

Disclaimer: This is a machine generated PDF of selected content from our databases. This functionality is provided solely for your convenience and is in no way intended to replace original scanned PDF. Neither Cengage Learning nor its licensors make any representations or warranties with respect to the machine generated PDF. The PDF is automatically generated "AS IS" and "AS AVAILABLE" and are not retained in our systems. CENGAGE LEARNING AND ITS LICENSORS SPECIFICALLY DISCLAIM ANY AND ALL EXPRESS OR IMPLIED WARRANTIES, INCLUDING WITHOUT LIMITATION, ANY WARRANTIES FOR AVAILABILITY, ACCURACY, TIMELINESS, COMPLETENESS, NON-INFRINGEMENT, MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE. Your use of the machine generated PDF is subject to all use restrictions contained in The Cengage Learning Subscription and License Agreement and/or the Gale In Context: World History Terms and Conditions and by using the machine generated PDF functionality you agree to forgo any and all claims against Cengage Learning or its licensors for your use of the machine generated PDF functionality and any output derived therefrom.

Russian Revolution

Date: 2020

From: Gale World History Online Collection

Publisher: Gale, a Cengage Company

Document Type: Event overview

Length: 832 words

Content Level: (Level 4)

Lexile Measure: 1110L

Full Text:

At the start of the 20th century, most Russians lived in poverty. Social and political unrest had been simmering for years. Russia's working-class majority began to assert themselves. They began organizing in protest against the ruling Romanov dynasty (1613–1917). Communism, a political theory developed sometime during the 19th century, became the means through which the workers eventually toppled the government. It also helped them to establish sweeping social and political changes across the nation.

Though the Russian Revolution (1917) marked a period of violence and political unrest, it helped pave the way for Russia's growth into a modern superpower during the 20th century.

Words to Know

Communism

a political philosophy that argues that all property in a society must be owned by the people

Duma

the Russian parliament

Soviet

Russian for "council" and the name for several political organizations active during the Russian Revolution

Background

Early in the 20th century, revolutionaries Vladimir Lenin (1870–1924) and Alexander Bogdanov (1873–1928) founded the Bolsheviks after breaking away from the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP). The Bolsheviks were a political party with Communist beliefs. Their rise to power came in the midst of increasing popular dissatisfaction over Romanov rule. The corrupt government was constantly undermined by controversy and political intrigue. Wars from the previous century had taken their toll on Russia's already weak and underdeveloped economy. The country was falling behind compared to modern, industrialized nations such as Germany and the United States.

The first major civil unrest in Russia at the start of the century was the 1905 revolution. During this revolution, the working class conducted a series of strikes throughout the nation. The strikes, which were initially peaceful, became violent when government troops fired on the protesters in an event known as "Bloody Sunday." The incident convinced the reigning czar, Nicholas II (1868–1918), to promise some reforms for the country, including the establishment of the Duma.

However, the czar was slow to implement these reforms. Additionally, Russia entered World War I (1914–1918) because of its political alliance with the Serbs. Russia found that it could not sustain the high costs of another war. It lacked the money and the technology and lost more people to the war than the other members of the Allied Powers. This worsened the domestic situation in Russia as more people starved while the country's resources went toward fueling the war effort. Finally, the Russians were driven to another revolution in 1917.

The February Revolution

The first of the 1917 Russian Revolutions took place from March 8–16. It was known as the February Revolution because Russia followed the Julian calendar at the time. This revolution took place in Petrograd (St. Petersburg), and it involved a series of demonstrations. It resulted in the end of the centuries-old Russian monarchy when Nicholas II decided to step down as head of state. He was later imprisoned with his family.

The first of a series of provisional governments was established in the wake of Nicholas II's abdication. The provisional governments

failed to gain the full support of the Russian people because the government officials wanted Russia to keep fighting in World War I. In the meantime, Lenin announced his plans to implement Communism in Russia. However, the provisional governments were against it. Russia was then ruled by a "dual power." This meant that the provisional government held state authority while the Bolsheviks had the support of the masses. Conflict between the two sides caused months of political unrest in Russia. It finally culminated in another revolution later that year.

The October Revolution

The Bolsheviks led another major revolution that November, though it was called the October Revolution because of the different calendars. During this revolution, which lasted only a few days, the Bolsheviks successfully overthrew the government and came into power. Lenin became the leader of the world's first Communist state. The new government then established the Cheka, a Soviet secret police which hunted down and killed the "enemies of the people" the Bolshevik rule which marked the start of a period of political repression known as the "Red Terror."

With the political chaos in Russia having settled down, the Bolsheviks turned their attentions to foreign policy. The First World War was still raging, but Russia no longer wanted to be involved. The Bolsheviks made a peace treaty with Germany (the 1918 Treaty of Brest-Litovsk) and pulled out of the war.

However, the Russian Civil War (1917–1922) broke out in the aftermath of the October Revolution. This time the major factions were the "Red Army," or the Bolsheviks, and the "White Army," a group of counter-revolutionaries composed of various political interest groups, including socialists who were not allied with the Bolsheviks. In the meantime, the Romanovs were executed by the Bolsheviks in 1918.

The war ended in a Bolshevik victory. A new state was established—the Soviet Union, or the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR, 1922–1991). Despite the political turmoil and economic difficulties experienced at the start of the century, the Soviet Union quickly grew to become one of the major world powers of the 20th century.

Critical Thinking Questions

- Why did the Russians rebel against the monarchy?
- How did the difficult conditions experienced by the Russian people lead to their embrace of Communism?
- What was the impact of World War I on the Russian Revolution?

Further Reading

"1917 Russian Revolution." Local Life. Accessed February 21, 2019. <https://www.local-life.com/st-petersburg/articles/1917-russian-revolution>.

Edele, Mark. "World politics explainer: the Russian revolution." The Conversation. October 12, 2018. <http://theconversation.com/world-politics-explainer-the-russian-revolution-100669>.

Figes, Orlando. "From Tsar to U.S.S.R.: Russia's Chaotic Year of Revolution." *National Geographic*. October 25, 2017. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/archaeology-and-hostiry/magazine/2017/09-10/russian-revolution-history-lenin/>.

"Russian Revolution." History.com. January 29, 2019. <https://www.history.com/topics/russia/russian-revolution>.

"Timeline of the Russian Revolution." British Library. Accessed February 21, 2019. <https://www.bl.uk/russian-revolution/articles/timeline-of-the-russian-revolution>.

Full Text: COPYRIGHT 2020 Gale, a Cengage Company

Source Citation (MLA 8th Edition)

"Russian Revolution." *Gale World History Online Collection*, Gale, 2020. *Gale In Context: World History*, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/AYIQVH660291915/WHIC?u=cobb90289&sid=WHIC&xid=5c4f1c45>. Accessed 14 Aug. 2020.

Gale Document Number: GALE|AYIQVH660291915