

# The Russian Revolution

## GUIDE TO READING

### The BIG Idea

**Struggle for Rights** The fall of the czarist regime and the Russian Revolution put the Communists in power in Russia.

### Content Vocabulary

- soviets (p. 774)
- war communism (p. 777)

### Academic Vocabulary

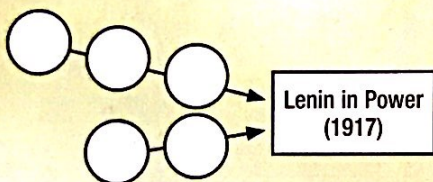
- revolution (p. 774)
- aid (p. 776)

### People and Places

- Grigory Rasputin (p. 772)
- Alexandra (p. 772)
- Petrograd (p. 773)
- Aleksandr Kerensky (p. 774)
- Bolsheviks (p. 774)
- V. I. Lenin (p. 774)
- Ukraine (p. 776)
- Siberia (p. 776)
- Urals (p. 777)
- Leon Trotsky (p. 777)

### Reading Strategy

**Categorizing Information** As you read, use a chart like the one below to identify the factors and events that led to Lenin coming to power in 1917.



*As the world anxiously waited to learn of developments along the fronts of World War I, Russia stirred internally with unrest. The Romanov dynasty of Russia ended when Czar Nicholas II stepped down and a provisional government was put in power. Seizing the opportunity that the instability offered, the Bolsheviks under V. I. Lenin overthrew the provisional government. By 1921, the Communists were in total command of Russia.*

## Background to Revolution

**MAIN IDEA** Worker unrest and the Russian czar's failures in the war led to revolution in March 1917.

**HISTORY & YOU** Recall the causes of the French Revolution. Then, read to learn what caused the Russian Revolution.

After its defeat by Japan in 1905, and the Revolution of 1905, Russia was unprepared both militarily and technologically for the total war of World War I. Russia had no competent military leaders. Even worse, Czar Nicholas II insisted on taking personal charge of the armed forces in spite of his obvious lack of ability and training.

In addition, Russian industry was unable to produce the weapons needed for the army. Supplies and munitions were rarely at the places where they needed to be. Many soldiers trained using broomsticks. Others were sent to the front without rifles and told to pick one up from a dead comrade.

Given these conditions, it is not surprising that the Russian army suffered incredible losses. Between 1914 and 1916, 2 million soldiers were killed, and another 4 to 6 million were wounded or captured. By 1917, the Russian will to fight had vanished.

## Beginnings of Upheaval

An autocratic ruler, Czar Nicholas II relied on the army and bureaucracy to hold up his regime. He was further cut off from events when a man named **Grigory Rasputin** (ra•SPYOO•tuhn) began to influence the czar's wife, **Alexandra**.

Rasputin gained Alexandra's confidence through her son, Alexis, who had hemophilia (a deficiency in the ability of the blood to clot). Alexandra believed that Rasputin had extraordinary powers, for he alone seemed to be able to stop her son's bleeding. With the czar at the battlefield, Alexandra made all of the important decisions after consulting Rasputin. His influence made him an important power behind the throne. Rasputin often interfered in government affairs.

**RUSSIAN REVOLUTION AND CIVIL WAR, 1917-1922**



- Boundary of Russia, 1914
- ★ Center of revolutionary (Bolshevik) activity, 1917-1918
- ← White Russian (anti-Bolshevik) or Allied attack, 1918-1920
- Land lost by Russia (Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, 1918)
- Area under Bolshevik control, October 1919
- Western Russia, 1922

0 400 kilometers  
0 400 miles  
Lambert Azimuthal Equal-Area projection

**Geography SKILLS**

1. **Regions** Compare the western boundary of Russia in 1914 and 1918. What happened to the boundary after the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk?
2. **Place** Where were most of the Bolsheviks' activities located?

As the leadership at the top stumbled its way through a series of military and economic disasters, the Russian people grew more and more upset with the czarist regime. Even conservative aristocrats who supported the monarchy felt the need to do something to save the situation. They assassinated Rasputin in December 1916. It was not easy to kill Rasputin. They shot him three times and then tied him up and threw him into the Neva River. Rasputin drowned but not before he had managed to untie the knots underwater. The killing of Rasputin occurred too late, however, to save the monarchy.

**The March Revolution**

At the beginning of March 1917, working-class women led a series of strikes in the capital city of **Petrograd** (St. Petersburg), helping to change Russian history. A few weeks earlier, the government had started bread rationing in Petrograd after the price of bread had skyrocketed.

Many of the women who stood in the lines waiting for bread were also factory workers who worked 12-hour days. Exhausted and distraught over their half-starving and sick children, the women finally revolted.

**History ONLINE**  
Student Web Activity—  
Visit [glencoe.com](http://glencoe.com) and complete the activity on the Russian royal family.

On March 8, about 10,000 women marched through the city of Petrograd demanding "Peace and Bread" and "Down with Autocracy." Other workers joined them, and together they called for a general strike. The strike shut down all the factories in the city on March 10.

Alexandra wrote her husband Nicholas II at the battlefront: "This is a hooligan movement. If the weather were very cold they would all probably stay at home." Nicholas ordered troops to break up the crowds by shooting them if necessary. Soon, however, large numbers of the soldiers joined the demonstrators and refused to fire on the crowds.

The Duma, or legislative body, which the czar had tried to dissolve, met anyway. On March 12, it established the provisional government, which mainly consisted of middle-class Duma representatives. This government urged the czar to step down. Because he no longer had the support of the army or even the aristocrats, Nicholas II reluctantly agreed and stepped down on March 15, ending the 300-year-old Romanov dynasty.

## Provisional Government

The provisional government, headed by **Aleksandr Kerensky** (keh•REHN•skee), now decided to carry on the war to preserve Russia's honor. This decision to remain in World War I was a major blunder. It satisfied neither the workers nor the peasants, who were tired and angry from years of suffering and wanted above all an end to the war.

The government was also faced with a challenge to its authority—the **soviets**. The soviets were councils composed of representatives from the workers and soldiers. The soviet of Petrograd had been formed in March 1917. At the same time, soviets sprang up in army units, factory towns, and rural areas. The soviets, largely made up of socialists, represented the more radical interests of the lower classes. One group—the Bolsheviks—came to play a crucial role.

 **Reading Check** Identifying Develop a sequence of events leading to the March Revolution.

## From Czars to Communists

**MAIN IDEA** Lenin and the Bolsheviks gained control and quickly overthrew the provisional government.

**HISTORY & YOU** How has political change happened in the United States? Read to learn how Lenin proposed to make changes in Russia.

The **Bolsheviks** began as a small faction of a Marxist party called the Russian Social Democrats. The Bolsheviks came under the leadership of Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov (ool•YAH•nuhf), known to the world as **V. I. Lenin**.

Under Lenin's direction, the Bolsheviks became a party dedicated to violent **revolution**. Lenin believed that only violent revolution could destroy the capitalist system. A "vanguard" (forefront) of activists, he said, must form a small party of well-disciplined, professional revolutionaries to accomplish the task.

## Lenin and the Bolsheviks

Between 1900 and 1917, Lenin spent most of his time abroad. When the provisional government was formed in March 1917, he saw an opportunity for the Bolsheviks to seize power. In April 1917, German military leaders, hoping to create disorder in Russia, shipped Lenin to Russia. Lenin and his associates were in a sealed train to prevent their ideas from infecting Germany.

Lenin's arrival in Russia opened a new stage of the Russian Revolution. Lenin maintained that the soviets of soldiers, workers, and peasants were ready-made instruments of power. He believed that the Bolsheviks should work toward gaining control of these groups and then use them to overthrow the provisional government.

At the same time, the Bolsheviks reflected the discontent of the people. They promised an end to the war. They also promised to redistribute all land to the peasants, to transfer factories and industries from capitalists to committees of workers, and to transfer government power from the provisional government to the soviets. Three simple slogans summed up the Bolshevik

program: "Peace, Land, Bread," "Worker Control of Production," and "All Power to the Soviets."

## The Bolsheviks Seize Power

By the end of October, Bolsheviks made up a slight majority in the Petrograd and Moscow soviets. The number of party members had grown from 50,000 to 240,000. With Leon Trotsky, a dedicated revolutionary, as head of the Petrograd soviet, the Bolsheviks were in a position to claim power in the name of the soviets. During the night of November 6, Bolshevik forces

seized the Winter Palace, the seat of the provisional government. The government quickly collapsed with little bloodshed.

This overthrow coincided with a meeting of the all-Russian Congress of Soviets, which represented local soviets country-wide. Outwardly, Lenin turned over the power of the provisional government to the Congress of Soviets. The real power, however, passed to a council headed by Lenin.

The Bolsheviks, who soon renamed themselves the Communists, still had a long way to go. Lenin had promised peace; and that, he realized, would not be an easy task.

# TURNING POINT

The Russian Revolution was the most violent and radical revolution since the French Revolution. In March 1917, the czar abdicated and a provisional government took control. Then, led by V. I. Lenin, the Bolsheviks seized power in November 1917. This marked a new era of Soviet rule. Russia had become the world's first socialist state, and Lenin intended for the revolution to spread.

The day after the Bolsheviks seized the Winter Palace, Lenin addressed the Russian people. In his speech he outlined the goals of the Bolsheviks. These goals threatened the governments of Western Europe:

## THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

"The first thing is the adoption of practical measures to realize peace. . . . We shall offer peace to the peoples of all the warring countries upon the basis of the Soviet terms—no annexations, no indemnities, and the right of self-determination of peoples. . . . This proposal of peace will meet with resistance on the part of the imperialist governments. . . . But we hope that revolution will soon break out in all the warring countries. This is why we address ourselves especially to the workers of France, England, and Germany."

—V. I. Lenin, quoted in *Ten Days that Shook the World*, by John Reed, 1919

The Winter Palace housed the provisional government after Nicholas stepped down. It had been the home of every Russian czar from Catherine the Great to Nicholas II.

### CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Georgiy Savitsky's painting *Assault on the Winter Palace* depicts the events of November 6, 1917.

1. **Analyzing** Why did the Bolsheviks choose the Winter Palace as the place to attack?
2. **Explaining** Why is the Russian Revolution considered a turning point?

Communism in Russia

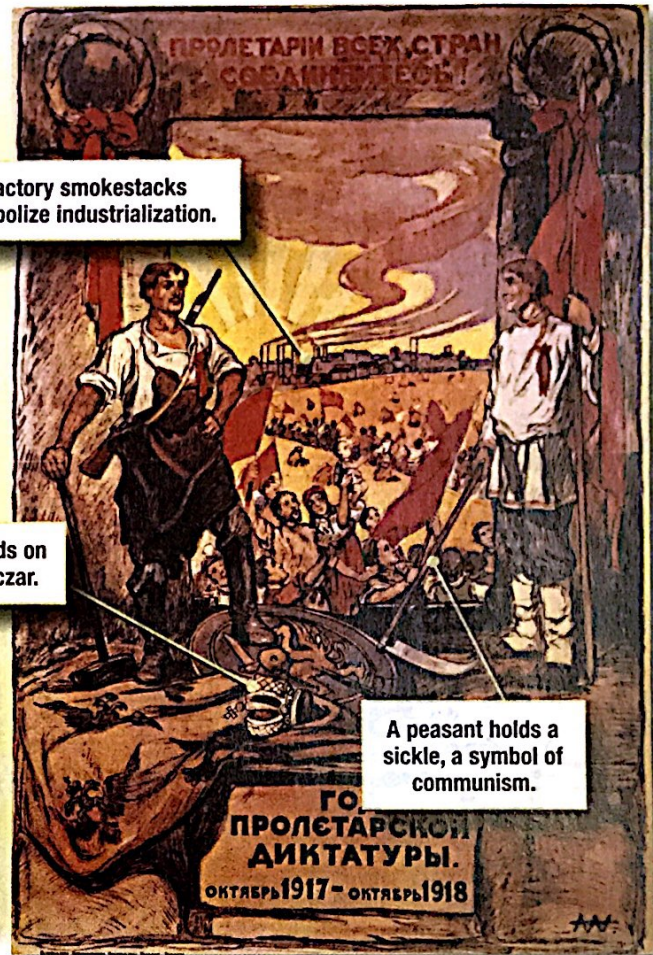
"Communism is Soviet power plus the electrification of the whole country. Otherwise the country will remain a small-peasant country. . . . We are weaker than capitalism, not only on a world scale, but also within the country. That is common knowledge. . . . We shall see to it that the economic basis is transformed from a small-peasant basis into a large-scale industrial basis. Only when the country has been electrified, and industry, agriculture and transport have been placed on the technical basis of modern large-scale industry, only then shall we be fully victorious."

—V. I. Lenin, remarks to the Congress of Soviets, 1920

DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTIONS

*Year of the Proletarian Dictatorship* is a propaganda poster created in 1918 by the Russian artist Aleksandr Apsit. It illustrates some of the goals of the Communists after the Russian Revolution.

1. **Making Inferences** What were two major goals of the Communists after the Russian Revolution? Explain.
2. **Analyzing** Why do you think a communist revolution occurred in Russia rather than an industrialized nation?



Factory smokestacks symbolize industrialization.

A blacksmith stands on the crown of the czar.

A peasant holds a sickle, a symbol of communism.

It would mean the humiliating loss of much Russian territory. There was no real choice, however.

On March 3, 1918, Lenin signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Germany and gave up eastern Poland, **Ukraine**, Finland, and the Baltic provinces. To his critics, Lenin argued that it made no difference. The spread of the socialist revolution throughout Europe would make the treaty largely irrelevant. In any case, he had promised peace to the Russian people. Real peace did not come, however, because the country soon sank into civil war.

Civil War in Russia

Many people were opposed to the new Bolshevik, or Communist, government. These people included not only groups loyal to the czar but also liberal and anti-Leninist socialists. Many liberals supported a constitutional monarchy, while a number of socialists supported gradual reform. These socialists expected to work for a socialist state under more democratic

leaders than Lenin. They were joined by the Allies, who were extremely concerned about the Communist takeover.

The Allies sent thousands of troops to various parts of Russia in the hope of bringing Russia back into the war. The Allied forces rarely fought on Russian soil, but they gave material aid to anti-Communist forces. Between 1918 and 1921, the Communist, or Red, Army fought on many fronts against these opponents.

The first serious threat to the Communists came from **Siberia**. An anti-Communist, or White, force attacked and advanced almost to the Volga River before being stopped. Attacks also came from the Ukrainians and from the Baltic regions. In mid-1919, White forces swept through Ukraine and advanced almost to Moscow before being pushed back.

By 1920, however, the major White forces had been defeated and Ukraine retaken. The next year, the Communist regime regained control over the independent nationalist governments in Georgia, Russian Armenia, and Azerbaijan (A•zuhr•by•JAHN).

The royal family was another victim of the civil war. After the czar abdicated, he, his wife, and their five children had been held as prisoners. In April 1918, they were moved to Yekaterinburg, a mining town in the **Urals**. On the night of July 16, members of the local soviet murdered the czar and his family and burned their bodies in a nearby mine shaft.

## Triumph of the Communists

How had Lenin and the Communists triumphed in the civil war over such overwhelming forces? One reason was that the Red Army was a well-disciplined fighting force. This was largely due to the organizational genius of **Leon Trotsky**. As commissar of war, Trotsky reinstated the draft and insisted on rigid discipline. Soldiers who deserted or refused to obey orders were executed on the spot.

Furthermore, the disunity of the anti-Communist forces weakened their efforts. Political differences created distrust among the Whites. Some Whites insisted on restoring the czarist regime. Others wanted a more liberal and democratic program. The Whites, then, had no common goal.

The Communists, in contrast, had a single-minded sense of purpose. Inspired by their vision of a new socialist order, the Communists had both revolutionary zeal and strong convictions. They were also able to translate their revolutionary faith into practical instruments of power. A policy of **war communism**, for example, was used to ensure regular supplies for the Red Army. War communism meant the government controlled the banks and most industries, seized grain from peasants, and centralized state administration under Communist control.

Another instrument was Communist revolutionary terror. A new Red secret police—known as the Cheka—began a Red Terror. Aimed at destroying all those who opposed the new regime (much like the Reign of Terror in the French Revolution), the Red Terror added an element of fear to the Communist regime.

Finally, foreign armies on Russian soil enabled the Communists to appeal to the powerful force of Russian patriotism. At one point, over 100,000 foreign troops—mostly Japanese, British, American, and French—were stationed in Russia in support of anti-Communist forces. Their presence made it easy for the Communist government to call on patriotic Russians to fight foreign attempts to control the country.

By 1921, the Communists were in total command of Russia. The Communist regime had transformed Russia into a centralized state dominated by a single party. The state was also largely hostile to the Allied Powers, because the Allies had tried to help the Communists' enemies in the civil war.

**✓ Reading Check** **Contrasting** Why did the Red Army prevail over the White forces?

### Vocabulary

1. Explain the significance of: Grigory Rasputin, Alexandra, Petrograd, Aleksandr Kerensky, soviets, Bolsheviks, V. I. Lenin, revolution, Ukraine, aid, Siberia, Urals, Leon Trotsky, war communism.

### Main Ideas

2. Explain what the Petrograd women meant when they chanted "Peace and Bread" during their march.
3. List the steps that the Communists took to turn Russia into a centralized state dominated by one party. Use a chart like the one below.

Steps to Communist Control
1.
2.

4. Specify why Lenin accepted the loss of so much Russian territory in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk.

### Critical Thinking

5. **The BIG Idea Analyzing** How did the collapse of the Romanov dynasty increase instability in Europe?
6. **Identifying Central Issues** What led to Czar Nicholas II's downfall?
7. **Analyzing Visuals** Examine the painting on page 776. What does the red flag symbolize?

### Writing About History

8. **Multimedia Presentation** Prepare a multimedia presentation comparing the economic, political, and social causes of the American, French, and Russian Revolutions.

### History ONLINE

For help with the concepts in this section of *Glencoe World History*, go to [glencoe.com](http://glencoe.com) and click Study Central™.