

# CAUSES OF THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION - 1917

## Who were the Bolsheviks?

The Bolsheviks were a revolutionary party - committed to the ideas of Karl Marx. They believed that the working classes would, at some point, liberate themselves from the economic and political control of the ruling classes. Once they had achieved this, a genuine socialist society based on equality, could be established. At the time of the February Revolution, which overthrew the Tsar, the Bolsheviks were still relatively weak. Most of their leaders, including Lenin, were in exile in Switzerland.

The chances of the Bolsheviks ever attaining power in Russia in early 1917 seemed remote.

## The Role of Trotsky

Trotsky became Chairman of the Petrograd Soviet and was head of the Military Revolutionary Committee. The MRC was established to protect Petrograd and allowed socialists to infiltrate the army. Trotsky had superb organisational and improvisational skills. His position in the Soviet allowed him to create the Red Guard. This was a Bolshevik militia, formed from armed factory workers, soldiers and sailors. Lenin returned to Petrograd in early October, determined to seize power quickly. The Provisional Government had announced that elections would take place in November and he was certain that the Bolsheviks would perform poorly. Trotsky took charge of planning the Bolshevik coup planned for the end of October.

## The October Revolution - The End

Trotsky led the Military Revolutionary Committee was able to secure the support of the Petrograd Garrison. Kerensky tried to arrest many of the Bolshevik leaders. In response, The Red Guards and Kronstadt sailors gained control of key locations in the city. This included the bridges, railway stations, and post office. On the 25th, they moved against the Provisional Government. The only defenders were a few officer cadets and the "Women's Battalion of Death" and troops remained in their barracks. By late evening the Palace was surrounded - workers and soldiers, were supported by Kronstadt sailors on board the cruiser Aurora. 26th of October, Red Guards entered the Winter Palace and arrested the members of the Government. There was little fighting.

## The Role of Lenin

In April 1917, assisted by Germans, Lenin returned to Russia from Switzerland. At once he took control and direction over the Bolsheviks. He began to stir up opposition to the Provisional Government. He prepared to seize power using a clear plan - first the Bolsheviks had to gain control of the Petrograd Soviet. Then they would take power in the name of the Soviet. The process would then be repeated in other cities. Lenin's energy and drive convinced the Bolsheviks to agree on this course of action. For the plan to work, it was necessary to increase Bolshevik support within the Soviets. Lenin developed Bolshevik policies with this aim in mind. These policies were outlined in his April Thesis. ( Soviet = elected council of / representing workers )

## The April Thesis

Lenin declared "All power to the Soviets". The Bolsheviks did not believe in the existence of the Provisional Government or an elected national assembly.

Lenin also promised "Peace, Land and Bread" to the masses.

**Peace** - Lenin could see that the Russian people wanted an end to the war. He declared they would make peace with the Germans.

**Land** - Bolsheviks support was concentrated in the cities with very little support among the peasants who made up the majority of the population. By offering them land, Lenin ensured that the peasants stayed neutral when the Bolsheviks made their bid for power.

**Bread** - Lenin claimed that the Bolsheviks could solve the food shortages that existed in the towns and cities



**STORMING OF THE WINTER PALACE**

## Continuation of the war - continued economic / food shortages.

The Russian people wanted the war to come to an end. However, the Provisional Government decided to continue Russia's involvement. They feared that foreign investment from Britain + France would cease in the event of a Russian withdrawal.

**The June Offensive + July Days** - The Provisional Government persisted with military campaigns. Alexander Kerensky, Minister of War, ordered the June Offensive of 1917, an attempt to push the Austrians back. However this failed and contributed to further protests during July. Food shortages led to further, widespread unrest in Petrograd - July 3rd to 6th. Unrest crushed by troops. Lenin fled to Finland. Soldiers on frontlines beginning to desert.

**The Kornilov Revolt** - In August 1917, Lavr Kornilov, a Russian General, made an attempt to seize power for himself. His army advanced on Petrograd. The Provisional Government, now under the leadership of Alexander Kerensky, seemed powerless to stop him. Kerensky called on the Petrograd Soviet to defend the city. This meant arming the Soviet - a move that would not be easy to reverse. This increased Bolshevik popularity as they were seen as defending the country, allowed them to organise rail strikes and infiltrate the army.

## Dual Power - Same Problems

After the abdication of the Tsar - little changed. The Provisional Government remained commitment to fighting in WW1 was unable to solve the economic problems that had been a key reason in Nicholas II's fall.

- The price of goods continued to increase.
- Food was in short supply.
- Fuel shortages made living conditions unbearable, especially during the harsh Russian winter.
- The government could not guarantee enough grain, ammunition or weapons for troops fighting in the war.
- The desire of peasants for control of land was not met. Seizures of land from landowners became widespread. This discredited the Provisional Government and strengthened the appeal of the Bolsheviks.

### Weaknesses of the Provisional Government



### Kerensky and the Provisional Government



### The July Days



### The Kornilov revolt

### Economic problems and continuation of war



### Economic and military shortages



### Continuation of World War I



### The Bolsheviks



### 16 April - Lenin returns from exile



### Lenin issues April Theses



### Trotsky president of The Petrograd Soviet



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The Role of Trotsky

The April Thesis



Continuation of the war -

The June Offensive + July Days -

The Kornilov Revolt -

The October Revolution - The End

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Economic problems and continuation of war

The Bolsheviks



Kerensky and the Provisional Government



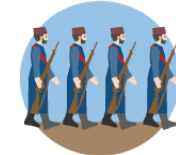
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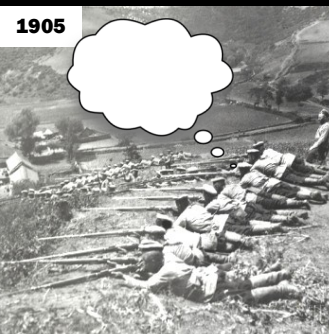
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# RUSSIA + REVOLUTION 1905 - 1917



Tsar Nicholas II + Family—The Romanov dynasty ruled Russia since 1613



1905

Nicholas was unpopular and Russians wanted reform. He thought a war with Japan would boost his popularity. Most expected Russia to win this war easily. Left: Japan's soldiers wait to fire on their enemy.

## MACHINE GUNS FROWN ON RUSSIAN MOBS

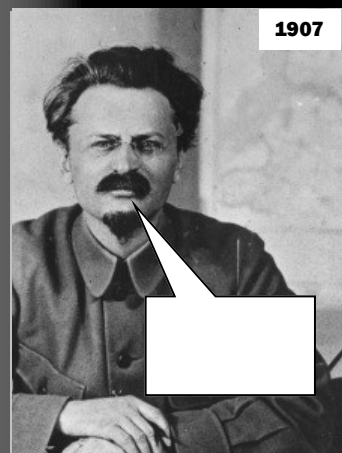
CROWDS IN THE STREETS HAVE GROWN MORE SULLEN, AND ADDITIONAL TROOPS HAVE BEEN PLACED ON GUARD.

Disorders Have Begun in Moscow, and Another Outbreak Is Feared. Britain Charged With F...

After a humiliating loss to Japan and food shortages in Russia - people took to the streets. Nicholas' army fired on its own people.



After the crushing of the revolution, tsar Nicholas promised to grant a number of concessions to the Russian people in the October Manifesto. One of the promises was sharing some of his power with the Duma—below are the members of the new Duma or Russian parliament.



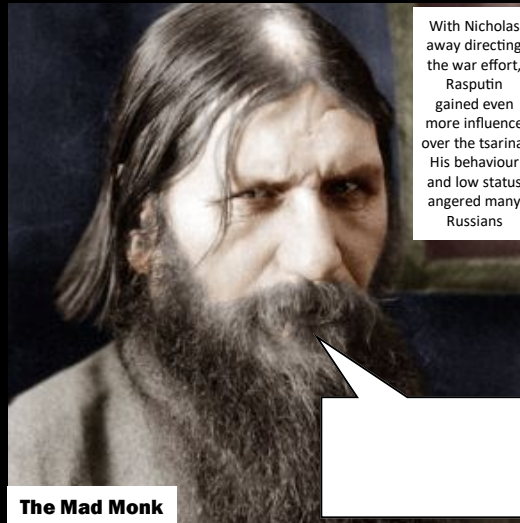
1907

But, Nicholas broke his promises. He ignored the Duma, closing it in 1907. He also arrested 'troublemakers' such as Leon Trotsky above.



1914

By 1914 Russia was at war again, this time fighting the Germans. Again the war went badly with the Russians losing millions of men. Nicholas decided he would go to the front and help command the army.



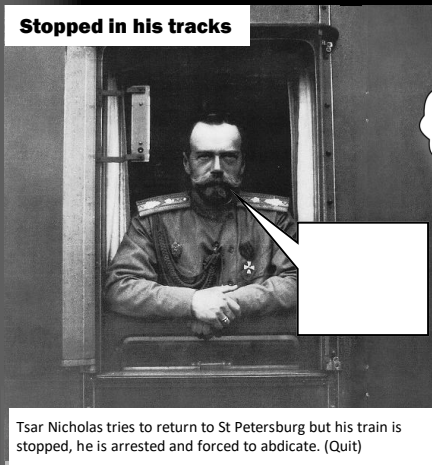
The Mad Monk

With Nicholas away directing the war effort, Rasputin gained even more influence over the tsarina. His behaviour and low status angered many Russians



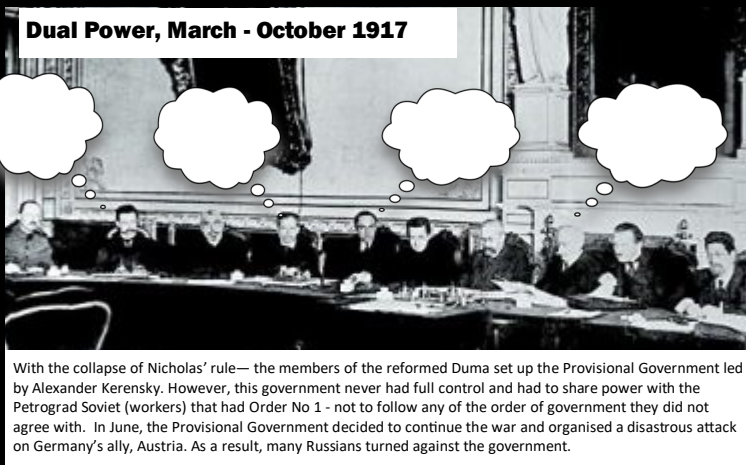
February - March 1917

With the war going badly, a freezing winter and food shortages crowds in Russia again marched against the tsar. This time soldiers refuse to fire on the people.



Stopped in his tracks

Tsar Nicholas tries to return to St Petersburg but his train is stopped, he is arrested and forced to abdicate. (Quit)



Dual Power, March - October 1917

With the collapse of Nicholas' rule—the members of the reformed Duma set up the Provisional Government led by Alexander Kerensky. However, this government never had full control and had to share power with the Petrograd Soviet (workers) that had Order No 1 - not to follow any of the order of government they did not agree with. In June, the Provisional Government decided to continue the war and organised a disastrous attack on Germany's ally, Austria. As a result, many Russians turned against the government.



The Russian people increasingly turned toward Vladimir Lenin. The leader of the Communist Bolshevik party, His slogan of 'Peace, land, and bread' and 'All Power to the Soviets' helped inspire the October Revolution of 1917.



Oct 1917

The Communist Bolshevik party take over Russia. It will now be renamed the USSR.