

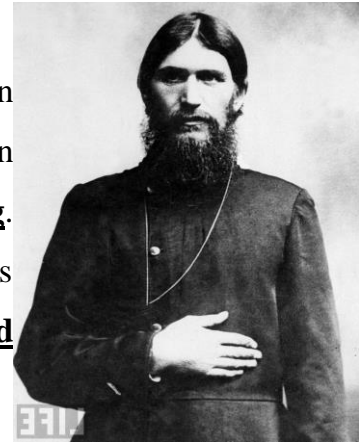
RUSSIAN REVOLUTION.

World War I.

Russia was unprepared militarily and technologically for the new concept of total war of World War I. Russian industry was unable to produce the weapons needed for the army. Soldiers were sent to the front without rifles and told to pick one up from a dead comrade. Russia had no competent military leaders and Tsar/Czar Nicholas II insisted on taking personal charge of the armed forces despite his obvious lack of ability and training. As a result, between 1914 and 1916 two million soldiers were killed and more than five million were wounded or captured by the German.

Rasputin: the power behind the throne.

Grigori Rasputin claimed to be a holy man and got influence over the queen Alexandra. Prince Alexis, the heir to the throne, had hemophilia (a deficiency in the ability of the blood to clot) and Rasputin seemed able to stop the bleeding. With the Tsar at the battlefront, Alexandra made all of the important decisions and insisted on first consulting Rasputin. Finally, some aristocrats assassinated Rasputin in December 1916.



February/March Revolution.

At the beginning of March 1917, there were a series of strikes led by working-class women in the capital city of Petrograd (formerly, Saint Petersburg). That was the reaction of the people against the bread rationing and the increased price of the bread. On March 8th, about 10,000 women marched through the city demanding “Peace and bread” and “Down with Autocracy”. A general strike shut down all the factories. Nicholas II ordered troops to shoot the crowds, however, soldiers joined the demonstrators and refused to fire.

The Duma (Parliament) established a provisional government and urged the Tsar to resign. As he had no support from the army or the aristocracy, Nicholas II abdicated on his brother, Grand Duke Michael. The Duma appointed a provisional government led by Alexander Kerensky. Pressured by the Allies (France, UK) Kerensky decided to carry on the war, which unsatisfied workers and peasants, who wanted above all the end of the war.

The government also faced the opposition of the soviets: councils composed of representatives from the workers and the soldiers. The soviet of Petrograd was the most powerful, led by the Bolsheviks. Leon Trotsky was the head of the Soviet.

The Rise of Lenin.

The Bolsheviks were a small faction of a party called the Russian Social Democrats. The leader of the Bolsheviks was Lenin. He believed that only a violent revolution could destroy the capitalist

system. He declared: “A vanguard of activists must form a small party of well disciplined professional revolutionaries to accomplish the task”.

When the revolution began Lenin was exiled in Switzerland. In April 1917 German military leaders hoping to create disorder in Russia, shipped Lenin to Russia in a sealed train to prevent their ideas from “infecting” Germany.

After the fall of the Tsar, Lenin saw the opportunity for the Bolsheviks to **seize** power. When Lenin finally **addressed** the party he promised the end of the war, the redistribution of all land to the peasants, transfer the factories and industries from capitalists to committees of workers and transfer the power from the provisional government to the soviets. These were the slogans of Lenin:

“Peace, land and bread”, “Worker control of the production” and “All power to the Soviets”.

October/November Revolution.

By the end of October the Soviets were strong enough to claim power. During the night of November 6th, Bolsheviks forces seized the Winter Palace and the provisional government quickly collapsed. As the **overthrow** of the government coincided with a meeting of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets (which represented local soviets from all over the country), Lenin turned over the power of the government to the Congress of Soviets led by the Council of Commissars, headed by Lenin and including Trotsky and Stalin.



As Lenin had promised peace, on March 3rd, 1918, signed the Treaty of Brest Litovsk with Germany and gave up Poland, Ukraine, Finland and the Baltic States.

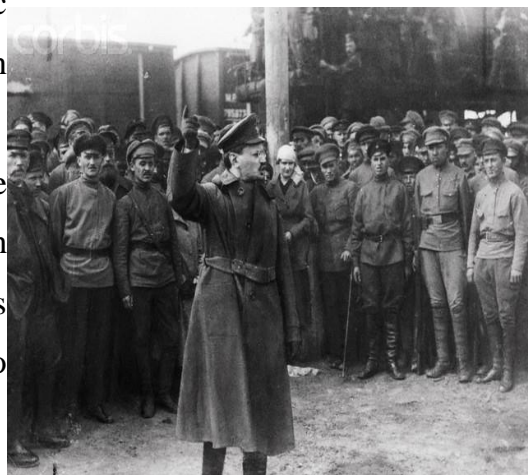
The Civil War.

People opposing the Communist Regime included loyal to the Tsar, liberals and anti-Leninist socialists. The Allies were extremely **concerned** about the Communist Revolution and sent thousands of troops, material and ammunitions to aid the anti-Communists forces (called the Whites). Between 1918 and 1921 the Communist Red Army fought on many fronts against the White Army. But the



disunity of the White Army forces **weakened** their efforts and had no common goal. Some Whites insisted on restoring the Tsar, others defended a democratic program. By the end of 1920, most of White Forces had been defeated and Ukraine retaken.

Finally, the Communists appealed to patriotism to fight the White Army as thousand of foreign troops were **stationed** in Russia in support of the Whites. The presence of foreign troops made it easy for the Communist to call on patriotic russians to fight foreign attempts to control the country.



War Communism.

The Red Army was a well disciplined fighting force led by Leon Trotsky. The War Communism was a policy used to ensure regular supplies for the Red Army and centralize the state administration under communist control. The communist government controlled the banks, industries and seize of grain from peasants.

Another Communist instrument of control was the terror inspired by a new secret police. The aimed was to destroy of all those who opposed the new regime.

The Royal Family.

After the Czar abdicated, he, his wife and their five children were moved to Ekaterinburg, in the Urals. On the night of July 16th 1918, members of the local soviets murdered the Czar and his family and burned their bodies.



ACTIVITIES.

1. Who was Rasputin?.

2. How was the economic situation in Russia before the Revolution?.

3. What is a Soviet?.

4. Who was Lenin? What were the first political measures approved by Lenin after the Bolsheviks seized power?.

5. What was the Council of Commissars? Who were the three most important members?.

6. Explain the Brest Litovsk Peace Treaty.

7. Who was Trotsky? How did the Communist win the Civil War?.

8. Who were the "Whites"? Why did they fail in the Civil War?.

9. Who was Stalin?.

10. What happened to the Royal Family after the Communist Coup?.
