** returned from exile. He was angry that Russia was still fighting in the war and that many Bolsheviks supported the provisional government. Joseph Stalin had to decide whether to oppose Lenin or whether to abandon his support for the provisional government.

He chose to support Lenin and on 24th October the Bolsheviks seized the Winter Palace, the headquarters of the provisional government. In December 1917 Lenin signed the treaty of Brest-Litovsk which took Russia out of the war. In 1918, the Russian royal family were murdered by the Bolsheviks.



Civil War

Many Russians did not support the Bolshevik government and tried to oppose the Bolsheviks. The Bolsheviks were known as “Reds” while those that opposed them were the “Whites”. There was civil war between the reds and whites. Armies from Britain, France and America supported the whites but the Bolsheviks were more powerful and by 1922 the Bolsheviks were in charge the country that would be renamed the Soviet Union.

Name _____

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Complete the following directions and answer the questions:

1. Underline the following important vocabulary terms in the reading: Autocrat, Cossack, Duma, communism, Bolsheviks. Then define the terms here:
 - a. Autocrat -
 - b. Duma -
 - c. Communism -
 - d. Bolshevik -
 - e. Soviet -
2. Make a timeline of 6 events that led to the Bolsheviks taking charge of Russia in 1922. (1905, 1914, 1915, 2/1917, 10/1917, 1918)



3. How did the feelings of the people in Russia in 1917 help the February revolution to succeed?
4. Why was Lenin unhappy with the results of the February revolution?
5. What steps do you think Tsar Nicholas II could have taken to avoid revolution in Russia?