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# Revolutions in Russia

## TERMS & NAMES

- pogrom
- Trans-Siberian Railway
- Bolsheviks
- V. I. Lenin
- Duma
- Rasputin
- provisional government
- soviet

## MAIN IDEA

Long-term social unrest in Russia erupted in revolution, ushering in the first Communist government.

## WHY IT MATTERS NOW

The Communist Party controlled the Soviet Union until the country's breakup in 1991.

**SETTING THE STAGE** The Russian Revolution was like a firecracker with a very long fuse. The explosion came in 1917. Yet the fuse had been burning for nearly a century. The cruel, oppressive rule of most 19th-century czars caused widespread social unrest for decades. Anger over social inequalities and the ruthless treatment of peasants grew. The czars' unfair governing sparked many violent reactions. Army officers revolted in 1825. Hundreds of peasants rioted. Secret revolutionary groups formed and plotted to overthrow the government. In 1881, student revolutionaries were angry over the slow pace of political change. They assassinated the reform-minded czar, Alexander II. Russia was heading toward a full-scale revolution.

## Alexander III Upholds the Autocracy

In 1881, Alexander III succeeded his father, Alexander II, to the throne and halted all reforms in Russia. Like his grandfather, Nicholas I, Alexander III clung to the principles of autocracy, a government in which he had total power. Alexander III was determined to strengthen "autocracy, orthodoxy, and nationality." Anyone who questioned the absolute authority of the czar, worshiped outside the Russian Orthodox Church, or spoke a language other than Russian was tagged as dangerous.

To wipe out revolutionaries, Alexander III used harsh measures. He imposed strict censorship codes on published materials and written documents, including private letters. His secret police carefully watched both secondary schools and universities. Teachers had to send detailed reports on every student. Political prisoners were exiled to Siberia, a region of eastern and central Russia.

To establish a uniform Russian culture, Alexander III oppressed other national groups within Russia. He made Russian the official language of the empire and forbade the use of minority languages, such as Polish, in schools. Alexander made Jews the target of persecution. He subjected them to new laws that encouraged prejudice. Jews could not buy land or live among other Russians. Universities set strict quotas for Jewish students. A wave of **pogroms**—organized violence against Jews—broke out in many parts of Russia. Police and soldiers stood by and watched Russian citizens loot and destroy Jewish homes, stores, and synagogues.



Alexander III turned Russia into a police state, teeming with spies and informers.

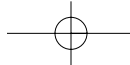
## THINK THROUGH HISTORY

### A. Summarizing

What methods did Alexander III use to maintain his authority over the Russian people?

## Nicholas II Resists Change

When Nicholas II became czar in 1894, he announced, "The principle of autocracy will be maintained by me as firmly and unswervingly as by my lamented father [Alexander III]." Nicholas stubbornly refused to surrender any of his power. His trust in the tradition of Russian autocracy blinded him to the changing conditions of his times. Yet the sweeping forces of change would override his pledge to preserve the czarist rule of Russia's past.



## SPOTLIGHT ON

### The Trans-Siberian Railway

The Trans-Siberian Railway ran about 5,800 miles across the vast area of Siberia, from Moscow to the city of Vladivostok on the Sea of Japan. Like the transcontinental railroad in the United States (built from 1863 to 1869), the Trans-Siberian Railway was constructed over difficult terrain and completed in sections.

To celebrate the opening of the Trans-Siberian Railway, Czar Nicholas II had the jewelry firm of Fabergé create a golden Easter egg (shown below) for Czarina Alexandra. The inscription on the silver band encircling the egg reads, "Great Siberian

Railway, 1900." Hidden inside the egg is a wonderful surprise—a miniature replica of a train studded with precious gems. The tiny engine is actually a wind-up toy that can pull the cars attached to it.



**Economic Growth and Its Impact** The number of factories more than doubled between 1863 and 1900. In spite of this, at the beginning of Nicholas II's reign, Russia lagged behind the industrial nations of western Europe. In the 1890s, Sergey Witte (VYEET·tyih), the czar's most capable minister, launched a program to move the country forward. Through higher taxes and foreign investments, Witte helped finance the buildup of Russian industries. Witte's steps also boosted the growth of heavy industry, particularly steel. By around 1900, Russia had become the world's fourth-ranking producer of steel. Only the United States, Germany, and Great Britain produced more steel.

Witte also pushed for the building of the great **Trans-Siberian Railway**—the world's longest continuous rail line. With the help of British and French investors, work began in 1891. The Trans-Siberian Railway was completed in 1904. It connected European Russia in the west with Russian ports on the Pacific Ocean in the east.

**The Revolutionary Movement Grows** Rapid industrialization also stirred discontent among the people of Russia. The growth of factories brought new problems. Among these problems were grueling working conditions, miserably low wages, and child labor. Trade unions were outlawed. Still, exploited laborers who worked in factories and built the railway lines organized strikes. Workers were unhappy with their low standard of living and lack of political power. The gap between rich and poor was enormous.

Amid the widespread unrest of workers and other members of Russian society, various revolutionary movements began to grow. They also competed for power. The group that would eventually succeed in establishing a new government in Russia followed the views of Karl Marx. These revolutionaries believed that the industrial class of workers

would overthrow the czar. The industrial class would then form "a dictatorship of the proletariat." In such a state, the workers would rule.

In 1903, Russian Marxists split into two groups over revolutionary tactics. The Mensheviks (MEHN·shuh·vihks) wanted a broad base of popular support for the revolution. The **Bolsheviks** (BOHL·shuh·vihks) supported a small number of committed revolutionaries willing to sacrifice everything for radical change.

The major leader of the Bolsheviks was Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov (ool·YAH·nuhf). He adopted the name of **Lenin**. He had an engaging personality and was an excellent organizer. He was also ruthless. These traits would ultimately help him gain command of the Bolsheviks. In the early 1900s, Lenin fled to western Europe to avoid arrest by the czarist regime. He maintained contact with other Bolsheviks. Lenin then waited until he could safely return to Russia.

## Crises at Home and Abroad

The revolutionaries would not have to wait long to realize their visions. Between 1904 and 1917, Russia faced a series of crises. These events showed the czar's weakness and paved the way for revolution.

**The Russo-Japanese War** In the late 1800s, Russia and Japan were imperialist powers. They both competed for control of Korea and Manchuria. The two nations signed a series of agreements over the territories, but Russia broke them. In retaliation, Japan attacked the Russians at Port Arthur, Manchuria, in February 1904.

Though Russian soldiers and sailors went confidently to war, the Japanese defeated them. News of repeated losses sparked unrest at home and led to revolt in the midst of the war.

### Vocabulary

**minister:** person in charge of an area of government, such as finance.

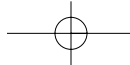
### THINK THROUGH HISTORY

#### B. Analyzing

**Causes** Why did industrialization in Russia lead to unrest?

### Background

Karl Marx, a 19th-century German philosopher, argued that the workers of the world would one day overthrow the ruling class and share equally in society's wealth.



**Bloody Sunday: The Revolution of 1905** On January 22, 1905, about 200,000 workers and their families approached the czar's Winter Palace in St. Petersburg. They carried a petition asking for better working conditions, more personal freedom, and an elected national legislature. Nicholas II was not at the palace. His generals and police chiefs were. They ordered the soldiers to fire on the crowd. Between 500 and 1,000 unarmed people were killed. Russians quickly named the event "Bloody Sunday." Lenin called the incident a "dress rehearsal" for the later revolution that would usher in a Communist regime.

Bloody Sunday provoked a wave of strikes and violence that spread across the country. Though Nicholas still opposed reform, in October 1905 he reluctantly promised more freedom. He approved the creation of the **Duma** (DOO-muh)—Russia's first parliament. The first Duma met in May 1906. Its leaders were moderates who wanted Russia to become a constitutional monarchy similar to Britain. Hesitant to share his power, the czar dissolved the Duma after ten weeks. Other Dumas would meet later. Yet none would have real power to make sweeping reforms.

**World War I: The Final Blow** In 1914, Nicholas II made the fateful decision to drag Russia into World War I. Russia, though, was unprepared to handle the military and economic costs. Russia's weak generals and poorly equipped troops were no match for the German army. Before a year had passed, more than 4 million Russian soldiers had been killed, wounded, or taken prisoner. German machine guns mowed down advancing Russians by the thousands. Defeat followed defeat. As in the Russo-Japanese War, Russia's involvement in World War I revealed the weaknesses of czarist rule and military leadership.

In 1915, Nicholas moved his headquarters to the war front. From there, he hoped to rally his discouraged troops to victory. His wife, Czarina Alexandra, ran the government while he was away. She ignored the czar's chief advisers. Instead, she continued to fall under the influence of the mysterious **Rasputin** (ras-PYOO-tihn)—a self-described "holy man." He claimed to have magical healing powers.

Alexis, Nicholas and Alexandra's son, suffered from hemophilia, a life-threatening disease. Rasputin seemed to ease the boy's symptoms. To show her gratitude, Alexandra allowed Rasputin to make key political decisions. He opposed reform measures and obtained powerful positions for his friends. He spread corruption throughout the royal court. In 1916, a group of nobles murdered Rasputin. They feared his increasing role in government affairs.

Meanwhile, the war was destroying the morale of Russian troops. Soldiers mutinied, deserted, or ignored orders. On the homefront, food and fuel supplies were dwindling. Prices were wildly inflated. People from all classes were clamoring for change and an end to the war. Neither Nicholas nor Alexandra proved capable of tackling these enormous problems.

## The March Revolution

In March 1917, women textile workers in Petrograd led a citywide strike. Soon afterward, riots flared up over shortages of bread and fuel. Nearly 200,000 workers swarmed the streets. At first the soldiers obeyed orders to shoot the rioters but later sided with them. The soldiers fired at their commanding officers and joined the rebellion. Large crowds gathered, shouting "Down with the autocracy!" and "Down with the war!"

### Vocabulary

**constitutional monarchy:** a form of government in which a single ruler heads the state and shares authority with elected lawmakers.

### Background

Hemophilia is a rare blood disease in which blood fails to clot. A deep cut may cause uncontrollable bleeding.

### Background

St. Petersburg was renamed Petrograd in 1914 because the original name seemed too German. In 1924, the name was changed to Leningrad. In 1991, the name St. Petersburg was restored.

## HISTORY MAKERS



**Rasputin**  
1872–1916

Born a peasant in Siberia, Rasputin became a religious teacher, although he was never ordained as a priest. The sinister monk seemed to cast a hypnotic spell on people, especially Czarina Alexandra and her ailing son. Rasputin's reputation for having mysterious powers followed him to his grave.

In December 1916, a small group of young aristocrats plotted his assassination because he was reportedly taking control of the government. They lured him to a mansion and fed him poisoned cakes. The poison apparently had no effect on Rasputin's extraordinary strength. The conspirators then shot him several times. Assuming he was finally dead, they threw him in the Neva River. When his body was discovered three days later, doctors confirmed the cause of his death—drowning.

Rasputin's death threw the czarina into shock. His prediction haunted her: "If I die or you desert me, in six months you will lose your son and your throne."





## CONNECT to TODAY

### DNA Solves the Mystery of Anastasia

For about 65 years after the execution of Czar Nicholas II and his family, a woman named Anna Anderson claimed that she was the Grand Duchess Anastasia, the czar's sole surviving daughter (circled above). According to Anna, she managed to escape her assassins.

Anna's regal manners and detailed knowledge about the Romanov family convinced many that she was telling the truth. Others believed she was a fraud seeking personal gain. Anna held fast to her story until her death in 1984.

In 1993, scientists finally solved the 75-year-old mystery. Prince Philip of Britain is a living descendant of Czarina Alexandra. Scientists compared his DNA to Anna Anderson's. The DNA proved that Anna was not a blood relative of the Romanovs. Instead, she carried the DNA of Polish peasants.

**The Czar Steps Down** The local protest exploded into a general uprising—the March Revolution. It forced Czar Nicholas II to abdicate his throne. A year later revolutionaries executed Nicholas and his family. The czarist rule of the Romanovs, which spanned over three centuries, had finally collapsed. The March Revolution succeeded in bringing down the czar. Yet it failed to set up a strong government to replace his regime.

Leaders of the Duma established a **provisional government**, or temporary government. It was eventually headed by Alexander Kerensky. His decision to continue fighting the war cost him the support of both soldiers and civilians. As the war dragged on, conditions inside Russia worsened. Angry peasants demanded land. City workers grew more radical. Social revolutionaries, competing for power, formed soviets. **Soviets** were local councils consisting of workers, peasants, and soldiers. In many cities, especially Petrograd, the soviets had more influence than the provisional government.

**Lenin Returns to Russia** The Germans launched their own “secret weapon” that would erode the provisional government's authority. They arranged Lenin's return to Russia after many years of exile. The Germans believed that Lenin and his Bolshevik supporters would stir unrest in Russia and hurt the Russian war effort. Traveling in a sealed railway boxcar, Lenin reached Petrograd in April 1917.

## The Bolshevik Revolution

Lenin and the Bolsheviks recognized their opportunity to seize power. They soon gained control of the Petrograd soviet, as well as the soviets in other major Russian cities. By the fall of 1917, people in the cities were rallying to the call, “All power to the soviets.” Lenin's slogan—“Peace, Land, and Bread”—was gaining widespread appeal. Lenin decided to take action.

**The Provisional Government Topples** In November 1917, without warning, Bolshevik Red Guards made up of armed factory workers stormed the Winter Palace in Petrograd. They took over government offices and arrested the leaders of the provisional government. The Bolshevik Revolution was over in a matter of hours. Kerensky and his colleagues disappeared almost as quickly as the czarist regime they had replaced.

### THINK THROUGH HISTORY

#### C. Making

**Inferences** Why did Kerensky's decision to continue fighting the war cost him the support of the Russian people?

## Causes and Effects of Two Russian Revolutions

Causes	Russian Revolutions of 1917	Effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Widespread discontent among all classes of Russian society</li> <li>Agitation from revolutionaries</li> <li>Weak leadership of Czar Nicholas II</li> <li>Defeat in Russo-Japanese War (1905)</li> <li>Bloody Sunday (1905)</li> <li>Losses in World War I</li> <li>Strikes and riots</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Abdication of Czar Nicholas</li> <li>Failure of provisional government</li> <li>Growing power of soviets</li> <li>Lenin's return to Russia</li> <li>Bolshevik takeover under Lenin</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Civil war (1918–1920)</li> <li>Czar and his family killed—end of czarist rule</li> <li>Peace with Germany under Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (1918)</li> <li>Bolshevik control of government</li> <li>Russian economy in ruins</li> </ul>

### SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Charts

- Based on the chart, form a generalization about why the Russian Revolutions occurred.
- What similarities exist between the causes of the Revolution and the effects?

## Russian Revolution and Civil War, 1905–1922



### GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Maps

- Region** What was the extent (north to south, east to west) of the Bolshevik territory in 1919?
- Region** What European countries were no longer within Russian boundaries by 1922 because of the Brest-Litovsk treaty?

**Bolsheviks in Power** Lenin's next step was tackling the problems he inherited from czarist rule. Within days after the Bolshevik takeover, Lenin ordered that all farmland be distributed among the peasants. Lenin and the Bolsheviks gave control of factories to the workers. The Bolshevik government also signed a truce with Germany to stop all fighting on the eastern war front and began peace talks.

In March 1918, Russia and Germany signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. The price of peace was costly. Russia surrendered a large chunk of its territory to Germany and its allies. The humiliating terms of this treaty triggered widespread anger among many Russians. They objected to the Bolsheviks and their policies.

**Civil War Rages in Russia** Still recovering from their painful losses of land to Germany, the Bolsheviks now faced a new challenge—stamping out their enemies at home. Their opponents formed the White Army. The revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky, who helped negotiate the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, expertly commanded the Bolshevik Red Army. From 1918 to 1920, civil war raged in Russia. Several Western nations, including the United States, sent military aid and forces to Russia to help the White Army.

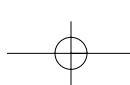
Russia's civil war proved far more deadly than the earlier revolutions. Around 15 million Russians died in the three-year struggle and in the famine that followed. The destruction and loss of life from fighting, hunger, and a worldwide flu epidemic left Russia in chaos.

In the end the Red Army triumphed and finally crushed all opposition to Bolshevik rule. The victory showed that the Bolsheviks were able both to seize power and to maintain it. Yet in the aftermath of the civil war, Lenin and the Bolsheviks faced overwhelming problems.



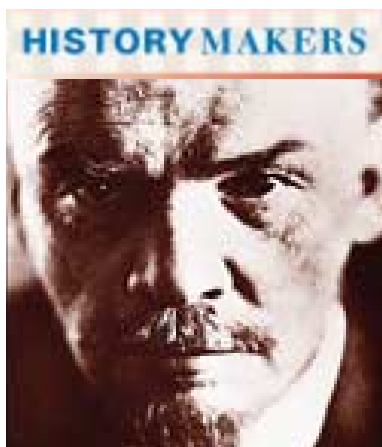
During the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, these Petrograd workers seized an armored car from the provisional government's forces.

**THINK THROUGH HISTORY**  
**D. Identifying Problems** What problems did Lenin and the Bolsheviks face after the revolution?



## Lenin Restores Order

War and revolution destroyed the Russian economy. Trade was at a standstill. Industrial production dropped and many skilled workers fled to other countries. Lenin, who helped mastermind the Bolshevik Revolution, shifted his role. He turned to reviving the economy and restructuring the government.



**V. I. Lenin**  
1870–1924

A brilliant student, Lenin enrolled in law school as a young man but was expelled for taking part in a student protest meeting. In 1887, when he was 17, his brother, Alexander, was hanged for plotting to kill the czar. Legend has it that this event turned Lenin into a revolutionary.

Though Alexander's execution influenced Lenin, Lenin already harbored feelings against the government. By the early 1900s, he planned to overthrow the czar. After 1917, Russians revered him as the "Father of the Revolution."

Following Lenin's death in 1924, the government placed his tomb in Red Square in Moscow. His preserved body, encased in a bulletproof, glass-topped coffin, is still on display. Many Russians, though, favor moving Lenin's corpse away from public view.

**New Economic Policy** In March 1921, Lenin launched the New Economic Policy (NEP) by temporarily putting aside his plan for a state-controlled economy. Instead, he resorted to a small-scale version of capitalism. The reforms under the NEP allowed peasants to sell their surplus crops instead of turning them over to the government. Individuals could buy and sell goods for profit. The government kept control of major industries, banks, and means of communication, but it let some small factories, businesses, and farms operate under private ownership. Lenin also tried to encourage foreign investment.

**Political Reforms** The many different nationalities within Russia had always posed an obstacle to national unity. Communist leaders also saw nationalism as a threat to unity and party loyalty. To keep nationalism in check, Lenin organized Russia into several self-governing republics under the central government. In 1922, the country was named the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), in honor of the councils that helped launch the Bolshevik Revolution. Each republic was controlled from the new capital—Moscow.

The Bolsheviks also renamed their party the Communist Party. The name came from the writings of Karl Marx. He had used the word *communism* to describe the classless society that would exist after workers had seized power. In 1924, the Communists created a constitution based on socialist and democratic principles. In reality, the Communist Party held all the power. Lenin had established a dictatorship of the Communist Party, not "a dictatorship of the proletariat," as Marx had promoted.

Thanks partly to the new policies and to the peace that followed the civil war, the USSR slowly recovered. By 1928, the country's farms and factories were producing as much as they had before World War I.

Lenin did not live to see this recovery. He had several strokes and spent the last 18 months of his life as a semi-invalid. His death in 1924 opened a power struggle for control of the party and the country. You will learn about the outcome of this struggle in Section 2.

### THINK THROUGH HISTORY

**E. Making Inferences** What steps did the Communist government take to prevent nationalism from threatening the new state created by the Russian Revolution?

## Section 1 Assessment

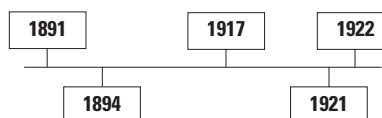
### 1. TERMS & NAMES

Identify

- pogrom
- Trans-Siberian Railway
- Bolsheviks
- V. I. Lenin
- Duma
- Rasputin
- provisional government
- soviet

### 2. TAKING NOTES

Create a time line like the one below to show significant events during the last phases of czarist rule and the beginning of Communist rule.



Write a paragraph explaining one of these events in more detail.

### 3. EVALUATING DECISIONS

What do you think were Czar Nicholas II's worst errors in judgment during his rule? Why?

**THINK ABOUT**

- the czar's military decisions
- the political outcome of "Bloody Sunday"

### 4. ANALYZING THEMES

**Revolution** Why was Lenin's leadership crucial to the success of the Russian Revolution?

**THINK ABOUT**

- Lenin's personal traits
- his slogan—"Peace, Land, and Bread"
- his role in organizing the Bolsheviks
- his role after the Revolution