

Russia: Reaction and Reform

By 1800 Western Europe had fully entered the industrial age. Russia, on the other hand, saw little economic growth. The **czars** feared change might weaken their control. Also, a rigid system of social classes blocked progress.

- Wealthy nobles owned all farmlands. They cared little for industry.
- The Middle Class was too small to have any power
- Most Russians were serfs who toiled for the landowners

As long as people served masters, Russia could not move forward!

Alexander II freed the serfs in 1861. His few reforms did not satisfy many Russians. He was killed in 1881.

His son, Alexander III persecuted all non-Russians. He insisted on one language, Russian, and one church, Russian Orthodox. Russian Jews were beaten and killed in attacks known as **pogroms**. Many Jews fled Russia to other lands.

Under Alexander II and then his son Nicholas II, Russia at last entered the industrial age. However the factory owners were just as unfair as the nobles had been.

On January 22, 1905, a priest led marchers to the palace of the czar. They called for an end to poverty and a voice in government. Soldiers opened fire and killed hundred of the demonstrators. That day, known as **Bloody Sunday** sparked a revolution.

In 1905, Nicholas II agreed to set up an elected **Duma** (body of lawmakers). However, its powers were limited. Unrest among peasants and workers did not end.

The Russian Revolution of 1905

Causes

- Low spirits after defeat in 1904 war with Japan
- Poverty and bad working conditions
- Corrupt government
- Persecution of minority groups

Results of the Russian Revolution of 1905

- The "October Manifesto" – Czar Nicholas II announces reforms and new freedoms
- Nicholas II sets up the Duma which must approve all laws
- Nicholas II dissolves the first Duma when its leaders criticize the government
- Pogroms continue
- New voting laws limit powers of the Dumas

In 1917 Russia was in deep trouble. More than one million soldiers had died in World War I. There was not enough food and citizens were starving. Many people blamed Czar Nicholas II for these problems.

A strike of workers began a revolution in March. A new government seized power and promised to be democratic. However this government decided to continue the war against Germany. This decision drained more men, money and food out of the Russian economy.

Vladimir Lenin, an enemy of the czar returned to Russia in April from exile in Switzerland He and his followers, the **Bolsheviks**, started a second revolution. Lenin called for a classless society based on the socialist teachings of the German Karl Marx. He and his Bolsheviks promised “**Peace, Land and Bread**” and quickly won control of the government in November 1917.

Lenin’s government set up councils called **soviets** to govern the nation. Lenin made peace with Germany, but for the next three years faced unrest in Russia.

Russians had expected democracy. But they found that the Bolsheviks, now called Communists, ran the soviets. A civil war erupted when rebel forces (**White Army**) fought against Lenin’s **Red Army**. By 1921 the Communists had defeated the rebels.

RUSSIA, 1917

The March Revolution

Causes

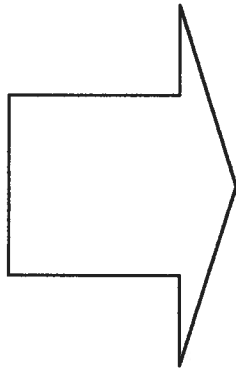
- Heavy loss of lives in WWI
- Food shortages
- Military defeats
- Power-hungry rulers

Goals

- Overthrow the czar
- Set up new Russian republic

Results

- End of czarist rule
- Beginnings of a constitution
- Continued war with Germany



The November Revolution

Causes

- Continued loss of lives in WWI
- Continued food shortages
- Continued military defeats
- Return of Lenin

Goals

- Bolshevik overthrow of government
- Ideals of Karl Marx applied to Russia

Results

- Bolshevik-run soviets control government
- End of private ownership of land
- Peace with Germany
- Outbreak of civil war