

The Russian Revolution

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War Devastates Russia's economy; Russian Suffering, Cold and Hungry

While one bloody war is going on in the trenches of France and Belgium, an even bloodier one is raging in Eastern Europe. There, Russian Armies are facing the armies of Germany and Austria-Hungary. In 1916, Russia was close to total defeat. It has also been facing complete economic and social collapse at home.

Why is the war going so badly for Russia? Basically, it was not ready for war. Compared to Germany, it has few factories and railroads. Thus it can not supply its soldiers with enough guns and ammunition. It can not get food, fuel, and clothing to either its soldiers or its civilians. Often, Russian soldiers go into battle without helmets or gas masks. Sometimes they don't even have rifles.

Since 1914, the Russian Army lost more than eight million men – either killed by warfare or the flu. These are higher casualty rates than any other Allied Power. The Russian soldiers and civilians are sick of the war. In cities and towns, many people are starving. The railroads have broken down and can not deliver food. There is not enough coal or wood to keep the people warm through the winter.

How did World War I affect Russia?

Call for a General Strike in Petrograd* (St. Petersburg), February 23, 1917

Nicholas II joined his army at the front. While away fighting the war, he left his wife and the Duma in charge. In his absence there were many strikes, riots, and general chaos.

DIRECTIONS: Underline the causes for the Strike, and **circle** the demands of the workers.

"Comrades! Our fathers, husbands, and brothers are dying... the czarist government sent them to the front, maimed and killed them... it has shed and continues to shed workers blood. Hunger is knocking on every door. In the villages the last grain and cattle are being taken for the war. The government is guilty; it began this war and cannot end it. It is tearing the country apart; it is its fault that you are going hungry... Enough! Down with the criminal government and its gang of plunderers and murderers. Long live peace. Everywhere workers are beginning to understand that their own governments will not bring an end to war... Workers do not need plunder from abroad! Down with the autocracy! Down with the war! Long live the democratic republic!"

Use the video clip to answer the questions below:

1. Why did the women come out onto the streets to protest?

2. How did the military (the Cossacks) react to the protestors at the end of the clip?

The Last Czar



↑ **Keywords:** ***abdicate***- quite/step down as leader ***Michael***- Nicholas II's brother
Constitutional assembly- is the Duma ***convoked***- call a meeting

Provisional (temporary) Government

After the czar abdicated (stepped down), Duma politicians set up a provisional or temporary government. Middle-class liberals in the government began preparing a constitution for a new Russian Republic.

DIRECTIONS: Pretend *you a poor Russian factory worker* or farmer. Who would you have supported in 1917?

1. Read the promises put forth by each candidate.
2. Work with a partner and provide 3 reasons for your decision and write them below.

Alexander Kerensky's Program for the Provisional Government

1. An immediate forgiveness for all political and religious offenses, including terrorist acts, military revolts...
2. Freedom of speech and press, freedom to form labor unions and to strike.
3. The abolition (to get rid of) of all social, religious, and national restrictions.
4. Creation of Constituent Assembly, elected by a secret vote.
5. Elections to be carried out on the basis of universal, direct, equal, and secret suffrage (voting).
6. Support our Allies by continuing Russia's involvement in World War I.
7. Peace, Land, and Bread... *In Time*.

Vladimir Lenin's adaptation of Marxist ideas to fit revolution

1. We will get our country out of World War I
2. Power will be in the hands of the workers and the poorest peasants.
3. No support for democracy.
4. Salaries of all government officials should not be more than the average wage of a regular worker
5. Creation of the Soviets (councils) for Workers, Farmers, and Peasants
6. The Soviet for Workers will control the National Bank
7. Peace, Bread, and Land... *Now!*

We would vote for: _____

List and explain 3 reasons why you chose to vote for that party.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

**Note: the name of Russia's capital city of St. Petersburg was changed to Petrograd during World War I because St. Petersburg is a German name. After the Communist Party took power, the city was named Leningrad. In 1992, after the fall of the Communist government, the city returned to its original name of St. Petersburg.*

Now create your campaign poster!!!

Mad Monk

March 9th : the riots got worse and were getting out of hand. Nicholas was informed about the situation and the Russian Parliament (the Duma) pleaded with him to order the release of emergency food supplies. He refused and ordered that the riots should be put down by March 10th !!

March 10th : the police tried to carry out the orders of Nicholas. Unfortunately, people got killed and the rioters became even more angry. The rioters opened up prisons and released those in them. For the first time there were calls for the tsar to quit. The head of the Duma informed Nicholas that law and order had broken down as soldiers brought in to put down the rioters had, in fact, joined them !! Nicholas then did something very foolish. He ordered that the Duma was no longer to meet.

March 11th : the Duma disobeyed Nicholas - this is usually considered the first act of the Russian Revolution. The members of the Duma met in chaos. One person in the Duma, Alexander Kerensky, shouted out that 25,000 soldiers had mutinied and were marching to where the Duma was meeting to support them. With this support, the Duma decided to form a temporary government (the Provisional Government) to take the place of the tsar. In a bizarre move, Alexandra, the tsar's wife, phoned him to tell him that he had nothing to worry about !!

March 12th : The leader of the Duma was a man called Rodzianko. He persuaded Nicholas that things had got very bad for the royal family. Nicholas then decided to return to Petrograd to restore law and order. The Provisional Government by this time had got some degree of control and they stopped the royal train outside of Petrograd. The government wanted to talk terms with Nicholas. The first plan was for Alexis - the son - to take over but Nicholas refused this as he felt that the boy was too weak. The throne was offered to Grand Duke Michael but he did not want it. It became clear to Nicholas that the Provisional Government did not want a tsar and he was forced to give up the throne.

Thus royalty came to an end in Russia. There had been a tsar since 1480. Now in March 1917 the title came to an end.

Do note that for the whole of this important event, [Lenin](#) was out of Russia. Even he was unprepared for this.

Source A

He was an honest, if not a great man. Sincere, in spite of his oratorical talents, and, for a man who for four months was worshipped as a god, comparatively modest. From the start he was fighting a hopeless battle, trying to drive back into the trenches a nation which had already finished with the war. Caught between the cross-fire of the Bolshevik Left, which was screaming peace at every street-corner and in every trench, and of the Right and of the Allies who were demanding the restoration of discipline by Tsarist methods, he had no chance.

A friend, speaking about Kerensky, May 1917

**Source B**

The Bolsheviks stand for the people and by the people - the poor classes, workers, soldiers and peasants. The people can only be saved by the completion of the Revolution and All power to the Soviets - both in the capital and in the provinces. Immediate truce on all fronts. An honest peace between peoples. Landlords' estates - without compensation - to the peasants. Workers' control over industrial production.

Lenin writing in April 1917

Source C

The July events took place quite spontaneously, without outside stimulation. The working class and peasantry in soldiers' and sailors' greatcoats sensed with their sound instinct that the Provisional government was destroying the revolution. The criminal offensive of June 18 opened the eyes of the masses better than any agitators could. A Bolshevik leader, (1917)

Source D

We are fighting against Kornilov, just as Kerensky's troops do, but we do not support Kerensky. On the contrary, we expose his weakness. There is the difference. Lenin, (September 1917)

Source E

Comrades! Look around, see what is happening in the village, what is happening in the army, and you will realise that the peasants and soldiers cannot stand it any longer. Over the whole of Russia, like a broad river, sweeps an uprising of the peasants. Lenin, (October 1917)

Source F

'At the headquarters of the Petrograd Military District . . . the night was a time of tense expectation. We were waiting for troops to arrive from the front. They had been summoned by me in good time and were due in Petrograd in the morning. But instead of the troops, all we got were telegrams and telephone messages saying that the railways were being sabotaged. The hours of the night dragged on painfully. From everywhere we expected reinforcements, but none appeared. There were endless telephone negotiations with the Cossack regiments. Under various excuses, the Cossacks stubbornly stuck to their barracks.' Kerensky recalling the night of the Bolshevik seizure of power

Source G

'The Ministers, who had sought refuge in the Winter Palace . . . were guarded only by a company of the Women's Battalion and a few of the cadets from the Military Schools. At six in the evening a message was sent into them calling on them to surrender immediately, but as no answer was received the attack on the Palace was opened by a few blank rounds being fired from the Fortress as a preliminary warning. This was followed by a massed onslaught from all sides, armoured cars and machine guns firing at the Palace from under the archway on the square, while now and then the guns of the Fortress or of the cruiser Aurora thundered and crashed above the general din Both the women soldiers and the cadets had put up a brave defence, but they were greatly outnumbered and when the Bolsheviks gained an entrance . . . the Ministers, gathered in one of the inner rooms, knew that their only hope lay in surrender.' Trotsky describing the storming of the Winter Palace

Source H

'About 11 o'clock we broke in the doors and we filtered up different stairways one by one, or in little bunches. When we got to the top of the stairs the officer cadets took away our guns; still our fellows kept coming up, little by little, until we had a majority. Then we turned around and we took away the cadets' guns.' A sailor who took part in the storming of the Winter Palace

Questions

1. Look at Source A. Kerensky's Provisional Government 'had no chance'. What reasons does the author give for this?
2. Look at Source B. By what name were Lenin's ideas here known?
3. Why did Lenin feel that the Revolution was not completed?
4. How did this view differ from that of most other Revolutionaries at this time?
5. Which 3 groups were Lenin's proposals intended to satisfy?
6. Why were these groups dissatisfied?
7. What two problems for the Provisional Government identified by the author of Source A are illustrated by Sources C and D?
8. Look at Source C. What was the 'criminal offensive of June 18'?
9. Why did it lead to the July Day's uprising?
10. How reliable is this account of the July Days?
11. Why was the uprising defeated?
12. Look at Source D. How did the Bolsheviks contribute to the defeat of General Kornilov?
13. By September 1917 Kerensky had defeated both left and right wing challenges to his government. How strong was his position at this time?
14. What was 'happening in the village in the army' (source E) in October 1917?
15. How had Kerensky alienated the peasants and soldiers?
16. 'An uprising of the peasants'. Is this a fair description of the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917?
17. Look at Source F. How does it illustrate the weakness of Kerensky's position by October 1917?
18. Look at Source G. What impression of the storming of the Winter Palace does Trotsky give?
19. How does it contrast with that given in Source H?
20. Explain which you think is the more reliable source.